



**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
Second Session, 37th Parliament

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de l'Ontario**
Deuxième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 28 November 2001

Mercredi 28 novembre 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 28 November 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 28 novembre 2001

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JOAN FLOOD

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Her Worship Mayor Joan Flood, mayor of Essex, has died after a brief but courageous fight with cancer.

First elected mayor in 1999, Joan was re-elected last year. Previously, from 1981 to 1999, Joan was a trustee of the Essex County Board of Education, later to be named the Greater Essex County District School Board, and served as chair of that board for 10 of those 18 years.

Joan and I were candidates in a provincial by-election in 1993, just eight short years ago. Joan was as tough a fighter then as she has been in her recent battle against cancer. But then, as recently, Joan never lost her perspective of who she was, where she was going or why she was headed there.

In recalling our election campaign, Joan recently said, "It's well documented I can verbally spar with the best of them. Sometimes my jabs did hit below the belt." I can attest to that, but we were always friends.

On tendering her resignation as mayor, Joan said: "I've learned that sometimes one's passion can be so strong that visually you are blinded by your own sincerity. I will be forever grateful to the people of Essex who have bestowed the mayor's honour upon me."

Joan had passion. She had vision. She loved her Essex, and I might add, she loved her Tory party.

From this Legislature, the friends in this House who knew her, and from the citizens of the riding of Essex, our sympathy and our prayers go to her husband, Charlie, and her supportive and loving family. God rest her soul.

OSPCA PUPPY MILL RAIDS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to draw attention to the successful raid by the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' special operations unit on three alleged puppy mills in my riding of Perth-Middlesex.

I'm obviously not proud that these alleged puppy mills were operating in my riding, but I am proud to be part of the government that funded the Ontario SPCA's crack-down on these operations.

On Monday, the Ontario SPCA executed search warrants at three suspected puppy mills in the township of Perth East. Twenty-five dogs were taken from the three locations. These were the first animals rescued from the puppy mills by the Ontario SPCA's special operations unit, which was established this fall with the help of a \$50,000 grant from the Solicitor General.

In two of these three cases, the investigation was assisted by tips from the public. I want to thank my constituents who helped in those tips.

These tips show the public's concern about the suffering caused by puppy mills. The two private members' bills dealing with puppy mills show that we in the Legislature are in sync with public opinion on this issue. I want to thank the members for Eglinton-Lawrence and York North for keeping this issue on the front burner.

I tell you about this to assure members of this House and the public that while we debate what more can be done, this government is already acting to eliminate puppy and kitten mills.

PRIVATE CLINICS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): A new private MRI clinic is about to set up shop in Ontario. It is certainly not likely to encounter any opposition from the Minister of Health, who is a great believer in the benefits of private sector delivery of health care. The minister will, however, have some questions to answer about this clinic. The first question: how will the minister ensure this clinic is not doing any MRIs for OHIP-covered services?

The minister will surely be aware of the history on this matter. His predecessor, just last year, had to deal with a concern about private individuals paying for MRIs at the William Osler Health Centre. The private company doing the MRIs there insisted that all their billings were legitimate, but in fact it was found that there were a number of inappropriate billings—that means people paying privately to jump the queue.

At about the same time a year ago, there was a furor in Alberta where hundreds or even thousands of individuals paid privately for MRIs because of their frustration with the waits. The Alberta government had to pay back the individuals who were supposed to have been able to get their MRIs in the public system, and then they were forced, because of public outrage, to actually provide better access to publicly funded MRIs.

That's the second question for the Minister of Health. What is he prepared to do to reduce waiting times for MRIs on the public machines in public hospitals?

People are extremely frustrated with waits for MRIs that can be as long as seven months in some parts of the province. The province was adding 12 MRIs across the province this year, but the waiting list grows by 1,200 patients a year. The association of radiologists says that we need 80 MRIs, not 12.

Two-tier Tony often talks about private delivery and private pay as the answers to rising health care costs. We agree with Allan Rock when he says, "If an MRI is medically necessary, it should be provided publicly. It's as simple as that."

ONTARIO MARINE INDUSTRY

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's my great pleasure to rise in celebration of Ontario Marine Day. Today in Toronto, representatives of marine communities across Ontario are meeting with government officials to discuss how the government and members of the Legislative Assembly can work in partnership, a partnership that will ensure a healthy, safe, efficient and competitive shipping industry.

Tens of thousands of jobs in Ontario communities rely on the ability to ship and receive goods by water. Men and women in the steel and construction industries, mining and agriculture, in our ports and on our ships, have made a livelihood through the efficiencies found in moving goods through our Great Lakes-St. Lawrence waterway system.

Through technological advancements and a highly skilled workforce, the marine community continues to be an effective and efficient component of Ontario's transportation infrastructure. In moving more than 75 million metric tonnes of cargo each year through Ontario, worth more than \$5 billion, our province's marine industry plays an integral role in Ontario's economic health.

As the most environmentally responsible mode of transportation, the marine industry that serves Ontario is well positioned to support the province's emissions reduction goals in the coming years.

With more than half of Canada's international trade moving by waterborne transit through Ontario's ports, marine communities across the province are working with all governments to prepare to meet the future environmental and economic challenges of our great nation. I am pleased to support those efforts here today.

I know it's not a point of order, but representatives of the Ontario marine association sitting in the members' gallery are John Greenway, Robert Paterson, and Camille Trepanier. Please join with me in welcoming them.

STUDED TIRES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Yesterday the first blast of winter hit my community of Sudbury. Yesterday the OPP in my area of northern Ontario investigated 97

accidents, 30 of them involving serious personal injury and, tragically, six people lost their lives. The OPP has stated that road conditions and weather conditions were the predominant factors.

Today I again call upon the Harris government to increase money for winter road maintenance. I also call upon the Harris government to pass my bill, Bill 119, which will allow for the use of studded tires in northern Ontario.

All studies indicate that studded tires save lives. All studies indicate that studded tires reduce accidents. Olle Nordstrom, an expert in winter tire performance, has stated categorically that cars with studded tires stop more safely and quickly than cars with winter tires or all-season radials. Sadly, Ontario is the only province which does not allow the use of studded tires.

Today I demand, on behalf of the people of northern Ontario, that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines wake up and speak up and that the Minister of Transportation act in the best interests of northerners. The firefighters from Sudbury who are in the gallery today, Chris Stokes, Marc Leduc and Mike Ouellette, have seen enough mangled metal and broken bodies. They have seen enough tragedy. Pass Bill 119, the studded tire act, and help reduce the carnage and tragic loss of life, which are all too often the end result of poor road conditions in northern Ontario.

1340

CLEAR-CUTTING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Today, I had the opportunity to attend a press conference that was presided over by none other than John Snobelen, the minister against forestry and for clear-cuts in the province of Ontario. The minister had the gall to go there and tell us, the Ontario public, that these guidelines were an end to old-style cutting when it comes to clear-cuts in Ontario.

Talk about taking a step backwards. We're going back, we're going way back, to the old days when forest companies were allowed to go into the forest and basically cut every tree that stood, without any regard for the environmental protection of our forests and environmental protection overall when it comes to forest policy.

Imagine this; get a load of this. Nobody is going to believe this, but it's true: the minister is saying that you're going to be allowed to cut every tree within one hectare except for 25 of them. That's what his new guidelines amount to. He says he wants to emulate what forest fires do to the forests in Ontario. The last time I checked, we spend millions of dollars to put out forest fires in the forests across Ontario. We're not out there trying to start them.

I say to Mike Harris and John Snobelen, get away from the lighters, because we know what you're going to do to forests from now on. We're saying get back to sensible practices when it comes to forestry in this province and get away from what you're trying to do, because

it is a step in the wrong direction. It will bring us back to the bad old days when we couldn't get access to markets because our forests were not being cut in a sustainable way.

NANTICOKE GENERATING STATION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I wish to inform members of the Legislature of the green energy thinking being put into action at the Nanticoke generating station in my riding. This is a plant that a Liberal member opposite keeps referring to as "dirty coal-fired." We in my riding and the 600 men and women who work there are proud of our plant and its environmental and efficiency record.

This past Monday this province made another step toward emissions reduction when Ontario Power Generation announced a \$250-million investment into new smog-reducing emission control technology for both the Nanticoke and Lambton generating stations. OPG has contracted with Babcock and Wilcox of Cambridge to provide four selective catalytic reduction units to be split between the two generating stations. This equipment will remove 80% of the nitrogen oxide emissions from the coal-burning units to which they are attached. Total station emissions will drop by 25%. Across the province, this week's announcement will mean an annual 12,000-tonne reduction in nitrogen oxide emissions, and this is the equivalent of taking 600,000 cars off the road.

This commitment, coupled with \$2 billion in emission control investments over the last decade, will better position Nanticoke to meet new environmental emission caps that were announced by our Ministry of the Environment this past month. These are some of the toughest regulations in North America.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): It's a privilege and an honour to stand here today on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus to extend to the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, to each and every one of you here today, a heartfelt welcome. We in the Liberal caucus recognize and appreciate the job you do to keep our families safe and secure.

We now have an even better understanding of the dangers you and your families face since the tragedy of September 11. We worked with you before this date and we have continued to work with you after September 11 to ensure you are properly funded, equipped, trained, safe and appreciated. That is why we proposed the Firefighters' Memorial Act, changed the Safe Streets Act to allow you to continue to do your good fundraising activities, the right-to-know legislation to keep you safe, and why I wrote to the Solicitor General on September 9 asking him to join me to build a wall of honour around the monument in Gravenhurst. The names of all the firefighters who have given the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty should be and must be added to that wall. As

well, Dalton McGuinty's Ontario security fund will put \$100 million into the safety and security of the families of our province.

Today I will further show how serious we are about our commitment to the communities and the firefighters of this province by introducing legislation making inappropriate staffing levels a thing of the past. We support Bill 105 and look forward to its quick passage. We will continue to be an inclusive party that respects the province's firefighters. Again we thank you, our firefighters and your families, for just doing your job.

HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION LEGISLATION

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm honoured to rise this afternoon to welcome Ontario firefighters to Queen's Park on their annual lobby day and to promote my private member's bill, Bill 105, the Health Promotion and Protection Amendment Act, 2001. The bill would allow emergency service workers, good Samaritans and victims of crime the opportunity to request a blood sample from someone they have come into contact with who they suspect has an infectious disease.

My office has worked very hard to consult with stakeholders from across our province who have a direct concern about the lack of legislation in this area. I want to make it clear that all our consultation was prior to the tragedies of September 11. September 11 emphasized to the world the contributions made by emergency workers and others to our society.

Currently victims of crime, emergency service workers and good Samaritans, and their families and friends, are put in a lonely and frightening position when they become involved in incidents where they come into contact with bodily fluids of someone suspected of having an infectious disease such as hepatitis or HIV.

I ask all members of this House to work together to see speedy passage of Bill 105. As a society and as legislators, we must do everything we can do to protect those people who protect us.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND SOCIAL POLICY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice and social policy. I want to commend the hard work of the staff of the committee and of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Environment for all their hard work. Over the past three years there's been an awful lot of consultation on this legislation, and I'm proud to move it's adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 81, An Act to provide standards with respect to the management of materials containing nutrients used on lands, to provide for the making of regulations with respect to farm animals and lands to which nutrients are applied, and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 81, Loi prévoyant des normes à l'égard de la gestion des matières contenant des éléments nutritifs utilisées sur les biens-fonds, prévoyant la prise de règlements à l'égard des animaux d'élevage et des biens-fonds sur lesquels des éléments nutritifs sont épanchés et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing order 72(b), the bill is therefore ordered for second reading.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ALTERNATIVE FUEL SOURCES

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I beg leave to present the interim report of the select committee on alternative fuel sources.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Galt presents the committee's report. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Galt: Our interim report, which I am tabling today, is a summary of our initial hearings. It is designed as a discussion paper to encourage public debate on where the committee and the province should go from here. Some of the major topics discussed are water power, wind power, solar energy, energy derived from biomass, alternative transportation fuels, hydrogen and fuel cells. We also looked at the role of energy conservation and efficiency, and how public policy and education can encourage alternative fuels and energy use.

We face a world of rising fuel costs, dwindling resources and increasing concern about air quality. The task of this committee is to ensure that all the options are explored, all the fuel sources examined and the best solutions for Ontario's future recommended. Our work is not complete, but we look forward to your feedback and to the feedback of the public, environmental groups and the industry stakeholders on our interim report.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NIKKEI HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2001 LOI DE 2001 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE NIKKEI

Mr Wettlaufer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to proclaim Nikkei Heritage Day / Projet de loi 140, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine Nikkei.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Japanese Canadians who lost much of their property and who lost many of their civil rights during the Second World War have made many contributions to the development of Ontario and to Canada. They presently have a cultural day that they recognize among their own community. It's the Sunday closest to September 22 in each year and it is called Nikkei Heritage Day. This bill will proclaim the Sunday closest to September 22 in each year as Nikkei Heritage Day and give appropriate recognition to that.

FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE

Mr Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): In respect to the citizens of Ontario and to the firefighters across the province, the purpose of this bill is to require that any proposal to reduce or restructure fire protection services be approved by the fire marshal before implementation. The fire marshal would be required to report annually to the minister on proposals that are reviewed, either accepted or rejected.

CITY OF OTTAWA ACT (CONSOLIDATION OF SPECIAL ACTS), 2001

Mr Guzzo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr21, An Act respecting the City of Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

LOI DE 2001 SUR LES COMTÉS-UNIS DE PRESCOTT ET RUSSELL

UNITED COUNTIES OF PRESCOTT AND RUSSELL ACT, 2001

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Projet de loi 142, Loi autorisant la réglementation municipale de la perturbation et de l'extraction de la

tourbe dans les Comtés-Unis de Prescott et Russell / Bill 142, An Act to permit municipal regulation of peat disturbance and extraction in the United Counties of Prescott and Russell.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): The bill gives authority to the municipal council of the corporation of the united counties of Prescott and Russell to pass bylaws to control peat extraction within the counties.

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LES LIEUX DE SÉPULTURE DES ANCIENS PREMIERS MINISTRES

Mr Peters moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 143, An Act to preserve the gravesites of former premiers of Ontario / Projet de loi 143, Loi visant à conserver les lieux de sépulture des anciens premiers ministres de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): This bill, if passed, would require the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation to mark the gravesites of former Premiers of Ontario and permit the minister to make arrangements for the care and preservation of such gravesites.

If passed, the province would, by means of flags of Ontario and Canada, plaques and signs, mark the 18 gravesites of former Premiers of Ontario in the dignified and respectful manner they deserve.

This legislation is modelled after the federal Prime Ministers' gravesites act.

VISITORS

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce to the House members of the York West Riding Association, sitting in the west gallery. They represent part of the largest group to send a Liberal member to Queen's Park, election after election.

CLINTON SUZACK

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: following Corrections Canada's failure to move Clinton Suzack to a maximum-security prison, I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion without debate:

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario denounces Corrections Canada's decision to transfer Clinton Suzack

from one medium-security prison to another and renews its call for his immediate return to a maximum-security facility.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed. The member.

Mr Bartolucci: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario denounces Corrections Canada's decision to transfer Clinton Suzack from one medium-security prison to another and renews its call for his immediate return to a maximum-security facility.

The Speaker: The Legislative Assembly of Ontario denounces Corrections Canada's decision to release Clinton Suzack from one medium-security prison to another and renews its call for immediate return to a maximum-security facility.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FIREFIGHTERS

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): It is a privilege for me to rise in the House today to pay tribute to Ontario's firefighters and to acknowledge the tremendous contribution that the brave men and women of Ontario's fire services make every day to public safety in our province.

It takes a special kind of courage to respond to an alarm bell and go into a burning building, knowing that you are risking your life. Yet every day our firefighting professionals, knowing the risks, understanding the danger of their work, put the safety of others first. There is no greater bravery than the bravery these men and women show every day as they work to keep the people of Ontario safe.

1400

Recently we remembered those who died while on duty with the first Firefighters' Memorial Day service at the Ontario Fire College in Gravenhurst, people like Captain Pat Carey of the Toronto Fire Service and Captain Dennis Redman of the St Thomas Fire Service, who made the greatest sacrifice in the line of duty.

I'm proud to announce that their names will be added to the new wall of honour, which will be part of the new addition to the Ontario Fire College. The names of all firefighters who have fallen in the line of duty will be inscribed on this wall of honour.

My government is proud to be creating this wall to keep the names of these brave individuals alive forever and to ensure that their sacrifices will not be forgotten.

Just two weeks ago, the Lieutenant Governor presented this year's fire and police bravery awards. Six courageous firefighters from across Ontario were honoured for their extraordinary sacrifice and service.

Ontario, as well, is one of the safest places in the world when it comes to fire, and that's because of the bravery and the dedication and the skill of our firefighters. They are so good at their jobs that it's easy to forget just how vital they are to safeguarding our communities, but we must never take them for granted.

The shocking events of September 11 were indeed a powerful reminder of the risks firefighters on both sides of the border face every day.

Our firefighters cannot do their job alone. They need and they deserve our respect, our thanks and our help. That's why, for example, we're investing \$2.5 million each year to train firefighters and other emergency workers in performing urban search and rescue, responding to chemical, biological and nuclear emergencies and dealing with hazardous materials. These are just a few of the serious risks for which our firefighters must be prepared.

We are also spending \$3 million to upgrade the Ontario Fire College in Gravenhurst to develop an emergency management training facility.

After the events of September 11, we are more aware than ever of the dangers our firefighters must face and the sacrifices that they and their families must make.

These are challenging times, but despite the challenges, the difficulties and the problems we may face, we know that we can rely on our firefighters.

So today, on behalf of the people of Ontario, we pause to say thank you. Thank you for your professionalism, for your dedication, for your bravery. We depend on you. We want you to know that you can depend on us.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent for this House to agree to the singing or playing of our national anthem, O Canada, in this House at least once a week before the daily proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Responses? The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): On behalf of the members of the Ontario Liberal caucus, I want to offer my words of support and praise for the men and women of Ontario's fire services.

Let me say to the representatives of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association present in the gallery today, and to all those watching these proceedings on TV, thank you for your courage, your sacrifice, your dedication and your commitment to our communities.

The terrorist attacks on September 11 have provided us with a shocking reminder of the great sacrifices made by people who serve our communities. Few make as great a contribution to our communities as do our firefighters. I know all Ontarians have been shaken by the terrorist attacks. We're all saddened by the immense loss of life. But since the attacks, I've been particularly saddened by the terrible losses suffered by the New York City fire department. We now know that some 343 members of the New York City fire department died on that day, and our hearts go out to the friends and families of those fallen heroes. I can tell you that I was heartened

and proud to meet Ontario firefighters working at ground zero in New York City. These people were there working in a volunteer capacity, giving expression to our collective desire to simply help a neighbour in a time of need.

The heroes in New York remind us that there are heroes in our own communities. Every Ontario community has dedicated firefighters who risk their lives and give back to their communities. Ontario Liberals know that our firefighters put themselves at risk, put themselves in harm's way and spend considerable time away from their families. Firefighters make these sacrifices so Ontario families can be safe. In turn, we on this side of the House believe we should be doing everything possible to ensure that our firefighters themselves are safe.

That's why we've demanded that the government adopt our plan to invest \$100 million in an Ontario security fund. The fund I am proposing would make \$50 million available to municipalities for hiring additional firefighters and police officers and, more specifically, to ensure that all firefighters are adequately equipped and protected in any situation.

The government has, to its credit, put aside \$2.5 million in funding, including a new training facility. But sadly, that simply does not address the magnitude of the challenges we are facing. The government hasn't provided one cent to help municipalities hire additional firefighters. That's not good enough for me and that's not good enough for our working families, not when firefighters are responding to calls without adequate staff and equipment. So again today, I call upon the government to implement our Ontario security plan, a plan that wouldn't add one dollar to the provincial budget. Our firefighters deserve nothing less.

Working families know that firefighters are constantly at risk of contracting a communicable disease when providing emergency medical treatment. We believe that firefighters should be able to find out if they have come into contact with someone carrying such a disease. That is why we support Bill 105. My caucus and I have fought alongside the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association against the government's Bill 84, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, and we will continue to fight any other move that puts firefighters at risk by allowing communities to send inadequate numbers of ill-equipped firefighters into dangerous situations.

We have felt for a long time now that the government should create a memorial to honour those firefighters who have fallen in the line of duty. We appreciate that the government has followed our lead and will be creating this memorial. Ontario's firefighters make great contributions to our communities. Our firefighters not only keep us safe, but they assist us as volunteers and through charity drives. Ontario's working families depend on our firefighters and our firefighters should be able to depend on us as legislators.

With a great deal of pride I say that we will continue to work with and for our firefighters and we will continue to propose policies that ensure their safety and the continuing safety of Ontario's working families.

1410

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): This is an important day, and the events of September 11 have, I think, made it all the more important. It is the day when we should remind ourselves and we should remind people all across Ontario of the broad scale of work that firefighters do in our communities.

What happened on September 11 in New York City and in Washington was an expression, a very vivid expression for everyone, that people could understand—a disaster, fire, explosions—and while almost everyone was trying to leave the buildings in question, while everyone was trying to get out, firefighters were going in. I think that visually sent a message to everyone of the incredible level of sacrifice, of dedication and of courage that it takes when your duty says, “You must go in when everyone else is trying to escape.” We need to acknowledge that dedication, that sacrifice and that courage.

We also need to recognize all of the other work that firefighters do. In some senses, the word “firefighter” is a very narrow description of the work that we expect from our fire services. When you’re on a lonely stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway and there is a very serious accident, the first or second people called to the scene will be the fire service because in most cases it is the fire service that has the expertise, the knowledge, the experience and the equipment to extract people who are very seriously injured, perhaps critically injured, from a car, a van, a truck or whatever other kind of motor vehicle. It is work once again that on a busy highway can be dangerous but it is work that requires a very special kind of expertise and experience.

A few years ago I had the opportunity to spend a day riding with a paramedic crew in an ambulance, and as we responded to emergency directives, in almost every case what I discovered was that the first people at the scene, whether it was a household or whether it was a downtown business, were firefighters. The people who were there, who offered the first response, who provided in essence the first emergency medical service, were firefighters. I don’t think many people in the public understand that, that in a majority of our communities where someone calls for an ambulance in fact it is often the fire service which arrives first and may administer the oxygen or may do the first examination in terms of whatever the particular affliction may be. It is obviously very important work.

On an occasion like this we also need to acknowledge that if we’re going to continue to have these very good public services, we need to be willing to fund them. And I use the word “public” service, because if we each contribute a little, we individually and collectively derive a huge benefit from this service. But we must have a willingness to fund and to provide the financial resources if these public services are going to continue to be of very high quality. I regret to say that in Ontario today that is not the case. There are too many fire services across the province that are struggling.

We also need to recognize the legitimate workplace issues, that fire services and people who work in fire services deserve a properly administered pension fund and a pension fund which is at least partially under their control. I recognize the courage, the dedication, the sacrifice. We must similarly recognize our responsibilities here.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just wanted to ask for unanimous consent and I’d also like to thank all the members of the House that have helped me draft this motion. The unanimous consent asks that this Legislature directs Bill 105, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act, 2001, to—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Sorry to interrupt the member. If we could, could we just ask for unanimous consent to move that? Agreed? Agreed. Yes, now you can proceed.

Mr Dunlop: The motion that I’m asking for unanimous consent on reads: that this Legislature direct that Bill 105, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act, 2001, to require the taking of blood samples to protect victims of crime, emergency service workers, good Samaritans and other persons, be considered by the standing committee on justice and social policy on Tuesday, December 4, for one day, at the end of which the Chair shall put every question necessary to dispose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and that it then be reported back to this House and ordered for third reading; and that when third reading of Bill 105 is next called, the question be put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Speaker: We’ll see if our high-tech system works here. Mr Dunlop has moved that—

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Dispense.

Interjection: It’s working.

The Speaker: It’s working very well, thank you. It was going to be very tough to read.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday you went too far. You threatened Ontario’s seniors. You said that if you didn’t get your way—you stamped your foot and you threw a tantrum—you were going to take home care and drug coverage away from Ontario’s seniors.

You’ve now had the time, you’ve had the benefit of a cooling-off period. Surely you now understand that if you actually follow through on that threat, thousands of seniors would be forced into poverty. Surely you now

understand that cutting off home care and drug coverage would mean sentencing thousands without the ability to pay to prolonged sickness and worse.

Premier, will you now do the right thing? Apologize, and reassure Ontario's parents and grandparents that under no circumstances whatsoever will the health care services they need be on the chopping block.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Let me indicate very clearly what I said yesterday and already confirmed today when I talked to the media: under no circumstances under a Harris government, under six years of massive underfunding from the federal government, would I allow cuts. In fact, I provided for massive increases to home care and to senior citizens and drug programs. I indicated very clearly that as long as I am Premier of the province of Ontario, I will continue to fund Ontario's share that I have continued for six years. For six years I have made up the shortfall from the federal government. I will confirm to you and I make no apology for going to Ottawa and fighting for the disgraceful show from the Liberal government in Ottawa in the underfunding of health care.

1420

Mr McGuinty: Premier, why not inject some modicum, some semblance of honesty into this debate? This is not about money. If you scrapped your \$2.2-billion corporate tax cut, you could double our drug care plan. If you scrapped the \$2.2-billion corporate tax cut, you could triple our investment in home care.

This isn't about money. Why not be honest? You're on the way out. You've got nothing to lose. Come out of the closet and tell the people of Ontario you are against medicare. That's what this is all about. You are in favour of two-tier health care. You're in favour of user fees. Premier, why not be honest with the Ontario public? This is not about money. It's about your right-wing ideology.

Hon Mr Harris: My record on health care is a matter of public record. During my term in office, we have increased health care—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Premier, take his seat. Order, please. Sorry, Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: During my term as Premier of this government, for six successive budgets we have increased total spending by \$6.8 billion. Six billion of that \$6.8 billion has been for new health care funding: \$3 billion of that is our share and \$3 billion of that ought to have been the federal share, but since they slashed the funding, I made it up. That is the record. The record is clear: more money for home care, more money for seniors, more money for drugs—the Ontario share and the federal share.

What is disgraceful, in addition to the federal shortfall, is that the Ontario Liberal Party stands in its place and tells all the Premiers, "You should be un-tax-competitive. You should hike taxes. You should find money from elsewhere to make up the federal funding shortfall." That is a disgraceful position for any provincial politician of any party.

The Speaker: The Premier's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I enjoy the bluster. I really do. I made you an offer yesterday and I'll repeat that same offer today. I'll get on the airplane with you. We will fly to Ottawa. We will make our request together for more health care dollars on one condition: you commit here and now that you won't proceed with your \$2.2 billion in corporate tax cuts; you won't put half a billion dollars into private schools; you'll stop spending hundreds of millions of dollars on partisan political advertising. Prove to me and prove to Ontarians that you're prepared to put health care first and corporate tax cuts second. Let's get on the plane. Let's go to Ottawa. Let's ask for more money. Let's put tax cuts aside.

Hon Mr Harris: I want to say that nothing cuts me to the quick more than to have these questions raised today, to be able to talk about the lack of Liberal commitment to health care, in Ottawa and here in the province of Ontario.

Last night in debate in this Legislature, the Liberal position was quite clear: not one more cent is required from Ottawa. We don't need any more money from Ottawa. That was the Liberal position as articulated last night. Do you think I'm going to waste gas to take you to Ottawa to tell them, "Don't give the provinces any more money"? You are a disgrace to your party. You are a disgrace to health care. You are a disgrace to provincial politicians everywhere in this country.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We'll just wait. I guess we won't have a question period and I'll just stand here. The only person who's happy with that is my mother who gets to see me on TV. If you don't want any questions, that's fine. We'll just stand here and wait. Obviously both sides are rather feisty today. I'm not going to carry on. The pages and I are not going to keep getting up back and forth for both sides. We'll just continue to wait till it's silent, and if that takes 53 minutes, then there will be no more questions today. It's as simple as that.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I say this to the government side as well. If you start doing that and start yelling across when I'm trying to maintain order, you will also be thrown out, the member for Ottawa West-Nepean.

I believe it is now a new question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: I've been so cut to the quick, I barely know where to begin now.

Premier, again I ask you, why not inject some honesty into this debate? You won't fix medicare because you don't believe in it. Deep down, you believe in extra-billing. Deep down, you believe in user fees. Your record speaks to that already. You believe in a premium system for the well-off and a second-rate system for the rest of us. If you want an honest debate about the future of medicare in our province and in our country, I think you owe it to Ontarians to plainly stake your ground. The fact is, as we have observed on this side of the House for quite some time now, that you don't champion medicare

because you don't believe in medicare. You believe in user fees. You believe in two-tier health care.

Why not, today, be honest? You've got one foot in the private sector. Don't drag the health care system there with you. Be honest. Tell us you stand against medicare and you're for two-tier health care.

Hon Mr Harris: My actions speak for themselves. I refer you to the budget of 1996. I refer you to the budget of 1997. I refer you to the budget of 1998. I refer you to the Ontario budget of 1999. I refer you to the Ontario budget of 2000, and I refer you to the budget of 2001. When you see those budgets, when you see the massive increases in health care, when you see 100% total support for the Canada Health Act, you will see that, of the federal government in Ottawa and of the provincial government here, one government, one leader, has stood up for the Canada Health Act, stood up for seniors, stood up for medicare, and that has been this government on this side of the House, as evidenced in six successive budgets tabled in this Legislature and passed.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you can play with the numbers to your heart's content. I want to refer you to Ontario's families and the problems they've been encountering under Mike Harris's Ontario when it comes to accessing health care. We have the fewest nurses per capita now in the country; that's a number I want you to keep in mind. We have the second fewest hospital beds per capita in the country; that's a number I want you to keep in mind. Keep this in mind as well, Premier: when it comes to your record on home care, you are so unhappy with the honesty coming forth from our CCACs and the volunteers who work in our communities on behalf of our parents and grandparents that you want to fire every last one of them. That's something you should keep in mind.

Premier, this is not about money; it's about your ideology. Why not come clean? Why not be honest with the people of Ontario? Why not stake out your ground honestly, in a forthright manner, and tell them about you and your government and your would-be successors? You don't stand for medicare; you stand for two-tier health care.

Hon Mr Harris: As I indicated in Ottawa and as I think would be confirmed by every Premier of every political stripe across the country, and I believe by every leader of every opposition party save and except the Ontario Liberal Party, there is one threat to universal medicare as we know it. That threat is Jean Chrétien; that threat is Paul Martin; that threat is Allan Rock. That threat is the federal Liberal Party in Ottawa.

Since you don't want to accept the actual audited statements that are in the Legislature and you don't want to accept the budget, let me quote from Allan Rock. "I am part of the problem, not the solution. It was my government that diminished the size of transfer payments. I will not stand here and tell you that the cuts in transfer payments were insignificant. They were not. And I won't tell you that they have not had an impact. They have." Allan Rock, acknowledging the significant impact of the massive cuts from the federal Liberal government.

Check the record: who is the defender of medicare, who cares about our seniors, who cares about the drug plan, who cares about home care—

The Speaker: The Premier's time is up. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Speaker, I could not agree with you more: this Premier's time is up. He cannot leave too soon for the people of Ontario and for the future of medicare in Ontario.

We've seen this movie before. It's all about fundamentally creating a crisis. It's a matter of taking any excess revenues that we have, plowing them into tax cuts, and leaving us short when it comes to meeting our health care responsibilities. That's what this is all about. This is about a Premier who has used this ploy in the past. He wants to create a crisis. He wants to tell Ontarians there's no way to fix medicare. The only thing that's lacking in this government is the kind of leadership that will champion medicare. That's what we need. I have no further question for this Premier. His time is up.

Hon Mr Harris: The leader of the Liberal Party, which has been a non-advocate for health care funding, has asked me to resign. As you know, I have indicated I intend to do that. In so doing, unfortunately for the people of Ontario, I will be the only leader, certainly in Ontario, nationally or provincially who has stood up for and put his money where his mouth is on medicare year after year for six budgets.

I hear the bluff and the bluster of the member opposite, and yet on March 6, 2000, the Leader of the Opposition—perhaps heading to third party status, I'm not sure—said, "I was personally disappointed with the budget because it did not assign the priority to health care that ordinary Ontarians are telling me they assign to it. The silence from the federal government on medicare has been deafening." This is exactly what we've been saying. That's what you said in 2000. Is that your position or was it your critic's position in 1997? Gerard Kennedy said that there is enough money, that we don't need more money. He said, "We want to make sure that we take some of the non-essential stuff out of the health care system." What is it that your party wants—

The Speaker: Order.

1430

LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGN FUNDING DISCLOSURE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. I'm asking the Premier to open the financial books on the campaign to replace him. Four cabinet ministers and a former finance minister want your job, Premier. That means five secret lists of contributors are funnelling cash into their campaigns. Who are these mysterious financial backers? Who is pouring money into the health minister's pocket? Private health care corporations? Pharmaceutical companies? Who is bankrolling Ernie Eves? Private companies who want to buy up our electricity system? We don't know.

But we know there is a serious potential for conflict of interest. So I'm asking the Premier, will you immediately require each leadership candidate to disclose the name and amount of each financial contributor to their campaigns?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate being informed that five people are campaigning for my job. That's valuable information for me to have. I would also suggest to you, given the actions of the two opposition leaders, they are the only five I know of who are seriously campaigning for the job, particularly given the disgraceful performance of the Liberal leader in not advocating for more health care money.

Let me say in response to the question, as the leader of the New Democratic Party will know because he went through this process, that I went through this process and others have been through this process, the Election Finances Act specifically covers full disclosure of all donations that are made. I think it's everything over \$100 that must be fully disclosed. I can assure you that every one of the candidates of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party will comply with the legislation and fully disclose those contributions. I can't guarantee that you won't be shocked at the number of union supporters that will be there, but I can tell you it will be disclosed.

Mr Hampton: The disclosure you talk about will happen six, seven or eight months after the event. What is happening now is that whoever wins this leadership race immediately becomes the Premier of Ontario and gets to decide, should more of the health care system be privatized, should the electricity system be sold off and should our water systems be sold off? I think the people of Ontario need to know now who the people are who are going to financially back the person who may become the next Premier of Ontario and make these decisions.

You must know that the federal elections watchdog yesterday recommended that exactly this kind of thing happen in federal leaderships, that all of the contributions be disclosed right away.

Premier, I can't understand why you wouldn't want to do this, unless you have something to hide. Why won't you require each candidate to disclose now where they're getting their contributions from and how much?

Hon Mr Harris: As I indicated, we do have legislation that requires full disclosure. I would doubt that any of the candidates today knows where a financial backer would come from. If they're worrying about that, they're not going to win. My experience in this is to leave the finances to somebody else and get out there and get campaigning.

I would suggest to you that there will be full disclosure. I find it passing strange, though, that after having been through the process and the amount of time you have been in the Legislature, you have not brought forward a single amendment to change the legislation. Even today, at the 11th hour, I have not seen any proposed amendment from you that should be there. To suggest that we should make amendments to an act partway through a race I think even you would agree would be

retroactive and silly. But if you were serious about it, I think you would have done that long ago.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you're the one who says that you believe in financial accountability to the taxpayer, and transparency, and that's what this is about. That's exactly what this is about.

What you're proposing is that disclosure as to which corporations contribute to which candidate will happen eight months after the fact, after someone becomes Premier and can say, "We are going to privatize the water system now. We are going to sell off the electricity system. We are going to privatize more of the health care system." That kind of accountability that happens after the fact is completely inadequate. That's why you need to do something now.

You need to do something else in addition. You need to pass guidelines now—and you've got the authority to do this—to ensure that government cars, government airplanes, government polls and government access to advertising are not used by the leadership candidates.

Are you or are you not interested in accountability to the taxpayer, transparency and ensuring that people can avoid a conflict of interest? What's your answer, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: I say to the honourable member that I find it passing strange that you had no interest in amending this act up until the leadership had already been called and is underway, which demonstrates a rather strange commitment, in fact no commitment at all, to be serious about it.

There will be full disclosure. Of course, every candidate will know they will be subject to the penalties of the law, should they be involved in anything that is untoward or that uses their office wrongly, and there may be substantial penalties, criminal charges as well. I think all the candidates are well aware of that and I am sure they will be conducting themselves accordingly.

With regard to government vehicles such as the vehicle that you have, I'm sure you make sure that vehicle is not used to attend NDP functions or partisan functions. I'm sure that is the case. I'm sure that when your members travel on committees, they're doing committee work; they are not doing partisan NDP work in any of the towns they visit.

Nonetheless, I have insisted that the rules be followed. No aircraft and no vehicles are to be used for political—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the Premier's time is over.

1440

CURRICULUM

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I just remind the Premier that you yourself exceeded the spending limits in your own leadership race.

I have a question to the Minister of Education. Citizens of Ontario are alarmed at reports that grade 9 students are failing or are dropping out at levels unknown in

the past, and people are demanding some action from your government.

I will give you a proposal today for immediate action: create school teams for success in every school across Ontario where grade 9 students are struggling. The teams would be made up of teachers with the most expertise in remedial techniques within each school to work intensively with those students who are at risk. Will you take immediate action, creating school teams for success, or are you going to continue to allow grade 9 students to struggle with a curriculum that has been implemented too quickly without the necessary resources to back it up?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Through you to the honourable member, Mr Speaker, I certainly appreciate his concern for the students in high school who were not getting what they needed from the old curriculum. It's unfortunate that your government didn't adopt recommendations that were forwarded at the time to improve that. We acknowledged that there was a need, that our students were not getting what they needed when they left high school. Colleges, universities, parents, employers were saying they were clearly not getting that, so we have set higher standards through a new, more rigorous curriculum. It is asking more of our students, our teachers and our parents.

We have already acted and put in place considerable strategies to help those students who are in the transition years, who have not had the benefit of the new curriculum in the elementary years, so that we can assist them by the time they get through high school to make sure that they have all of the skills and the knowledge they need to succeed. Parents said we needed to do that. We were prepared to admit there was a problem in the system. Unlike previous governments, we've taken a series of steps to help all of our kids meet higher standards in our schools so they can succeed.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you have been in the government for six years. For six years you have been in charge in education, and six years later we now see that grade 9 students are failing and are dropping out of schools at an unprecedented rate. The question is, what are you as a government going to do about it, other than try to blame someone else? Minister, these are young people who have their lives ahead of them, and what we've seen from you so far is that, notwithstanding that you implemented the curriculum too quickly without the necessary resources, you don't seem to be concerned about what's happening.

I've given you an idea, an idea you can act on immediately. Are you prepared to do something to address this problem or are more young people going to fail at the grade 9 level and perhaps the grade 10 level, and are we going to face more dropouts? Are you going to do something, or are you simply going to allow the situation to get worse?

Hon Mrs Ecker: You weren't very concerned about the fact that our high school students could not compete, could not succeed, were not able to go out there with the basic literacy skills when you were in government. This

side of the House, this party, recognized that, and we are indeed taking action to assist all of the students in grade 9, grade 10, grade 11 and grade 12. The curriculum in high school was phased in on a year-by-year basis; it was not brought in too fast. Second, we've made deals for extra remediation, extra money for extra remediation for students, summer institutes for teachers and students, courses and training for teachers and students to deal with the new curriculum.

I know the NDP thinks, "Let's lower the standards; that's how we can solve this problem." That's how we got into this problem, and the goal of this government, the goal of the parents out there in the system, is to have higher standards and help all of our students to meet those standards. The steps we are taking are indeed doing that, and that is the commitment we will continue to meet.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I want to go to the same minister on the same subject. Madam Minister, let's take a look at the record of your government when it comes to bringing about successful education reform and better results for our children.

It turns out now that after six and a half years on the job, one half of our children are failing to meet the basic standards in reading, writing and mathematics—that's your record—and 40% of our grade 10 students are failing to meet the basic literacy standard that your government has established. Today we learn that almost one quarter of our grade 9 students failed to earn the required eight credits—this is the basic curriculum—because they failed or dropped classes.

Madam Minister, that is your record, that is the record of your government. Why do you continue to fail Ontario's children?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, I think it's fair to put on the record that this is preliminary data. We are tracking a group of students so we can track and have accurate information to assist students.

The party on the other side of the House, when they were in government, didn't think there was a problem. They didn't change the curriculum. They didn't set higher standards. We have. Parents, employers and students themselves want higher standards. We're putting in place the supports to help those students meet those standards.

There's no question that for those students who have not had the benefit of the curriculum throughout their elementary school years, it is a challenge for them to meet that curriculum in high school. That's why we've increased time for teachers with the remediation. That's why we've increased monies specifically targeted for remediation. This data confirms what we've been saying: that our students were not able to deal with the challenges they need to deal with. That's why we've made the changes, to help those students succeed. When they leave high school at the end of their high school career—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, the record speaks for itself. Painful as it may be for you to stare into this mirror, it is

all about you. You're failing our children. Some 24% of our grade 9 students failed the curriculum. That's close to 30,000 students, Madam Minister. Our kids are bright and capable. The problem does not lie with Ontario's youth. It lies with your inability to support their teachers, to make sure they've got the necessary materials in the classroom. That's what this is all about.

Madam Minister, pay a little bit of attention to what Ontario parents are saying today. Do you know how much money they're spending on private tutorials now? Do you know how disappointed they are that one quarter of Ontario kids have got to spend time in summer school? Do you know what that does to a family's summer plans? This has nothing to do with the standards that you put forward in your curriculum. It has everything to do with your failure to put in place the necessary supports to help our kids succeed. Why don't you just admit that?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member would have us believe that we can bring in a new curriculum that is more rigorous, that is setting more standards, and somehow or other that's not going to ask more from our students, our parents and our teachers. Yes, that curriculum does. Teachers, parents and students are being asked to work harder at that new curriculum. It's asking our students to learn more in earlier grades, because that is what they need to know when they leave school.

Your government didn't think there was a problem. We recognized there was a problem. That's why we are putting in the supports for students to better deal with the new curriculum, for teachers so they can better teach the new curriculum. The honourable member was against our requirements for professional development for teachers. One of the requirements has to do with curriculum. He's against summer school for students. Summer school has been a great support for those students who need extra help. We have school-to-work transition programs to help students transfer into work, if that's going to be their destination. On this side of the House, we're prepared to recognize there was a problem. We're prepared to take steps, and that's indeed what we're doing.

BAY OF QUINTE WALLEYE FISHERY

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Natural Resources, and it is in regard to the Bay of Quinte fishery. There has been mention by the media of a possible closure on January 1, 2002. This has been further enflamed by the unnecessary rhetoric of opposition members—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Education, your own member is asking a question. I would appreciate if you would listen. You've answered the question. It's now the member for Northumberland's time.

Sorry, member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: As I was saying, this has been further enflamed by the unnecessary rhetoric of opposition mem-

bers in my area. They've created a terrible concern among those constituents in my riding.

Minister, I want you to stand in your place today and either confirm or deny that the Ministry of Natural Resources will impose a moratorium on the walleye fishing on January 1, 2002, in the Bay of Quinte.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I want to thank the member from Northumberland for the question, and go on record, Mr Speaker, as saying that if your mother would prefer you to stand in front of this place for a full 60 minutes of question period, I could in fact support that.

The member has raised a very important question. The member brought this to my attention many, many months ago and in fact has been a very important source of local knowledge about this issue. I can respond today by saying that I think he and the members of his community will be happy to know that the Ministry of Natural Resources will not impose a walleye moratorium on the Bay of Quinte for January 1, 2002. We are in a public consultation process and no decisions regarding that fishery have been made.

1450

Mr Galt: Thank you, Minister. I am encouraged by the fact that the Ministry of Natural Resources is engaged in a public consultation process before—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Sorry again. The member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I guess the opposition can't take good news very well.

I am encouraged by the fact that the Ministry of Natural Resources is engaged in a public consultation process before making decisions. With the cold weather fast approaching, some of my constituents are currently in the process of booking anglers for the upcoming ice-fishing season. They're concerned that the ice-fishing season is in jeopardy. Minister, can you tell this House what the public consultations will be like, and is this year's ice-fishing season indeed in jeopardy?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I thank the member from Northumberland. He will know by now that my responses to questions in this chamber are always met with a euphoric reaction by members of the opposition and I am pleased that continues.

With regard to the public consultations, the times, dates and formats are currently being worked out by the ministry. We will contact both interested stakeholder groups and all the MPPs who are concerned with this issue, and other leaders of the local communities.

With regard to the ice-fishing season, Mr Speaker—I know this will be of particular important to you—I understand that it's a very important season, both for tourism operators and for the local community, and I'm pleased to tell the member for Northumberland and the local tourist operators in his area to book the tours and get the huts ready—the ice-fishing season is on.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier and it's a straightforward question on Ipperwash. You have said in the past that you gave no direction, you gave no influence, you left it entirely to the OPP. However, we have recently learned that on September 6, the day of the shooting, you held a key, high-level meeting involving 14 people, including the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, an OPP inspector and an OPP sergeant. At that meeting, according to the minutes we have, you said something quite different than "no direction." The note we have says that the Premier instructed the group that you wanted the occupiers out of the park within 24 hours.

The simple question is this, Premier, at the heart of the Ipperwash affair: did you instruct the group that you wanted the occupiers out of the park within 24 hours?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): This is a matter of a court case in which I am being sued personally. I answered that question in discovery yesterday.

Mr Phillips: It is a civil case and I hope the Premier isn't saying that the government's position now is that whenever a civil case is launched, the government will not answer questions in the Legislature.

The public wants to know an answer to the question. You have said publicly that you gave no influence, that you gave no directions. The note we have suggests something different. It says the Premier instructed that he wanted the occupiers removed from the park within 24 hours. The public wants to know a simple answer to that question, Premier, because it's at the heart of the matter. Did you instruct that group that you wanted the occupiers removed from the park within 24 hours?

Hon Mr Harris: This is a matter of a court case and I'm responding to those questions as a sitting Premier with the right to refuse to attend when the Legislature is sitting. I volunteered to participate, to help the George family try to get the answers they require. They have opted for this process and I am fully complying.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The debate about how best to protect Canadians and Americans from the threat of terrorism has been ongoing since the attacks of September 11. Many experts, governments and businesses around the world have endorsed the idea of a North American security perimeter that would still allow the free movement of legitimate goods and citizens between Canada and the United States.

Unfortunately the federal Liberal government in Ottawa has been sending out mixed messages. Last week, Minister Tobin was quoted as saying: "What we are asking the United States to do is to catch up with us." Later in the week, Minister Cauchon said that solving border concerns would require a long-term solution that could take 10 to 15 years of discussion.

Minister, could you share with us your thoughts on these latest comments from Ottawa?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I thank the member for the question and his continuing interest in these issues.

I found the comments that came out of Ottawa last week passing strange and cause for concern. We have some ministers saying that the status quo is acceptable; we have another saying that change would take over a decade to accomplish. It's regrettably clear that the federal government has no plan with respect to the continental security issue. The government view in Ottawa seems to be that we can return to a September 10 world and that our closest friend and largest trading partner will, tragically, forget its concerns about the security of its northern border. Our government profoundly disagrees.

Mr Maves: I also find their comments to be perplexing and concerning. I'm really not surprised to find them to be weak showing leadership on this issue. They continue to sell out the people of Ontario as far as health care goes, and they certainly are not taking the lead in security issues since September 11.

Minister, can you indicate what our government is doing to encourage the federal government to seriously consider the North American security perimeter proposal?

Hon Mr Runciman: Our justice ministers are in Ottawa today urging the federal government to make the security perimeter issue their number one priority. I will be in Ottawa on Friday to meet with Industry Minister Tobin to discuss the border security and enforcement proposals that I released last week following our industry leaders' round table on border issues.

We believe the federal government should now be developing a security perimeter proposal to present to our American friends. We have to be proactive on this file. If not, we are playing a dangerous, high-risk game that could result in something being imposed upon us that could have detrimental impact on the long-term health of our country's economy.

CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION BOARD

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Premier. The Ontario Criminal Injuries Compensation Board is there; it's supposed to provide compensation for victims of violent crimes. Olga Baranovski is one of those victims. Her 15-year-old son Matt was brutally murdered two years ago. She sought compensation on an interim basis to help pay for the counselling and some of the medical attention that she requires related to the incredible psychological stress she has been under. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board slammed the door in her face, didn't give her a penny, denied her even a cent of compensation.

Premier, would you explain to us how in your Ontario, Mrs Baranovski isn't entitled to compensation as a victim of crime?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No, I can't explain that to you, because the board, as you know, is an arm's-length board and I was not there. I was not at the hearing, nor did I make the decision. I can tell you that an applicant who has been denied an interim award may ask the chair to re-examine the interim application. I would expect that this would be good advice to give the applicant. I can do that, you can do it or we can both do it.

Mr Kormos: Premier, you, your Attorney General and your Solicitor General have on an almost weekly basis proclaimed your and your government's support for victims here in the province of Ontario. One of the problems that Ms Baranovski had is that the process with the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board is an incredibly bureaucratic one and she went there on her own. Joe Wamback, who is known to all of us, who lives in his own hell because of the serious and violent attack on his own son, came to her aid.

Premier, will you ensure that Ms Baranovski has access to the legal assistance that appears to be necessary for her or other victims of crime to access compensation through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board? Will you guarantee that she will have representation that will allow her to effect the appeal that you just spoke of?

Hon Mr Harris: I would be pleased to look into whether that is something that is appropriate in dealing with a quasi-judicial body. As you know, I cannot guarantee success of outcomes. But you have expressed an interest in the case. You're a lawyer. You have more time than I. I might volunteer you, with my blessing, to go and represent Ms Baranovski. If you're not willing to do that, I may be able to get another lawyer to do so. If that's your suggestion, I'll see if it's appropriate and see what I can do.

1500

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. You have been working with our community with respect to children's mental health issues for some time. You have travelled to our community and met with the folks at Maryvale. Your government provided an additional \$1.8 million of funding with respect to these questions.

In the gallery today I am joined by George and Joanne Johnson and Jack and Shirley Haines, who have headed up the local Kids Campaign.

Minister, in spite of these actions and in spite of your attention to the issue, the waiting list for children's mental health services in our community not only has not decreased, it in fact has gone up. I wonder if you would take an opportunity to explain to our community what

steps you plan to take to help deal with a list of 800 children who are waiting for children's mental health services in our community.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Providing supports to children in Ontario is an incredible priority. I recognize, as minister, the challenges they're facing in Windsor-Essex with respect to the provision of children's mental health services.

I have taken a significant personal interest in the file. I have met on a good number of occasions—I visited Maryvale, the children's mental health centre in his home community, not three or four weeks ago. I had the opportunity to sit down with officials at Maryvale to work with them on some potential solutions. They presented me with four particular options with which I could work with my colleague the Minister of Health, and I have certainly committed, before Christmas, to close the loop on that and to try to find a way we can help address some of the important challenges that are facing the Windsor-Essex community.

Mr Duncan: Minister, I am aware of your efforts to date, as is our community.

I'm going to present to you today 6,566 letters that have accumulated in our community in the last 30 days.

Minister, let me remind you, this waiting list, first of all, is an unduplicated waiting list. The Johnsons, the Haineses and others like them have confirmed that there are no duplications. These are 800 unique individuals with families. Not only are they on waiting lists, but that's a waiting list just for an assessment—an assessment for special schooling, for counselling services, for daycare, for respite care, for residential alternatives.

I'm aware of your efforts on behalf of Maryvale. I'm aware of the challenge. But some six years ago we had more than 100 beds of this nature in our community. Today there are 37.

Minister, can you please give us some assurance that you will again involve yourself to help deal with this crisis: 800 families waiting for an assessment, waiting 18 to 24 months? I don't believe that you think that's acceptable. We certainly don't. What can you say to our community and the 6,500 people who have sent letters here today to reassure them that we're going to deal with this crisis?

Hon Mr Baird: I can assure the member opposite that I'm going to continue to work in the coming days and weeks on this important challenge. We've made some good success, we've had some good progress, and at last we're dealing with some of the challenges facing not just Maryvale but the Hotel Dieu hospital. In working with the community, I certainly am impressed with the whole host of community agencies and leaders, whether it's the police chief, whether it's the CAW retirees' union, who have indicated their strong support.

I would also indicate that Gloria Mitchell, the executive director of Child's Place, said last year, "I would like to express my appreciation for your exceptional respon-

siveness to the dire need of adolescent crisis services in Windsor-Essex county. After many years of feeling that children's mental health is a second-class service, it is heartening to see that the mental health needs of our children are gaining attention." That's very much the kind of approach we're going to continue to take, and I look forward to resolving the issue.

ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question today is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Last week in this House a member opposite made certain claims during members' statements that caused me great concern. The suggestion from the opposition benches was about the integration of foreign-trained professionals into Ontario's economy. The statement suggested that the government of Ontario has kept the doors closed when new Ontarians arrive looking for work in their chosen field.

Minister, as you know, immigration is of vital importance to Ontario's economy and particularly important to my riding of Scarborough Centre. I'd like to know what actions our government is taking to help new Ontarians find work in their field of expertise and study. Are we as a government simply studying this issue or are we taking positive steps in an effort to help resolve this serious situation?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the opportunity, not only to respond to my colleague from Scarborough Centre's question, but to remind the House of the actions the government is taking to solve this critical issue for Ontario's economy and to improve and value the quality of the working life of our immigrants.

Where past Liberal governments spent valuable resources studying the issue and the NDP set up some temporary projects, we have taken serious action on this issue. Having new Ontarians recognized for their skills is very important, but it's also very difficult for them. One of the projects we were very happy to launch just about a month ago is called a bridging program. It was actually in Scarborough at the Yee Hong seniors' centre. That's where the nurses themselves took the opportunity through their Care for Nurses program to help each other, and especially help immigrant nurses, to get the qualifications they need to be certified.

There is about \$12 million over three years to help foreign-trained individuals quickly employ their skills. This is just one of the projects we're so very proud of.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that, Minister. I appreciate the answer. It's particularly encouraging to see that Ontario is indeed taking concrete steps to ensure that new citizens can employ their skills as quickly as possible.

Minister, I agree with you and would suggest that this issue is much broader than simply integrating new Canadians into Ontario socially, but ensuring that we can

promote economic integration as well. I know you've worked hard over the past several years to secure a labour market development agreement with the federal government, and recognize that they are completely unwilling to enter into such an agreement. I also recognize how critically important such an agreement would be to help the Ontario economy, and the skills shortage specifically.

Minister, I don't believe that Ontario is alone in this process. The federal Liberal government has a responsibility for immigration, and I am curious to know exactly what they are doing to help ease that transition for new Ontarians.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: This labour market development agreement, which has been signed with every province and territory, including Nunavut, which wasn't even a territory when we started our negotiations with the federal government, is in a sense a shame, I think, for the lack of a good working relationship between the federal government and the province of Ontario in this regard.

The federal government made us an offer in May which we accepted and still they lag behind with no reason for not signing the agreement. Just to let the members opposite know, they could take the time to find out what this agreement is all about, but they don't do that. They just sit there like bumps on a log while immigrants are having difficulty getting jobs, people on employment insurance don't get timely results and, worst of all, this is a time when we need to work together as governments. We have a critical skills shortage. I do want that labour market development agreement signed and I will continue—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

1510

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It is my understanding that discussions have been held between your staff and officials of the Hamilton Health Sciences Centre regarding the redevelopment of the Henderson hospital. This needed redevelopment is necessary to meet the demands on the hospital that will arise from the significant expansion of the Hamilton Regional Cancer Centre. Hospital officials have publicly stated that in the initial discussions, ministry staff have proposed that such a project would be subject to a 50-50 sharing in the project cost between the province and the local community.

Why should this project not be subject to the same 70-30 sharing as is the case for the expansion of the Credit Valley Hospital in your own riding, or as is the case for the Grand River Hospital in the riding of the previous health minister? Both hospital projects are required because of the development of cancer centres, as is the case in Hamilton. Minister, would you consider the same 70-30 sharing for the Henderson hospital?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the honourable member may be aware, there are certain rules in place for the commission-directed recapitalization of our hospitals and our regional cancer centres, which are directed by the Health Services Restructuring Commission. They follow a certain set of rules. It is a richer set of rules because they are determined by population needs and by the restructuring orders that were directed—legal directions by the Ministry of Health—as a result of the HSRC directions. That is a set of rules for that particular function.

I would be happy to work with the community if there is a problem because they are outside the HSRC directions. There are lots of ways we can work together in partnership with the private sector and philanthropists as well as the public sector to make these things occur.

Mrs Bountrogianni: The Henderson hospital has not been updated since 1964. The restructuring commission was aware that upgrades were and are needed. Cuts to health care by this government have meant that hospitals have been operating for years without enough in their budgets for capital upgrades.

It should also be noted that the Honourable Brad Clark posed the same question recently when interviewed by the Hamilton Spectator:

“I have some questions that I will have to raise with the Minister of Health with regard to the Henderson.’ ... He said a 70-30 split would be more appropriate for the Henderson.

“It was a government decision to maintain the Henderson hospital, so putting that additional burden on the community is a concern to me.”

That was the Honourable Brad Clark, Tuesday, November 6.

The fact that municipalities are forced to consider levies to support health care speaks volumes of the disastrous cumulative effects of provincial downloading on municipalities and taxpayers. When will this government make the tough decision to stop another \$2.2 billion in tax breaks for corporations and put health care first?

Hon Mr Clement: She actually ruined a perfectly good question by continuing the line about how the Liberals are against every single tax cut in the life of this Parliament, and in the life of the previous Parliament. That’s their record. We know they’re against tax cuts. They voted against every single one. They are against jobs and opportunity and new prosperity for Ontario. They keep underlining it. They keep bringing attention to it. If they want to spend their time doing that, that’s fine. On this side of the House, we are for tax cuts. We are for, so far, \$6 billion worth of tax cuts, creating \$14 billion worth of taxable economic activity. That’s our record.

Of that amount, I can tell you that the lion’s share went into the provision of health care, which is not the case with their federal Liberal kissing cousins, where they have not been living up to the expectations of the people of Ontario and Canada. They have not been putting the money back into health care. They don’t seem

to care that our health care system is under threat by their—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister’s time is up.

MINING PROGRAMS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question today is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I know my constituents are concerned about our environment and the balance between our natural heritage and economic prosperity. They want to know what we’ve done to ensure that balance is maintained. They want to hear about the specific actions we’ve taken to ensure public safety and environmental and economic prosperity. As the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, what have you done in mining to ensure that economic and environmental prosperity are maintained?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I thank the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka for his excellent question. In 1999 our government announced our unprecedented commitment of \$27 million for the province’s abandoned mine program. The Liberals, when they were in office, never had an abandoned mine program, and they clearly failed to recognize that eventually production cycles end. When the NDP were in government, they spent more in administration than they actually did on rehabilitation field work. We’re spending more on the Kam Kotia site cleanup alone than they spent on the entire program. This commitment means that we can ensure these sites are secured from hazards and that these sites return to their natural beauty or productivity for the enjoyment of future generations.

We want prosperity for all Ontarians, if prosperity means we can enjoy the benefits of mining jobs and ensure that we rehabilitate crown lands for the benefit of generations to come.

Mr Miller: Thank you for that answer, Minister. I recently read an editorial in the Northern Daily News suggesting the government should assist residents at the Toburn mine site. The editorial suggests we should provide assistance in terms of finding alternate accommodation and alert the public to the hazards on-site. Minister, what have you done to ensure the public is protected and residents are not displaced?

Hon Mr Newman: It was as a result of the abandoned mines program that we became aware of the potential hazards at the abandoned Toburn mine site. This is a program that is the most extensive and the envy of the rest of Canada. In fact, my ministry staff have been working in co-operation with staff from the Ministry of Natural Resources to ensure the residents of the area are protected. Yesterday, we held a meeting with the public and the affected residents and assured them once again that we will work with them to find interim and long-term accommodations. As well, my ministry has spent over \$400,000 rehabilitating this single site to date, and

we will continue to ensure there are proper fences and protection from potential hazards on the site.

Our government should be very proud of our unprecedented \$27-million investment in restoring abandoned mines to productive use. I assure you that my ministry staff are working with the communities to address their concerns at the Toburn mine site.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Premier: Henry Redekopp, Gary Ferrier and Erich Schulz went to work in August 2000, but they didn't come home, because, you see, they were killed in the workplace. Unlike most other workers in this province, these three workers didn't have any of the protection that would be accorded by occupational health and safety legislation. The reason why is because your government doesn't believe agricultural workers, farm workers, deserve protection under occupational health and safety legislation. As well, the coroner's jury has recommended that farm workers be among those workers in Ontario who receive the protection of occupational health and safety legislation. Will you explain why you think farm workers don't deserve that protection, or will you tell us today that you're going to respond to the coroner's jury recommendations and in fact table those responses before the House rises at Christmas?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of Labour can respond.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): We take any inquiry, and results from any inquiry, very seriously. We'll be reviewing the recommendations with the idea of looking at them to implement the ones we consider appropriate.

Although they aren't covered specifically under that part of the act, they are covered by the FSA, the Farm Safety Association. Leaving the impression that they are not covered under some program is a false assumption; they are. It's a different approach. It's funded by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. In fact, they report to them and directly through the Ministry of Labour.

The rationale, obviously, is that farming is a very different approach. It has different needs and very specific problems within that industry that are very different from other workplaces. Yes, we will look at the recommendations and review them very carefully. But don't leave the impression they're not covered; they are covered under the FSA, and that body is effectively working very hard to ensure safe workplaces at agricultural workplaces in Ontario.

VISITORS

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to welcome to this wonderful Legislative Assembly

Joanne McNamara, Janice Palmer and Jeff Fitzpatrick, who are constituents of my riding of London North Centre.

PETITIONS

HOME CARE

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there have been major cutbacks in hospital services over the past few years; and

"Whereas although this government said that the effect of these cutbacks would be addressed by increased home care; and

"Whereas home care budgets have not been increased but have instead been frozen without the promised expansion of services; and

"Whereas frail and vulnerable seniors and their caregivers have been critically affected by the effects of this inadequate system,

"The Legislative Assembly is urged to immediately implement the required home care services to seniors.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The full range of home care services must be available at a level that provides homemaking, personal assistance and care, rehabilitation, and preventive supports to seniors living in their own or their relatives' homes, in seniors' housing and in retirement facilities so that, as far as possible, seniors do not require either acute care or long-term services."

This has to be done immediately. I affix my signature to this petition as well.

1520

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Criminal Code of Canada considers animal cruelty to be a property offence; and

"Whereas those who commit crimes against animals currently face light sentences upon conviction; and

"Whereas those who operate puppy mills should, upon conviction, face sentences that are appropriate for the torture and inhumane treatment they have inflicted on puppies under their so-called care;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario provincial government petition the federal government to move forward with amendments to the cruelty-to-animal provisions in the Criminal Code as soon as possible."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Because we, the undersigned, believe in our responsibility as teachers to maintain a high degree of professionalism; and

“Because such professionalism is best served when professional learning is self-directed and based on teacher need, improves professional skills, improves student learning, is based on best-practice accountability and is funded by the appropriate educational authority; and

“Because we oppose the government’s teacher testing program and the College of Teachers’ professional learning program because they do not meet the objectives of effective professional learning,

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request that you repeal all clauses and references to professional learning from the Stability and Excellence in Education Act, 2001.”

I affix my signature to this.

LONDON HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the London Health Sciences Centre is a world-class academic health sciences centre serving people throughout southwestern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Health has forced the London Health Sciences Centre to find \$17 million in annual savings by 2005; and

“Whereas the London Health Sciences Centre has agreed to cut 18 programs in order to satisfy directions from the ... Ministry of Health; and

“Whereas these cuts will put the health of the people of southwestern Ontario, and particularly children, at risk; and

“Whereas these cuts will diminish the London Health Sciences Centre’s standing as a regional health care resource; and

“Whereas these cuts will worsen the continuing physician shortages in the region;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Mike Harris government take immediate action to ensure that these important health services are maintained so that the health and safety of people throughout southwestern Ontario,” such as Stratford, Kitchener, London, St Thomas and Woodstock, “are not put at risk.”

This signature contains the names of over 1,000 individuals. I have affixed my signature hereto in full support.

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots;

“Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999, effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

“Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money and awareness;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We ask that the government of Ontario amend provincial legislation by passing Bill 26, the Charity Fund-Raising Activities Act, 2001, to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots.”

In support, I affix my signature.

LONDON HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the London Health Sciences Centre is a world-class academic health sciences centre serving people throughout southwestern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Health has forced the London Health Sciences Centre to find \$17 million in annual savings by 2005; and

“Whereas the London Health Sciences Centre has agreed to cut 18 programs in order to satisfy directions from the provincial Ministry of Health; and

“Whereas these cuts will put the health of the people of southwestern Ontario, and particularly children, at risk; and

“Whereas these cuts will diminish the London Health Sciences Centre’s standing as a regional health care resource; and

“Whereas these cuts will worsen the continuing physician shortages in the region;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government take immediate action to ensure these important health services are maintained so that the health and safety of people throughout southwestern Ontario are not put at risk.”

I have affixed my signature.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Harris government’s rigid education funding formula is forcing the potential closure of neighbourhood schools such as Consolidated, Dalewood, Lakebreeze, Maplewood and Victoria in the city of St Catharines, and has centralized control for education

spending and decision-making at Queen's Park, and will not allow communities the flexibility to respond to local needs;

"Whereas chronic underfunding and an inflexible funding formula are strangling the system and students are suffering the consequences;

"Whereas there is evidence that larger schools do not automatically translate into cost-effectiveness;

"Whereas smaller, neighbourhood schools have lower incidences of negative social behaviour, much greater and more varied student participation in extracurricular activities, higher attendance rates and lower dropout rates, and foster strong interpersonal relationships;

"Whereas small neighbourhood schools in local communities, both rural and urban, serve as important meeting areas for neighbourhood organizations which help bring individuals together and strengthen neighbourhood ties and the current funding formula does not recognize community use of these schools,

"Be it resolved that the Harris government immediately reconfigure their unyielding funding formula to restore flexibility to local school boards and their communities which will allow neighbourhood schools in our province to remain open."

I affix my signature. I'm in agreement.

HOME CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition signed by a number of residents from my community.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and request a withdrawal of Bill 130, Community Care Access Corporations Act, 2001, introduced by the associate minister of health with responsibilities for long-term care, the Honourable Helen Johns;

"Bill 130 will eliminate community volunteer membership in local access centres, fire the CEOs, fire the volunteer officers and members of the boards of directors. The cabinet will appoint a CEO, the directors and the officers of the local access centres, who will be paid by the taxpayers if they are no longer volunteers;

"We urge the government to withdraw Bill 130, initiate public consultations with the stakeholders that are transparent and accessible and to review the issues of the current delivery of home care and options to improve the current system."

I hereby present the petition. I've signed it because I agree with it.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have literally hundreds of signatures on this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the need for home care services is rapidly growing in Ontario due to the aging of the population and hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the prices paid by community care access centres (CCACs) to purchase home care services for their clients are rising due to factors beyond their control; and

"Whereas the funding provided by the Ontario government through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) is inadequate to meet the growing need for home care services; and

"Whereas the funding shortfall, coupled with the implications of Bill 46, the Public Sector Accountability Act, currently before the Legislature, are forcing CCACs to make deep cuts in home care services without any policy direction from the provincial government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to take control of policy setting for home care services through rational, population-based health planning rather than simply by underfunding the system; and

"(2) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to provide sufficient funding to CCACs to support the home care services that are the mandate of CCACs in the volumes needed to meet their communities' rapidly growing needs; and

"(3) That the Legislative Assembly make it necessary for the provincial government to notify the agencies it funds of the amount of funding they will be given by the government in a fiscal year at least three months before the commencement of this fiscal year."

I agree with these petitions and I'm happy to affix my signature.

1530

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I have a petition here from concerned citizens of Victoria county.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the citizens of Victoria county had no direct say in the creation of the new city of Kawartha Lakes; and

"Whereas the government by regulation and legislation forced the recent amalgamation, against the will of the obvious majority of the people; and

"Whereas the government has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local government, nor the provision of better services at reduced costs; and

"Whereas the promise of tax decreases has not been met, based on current assessments; and

"Whereas the expected transition costs to area taxpayers of this forced amalgamation have already exceeded the promised amount by over three times,

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario immediately rescind this forced amalgamation order and return our local municipal government back to the local citizens and their democratically elected officials in Victoria county and remove the bureaucratic, dictatorial, single-tier governance it has coerced on all local residents."

I also sign my signature.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): This is a petition to shut down puppy mills and to stop cruel animal breeding activities by passing MPP Mike Colle's private member's bill.

"To the provincial Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas puppy mills and other cruel animal breeding activities are unregulated and unlicensed in the province of Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario SPCA needs more power to inspect and control animal kennels or breeders;

"Whereas Ontario consumers have no way of knowing if the animals they purchase as pets have been abused;

"Whereas there are no provincial penalties to punish people guilty of abusing animals that are bred and sold to unsuspecting consumers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario pass legislation that outlaws puppy mills and other cruel animal breeding activities in this province and that strengthens the powers of the Ontario SPCA to establish a provincial registry of kennels and breeders subject to SPCA inspection, and to allow the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to impose fines and jail terms on those found guilty of perpetrating cruelty to animals for the purpose of selling these animals to an unsuspecting public."

I happily add my signature to this petition.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): "Whereas puppy mills and other cruel animal breeding activities are unregulated and unlicensed in the province of Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario SPCA needs more power to inspect and control animal kennels or breeders;

"Whereas Ontario consumers have no way of knowing if the animals they purchase as pets have been abused;

"Whereas there are no provincial penalties to punish people guilty of abusing animals that are bred and sold to unsuspecting consumers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario pass legislation that outlaws puppy mills and other cruel animal breeding activities and that strengthens the powers of the Ontario SPCA to establish a provincial registry of kennels and breeders subject to SPCA inspection, and to allow the SPCA to impose fines and jail terms on those found guilty of perpetrating cruelty to animals for the purpose of selling these animals to an unsuspecting public."

We're asking that individuals support Mike Colle's private member's bill. I'm in full agreement and have signed my signature hereto.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 127, An Act to implement measures contained in the Budget and to implement other initiatives of the Government, when Bill 127 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered for third reading; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 28(h), no deferral of the second reading vote may be permitted; and

That, the order for third reading is called immediately; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, the remainder of the sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, to be divided equally among all recognized parties, and at the end of that time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "deferred votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to the proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Baird moves government notice of motion 97. Debate.

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the member for London West to be the first government speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Baird has asked for unanimous consent that Mr Wood be the first leadoff speaker. Is there consent? It is agreed.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I would like to thank the members for their indulgence in indulging my schedule. I will do my best to not disappoint the members in my speech. I do support the motion, because I think this is a good bill, and I'd like to explain why I think it's a good bill. The reason I think it's a good bill is that it is another step toward the implementation of sound fiscal policy for this province.

Sound fiscal policy, to me, is to cut taxes to create jobs, to balance the budget and to keep it balanced in accordance with our balanced budget legislation, and at the same time to meet the need for priority spending in those areas that truly need it, by which I mean health, education and public safety.

I would suggest that for such a strategy to be successful, it has to be long-term and it has to be consistent. As

we look at the historical record of the last 20 or so years, we can see what works and what doesn't.

In the first half of the 1980s, we had, in essence, spending restraint and a moderate deficit. That policy wasn't disastrous, but it was not perfect either.

In 1985, we switched to a policy of taxing and spending. The Liberals and the NDP entered into an accord in 1985 in order that the Liberals could take power, and they agreed upon certain aspects of a political program. Basically in fiscal terms what that program amounted to was a tax-and-spend policy. The Liberals raised the debt by one third in five years, and of course they raised taxes 60-plus times.

The NDP, from 1990 to 1995, in essence followed the same policy. They, however, were following that policy in bad economic times. They, in that time period, continued to increase taxes, the debt more than doubled over a five-year period, and of course the results were there for everyone to see at the end of that five-year period. The results were the worst economic performance of this province since the first half of the Great Depression of the 1930s. We actually had a net loss of 10,000 jobs over that five-year period.

In 1995, of course, we saw a different approach: we saw the approach of tax cuts and spending restraint and the results, which were economic growth and a balanced budget.

It does bear comment that it does make a big difference to the people of this province what the fiscal policy of our provincial government is. It's important to remember that the American recovery started in 1992. The United States started to do much better in 1992. We have to remember that, at the same time, we had extraordinarily weak economic performance throughout the 1990s until 1997. I would suggest to you that the reason for that was that the policies of our provincial government were holding back what our citizens were able to do.

1540

In the last four years, of course, our growth rate has exceeded that of the United States. We have been leading the United States in the last four years. I would suggest the reason for all of that, the reason we have seen such positive results for the people of this province—and we've seen that in human terms, of course. We have seen the 800,000-plus net new jobs, 800,000 lives given opportunity and hope and the ability to fulfill their dreams. We have seen the very positive result of some 600,000 people being able to leave the dependence of social assistance and achieve independence. I would suggest that those results relate directly to positive fiscal policy for our province.

Having offered an outline of why I think the overall policy is good, I would like to talk a bit about some of the specifics we have in the bill. One specific of course is that we are accelerating the tax cuts that we have proposed. Many indeed are opposed to that. The Liberal opposition is opposed to tax cuts generally. They have voted against virtually every tax cut we have proposed to

this House since we took office in 1995. Their policy seems to be still wedded—except at election time, when they're more favourable toward tax cuts—to their old tax-and-spend ways. Certainly from 1985 to 1990 they proved that they were indeed wedded to that policy.

I would suggest, however, that accelerating tax cuts at a time of economic slowdown is indeed good public policy, and that, of course, is why I support the acceleration of the tax cuts in this bill. Most members will be familiar with the details, so I'm not going to talk too much about the details of the accelerated tax cuts other than to say that this is part of sound fiscal policy. This is not anything more than pursuing an agenda of investment and jobs for the people of this province. Some would cast it in a different light, and I think they're quite wrong.

I would just say to our friends in the opposition, who have been quite critical of our economic policies for the last six and a half years, that you have to look at the results and look at the very positive benefits these policies have brought to so many people in this province. I would remind you that economic progress and economic good news are not automatic. They were doing well in the United States in the mid-1990s, when we weren't. There was a reason for that; the reason, I would suggest to the House, was that our economic policies weren't sound ones.

I'd also like to refer briefly to the repatriation of GO Transit. The matter of GO Transit ultimately has to be looked at as a regional problem rather than a problem of a particular municipality. I think what we're doing in the area of GO Transit is going to make a difference for the better for the people of the greater Toronto area and, in some respects, for the people of the province as a whole. The change is going to give them the opportunity to invest a further \$100 million in local and regional transit priorities. This is of course only part of a more overall strategy of more effective transit in the greater Toronto area and in the province generally, and I think it's very much a step forward.

I'd also like to touch very briefly on the further support that's being offered for small- and medium-sized businesses. We tend to forget how important those businesses are to our province as a whole. They create large numbers of jobs every year. The creations are in relatively small amounts individually, but they're very big amounts collectively. The fact that this budget bill helps them and recognizes them is a very important signal to send. It's also going to bring important dividends for the people of Ontario.

We are also accelerating the application of the small business income tax rate. We can talk about the details of that, and maybe I should briefly allude to them. Currently the rate is 6.5% and applies to the first \$240,000 of income. This bill proposes to accelerate a reduction from 6.5% to 6% and raise the eligibility threshold from \$240,000 to \$280,000, effective October 1, 2001.

This is of course going to give help to individual small businesses, but I think the more important part of this is that it's going to send a signal to small business that the

government of Ontario and the people of Ontario are behind what they do, and we're going to offer some material help. Good wishes in any circumstance are not enough. We also have to come forward with some tangible help that's going to make a material difference for the small business people of our province. I think this bill is an important step in that direction.

In this bill we also have simplifying tax filing procedures for small businesses. Currently, corporations are required to pay monthly corporate tax instalments if annual tax payable in the current or preceding year is \$2,000 or more. The proposal in this bill is going to simplify this. In the 2001 budget, we proposed to reduce red tape for Ontario's small businesses by allowing businesses with corporate tax payable of at least \$2,000 and less than \$10,000 to remit tax instalments quarterly instead of monthly. This change would apply to taxation years commencing in 2002.

This may seem like a relatively small thing, particularly to those who are not involved in small business. In actual fact, it's part of a much larger picture. I'd like to remind the House and remind the people of Ontario that while tax policy is very important in attracting investment and jobs, so is good regulatory policy. Good regulatory policy means reducing red tape and offering the most effective and efficient regulation possible. That, by the way, does not mean reducing the effectiveness of regulation. It actually means increasing the effectiveness of regulation.

The changes we are making are not going to in any way weaken the ability of the Ministry of Finance to collect taxes, but what they are going to do is introduce an efficiency for small business. To send a message that we're on the side of our investors and our business people, when it comes to the matter of red tape and good regulation, is a very important signal to send.

Red tape reduction is a bit like a diet. Once you get off the diet, you start to get back to your old problem. It's the same thing with red tape reduction and good regulation. As soon as you stop striving to improve the effectiveness of your regulation and the efficiency of the regulation, you're going to get into problems.

Other jurisdictions understand that very well. There are red-tape-type commissions throughout the world, all of whom are looking for ways to increase regulatory effectiveness and reduce red tape in their jurisdiction. If we're not able to say to investors who are considering Ontario as a place to invest that we're ahead of the curve, that we are there to make sure their concerns are heard and that they're going to have good regulation and responsiveness to problems, that's going to be a very negative signal to send to potential investors.

I would like to applaud that particular aspect as being part of an ongoing process which I think has paid great dividends. There have been billions of dollars invested in this province and 800,000-plus net new jobs created. One of the important reasons is that investors and business people understand that we are sensitive to the need for good regulation and red tape reduction.

The extension of the deadline for registering new community small business investment funds for another year, from December 31, 2001, to December 31, 2002, is of course another positive signal sent to small business.

Restoring support for research and development is also an important signal to send. One of Ontario's most important tax-based initiatives for research and development is the super allowance, which provides over \$100 million in benefits to research and development performing firms. The federal government, in its 2000 budget, stated that provincial deductions for research and development in excess of actual expenditures would be treated as taxable government assistance. We made our opposition to this measure clear. We do not believe in eroding support for research and development in Ontario. In order to maintain support for research and development and to respond to the 2000 federal budget, which raises the cost of research and development in this province, our 2001 budget proposed to suspend the R&D super allowance and allow corporations to exclude the federal R&D tax credit from Ontario taxable income. Ontario's proposed action would restore research and development tax benefits for most firms to their level before the federal budget.

All that sounds like a tax lawyer talking, and I'm not a tax lawyer. What that really means is that we are sensitive to the needs and concerns of innovative businesses in this province.

I said I would try and get to the point and offer something useful in this debate and I hope I have done that. On that note, I'd like to thank the members again for their indulgence and conclude my remarks on what I think is a good motion.

1550

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Here we go again with time allocation shutting down debate in this Legislature. We saw the criticism yesterday levelled at the federal government for their move for time allocation, but it's unprecedented in the history of this province the number of times this government has shut down good, legitimate debate in this Legislature and rammed legislation through. We see it over and over again. I think it's a really sad day.

Let's look at what's not in Bill 127. What wasn't in Bill 127 were the words "agriculture" and "farmer." This government has abandoned the agricultural community in this province. You're not standing up for the farmers of this province. Not once did we hear the word "agriculture" or "farmer" come out of the finance minister's mouth. I think that's a real shame.

The farmers of Ontario are waiting to hear the minister come forward and let them know what he's going to be doing in the area of safety nets. But what do we hear from the minister? We hear that he's been given the green light from cabinet to negotiate. We thought he had that green light last spring when he was working toward the development of his made-in-Ontario safety net solution. But no mention of dollars for the farmers of this

province was in this motion put in front of us. That's a real shame.

While we're talking about farmers, I would ask you on the other side, those of you who represent dairy farmers, to ask your dairy farmers what they think right now of Bill 87, the Food Safety and Quality Act and the repeal of the Edible Oils Act. Ask what that's going to do to the dairy farmers of this province. I hope the dairy farmers are calling on you and telling you what this repeal is going to do. That's a real shameful move by this government because you didn't have the guts to consult with the dairy farmers of Ontario. You went and consulted with the soybean growers but you didn't talk to the dairy farmers. So talk to your dairy farmers and find out what they think about that.

Another issue that needs to be addressed by the Minister of Agriculture is Imperial Tobacco and what they are up to right now. Imperial Tobacco is playing a very dangerous game with the tobacco farmers of this province. They've just put up their own Web site today and in that Web site Imperial Tobacco is talking about how they're going to respect and honour the tobacco marketing board. But do you know what they want to do? They want to direct-contract their purchase of tobacco from farmers. That secrecy that exists within the marketing board right now is going to disappear because Imperial Tobacco is not playing by the rules. I'm asking the Minister of Agriculture to stand up today in support of the tobacco farmers in this province and not abandon them.

Another issue that wasn't addressed was the London Health Sciences Centre. We've seen what's going on in London right now, where this government, this Ministry of Health, is forcing the London Health Sciences Centre to cut a wide variety of programs. Some of those programs need to be seriously reviewed, and this government stands back. The government members have been silent in allowing these cuts to take place, but these cuts are putting at risk the lives of families and children in southwestern Ontario.

It's extremely irresponsible what this government is allowing to take place in London. I would ask the London members, and actually all those members from southwestern Ontario, to stand up and get behind the London Health Sciences Centre and not allow these cuts to take place. It's like a house of cards. What we're seeing right now with the paediatric cardiology program being cancelled is like a house of cards: when you pull that one card out, the whole program starts to fall in. But this government is just allowing this to happen. It's a real shame to see this happen.

Today too we had the fire departments here, and we thanked them for the wonderful things they've done, but you can see how this government plays games with those who are looking after people's lives in this province. They stand up and they implement programs to hire new police officers and they offer to pay municipalities 50% of the costs. But do you know what's happening in municipalities all across this province, including my own

riding? The fire marshal of this province has stepped in and said that the St Thomas fire service is understaffed. The St Thomas fire service now has to hire 12 additional firefighters, and Woodstock and Stratford are going to end up having to do the same thing. Why doesn't the government come forward with a program very similar to what you did with the police services? Why don't you stand behind the fire services in this province, come forward and get behind what municipalities are going to have to do with fire services in this province?

It's really sad that we're seeing this debate shut down because it happens over and over again. We know what's going on. We know what the agenda is on the other side. They want to get out of here as quickly as they can. They want to skedaddle out of here because they don't want to address the real issues that Ontarians want to see addressed in this Legislature. They want to get out of here as quickly as they can, get behind their leadership candidates and get into that, but not address the serious issues that face Ontarians today. I think that's a real shame and, more importantly, it's a shame how you've let down the farmers of this province.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It's Wednesday afternoon so it must be a time allocation motion.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Oh, yes. How did you know that?

Mr Martin: When it's a time allocation motion, I know it's Wednesday afternoon because that's always been the pattern here on Wednesday afternoon for as long as I can remember. The member from Nickel Belt and I sit here—today it's the member from Timmins-James Bay—and we know that when we come here on Wednesday afternoon, we're going to be debating another time allocation motion. That's the way this government governs. There's no more respect for, interest in or commitment to process, dialogue, taking things out to the public and hearing what they have to say and making sure the things we pass in this place are in fact in the public interest. We know this government has an agenda and we know they're going to implement that agenda because they said so and they have, regardless of the effect it's going to have on the people we're all elected to serve.

So here we are again. It's Wednesday afternoon and we have another time allocation motion which basically says we'll spend today on the time allocation motion and we'll talk a bit about the bill and what it's going to or not going to do. It will then go from here to another session—an afternoon for a couple of hours, perhaps an evening for another couple hours if we're lucky and we'll run out the clock on that. Each of us, perhaps a couple of speakers, will have an opportunity for 10 or 20 minutes to put on the record what we feel about these very important pieces of public business. Then the debate will be virtually shut down and we'll move it to some usually very limited public hearings in this place while the House is sitting, with absolutely no possibility of travel. I'll talk in a second about the Ontarians With Disabilities Act, where in fact there is some travel. But it's so quick, so

limited and so inaccessible as to actually be funny if it wasn't so sad.

Then we bring it back to this place after the public consultation. It's very orchestrated, very well organized and very controlled by the government. We bring it back in here for third reading, which is a time when, after we've gone out to the public and we've had a chance to debate amendments, perhaps—although these days, unless the government brings forward the amendments, they're usually not entertained, accepted or shown any interest. But if there's an amendment or two brought forward in some instances by the public out there—when they take a look at these pieces of public business and assess how it might impact them and their community, they bring forward suggested changes so that we might adopt some amendments.

We come back here for third reading, and the full extent of that very important piece of the legislative process that we call third reading usually, by way of these bills, lasts, again, one sitting day, which on a day like today starts anywhere between 3:30 and 4 o'clock and goes till 6 o'clock. So we're talking two hours, maybe two hours and 15 minutes. You divide that up by three parties, who should have some significant things to say after having travelled the province, perhaps—although we don't do much of that these days—and after having heard from the public in some limited way, after having listened to what the government is going to do by way of change or amendment and response to that input, I'd say we have about 40 minutes per caucus. If you have three or four members who are interested in speaking to that subject and you break that down, you're talking—what?—about 15 minutes per person, if you're lucky, to do that. It doesn't give one much time to give input, to have some role in, to participate in the very important work we do under the aegis of developing public policy, of putting in place the rules and regulations that we all live by in this province as we attempt to do our work, live, socialize, recreate, get ourselves educated, perhaps access the health care system. It doesn't give us a whole lot of time to participate in that very important process.

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This government very early in its mandate changed the rules such that they in fact can do that. They could actually bring a bill in here on a Monday, time-allocate it by Tuesday or Wednesday and, the way they time-allocate, have that bill passed through this place by Thursday. So in a week—

Hon Mr Baird: No way. Impossible.

Mr Martin: You could. We've spoken about this at least half a dozen times in this place. You could do that, and this government has in fact done it.

I don't think that's in any of our best interests. I think it's a misuse of an institution that was established hundreds of years ago so that governments that come here in a hurry, in their haste to implement their agenda, cannot in fact do that, cannot take the public for granted in that way, cannot take the opposition, which are a very important part of any accountable, responsible and good gov-

ernment, for granted and not allow them the full participation that I think those who designed the Constitution and the parliamentary system that we all participate in and give at least word-of-mouth support to allowed for.

Here we are again, and it goes on and on. Some out there who have listened to me on Wednesday afternoon will know that I make the same argument and say a lot of the same things each time I get up here. For example, last week they time-allocated the bill concerning Ontarians with disabilities, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I said that we have 1.6 million disabled Ontario citizens, not Canada-wide here, waiting for this bill. They've waited for over six years. This government, when it first came to power, just systematically rubbed its hand across the table and wiped out all the legislation that had been put in place by our government between 1990 and 1995 to deal with the question of accessibility and participation of disabled citizens in our communities, in their workplaces, taking advantage of education opportunities and access to the health care system and other things in the province. They've been waiting for over six years, because this government made a promise that it would bring in a strong, effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

They throw up in our face all the time, when we discuss this, that we didn't pass the bill that was brought forward by Gary Malkowski. That's fine; we didn't do that. We did a lot of other things, however, that this government saw as not in their interests to keep in place: the Employment Equity Act. We set up the commission. We did a whole lot of things within the public sector itself, and the Planning Act, so that any new buildings would have to live up to certain requirements and regulations in terms of accessibility. We made sure that people with disabilities were able to access and participate in the education system by funding in a generous way organizations of government like the vocational rehabilitation services of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, which they got rid of; put money into transit: Handi-Cabs. I remember buses bought in my own community that were designed to not only pick up the temporarily abled folks out there but the disabled as well so that disabled people across this province could in very serious and significant and important ways participate in the communities in which they live.

This government came in and just wiped all those out. It promised those people that in doing that, they would bring in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act that would have some teeth, some effect, some ability to make change, and would put their own stamp on this very challenging area of public policy and public life.

But more than six years later, those 1.6 million disabled citizens out there were waiting for this government to live up to their promise. They tabled a bill, the second one they have tabled—the first one was such a joke that it just kind of flew off the table. I think it was one page, and it kind of went like this across the Legislature.

Mr Bisson: Kept on floating off the table.

Mr Martin: That's right. It was such a piece of fluff that even the minister lost her job over it.

But this bill now, hailed with some great flourish by the minister, who went across the province talking to people, making these wonderful promises that he was looking at this and looking at that, and "What about that?" gave everybody the sense that, "Hey, this guy understands. He knows what we're confronting and is, by way of that, probably going to do something here that will have some effect."

Well, we found out not long after he tabled the bill—and some of you will remember the tabling of that bill and what proceeded that that day. He brought in some disabled people, had lunch with them, had a press conference, but nobody had seen the bill yet.

Mr Bisson: I was going to ask. Exactly.

Mr Martin: Yes, nobody had seen the bill yet, so they were all singing the praises.

Mr Bisson: Did he at least pay his bill for lunch?

Mr Martin: I'm not sure whether he paid the bill or not. I'm assuming he probably did in that instance. But he had promised a lot of things as he went around the province and—

The Acting Speaker: Order. The Chair recognizes the chief government whip on a point of order.

Hon R. Gary Stewart (Minister without Portfolio): Mr Speaker, it is my understanding in this House that the speakers go through the Chair rather than having conversations and speaking back and forth.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order. I would ask the member to address his comments through the Chair, please.

Mr Martin: Well, it's just an example of how petty the government members across the way are getting in this place and how sensitive they are to criticism, because they know, and you know, member from Timmins—

The Acting Speaker: The rules of this House are not petty. I'd ask the member to correct himself and address his comments through the Chair.

The Chair recognizes the member for Don Valley East on a point of order.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I too am concerned about the rules of this House. Would you tell me if there is a quorum present to hear this presentation, please?

The Acting Speaker: I don't know, but I will have someone check that for you if you would like.

Would you check and see if there's a quorum present.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: Thank you very much. It's always important, Speaker—and we're talking about process here—that we have people in this place who are participating in the debate, even though in most instances they are talking to each other and not listening, and are writing at their desks. The member who just got up a few minutes ago to challenge me in terms of my conversation

with my colleague sitting beside me here is the only person in the House, other than the Liberal who just got up to call for quorum, who is actually paying attention to anything I have to say here. So it's helpful when somebody brings to your attention the possibility that there aren't enough members in this place to carry out the business of the Legislature.

I was saying, Mr Speaker, that last week we debated another time allocation motion here, and I'm speaking to you now very directly, about the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I was saying that 1.6 million disabled Ontario citizens have been waiting for over six years for this government to bring forward a bill that will be effective in their ordinary, everyday life, a bill that, on the day that it's passed, will make a difference, that these people will recognize as having made a difference.

It was brought in with some great flourish, it was tabled, and then a day later we're debating it for second reading. A couple of days after that, we're debating a time allocation motion which is going to effectively cut down public debate, limit the ability of the public to participate. We were hoping that in this process, particularly with that bill, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the government, after having waited for six years, and the minister obviously being so convinced that this was the thing that was going to do it, would be willing to take the time necessary to do it right and hear from people, if in fact it wasn't going to do the job, what they needed to do by way of changes and amendment to achieve that end.

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Alas, that's not going to happen. Where we thought they might be willing to take January, February and March, when I'm sure we will all have a lot of time on our hands to participate in this public process, to actually go out across the province, to communities in the north, in the south, in the east and in the west, to actually hear from people about this bill, to make sure that the folks that this bill, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Bill 125, is targeted at had all kinds of opportunity; that the provisions necessary to translate or to make sure transportation was available were taken care of in a timely and comfortable fashion so that all those people felt they had adequate and full opportunity to participate if they wanted, to get to the location of the hearings, and then when getting to the hearings to be comfortable that all the assistive devices or translators etc that were necessary were there to help them get their message across, to understand that they were heard and understood by the committee; and that after that was done, that the government would be willing to take the significant time that would be available to them before the House comes back to consider the recommendations that were made, to consider the amendments that were put on the table and to do the right thing in the end and make sure that this was in fact a bill that committed government, that committed the private sector, that committed every citizen of this province to do everything within their power to make sure all citizens were included in the public business and the private business of Ontario in a

way that reflected the value that exists inherently in every single human being who calls Ontario home.

But alas, even in that instance, what we have before us now that we're trying to deal with, and I'll give you an example of how difficult it is, a process that sees us now, having done second reading—as a matter of fact, we didn't even get a chance to have any further debate on second reading for Bill 125. Once we passed the time allocation motion before us last Wednesday, it said right in the bill that the next time that bill was called, it would be voted on immediately, with no further debate, and that we would be out to these very limited and rushed public hearings that are going to see us going to Ottawa on Friday.

This is what I want to bring before you. Because we are going to Ottawa on Friday in such a hurry and because the bill wasn't voted on until Monday, there was a problem, there was a logistical snag in this process. The clerk of the committee, a very hard-working, proficient and excellent member of the staff of this legislative precinct, in her attempt to make sure the people in the Ottawa area knew of this opportunity to come and make comments to Bill 125, was hamstrung by the fact that she could not possibly get an ad into the Ottawa newspapers until Tuesday. If she was going to follow the template we usually use in this place, she would have to make the timeline for people asking to make submissions that Tuesday afternoon so that she could then schedule them and get back to them to tell them they were scheduled and when they were to appear, so that in fact they could be there on Friday.

Imagine: you read about this. You're a disabled person out there in some part of the Ottawa region. You pick up the *Ottawa Citizen*, probably some time Tuesday morning or afternoon. You hear that these hearings are coming to your area. You've been waiting for this bill for six years. You've got a lot to say about it.

First of all, you'd like to get your hands on it, because you've heard about it now by way of this ad in the paper, so that you could have a look at it and prepare something to present. But on top of that, you've now got until 5 o'clock on Tuesday to phone the clerk's office and tell them you want to appear before the committee. You probably suggest to her that she might want to send you a copy of the bill. Once you've done that, once you've got your head around that, you've got to then figure out, "How do I get there? Can I, between Wednesday and Friday morning, arrange for the kind of transportation I need to get me from here to there?"

It's one thing for able-bodied people, or the temporarily able-bodied people in the province, to have a window of about two or three days to look at a bill, assess it, come up with a critique, perhaps some suggested amendments and then organize yourself to get a place at the table at the hearings and then get yourself from home to there in a timely and comfortable fashion. Add to that the added challenge with no Ontarians with Disabilities Act in place, with no provisions provided by this government because they knocked them all off the table in 1995 when

they came to power, to provide you with the support you need to in fact get to these hearings and participate in some meaningful and helpful way. But that's what has happened here.

I haven't even begun to look at the challenges people in northern Ontario are going to have, because they've only got a week too, as they look at the potential for them to either get to Thunder Bay or Sudbury so that they can participate. Imagine somebody in Dubreuilville, Chapleau or Hornepayne—

Mr Bisson: Or even Timmins.

Mr Martin: —or even Timmins—

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Thessalon.

Mr Martin: —or Thessalon, considering these public hearings. I'm particularly talking about the people in the Chapleau-Wawa-Hornepayne area. They're saying, "OK, next week on Thursday the hearings are going to be in Thunder Bay; on Friday they're going to be in Sudbury. Which place should I go?"

Mr Bisson: They're both pretty far from where I come from.

Mr Martin: You're darned right they are. From Chapleau, Wawa or Hornepayne, they're at least seven or eight hours away by car. I don't know if any of you have heard recently, but it's snowing up there. Joe, it started to snow there yesterday, about six inches of snow. We'll all be skiing on the weekend. We're hoping everybody will come.

But imagine the challenge to anybody who's disabled, you know, from Chapleau, Wawa or Hornepayne, trying to get to either Thunder Bay or Sudbury. It's not as easy as one would imagine. You look at that map of Ontario—and we all laugh about this, but it's not funny really. When you see the map of southern Ontario and you say, "OK, there's where everything is," and it looks relatively close. Then you flip the side that's northern Ontario over and you say, "What's the problem here?"

Mr Bisson: "It's not that far."

Mr Martin: "That's not far." What they don't realize is that it's not to scale. To get from a place like Wawa, Chapleau, Hornepayne or Dubreuilville to either Sudbury or Thunder Bay is a major undertaking. It's a big trip. You've got all these people out there who have been waiting for six years, 1.6 million of them waiting for six years—and I'm running out of time here—to look at the bill that's put forward, anxiously hoping it's all they expected it to be; they look at it, and it turns out that it's not, and they want to have some input. They want to go and speak to the bill, meet with their elected officials and put their thoughts on the table, but hey, it's a challenge, it's difficult. This government could have, if it really wanted to and was committed to public process, waited until January, February or March and given everybody ample and adequate opportunity to participate and do the right thing.

But here we are again: a bill that is dealing with the budget, a budget that we have some real concern about, particularly when you consider the fact that we're head-

ing into a recession. Just this morning we heard the US has finally officially and publicly admitted they're in recession. You know that when the Americans go into recession, we're not far behind, we're coming along and it's going to be our turn. We have a budget here that has been presented way before anybody was officially and publicly willing to concede there was a recession. We have some things to say about it, I'm sure the public out there has a lot to say about it, and we're being hamstrung with a time allocation motion that's going to see this done within the next week or two, and that's really shameful. I'm embarrassed, and I'm calling on the government to, please, stop the time allocation motions. Honour the time-tested process of this place and let it run its course so that we can have full and comprehensive analysis and comment and study on these important matters of public business.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I'm pleased and honoured to be able to speak to this. I want to perhaps draw a cue for a moment from the honourable member from Sault Ste Marie. We come from the same hometown, born and raised. He lives right around the corner from my cousins. It is snowing. Do you know what? I wish I was there instead of here. Snow beats rain any day of the week, right?

Mr Martin: Any day, even if you have to shovel it.

Mr Spina: I want to remind my friend, the honourable member, that we want to ensure on that particular bill, the disabilities act and the public hearings that we are going to Windsor, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, and of course two days here in Toronto.

Mr Caplan: Why not Brampton?

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Spina: Because it's covered by Toronto. That's why not Brampton.

Mr Caplan: Oh, they're not going to like that.

Mr Spina: We are part of the GTA. You can't deny that.

The reality is that we wanted to make sure that this particular bill is implemented as soon as we possibly can. It's always nicer and it certainly would be a wonderful, ideal situation if we could take it to many towns across Ontario. But one of the things that act will do, and we'll talk more about it when it comes before the House, is that it will allow more of those communities the opportunity to become more accessible for disabled people.

But I want to get back to the government element that my friend talks about. Here we are—and also the member from whatever it is, the St Thomas area; I'm not sure of his riding. Nevertheless, they talked about, "Here we go again, time allocation." I want to remind my honourable friend from Sault Ste Marie that there was something called the social contract. I thought it was amazing that he conveniently forgot about that. It was time-allocated. It was an omnibus bill. There was no debate. It was rammed through cabinet, no committee time, no consultation. It shut the government down in the fall of—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Spina: I guess we provoked an argument here, Speaker. But the reality is that if we look at their government, in the fall of 1994 I think they met for something like 10 days and then—

Mr Bisson: How long are we going to be on this one?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Timmins-James Bay, come to order.

Mr Spina: Just 10 days in the winter, and we're meeting from September till a week before Christmas.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister without Portfolio [Health and Long-Term Care]): And we're sitting till 9:30 at night.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Huron-Bruce, come to order.

Mr Spina: And we're sitting till 9:30 at night, possibly even, in the next two weeks, until midnight. Thank goodness for the pages. God bless them. They're such beautiful children. They don't have to be here like we do till midnight, or even 9:30 every night.

But I want to say with respect to that government, not only did they only meet for 10 days in the fall of 1994, but in addition they never met at all in the spring because then Premier Bob Rae called the election because he had no choice. He had to call an election. Time had run out. He knew he was going to lose. It was a question of how much he could salvage.

You know what? To the credit of the two members who are here today, they won.

Mr Martin: What goes around comes around.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Sault Ste Marie, come to order.

Mr Spina: They won, and they are still here to enjoy the privilege of representing their respective ridings today, 10 years later.

But the finance minister—which is the germane subject to which we must be speaking today—Jim Flaherty, was criticized for bringing down what was ostensibly a budget. Why didn't it have the elements of a budget, the secrecy, a lock-up, a guarded document situation with police officers and security people? It wasn't a budget. However, it was a financial statement that evaluated our situation in a fiscal way. Like any good \$80-billion corporation, you have to be able to evaluate where you stand on a regular monthly basis. This government not only does that of course on a monthly basis, because we have ministry people who do that, regardless of who the government of the day is, but the reality is that it is good, sound management policy to make a statement not only on the status of what the economy is but also if there are some substantive changes which the government is preparing to make, then, like any good \$80-billion corporation, which is what this province is, you have to shift the gears in order to make sure the funding continues to be there for the people of this province: funding for our health care system so that the emergency wards this winter will continue to be able to provide service and extended service with the rush periods they will experi-

ence, particularly on weekends or holidays; so that we can continue to ensure that we have the programs in place for student testing, teacher testing and various elements of the quality of education that we are trying to deliver.

I want to touch on some points that my colleague from London West talked about and eluded to in a couple of words. He left it to me, thank goodness, to flesh out some of the details.

He talked about the accelerated tax cuts. Tax cuts, as Mr Wood said, are the single most important reason why this province has enjoyed strong economic growth.

We've created over 824,000 jobs in the six years that we've been here. The opposition, and particularly the Liberals, say, "We've lost 30,000 jobs in this past year." That may be so, but we didn't go to hell in a handbasket. The reality is that when you increase the number of jobs in this province, a net increase of 864,000 over that five- or six-year period, which really is more than 100,000 a year, or close to 150,000 jobs a year, we are more capable of managing the economy. Because of that, and managing the fiscal responsibility of this government, the provincial treasury and the taxpayers' dollars, we can lose 30,000 jobs—which is not a good thing for the people out there. But if we can ride through that and come out of it even better than when we went into it, those are the goals that we want to achieve. So in the next year we may only have a 90,000 increase in net jobs, rather than 150,000, but at least we've had an increase as opposed to a net, net, net decline, which is what happened in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995, until this government took power and began to turn this gigantic ship called Ontario around so that we could experience the positive economic impact that we have today.

Disposable income has increased by 20% and tax revenues have increased by nearly \$15 billion, all since 1995. That's an interesting figure, because the reality is that the growth, on an annual basis, started out slowly in 1995, somewhere around 1.5% to 1.75%. It almost doubled, but not quite, to about 2.75% in the 1996-97 fiscal year. Then it jumped to almost 5% in the subsequent years.

I thought it was very wise of Minister Flaherty to look at the situation over this past year. It suddenly became an amazing revelation in the papers this week that the US had struck a recession in the early part of 2001. This was no revelation to the US government and the US treasury, and it was no revelation to the people in the Ministry of Finance in Ontario, because they knew what was happening. The reality was that we were able to control it, we were able to manage it, and we will continue to do so with the incentives of the accelerated tax reductions because now it has been demonstrated.

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Ontario's growth was higher than the Canadian government's growth. People can ask, "Why?" Well, I can tell you why. Normally, the country goes as Ontario goes. One would presume, therefore, that the percentages we experienced in Ontario would be experienced feder-

ally, but they were not. Ontario's averages were far above the Canadian average. The reason is that the tax reductions and increase in disposable income, those dollars and cents in the hands of the consumer, allowed them to decide where they wanted to spend it: to either put it in a bank or buy a new pair of boots, a new pair of shoes, a new coat, or make a down payment on a new car, or put more money into our children's university savings funds. Those are the decisions consumers make. Those are the important elements that consumers have. It's the decision-making authority the consumer now has with that extra amount of money that makes it critical. That it is what the difference was. The increase in the billions of dollars—\$15 billion over a five-year period; \$5 billion more revenue a year—for a much smaller reduction in tax cuts, far exceeded the federal government.

I go back to my question of three minutes ago. People can ask, "Why? The federal government cut taxes. Why didn't they get the same amount of proportional increase of revenue that Ontario did?" Because they rode the back of our success, balanced their budget, then cut taxes. That's admirable. But do you know what? If they had done what we did, they would have been far more successful. Instead of a \$17-billion surplus that I think Mr Martin had a couple of years ago, which was his first big surplus, he might have had twice that. Even if he only had one and a half times that, fundamentally it would have been far better. He could have taken more money toward the deficit.

One of my little picking points and one of my little gripes about the federal government, among others, is this: why didn't they fund the military so we aren't embarrassed with the soldiers we are sending overseas? No one could have predicted 9-11, but do you know what? You can't sit back on your hands and say, "Well, let the US do it all." We've got soldiers out there who are very proud people. We have a military, which is a traditional pride in this country. I think of the Lorne Scots, the Peel, Halton and Dufferin regiment, an extremely proud traditional regiment, ready, willing and able to go when they are called to serve for our country, and yet, some of the weapons and some the clothing they have are not up to date.

I think one of the most embarrassing elements we've experienced in this country, and I'm amazed the media never picked up on this—of course, they're the darlings of the Jean Chrétien government, so why would the media pick up on this? But here is the reality: all of the Canadian military boots—a small point but an important one—were produced by a factory in Quebec. When that factory shut down, what happened? "Oh my goodness, what are we going to do? Where are we going to get boots for our soldiers?" Hello, it's like it's the only factory in North America? I doubt that it's the only factory in Canada. The reality is that if they would have bought quality material for a long period of time—there is nothing wrong with the quality of the US army boots, I can tell you. What's wrong with that? But no, they want to fund stuff for Quebec. Forget the rest of the country.

Let's feed the dollars into Quebec and force-feed it. The francophones run the military, they run the government. The only bilingual city in this entire country is Ottawa. It is the only bilingual city in this entire country.

Let me get back to the point, which is this: if the federal government had cut taxes sooner, like we did, before they balanced the budget, they would have had that much more surplus to be able to spend on anything—the health care they cut back, the \$2 billion per year to Ontario and all the other provinces in this country. They would have had some money to put into the military so we wouldn't be embarrassed in a situation that we are called to do and they would have been able to provide perhaps an even better tax break to the citizens of Canada. They would have perhaps been able to put more money into the Canada pension fund instead of whacking the worker and having it taken off their paycheque at a higher rate so that whatever tax break they got from Ontario was chewed up by the federal government raising the pension plan rates.

This is a government that practises fiscal responsibility. It keeps its eye on the till. When it comes time to make changes, responsible changes, to shift gears, to deliver responsible government and a responsible action economically for the people of Ontario, this is the government that does it.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I am very delighted to participate in this debate because it provides us with an opportunity, those of us on this side of the House, to clearly point out to the public out there that in fact there is a bunch of myths being perpetrated when it comes to economic policy.

Myth number 1: it was this government's tax cuts that led to an economic recovery the likes of which we have never seen before. Total myth. In fact, it was monetary policy, the reduction in interest rates brought about by both the Federal Reserve and the Bank of Canada, to an ever-decreasing amount during the 1990s, that allowed the economy to have the kind of growth that we saw, in addition to the fact that Ontario has become even more export-driven. We have a much greater dependence on exports to the United States than ever before, and that has proven to be very successful for our economy.

It means that Ontario has industries that are selling more to the United States. Our manufacturing base, the auto sector and the spinoffs from the auto sector, have benefited enormously from the fact that we sell more exports to the United States. We have many more industries engaged in that export production and, as a result, Ontario has seen another boom.

Ontario has always been export-driven. The United States has always been our biggest marketplace. When we were in government, we experienced tremendous growth between 1986 and 1989. Those were boom years as well and the unemployment rate at that time was very similar to the unemployment rate that we've seen in the past number of years.

If—and this is myth number two—the tax cuts created all these jobs during all of these years that we've had a

boom, then why is it that we're now experiencing a decline in the employment numbers? In fact, the number of jobs we've lost is 29,000 alone in the last six months. Companies know that you're cutting taxes, companies know that you're cutting corporate taxes, and that isn't incentive enough to create jobs, which means that it's not tax cuts at all that create jobs.

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Tax cuts are designed to provide additional stimulus for individuals. I agree with that to a certain extent but, at a time when confidence is very low, at a time when that's been severely eroded, tax cuts alone will not provide that stimulus. This is a reckless policy at the present time. The government is now admitting that you have a \$5-billion gap that you need to make up somehow. Well, it's not surprising. They plan to cut taxes, \$2.5 billion to the corporate sector. On top of that, they're going to give an additional \$500 million to private school funding. It's not surprising that the Minister of Finance is going around pulling his hair, saying, "I've got to make up this gap somehow." It's not surprising that the former Minister of Finance has entered the race and has been called back by his colleagues, because there's simply a disaster going to happen with this government's books.

Hon Mr Baird: Say it isn't so.

Mr Cordiano: Well, it's a \$5-billion gap that you need to make up. You're facing a deficit this year if you don't do something about it.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Stay tuned.

Mr Cordiano: The member says, "Stay tuned." Well, that's what we're fearful about. The seniors in my riding are very alarmed by this because, as we've pointed out in this House time and again, community care access centres have been cut; home care is nothing but a shambles—total mismanagement. You're now taking over because you don't like the fact that CCACs have spoken out against the lack of funding. There's a shortage of funding; that is very clear.

In my community, the North York CCAC was facing a \$10-million shortfall, and what does this government say? What do you say? You say to 70-year-olds, "You look after your 90-year-old parents." That's what you're saying to people in my riding repeatedly, because there is no home care. There are waiting lists. Can you imagine?

This is a government that says it's going to continue with tax cuts, a government that does not realize that Ontario is competitive because we have had in the past the kind of health care system that is very cost-efficient, that enables employers like the auto companies to make an investment decision in Ontario because they have a \$2,500 advantage over their American counterparts. Can you imagine? Some \$2,500 as a result of a health care system that is publicly funded, and what are you doing now? You're going to dismantle that system. You are denying that system the funds that it needs. Ottawa in fact—

Hon Mrs Johns: Let's talk about that.

Mr Cordiano: Let's talk about Ottawa. Ottawa has transferred \$6.3 billion this year for health care—

Hon Mrs Johns: They have not.

Mr Cordiano: —to Queen's Park. That's right. That's \$1.2 billion more than last year, and your finance minister has suggested that it's costing him \$1.9 billion more in health care costs. So the budget for health care has gone up—it has—to \$23.7 billion. That means a \$1.9-billion increase over last year. But guess what? The federal government gave you \$6.3 billion—

Hon Mrs Johns: Gave us?

Mr Cordiano: That's right—in transfers. They transferred that over to you, \$1.2 billion more than last year. So what you're required to make up, the difference, is about \$700 million, which you say you don't have, but you do have in the form of a tax cut of \$2.5 billion. So this is another myth that this government continues to perpetrate, that they don't have the money. Yet they have the money to cut taxes. Something doesn't add up here. It simply does not add up. You have \$2.5 billion for corporate taxes and yet you don't have the health care money that you need, so you claim.

So the people in my riding and the people across this province, the seniors across this province, what are they forced to do, the 70-year-olds in my riding, some of whom unfortunately are ill and are undergoing treatment themselves? In the case of one of my—

Interjections.

Mr Cordiano: Mr Speaker, I'm not sure if I'm supposed to be speaking right now. I'm being interrupted. So I wanted to sit down and give you the opportunity to intervene on my behalf, but I will continue.

The Acting Speaker: Are you finished your time?

Mr Cordiano: No, I'm not.

The Acting Speaker: I would expect that you continue, please.

Mr Cordiano: That's what I would like to know, Mr Speaker.

Anyway, as I was saying, the fact of the matter is I did interrupt myself because I wanted attention from Mr Speaker, and I got it. So thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Let me simply say this: you can't have it both ways. You can't say to the public, "We don't have enough money," when you're going to cut taxes. You obviously have enough money to cut taxes. Yet in the face of the facts—the facts are that we have declining employment numbers. We've lost 29,000 jobs, yet you're saying we're going to stimulate the economy by cutting taxes. It's not working. We're still losing jobs.

But one thing is certain: we need those health care dollars. We need those dollars to go into funding our health care needs, home care. It is unacceptable, completely disgraceful, that 70-year-olds, as I've pointed out in this Legislative Assembly time and again, people in my riding—Mr Derango, who had been looking after his mother, who is a 90-year-old, along with his wife, now has to undergo cancer treatment. As a result of these problems, he applied for home care. He was told that he

would be put on a waiting list to receive that home care. I asked the associate minister of health, is that acceptable to her. Is that acceptable to this government, that 70-year-olds should be put in a position where they have to care for their 90-year-old parents? That is disgraceful in this province in this day and age.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Would the member for Huron-Bruce and the member for Don Valley East come to order.

Mr Cordiano: It's this government, that has been in charge of that administration for CCACs across this province, that has created this crisis yet again. It's simply unacceptable that that would be the case. I'll turn it over to my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker: If you feel that you must indulge in a conversation back and forth, it's fine as long as I can't hear. If I hear it, then it's too loud.

Mr Bisson: I want to thank you, Mr Speaker, for recognizing me today, this humble servant of the Legislature and this humble servant to the people of Timmins-James Bay, who is here today in order to speak on this, yet another time allocation motion.

Do you realize how many times the government has come before us with a time allocation motion? I'm just shocked. The government, the Tories, the same party that, when they were in opposition, used to rail against the Bob Rae government because we had brought in some, I think, 15 or 18 time allocation motions over a period of five years—over a period of six years now the Conservatives are on a routine habit of bringing a time allocation motion each and every week, at least one. So you do the math. They've been here for six years; they do it every week. We sit about 26 to 30 weeks per year. They are far in excess of what the New Democrats or Liberals had ever introduced by way of time allocation motions.

I say to the government across the way, why do you need time allocation motions when you look at the rules which you have designed in this House that allow you to do pretty well what you want anyway? As it is now, the government, because of the rule changes, has limited the time that members can debate bills in the House, has limited our ability to oppose, as opposition parties, the government in trying to slow down your agenda. Without time allocation motions, you should be able to pass through the House what you need in fairly record time, considering we now have afternoon sessions and we have evening sessions, which count more or less as two different sessional days. We didn't even have that luxury when we were in government. I have to say to myself, either there is a total disregard for the democratic process on the part of the Conservative government or you're incompetent and you don't know how to run the House. The problem is, I don't care which one it is; either one of them is a bad option for the people of Ontario.

So I say to the government across the way, what we should be doing is sitting down as parties and looking at how we set the rules in this House such that we have an

equal balance between the ability of the government to pass its agenda, but at the same time an ability, but not equal to the government, on the part of the opposition to slow down the agenda when we need to so that we can actually force the type of debate we need on some of the very important bills, such as the budget debate we're having today.

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I say to the government that as a practical matter, as a New Democrat I am suggesting to you, because I believe, as does my friend Tony Martin and as do all nine of us in the NDP caucus—we are so many in our caucus; we are nine—

Mr Martin: We are mighty.

Mr Bisson: —and we are mighty. It's amazing.

I say to the members in the House that I propose, as a New Democrat, to the government that what we should be doing in a practical way is sitting down together as parties, either at the committee level or at the House leaders' level initially, to look at how we redraft the rules of the House so that we are able to have a balance in this place again, so that the government, yes, can pass its agenda.

I accept that the government got a majority. Mike Harris went to the polls in 1995. He won a majority government. It's fair and square and I accept that. But you'll have to accept from me as an opposition member that I also have an ability. There are a number of members in this House who may be a minority as members, but we won a majority of votes. You guys got 44% of the general vote, or 41%, and we got more than that as a combination between New Democrats and Liberals. But a majority of Ontarians are shut out of the process because of the rules of this House.

I believe that more government members agree with me than are willing to stand up and speak today, like my good friend across the way, to whom I will point and not say any names, because I know that gentleman across the way agrees with me that we need to change the rules in this House so that members in the back bench of the government and, I would argue, government members as well in the cabinet, have an ability to play a more important role in the House, so that it's not just a choice few in the Premier's circle who decide everything that happens here in the Legislature.

Here's the question; it's a simple one: should the government, at the end of this debate, have the right to pass their budget bill with a majority government? The answer is yes, no question. They won a majority government. They have the right to pass legislation in this House. The people have spoken. I accept that. What I don't accept is a set of rules in this House that says because you happen to have a Premier who feels he has to have control of everything, we in the opposition, who happen to have got the majority of votes in the last election but have a minority of seats in the House because of our first-past-the-post system, don't have an ability to slow you down when necessary.

As my friend Tony Martin, the member from Sault Ste Marie, said, it's important that we have debate on certain bills. We probably would slow down debate on the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, because we think it's important that we go out and talk to the disabled community to see how we can strengthen the bill. We fundamentally agree with what you're trying to do. We think, though, it could be made better.

On the other hand, there are other bills we would be prepared to allow you to have much more quickly because there's generally not a lot of contention and we say, "OK, we would accept that." There are a number of bills the government has that I would be prepared to support, but I will not support them at this point and I will slow you down because you've given me no other option by way of the rules of this House.

The Harris government changed all the rules and said that I have no ability to do what we used to do before, as an opposition party, either Liberals or New Democrats or Tories, and that is to hold the feet of the government to the fire so we're able to get important concessions on key bills that are important to our communities. We can't do that any more. You have put the opposition parties in the position of having to try to slow you down on everything because overall we can't—not that we should be able to stop you, but we're not able to affect your legislative agenda. So yes, I will speak on every bill, because you've given me no other option.

I know there are government members and there are certainly opposition members who agree with me. We should be sitting down as House leaders or at the committee level. We should be reconstituting the rules of this House so that we can have a real debate at the end of the day that is for the benefit of the people of Ontario, and yes, the government should have the right to pass its bills, but there should be some balance by way of the powers the opposition party has.

I'm sure the Clerk's table would be able to help us. I'm sure they have lots of ideas. For example, with new rules in this House we would be able to have a discussion that I think we have to have on this bill, which is that the government initially put out a budget last spring that said we were going to have a surplus at the end of this fiscal year. It's not their fault; because of fiscal realities the American economy is slowing down. I'm not going to sit here and say the Ontario recession is happening because of Mike Harris. It's because of what's happening in the United States. Because of the slowdown in the American economy, we are now in a situation where the government is saying, "Whoa. We don't know if we're going to be able to make our projections." In fact, things are so bad that if we look at the extreme circumstance, in the next budget year we might be as much as \$5 billion in debt.

I believe we have to have a good debate about the balance we need to strike in this fiscal year and the next as to how we deal with the issue of public debt. The government has passed legislation and said, "We shall not have a deficit in the province of Ontario." But faced

with the reality of having to make a decision about having a deficit over the short term next year, to make sure we don't gut our social programs such as health care and education, should we run a small deficit to make sure we don't end up there? That's one option. I don't know how the vote would turn out. I imagine there would be a bit of a split, even with members of your own caucus. I listened to Mr Stockwell, who says he doesn't believe in tax cuts at a time of recession.

My point is, we're not able to have those discussions. For example, contained in this budget bill are accelerated tax cuts for both individuals and businesses in Ontario. I will argue that tax cuts by way of income tax are by their very nature not a good way to stimulate the economy. You have to give such a huge tax break on the income tax side for people to see it, so that they have the dollars in their pockets to go out and spend it in the economy, that you virtually can't reach the target or even make it register on the radar screen of most people. I will argue that most low-income earners in Ontario have not really seen the tax cut, if they're making \$20,000 to \$30,000 or \$35,000 a year. I make \$80,000 to \$90,000 and I saw the difference; there's no question. But I make more money than most people and that's the way the tax cut was set up.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Do a bit in French for my people up there.

Mr Bisson: Yes, we can do that for you, Bill. No problem. We're always here to please.

I say we have to have the debate about whether we should be having accelerated tax cuts at a time of recession. We don't have an opportunity to have that debate because of the way the government has set up the rules in this House.

We should have a debate, by the way, on the issue of SuperBuild. The government has done quite an interesting trick here. Do you know what they did? We used to have capital dollars within the government and each of the ministries, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation all had capital budgets. If you were a school in your community and you wanted to build a new roof on the school, you'd go the Ministry of Education for capital dollars. If you were the local arena and you wanted to fix the arena floor, you went to the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation to get the dollars to fix your arena, along with local money. If a municipality wanted to build a new library, such as the city of Timmins wants to do, they would go to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation or the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and get money to build it.

All these groups were out there trying to advance what needed to be done in their communities. What the government said, and why I think this is an important issue to debate, was, "We're going to create one capital fund called SuperBuild." Here's the trick: they're saying the only ones to get funded by way of SuperBuild—because now there's only one pot. There are fewer places people

can go to get capital dollars. The only way you can get money is to have the support of the local municipality to get your project done. The difficulty with that is it puts the municipality up as the bad guy.

The city of Timmins, by way of council, made a decision that most people in our community support: the idea of building a new public library, a new resource centre for Timmins, for schools and local citizens to be able to utilize the technologies, look at books and utilize the services of a library. They put that out as a project. That's an important project for Timmins, one that I and most people in our community can support. But here's the difficulty: by virtue of the rules of SuperBuild, the city of Timmins has to basically give the go-ahead as to which one project is going to get supported. So because the city says, "We want a library," everybody else is shut out of the process. The people who were trying to build a track and field facility at Theriault high school have to take a back seat because Timmins wants to build its library.

They're setting up the city of Timmins, our council and our mayor, Mrs Jamie Lim, as the bad guys. They're not the bad guys. They're trying to do good things for their community. I support Jamie Lim as a mayor. I think she's doing a great job. I support my council. All the councillors in the city of Timmins are doing a wonderful job trying to advance the projects for our community. But they are setting them up for division. Now the council is split between, "Should we do this library or shouldn't we do it?" You've got people in the community asking, "Should we do this library or shouldn't we do it?" You've got petitions circulating through the city. We're setting up the mayor and we're setting up the council as the bad guys, and all they're trying to do is run a city.

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I say to the government, why have one SuperBuild fund where you only allow one project to go through? You should have left the ministries with the capital dollars necessary so the city that wants a library can go to the fund for libraries, and they're not competing with the people who are trying to build a track-and-field track, they're not competing with the people who want to build a new floor at the South Porcupine arena and they're not competing with someone who is trying to build a daycare facility.

Mr Murdoch: How much money—

Mr Bisson: The point is that it's not a question of how much more money. You have to compete within the one pot, so everybody else is pushed off.

Mr Murdoch: That makes more sense because you don't have those bureaucrats running it.

Mr Bisson: It makes no sense, Bill. It makes absolutely no sense, because it divides the communities. If, as the communities are saying, you're only allowed one project by the rules in this rotation, the city has to pick. If the city had said, "We support the track-and-field project," and then the South Porcupine arena people want a floor in their new arena, they have to be set up as, "You

support our projects or we don't support yours." I say it's unfair to the council and it's unfair to the municipalities.

Je veux aussi dire que toute la question dans ce budget—on aurait pu avoir une bonne discussion ce soir—c'est sur la commission de télécommunications et de transport du nord de l'Ontario. On sait que le gouvernement a décidé, avec leurs génies à l'intérieur du gouvernement, qu'ils veulent à leur tour s'organiser à ôter les services ferroviaires passagers pour les citoyens du nord de l'Ontario et pour ceux qui viennent au nord de la province. Dans ce projet de loi, on n'a pas l'opportunité d'avoir le débat nécessaire pour dire, est-ce qu'on doit donner l'autorité par droit de cette législation à la commission de pouvoir fermer n'importe quelle partie de son opération, sans avoir à retourner au cabinet de l'Ontario pour avoir la permission ?

We have another one crossing the floor. Thank you very much, Mr Beaubien. Nice to have you with us.

M. Beaubien : On parle le français là.

M. Bisson : On parle français, mon ami. Sérieusement, M. Beaubien est un bon ami, un bon francophone. On n'est pas assez francophone dans cette assemblée. On s'arrange très bien pour être capable de faire des blagues comme ça de temps en temps.

Mais le point que je veux faire, c'est que le gouvernement dans la législation dit que vous avez le droit, par la législation, de fermer les parties de la CTON que la commission elle-même décide pourraient fermer. Le problème avec ça, c'est que ça donne l'habileté de fermer les services ferroviaires pour les passagers du nord-est de l'Ontario. Ça ne fait pas de bon sens. À place de détruire l'infrastructure des transports dans le nord-est de l'Ontario, on doit être en train, dans un temps de récession, de trouver une manière de renforcer ces services pour la population du nord-est de l'Ontario.

I say to the government as well that we're not having an opportunity in this debate because you have time-allocated this bill. Again, the rules of the House do not allow us to do the kind of scrutiny we need to do on this bill. We don't have the opportunity to talk about a very important issue: the tax cut agenda of the government. The government has now accelerated, by way of this bill, tax cuts to wealthy corporations and wealthy individuals in this province. Let's say the government decides that's something they want to do and they think it's a great idea. That's somewhat debatable. But here's the problem I'm having. There is duplicity in the argument the government puts forward. The government says, "We are going to give up in the next couple of years"—when you count the tax cut for corporations, the tax cut for personal income tax and the school tax credit to private schools, the government is giving over \$3.5 billion in tax dollars back to the taxpayers of Ontario.

If we had the money to give away, that might be a good thing. But we're heading into a recession. The government has now admitted that next year they may have a \$5-billion deficit. Tell me, why would anybody in their right mind, in a time of recession, say, "I'm going to take \$3.5 billion of revenue and throw it away"? And

then say, "Oh, Mr Chrétien, give me more money. I've got to pay for health care." Well, excuse me. You threw the money away and now you expect the federal government to give you \$6 billion?

I want to make a point: I agree with the government that the federal Liberals are not living up their commitment. I agree with the government that the federal Liberals have downloaded health care to the provinces. I have no argument with the government on that point. If you're going to go cap in hand back to the federal government, I'll go with you, but don't throw away \$3.5 billion of revenue over the next two years. It takes away from your argument. How can you expect the federal government to take you seriously? Jean Chrétien is no stupid politician. He's a pretty bright politician, we can all agree.

Mr Murdoch: Do some French. You've only got two minutes left.

Mr Bisson: I did it already, Bill. You weren't listening.

Mr Chrétien, sitting in Ottawa, is going to sit back and say, "Why should I give you \$6 billion in transfers that you say I owe you when you're giving away \$3.5 billion in tax cuts in the next two or three years?" Chrétien can hide behind that. It's an irresponsible thing to do.

I say, as a New Democrat, do you want a suggestion? It's not up to me just to criticize. I must give you options, suggestions that you can follow. I suggest you should cancel the tax cuts. In a time of recession when you're losing revenue because of a slowdown in the economy, don't give that tax cut to the wealthiest people in the province of Ontario and to the corporations. If you're going to do a tax cut, do it on the revenue side, do it on the PST side. That's what we suggest. At least that way it's equalized. You may even get the federal government to reduce the GST in Ontario for a short period of time, and that may have a stimulus impact on the economy, but if you're giving away the income tax cut—think about this: \$2.2 billion of corporate tax cuts to the corporations in the province of Ontario. Are they going to take that money and re-spend it back here? Do we really think that? The reality is that most of it's going to go back to the people who own stock in the company. If they were planning on doing any kind of increase as far as production capacity, they're going to do that regardless of a tax cut, so we're really not getting anything back for it.

So my argument is, don't give them a tax cut at the time of a recession. Take that money, put it into services that are important to the people of the province, such as transportation infrastructure, like the Ontario Northland train; such as health care; such as education. Leave it in those programs that are important. Do you know what is really interesting? It's not only me who's saying that. Mr Stockwell, one of the candidates running in the Tory leadership race, says it as well.

I say to the government, in the few seconds that I have left, I agree that you won a majority government in the last election. I agree and I accept that you have the right

to pass legislation. But the rules of this House have to be changed so that we in the opposition have an equal ability to have an effect on what you're doing, so that we're able together, as all parties in this House, to work on behalf of the people of this province. With the rules we have now, it's pretty darned hard.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity, unfortunately, to speak on yet another time allocation motion. That is a motion, of course, where debate is choked off in the Legislative Assembly by the dictum of the government; that's most unfortunate, but it does happen only too often.

The first thing I want to say is that I wish that in the legislation that comes forward in this House there would be more consideration of the marine industry. Representatives of the marine industry, which is extremely important to our province, were meeting with members of the Legislature today, particularly those of us who represent areas where the marine industry is extremely important, though it is important for all of Ontario.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): Does that include the Rideau Canal?

Mr Bradley: The Rideau Canal may well be.

I should share with members that there is not a community in this province, including those in the interior, that wouldn't be impacted by the marine industry. In 1999, Ontario ports handled more than 76 million tonnes of cargo, worth more than \$5 billion. In the last 40 years, the seaway has moved more than two billion tonnes of cargo, valued at \$400 billion. The seaway serves 15 international and more than 50 regional ports on both sides of the border, so you can see it has a major impact. They have some issues that they would like to have this government deal with, and I'm sure they will.

1710

But I think we have to first of all recognize that the Minister of Transportation, no matter which party is in or who it happens to be, should recognize that the marine industry is part of the transportation industry in this province. It's almost as though, in Ontario at least, the Minister of Transportation is, as he or she used to be, the Minister of Highways, where we've had a bit of branching out into public transit of the commuter rail type. But certainly we should recognize the marine industry and its importance and its needs. It is the most environmentally benign way, for instance, of moving product from one end of the province to the other, or indeed around Canada, much more benign environmentally, particularly in terms of air quality, than other ways of moving products around the country.

We recognize as well that there are certain challenges that this industry is facing, as others are. But we should know that the commodities that move in large bulk in our marine industry are steel manufacturing, aggregates and construction materials, power generation, agriculture, petroleum products and road salt. All of these are

dependent upon the ships that are on the St Lawrence Seaway. One of the problems is that they face some user fees that other modes of transportation do not. They would like the playing field levelled by not having as high user fees for using the St Lawrence Seaway system and other obligations which are placed upon them. The industry also faces a challenge which many other Industries do, and that is the age of the people working in the industry at the present time. They require our community colleges to have courses for mariners, first of all to attract people as mariners and then to have the courses available to them.

They have a number of issues, and I hope this Legislature will see them as being important. It's the transportation itself, yes, by means of ships. It's the shipbuilding and ship repair industry, which is important in St Catharines, if I can be parochial, at Port Weller Dry Docks, and of course places such as Dofasco and Stelco and other industries that rely upon it for carrying of products. I wanted to mention that because here we are dealing with a time allocation motion when we could be dealing with the issues of the marine industry.

I want to deal with some other matters that I feel this bill does not adequately address. Because we have this obsession on the part of the government with tax cuts—that's virtually everybody but the Minister of Labour, who now says we can't afford more tax cuts, and I happen to agree with him. I think he's broken ranks with the others and he's finally able to speak out in the open, and I commend him for doing so. But we have a formula, as a result, for the closing of schools which is far too inflexible and far too confining. What does it result in? It results in schools in St Catharines such as Consolidated, Dalewood, Maplewood, Lakebreeze and Victoria all being under the gun, all threatened with closing. These schools have served their neighbourhoods very well over the years. They have a tradition. They are a community centre. Their grounds are used for recreational purposes. It would be awful to see those schools closed, as I'm sure all members in this Legislature are confronted with matters of this kind.

The natural focus is on members of the board of education. That is how the provincial government wishes it to be. I happen to know it's the funding formula that is provided by the Ministry of Education which is so restrictive now that it does not allow local boards of education to keep open those neighbourhood schools. Therefore, more and more students are on buses and we lose the important neighbourhood school as a community centre for us and for the children who access it.

I am pleading with the government on this occasion to change that funding formula. You have noticed that I have been receiving petitions on this and I have read the petitions in the Legislature on almost a daily basis to try to encourage that.

Mr Guzzo: The Ottawa board still has a farm.

Mr Bradley: The Ottawa board still has a farm, the member says, and that's very nice to have.

I want to say as well, because the associate minister of health is here this afternoon, that our community care access centres are way underfunded in our area. There are people calling the constituency office on a daily basis asking that the funding be restored, that adequate funding be available. We know, for instance, that hospitals now have people leave those hospitals much more quickly, in a quicker and sicker state, as people will say, so we need those community services much more frequently and much more extensively. But unfortunately, this government has frozen the budgets, and that represents in effect a cut.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Most people would understand that if the demand for the service is far greater, if the number of people requiring that service is far greater, and the government does not increase its funding to meet that need, then in effect that's a cut. Most people would understand that. Everyone but my friend the minister seems to understand that to be the case.

Nursing homes are facing a very difficult challenge now. They don't have enough staff to provide the kind of services they would like to provide, because the per diem that is provided by the government is not adequate. I invite the associate minister of health to visit Linhaven in St Catharines, a wonderful facility which is now straining under the budgetary constraints placed upon it by this government.

I know that people with special needs—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: In this House, only the person that I recognize to have the floor is allowed to speak. In this case, it's the member for St Catharines. So I would ask the indulgence of the others that you don't interrupt. That way I will not be under the necessity of enforcing the restrictive rules that we have and that are available to me to address the issue.

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I'll say in conclusion that the other aspect I want to deal with is people with special needs. Often there are people who have psychiatric problems, who have mental illness, and have some very special needs. We need more of an investment in that area as well.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Caplan: Usually I would mention that it's a pleasure to speak to a particular item here in the House, but it's not a pleasure to speak to another closure motion. It's not any surprise why. The members opposite don't want to talk about what's contained in Bill 127. They want to push it through this House as quickly as possible, outside of public view. They really don't want the public to know, and that's why, frankly, we have opposition members here to shed some light on what is actually contained in this piece of legislation.

It's a very thick act. There is a lot in here. There are some very interesting sections, and I did want to talk about them in the few minutes that I have to speak here today. As I said, the government doesn't want to do that.

I would refer to part VI of the act. It relates to the Education Act and is found on page 39. Under a heading called "Retroactivity," it says, "A regulation made under this section is, if it so provides, effective with reference to a period before it is filed." What that means is that the Minister of Finance in the province of Ontario is giving himself the authority to retroactively set education property tax rates.

I know, Speaker, you have a strong municipal background. You know that local residents, hard-working taxpayers, hard-pressed businesses in Ontario, are coping with the strain of downloading, with the municipal tax burden that's been forced upon them by the Harris government. Now the Minister of Finance has decided that he's going to retroactively set education property tax rates by regulation. Can you believe such a thing? The folks in Listowel will be very unhappy to learn that with the stroke of a pen, Jim Flaherty, our finance minister, without any public input, without any debate, without any transparency, is going to tax them without any representation. It's a scandal, absolutely a scandal.

1720

There are some other very interesting sections of this bill. I would refer as well to the section that deals with Highway 407, part XIII of the bill, the Highway 407 East Completion Act, 2001, as set out in schedule B.

When I went to schedule B, some very interesting things were in this part of the legislation. It talks about toll collection and the powers of the owner. There's a very long list of things that the owner can do. Then when you flip, one or two pages over, to page 153 of the bill, it says, "Registrar's action." You might want to ask yourself, "What do the actions of the registrar of motor vehicles have to do with Highway 407 and toll collection?" I would read subsection 4 to you.

It says, "If the registrar of motor vehicles receives notice under subsection (1), he or she shall, at the next opportunity, refuse to validate the vehicle permit issued to the person who received the notice of failure to pay under section 14 and refuse to issue a vehicle permit to that person." Can you believe that? A private consortium is now going to decide whether or not you or I can have our motor vehicle permit issued. Unspeakable. Unheard of. It's a scandal. It's no wonder that members of the government are trying to push this piece of legislation through, because if the people of Ontario knew the scandal contained in here, they would be up in arms.

Interjection.

Mr Caplan: I'm surprised, because I know the people in Peterborough don't like having the power of the Registrar of motor vehicles to prevent them from receiving their permit to drive a car, to operate their motor vehicle, in the hands of a private company. I know that Al Leach and SNC Lavalin are laughing all the way to the bank. The member from Peterborough, if he had the guts, would stand up and he would protest this very same action. It is undemocratic. It is unfair.

Hon Mr Stewart: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I take exception to the language being used in this House,

but then I look at the person who said it and I can appreciate the intelligence that he has when using that kind—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I was just giving everyone a chance to get themselves composed.

That is not a point of order. The member for Don Valley East has the floor. I recognize the member for Don Valley East.

Mr Caplan: It's obvious I've touched a nerve. The people of Peterborough are absolutely disgusted by the actions of this government. I wish I had more time. I'm going to have to turn the debate over to my colleague from Windsor, but I will tell you this: Liberals will oppose—

Hon Mr Stewart: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Why do these people, the opposition, make these statements that they cannot back up? Can they look in the mirror every morning and—

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. That's more in the term of a question. Question period ended about a quarter after 3.

The Chair recognizes the member for Don Valley East. Your time is finished?

Mr Caplan: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Windsor-St Clair.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I appreciate having the opportunity to join the discussion on the time allocation motion respecting what is essentially a budget bill. I might add that it's another example of an omnibus bill that the government has brought forward in an attempt to make a number of changes to significant legislation. In the view of the official opposition, a number of the items in this bill ought to have had time to be reflected on themselves, and in a more proper fashion.

This bill, again, in large part implements the May 2001 budget announcements, including the corporate tax cut, which is now retroactive to October 1. In the finance minister's original budget, that corporate tax cut, which will leave our corporate tax rates 25% below our competitive and neighbouring US jurisdictions, the states of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and a number of other jurisdictions.

The view of the official opposition is that is just the wrong policy at the wrong time. That tax cut, in our view, is inappropriate. According to the Chair of Management Board, the government is faced with a deficit in the range of \$5 billion for this year. The government will argue that the corporate tax cut will serve as a stimulus. We don't agree. We believe that the opposite will occur. We believe that the spending that would have gone on in health care and education not only would have helped stimulate the economy but also, in our view, would have helped to address the pressing needs in our hospitals, in our home care system and in our schools. We think that fundamentally this is the wrong public policy to pursue at this time. Broad-based tax cuts of this nature, which will benefit the largest and most profitable of our corpor-

ations, will do little, in our view, to stimulate the economy. Oh, sure, it will improve the PE ratios of those corporations benefiting and I suppose it will help investment bankers in Toronto and New York sell a few more shares and issue debt; however, in our view the more prudent investment would have been in our hospitals, our health care sector and in our schools.

Another interesting act of this legislation that caught my attention the very first day the bill was introduced was the section that gives the Minister of Finance the ability to retroactively set education tax rates by regulation. Again, that's a delegation of the very fundamental authority of Parliament, of this Legislature, something that I know all members take very seriously, on all sides of the House. That is at the essence of how a Parliament should work. Now, this government is proposing that we set up a committee to look at how to empower backbench members and how to give members of the Legislature more authority. Yet while they do that on the one hand, on the other hand they take away what is at the essence of our parliamentary democracy: the ability to set tax rates. They give it to the minister to do by regulation and then finally they give him the power to do it retroactively. That, in our view, is just not good public policy.

The other thing that struck me was giving the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission the ability to cancel services with government approval and divest itself of assets. We believe this is the first step to ending the Ontario Northland railway, which will particularly harm northeastern Ontario and, again, it's something that ought not to be delegated away to a commission without proper legislative oversight. This will be the last time in a debating forum in this House where we can raise that issue. We will have the opportunity in question period, should the government decide to proceed with the shutting down of the Ontario Northland, but we will not have this opportunity again.

As I indicated earlier, this is a time allocation motion. The government is again stifling debate. There are 25 different acts being amended in this bill, and we've had very little time to consider. I will acknowledge to the government that some of these changes are relatively routine, but there are at least four parts of the bill that we feel should have been dealt with separately and with enough time to have meaningful debate.

This budget impacts on my community. Earlier this year, we lost a number of our Catholic elementary schools due to the government's funding formula. Our hospitals in Windsor—Hotel-Dieu Grace and Windsor Regional—have had significant deficits, not due to mismanagement, not due to inappropriate provision of care, but due to underfunding given the increase in demand for services and the nature of the services that are provided. It impacts on the separate school board in Windsor and Essex county; it impacts on the public school board in Windsor and Essex county. The funding formula that the education minister has foisted on this province forced the closure of W.D. Lowe tech, for instance, in the public board.

I talked about our hospitals. Our home care system: like members right across the province, I have seniors in every part of my riding who are not getting adequate care. They're not getting enough hours, whether it be visiting nurses, homemaking services or all the various services offered by our community care access centres. So we think the government's priorities are simply wrong. They ought to forgo the corporate tax cuts. Our tax rates are competitive now on the corporate side. Forgo those tax cuts, invest in education and health care, and certainly don't run up a deficit again or further increase the debt, which the Harris government has done in order to pay for these tax cuts.

With that, I yield the floor.

1730

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It has been interesting sitting here for the last hour or so and listening to the rhetoric that has been flowing across these hallowed halls. I can't believe the kind of stuff I've been hearing. It's just terrible.

I was listening to the member from Timmins-James Bay talk about time allocation, and then the member from Don Valley East, the member from St Catharines and the member from Windsor-St Clair. When they get going on the same thing, over and over again, with nothing new to add to the debate, why wouldn't one get on with time allocation and get on with the bill, so we can get on with other bills? If you look at the actual record of what has been going on, time and time again, as you examine it, you'll find this government has spent more hours in debate on second reading than either of the other two governments—you know, that lost decade from 1985 to 1990 and 1990 to 1995—a tremendous number of hours spent on second reading, compared to what those two governments did.

Then you can move on to look at third reading. Some of the time they spent less than an hour, average, on third reading in some of their sessions. It was down to a few minutes. That's the length of time they spent. It's most unfortunate. Then every time a time allocation motion comes along, they get up with all kinds of rhetoric, "Oh, here it goes again," and they bemoan and carry on. If they had something new to add, I'm sure we'd give them more time to speak, but they're not contributing anything worthwhile, so it's necessary to move along.

I heard the member from Timmins-James Bay talk about next year's finances and how terrible they might be. Well, imagine where we'd be if we hadn't developed the kind of policy instruments that people like the Honourable Ernie Eves brought in back in 1995, with some of those budgets, setting an economic foundation for this province. I can imagine where we'd be today if Mr Eves hadn't done that back six or seven years ago, getting the province on to the right foundation.

I also heard the member from Timmins-James Bay talk about job losses in a downturn. He used a figure—I think it was 20,000 jobs or something like that. They lost, net, more than that when they were in government over five years. We're going through a downturn—absolutely,

no question. Will we rally out of it? I don't think there's too much question that we will indeed rally out of this in the not-too-distant future. But if we hadn't made some moves, guided by Mr Eves back a few years ago, imagine where we'd be if we hadn't established that foundation.

What a mess we found this province in, in 1995. In 1995 your party had two sets of books. We found out that the deficit and the debt were actually far greater than you were admitting in one set of books, but when we looked at the other set of books and we put the two together, we found out what was really there. They bemoaned that they were in bad times, that it was recessionary times. But I know of at least four provinces during that time, from 1990 to 1995, that actually balanced their books, got rid of their deficits.

This party went to over \$10 billion per year in deficit, spending more than they were taking in, but the province of New Brunswick, under a Liberal leader, McKenna, balanced their books. Out in Saskatchewan, under Romanow—an NDP government—they balanced the books in those recessionary times. But what happened in Ontario? Oh, no, they had to raise taxes, and with the increase in taxes, the revenue went down. You could see it on a graph.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie, come to order.

Mr Galt: Every time the taxes went up, revenue went down.

Of course in Manitoba they balanced their books—it's understandable, a PC government under Filmon. Also in Alberta, the Premier who received a lot of criticism, Mr Klein, was able to balance his books.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Don Valley, come to order.

Mr Galt: I've heard some of the comments from presentations across the floor talking about, "Stop cutting taxes," particularly the member from York South-Weston.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Don Valley East, come to order.

Mr Galt: It's just so obvious—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Don Valley East, I called your attention to come to order twice. You didn't hear it because you're still talking. I ask you to come to order.

The Chair recognizes the member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I think it's important, since they don't understand what happens with cutting taxes, that you bring them to order so they'd be able to follow my comments. I could refer to the Laffer curve. We cut taxes and increased revenue. It's interesting to note that since 1995 until now we've increased revenue by \$15 billion per year. That's an increase of 50% in tax revenue in Ontario. That's the

turnaround that's happened here. Imagine if we'd continued the route of the lost decade, where indeed we'd have ended up. It would have been quite a mess because that deficit was continuing to increase.

I look at the federal government. They brag about their surplus, but where did that federal surplus come from? I can tell you where it came from, because they didn't have one, single, solitary policy instrument to help their economic circumstances other than cutting transfers to the provinces, such as in health care. Yes, I can understand them limiting the provinces. However, why did they end up with a surplus? It's because of the policy in Ontario that stimulated the economy, created jobs, put us on the map. As a result, we took in extra income, and they had to because they didn't cut taxes. It flowed in. I challenge the opposition, when they get up to speak in the remaining time they have, that they tell us the economic policy instruments brought in by the federal Liberals to contribute to balancing the budget and also ending up with a surplus. I challenge them to supply me with some of those changes in their economic policies.

I also heard a lot of talk about CCACs and home care problems. We've increased that spending by some 70%. As I talk about increasing spending, \$6.8 billion since we took office, a fair criticism of our government might be that we've increased spending by too much because we've increased spending in health care by \$6 billion while the federal government's actually cut health care. When the federal Liberals took over from Brian Mulroney, it was at 18% in health care. What have they been doing since? They dropped it all the way down to 11% and the Prime Minister's bragging that it's been brought up to 14%, 14 cents on the dollar. That's 14 cents from the feds and 86 cents from the province of Ontario for our health care system. They don't contribute anything to long-term care. They don't contribute anything to the drug plan. The other \$800 million has been spent on education. Also, to get the books balanced there was a streamlining within our government. We got rid of that deficit of over \$11 billion. That was \$1,000 per year for every man, woman and child in this province. They were spending more than was coming into the province of Ontario, and that was just a shameful record that we took over from.

It's so obvious what is going on, but they have not understood yet what happens with tax cuts. If you look at the Laffer curve that economists talk about, as you start moving up, yes, as you increase taxes, especially income tax, you get more revenue, but when you go over the top of the curve and start down the other side, as you increase taxes, as the NDP government found out: increase taxes, lose dollars.

1740

Look at the graph. It's there in the Ministry of Finance, so obvious, so clear. While you're over the top, and we were in Ontario, and you cut taxes, you increase revenue.

If you look at something like PST or tax on assessment, like municipalities, there's no elasticity of demand,

no elasticity of supply. It's on the land, it's on the property that's real property, and it can't change. So as those revenues come in, if you cut it, yes, the revenue goes down. If you increase it, yes, the revenue goes up. But it is very different when it comes to income taxes, when it comes to corporate taxes.

Coming back for a moment as I wind up in the final minute here, I think it's important that we talk just a little bit about health care, about the Canada Health Act. The only area in Canada that I see respecting the Canada Health Act is the provinces and the territories. The federal government has no respect for the Canada Health Act whatsoever. If they did, they would be contributing their 50%, as it started out back around 1970. The federal government is beating the province of Ontario by \$7 billion in health care every year—\$7 billion. If we could even get back to the 18% of Brian Mulroney's era, that would be another \$2 billion, and that would be half reasonable. I challenge the members on the other side of the House to come up with an economic policy instrument that the federal Liberals have brought in to help their economic affairs.

Mr Gerretsen: I would simply suggest to the member opposite to take a look at their own financial document on which this bill is based and see how much more money the federal government has been paying to Ontario under the Canada health and social transfer and its supplement over the last two years and compare that to how much more money you're putting into health care, and you will notice, sir, that you are not spending one penny more yourself. The only money they're spending more of is what has been the increase in transfers from the federal government for the last two years. That's point number one.

The second point is that we are dealing here with a time allocation motion. The record is quite clear that you have used closure in this Parliament, in this House of democracy of the province of Ontario, more often in the last six years than all the other governments previous to that, going right back to 1867. You have used closure more often in six years than was done in the previous 130 years.

You will say, "You know, there used to be a lot more time spent in the late 1980s and early 1990s on the various bills such as budget bills." I would again ask you to check the Hansard record. The reason those debates weren't any longer than the hour or two you refer to is that there was no debate on them; nobody wanted to say anything further. It wasn't done by way of closure or time allocation. Those are the facts. The facts are that you are making a mockery of our democratic system by invoking closure on each and every bill.

Rather than having your House leader, our House leader and the House leader for the third party get together, work out a scheme whereby certain bills will be given more time than other bills, you are using the might of your majority by invoking closure on this House over and over again.

The fundamental problem I have with this bill is the corporate tax cut. The one aspect that really bothers me is that the government decided, in order to deal with the situation that arose province-wide, country-wide and worldwide as a result of the September 11 situation in New York, to implement its tax policy of corporate and personal tax cuts by moving that forward another three months, from January 1 to October 1. It was done on the basis that this would somehow stimulate the economy.

What's really interesting about it is that when it comes to the personal income tax side, it cannot even be implemented until after January 1. So I don't know how a speeding up of the tax cut process is going to benefit the economy today if in fact you can't even implement it until the new year.

What did we lose by that? What did the government lose by way of revenues there? It's losing \$175 million, and isn't it interesting that that just happens to be the amount that the community care access centres, the people who provide our home care, our nursing care, for people who are being released from hospitals sicker and quicker, are short this year?

The minister will say, "We're not cutting anybody from last year." The fact is still that what the community care access centres are asking for is exactly the same level of funding they got last year, not that they budgeted for last year, because they got a payment after they all ran over to some extent last year because of the much-needed services in our communities; all they want is the same amount of money that they got last year. That's a fact. So what is the government doing? Rather than dealing with the situation whereby our vulnerable, our elderly, who need home care, need nursing care, the sick who are released from hospitals quicker so that they can get the kind of support system this government promised—you promised. When you closed the hospitals, when you closed a number of beds in hospitals, you said, "Look, we will still be able to look after these people because we will take the money we're taking out of the hospital system because of the closure situation and we will put it into home care." Well, you haven't done that. Talk to your own people who need services from the community care access centres. So what did this government do? Rather than dealing with that situation, it is now firing the community boards, as if that somehow is going to deal with the financial situation.

What else is it doing? It is firing all the executive directors who have been hired by these community boards and it's basically saying, "From now on the executive directors of the community care access centres will be appointed by us by order in council." You are politicizing our health care system, because you know as well as I do that those individuals you're going to appoint to head up these various community care access centres across the province now somehow feel beholden to you, that if they don't do your bidding, you will fire them on the spot. That is an awful indictment. It is no different than if you decided to hire every executive director in our hospitals by way of order in council. It is a very callous

and cynical move that isn't going to accomplish anything.

The community care access board that we have in the Kingston area is made up of outstanding citizens, and undoubtedly the same thing goes throughout this province in exactly the same way. Why are these people, who have spoken up for their communities, for the people who need the services in their communities, being fired? Because you don't like what you're hearing. You don't like the fact that you're not providing them the amount of money that is required for them to look after these sick people.

That is the really, I would say, cynical part, but it's the unfortunate part as well. If we had just left your tax cut timetable in place, with which we don't agree, but you had implemented that earlier, there would have been enough money for us to deal with the people who need those much-needed services from our community care access centres.

It is on this ground and many other grounds—by the way, there's no committee time for this bill, even though it affects 25 different ministries. It is on this ground alone that this bill fails. It should not be passed, and you should not proceed with this time allocation motion.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Baird has moved government notice of motion 97. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Miller, Norm	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martin, Tony
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lynn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Prue, Michael

Caplan, David
Cleary, John C.
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Curling, Alvin

Kormos, Peter
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Ramsay, David
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

This House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock this evening.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 29.

The House adjourned at 1802.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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