



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Third Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Troisième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 16 May 2002

Jeudi 16 mai 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 16 May 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 16 mai 2002

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT
(HYDRO TRANSMISSION
CORRIDOR LANDS), 2002

LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ÉLECTRICITÉ
(BIENS-FONDS RÉSERVÉS
AUX COULOIRS DE TRANSPORT
DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ)

Mr Sergio moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to ensure that the transmission corridors remain provincial assets to be used for public transit, recreational and similar purposes / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité afin de garantir que les couloirs de transport demeurent des éléments d'actif provinciaux devant servir aux fins des transports en commun, des loisirs et d'activités semblables.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for York West.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I want to thank you and the House for bringing forward my private member's bill.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to our standing orders 96, the member has 10 minutes.

Mr Sergio: I'm delighted to make some comments on my private member's bill. I'd like to formally introduce it as it is written. It is An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to ensure that the transmission corridors remain provincial assets to be used for public transit, recreational and similar purposes.

More in particular, it is to remove from the assets of Ontario Hydro, or its successor in the event of a sale, the hydro transmission corridor lengths. My bill does not deal with any other component of the so-called Ontario Hydro, or Hydro One, as we have heard more the past few months, but for the past year. My bill deals strictly with the hydro corridor lengths, those stretches of land, those swaths of land, that the electric transmission towers sit on. Those are the lands that we deal with specifically with my bill today. Another day, hopefully, we will deal with the other issues, and perhaps the even more important issue, Hydro One. But for today, we'll limit ourselves

to try and protect and deal in the House with preserving forever and for public use in public hands the corridor properties.

You may say, "Why this particular bill at this particular time?" Let me say this. With what we have heard in the past year or so from the former Premier and now Premier Eves, we want to make sure that indeed, if a sale takes place, if a sale is approved by the present government, those lands are protected forever.

Let me say at the outset that I, my fellow Liberal colleagues here, and my leader, Dalton McGuinty, are opposed to the sale of Hydro One. Let me say further that my constituency and the people I have spoken to are opposed to the sale of Hydro One. But the former Premier and now the new Premier have said, especially just prior to the last by-election, the Hydro One sale was off the table. On my part and that of the people I speak for, they don't want to hear of, they don't want to know of, any deal off the table, on the table, under the table—any sale, any lease whatsoever. They want no deals whatsoever.

Let me get to my private member's bill. I was saying before, why the bill at this particular time? Well, if the Premier is serious in what he has said to us, if the government is serious in making that promise and protecting the lands forever, then today I think it's a good time, it's a good initial point, to support this bill and say, "Yes, it is important that the lands remain in public hands and in the control of the provincial government."

We are dealing with swaths of land, some 55,000 acres. It represents an irreplaceable piece of property. It is priceless. It is one of a kind and it is unique. Let me say that they don't make it any more. There is one for us to use today and for the needs of tomorrow.

On April 3, because of some pressures, I suppose, the government, through its Ontario SuperBuild Corp—which is one and the other; it's the same—made this particular announcement:

"The province and Hydro One, with the assistance of the Ontario SuperBuild Corp, have agreed to protect the province's interests and ability to use lands along hydro transmission corridors owned by Hydro One for public purposes after Hydro One is privatized." Well, I have a problem with that. It further says, "Hydro One and the province have entered into a letter of intent that establishes the principals that will form the basis of a final and binding agreement to be completed prior to the Hydro One equity IPO."

Further in the same memo, it says that there is an option for the province to acquire these transmission

corridor lands. Shall we say that the lands are already owned by the people of Ontario and they are owned by the province of Ontario?

It further says, "In addition, Hydro One will be required to provide the province with 120 days' notice" in case they decide to sell it or sell any part or any interest in it, and that they would have 120 days to exercise it. Specifically, the province says that they "may" exercise. So there are too many "ifs" if the province indeed is serious, is sincere, in protecting the hydro transmission corridor properties.

Further, which gives even more worries, it says that if the province indeed will use that option and acquire the lands, they may sell it for transportation uses. This is why the bill is here today. We want to know from the Premier and from this government if indeed they are serious to protect these 55,000 acres of land, which are now in the domain of the public, in the domain of the Ontario government, if they will indeed protect the hydro transmission corridor lands.

1010

This is only one aspect. Let me read what Markham is saying, for example: "Whereas the impending sale of Hydro One has raised questions about the ownership of lands under the transmission lines and whereas the lands in the hydro corridors are one of the few publicly owned facilities that are ideal for consideration as rapid transit corridors...."

Presently, those lands are already in use by many agencies and municipal governments for transportation, public parking, commuter parking. They are being used for recreational uses such as soccer fields and many other uses. But most important, if we let go of those lands—they already form part of the transportation corridor—those lands will be lost forever, and we will have to beg whoever is going to be in control of them tomorrow to lease them, to use them, to buy them back. Let me say that it will be impossible for the people of Ontario, for any government in the future, to repurchase 55,000 acres of land, let alone that because of the particular position where they are located, they would prove a huge, huge embarrassment for any future government to try and deal with the legal tangle, the legal issues to buy back those particular lands. Because of their location, they would provide a huge problem for the local municipalities and abutting residential communities as well. It is for this reason that I call on the Premier today, that I call on every member of the House, that if we are serious in saying we are indeed going to protect the hydro corridor lands, approve this bill today.

Might I say that whatever happens to this private member's bill this morning may be the prelude of what is going to happen to the rest of the components of Ontario Hydro, and more specifically Hydro One. What happens to this bill here today is indeed the prelude of what is going to happen to Hydro One in the future.

If we are to take the Premier seriously when he says the Hydro One sale is off the table, then my message to the Premier and the members on the government side is,

if you are serious, if you were sincere when you told the people of Ontario immediately prior to the last by-election that the Hydro One sale was off the table and the hydro corridor lands are a part of that, then you have no reason not to support this private member's bill today. Failing that, I think the Premier and the government are sending a very definite and strong message to the people of Ontario that they will go ahead and privatize Ontario Hydro and sell Hydro One.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Thank you for the opportunity to take part in what I think is a very important debate about a very important issue. Just so people at home understand clearly what we're talking about, Ontario's hydroelectric system has a number of very large transmission lines. I'm not talking about distribution lines; I'm not talking about the hydro poles and hydro wires that distribute electricity to our homes. I'm talking about the huge transmission lines which are in many cases 100 metres, 200 metres, even perhaps in some cases 300 metres high, that carry the very high voltage wires. We're talking about thousands of kilometres of these transmission lines. Essentially, they run from the Quebec border all along the St Lawrence River, along Lake Ontario, along Lake Erie down to Windsor. They run from Niagara Falls through to Hamilton. They run across northern Ontario, into northern Ontario. So we're talking about very large corridors. In some cases, these corridors are 300 or 400 metres wide. It's almost as if someone had the forethought to build very large, continuous road allowances, highway allowances across Ontario so that at some future time, if we chose to, we could literally build almost unimpeded superhighways. To say this is very valuable real estate is to understate incredibly the value of these corridors.

We've heard much discussion from the government over the last few weeks that they want to sell Hydro One, that they'd be satisfied if they got, say, \$4.5 billion or \$5 billion for Hydro One. I think anyone who went out and looked at the corridors by themselves, just looked at these transmission corridors, and did a little bit of inquiry would discover that within the next 10 years the corridors themselves are going to be worth that amount of money.

I want to elucidate why they will be worth that amount of money. The first reason they're worth that amount of money is that if we look not just in Ontario but across North America and the rest of the western world, a number of telecommunications companies are looking for dedicated corridors where they can put down fibre optic cable. Yes, you could put fibre optic cable down your street, or I guess you could put fibre optic cable down a railway line or down the 401. But you've got some problems there. First of all, in many cases those corridors are already very crowded. Second, many of those corridors are now so criss-crossed and interrupted that you'd go to a considerable expense to put down your fibre optic cable. Third, you'd always have to worry in that kind of situation about somebody who wants to put in a new water line, a new sewer line, and the prospect of

having your fibre optic cable broken, torn apart or otherwise disrupted.

What is so incredibly valuable about these transmission corridors, which belong to all of us in Ontario, and what makes them so attractive, is that you could literally use them to put fibre optic cable from Montreal to Windsor, from Niagara Falls to Toronto, on into northern Ontario, across northern Ontario from Quebec to Manitoba, and you've also got the potential to have a number of other linkages, all of them without interruption. In fact, you could lease some of this space to telecommunications corporations for them to put down their fibre optic cable and the money from those leases would accrue to the people of Ontario, and we're talking here potentially about hundreds of millions of dollars a year in revenue.

But what does this government want to do? It wants to give that revenue away to its friends on Bay Street. Not once in this government's attempts to try to avoid any debate or discussion about Hydro One have they been willing to talk about not just the value in 10 years but the value right now of those hydro transmission corridors in terms of leasing out some of the space for fibre optic use.

1020

But not just fibre optic use; almost every day when I pick up a newspaper that refers to the transportation situation in the greater Toronto area or in the Golden Horseshoe or anywhere in southern Ontario, I read about transportation gridlock, about how the 401 is becoming impassable, the Don Valley is becoming impassable, the Gardiner and the Queen Elizabeth Way are becoming impassable, many of the arterial roads are becoming impassable. If we're to look around at what are the potentially best transportation corridors, whether for new highways or for rail or rapid transit or busways, anyone looking at a map or anyone walking down one of these Hydro One transmission lines would say, "Oh, this is a natural. If we have to build new highways, this is where they should go. If we have to put in rapid transit lines, this is where they should go. If we want to put in busways, this is where they should go. We won't have to expropriate any property, we won't have to tear down any buildings, we won't have to force people to move from their homes; this is a natural." Just in terms of their value as highway corridors or railway corridors or future rapid transit corridors, they are worth, when you think about the length and breadth of Ontario, hundreds of millions of dollars for that purpose.

But during the whole discussion, during this government's whole scheme to sell off Ontario's most important public asset, have they ever once referred to the incredible value of those transmission corridors for transportation purposes? If you listen to this government, they would have you believe this is worthless land. In fact, for the purposes of transportation it is, again, worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Let's just assume for a minute that CN or CP wants to build a new rail corridor, or let's assume for a minute that the federal government and Via Rail finally get their act

together and discover that we need to build some of the rapid transit high-speed train lines you see now in Japan or western Europe or even in the United States. This is where they would go. And from the perspective of the public of Ontario, even leasing corridors out for dedicated rail use at below their market value would still gain for the taxpayers of Ontario, the people of Ontario, hundreds of millions of dollars a year in new revenue.

What's even more ironic about this is that while this government refuses to recognize the value of these public lands, and while this government refuses to recognize that this could be a revenue source not only for paying down the debt of Hydro One but residual stranded debt, they refuse to recognize the public benefits to the people of Ontario. The great irony is that when you read the privatization document, when you read the prospectus that was put out by all those Bay Street folks who want to privatize our hydroelectric system, they talk about how much revenue can be made, in private hands, of course, to line the pockets of the folks on Bay Street. It's so incredible: if we only sell off our hydroelectric system, if we only sell off our transmission lines, people on Bay Street will be only too happy to use those hydro corridors to put in fibre optic telecommunication lines, only too happy to make revenue from leasing it for rapid transit or rail or new highways. But this government takes the obtuse position that in public hands they're not worth anything.

I think this just illustrates the degree to which this government is all about helping out its friends on Bay Street, all about giving them all kinds of opportunities to make money off a public service. But in terms of improving that public service or further developing that public service so that it benefits all the people of Ontario, no, they can't even talk about that, can't even consider that, can't even think about that.

These lands, the hydro transmission lines, above and beyond their value for transmitting electricity, which is immense, are clearly worth hundreds of millions of dollars a year in new revenue for Hydro One, and for the people of Ontario, if it is kept in public hands. Not only that; in rapidly urbanizing areas of the province, this is where you will see the opportunity to build new bicycle corridors. This is where you will see the opportunity, for example, to put in cross-country ski corridors or in-line skating corridors or paths to walk and run on. The list is endless, because you're talking about corridors that in many cases are 300 or 400 metres wide, corridors that have no other conflicting use, where you can easily bypass or get through areas that are otherwise congested.

This government, in its whole scheme, the scheme that they are unwilling to debate or discuss for selling off our hydro transmission system, refuses to consider any of these values, refuses to consider any of them. The government, to try to finesse this issue, has said that, oh, there would be some kind of process where the public could reacquire use of these lands. But if you read the fine print, should a privatized Hydro One sell them off, that capacity is ended. In other words, when you read the

fine print, when you look just beneath the surface, there is no strategy here. There is no strategy whatsoever for the protection of these lands and the value that they have for the public, either the monetary value that they have for the public or the use value that they have for the public. This is all about, again, taking something that has immense financial value, immense public interest value and simply turning it over to the government's friends on Bay Street so they can make as much money as they want off it, and the public interest be damned. This is wrong, clearly wrong. But it just serves to underscore how wrong this government's whole scheme is from beginning to end, their whole scheme to privatize our hydro-electricity system. It makes no sense from a public interest point of view to sell off the hydro corridors. It makes no sense from a public interest point of view to sell off what is a natural monopoly. It makes no sense from a public interest point of view to sell off the generating stations either.

I appreciate the opportunity to debate this part of this issue. It has merits on its own, but it serves to illustrate just how ill-founded, how misdirected, this government's whole scheme of hydroelectricity privatization is.

So I would support the resolution. In fact, I think the resolution should be stronger. I think this amendment to the Electricity Competition Act should be stronger. I think what we should be saying is that for all time, these hydro corridors shall remain in public hands for public use, all revenues should accrue to the public benefit, and no other purposes, no other uses, shall be considered. That, I think, has to be the spirit of the position in this debate. These lands are worth hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenue now. These lands are worth hundreds of millions of dollars in terms of future revenue, whether as information corridors, rapid transit corridors, rail corridors or new highway corridors, and they should be kept in the public realm so that the benefits of these public lands go to the public and not just a few speculators on Bay Street.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I understand what the member for York West is trying to do here, and I think the intent is certainly worth looking at. The premise of the bill, though, is that Hydro is going to be sold. I think that's not only a premise that's premature; in fact, it just may be wrong. I think the member has been candid in saying that if there is no sale, the bill is not even necessary.

I think the member for Kenora-Rainy River hit it on the head. I was also looking at the bill, and what the member is trying to do is he wants a transfer of the lands from Ontario Hydro into the province's hands. Then he allows under the bill for the transfer or sale of the lands into the hands of municipalities, public transportation groups or whatever, with the purpose of dealing with the recreational uses etc. The member for Kenora-Rainy River is right. If we're going to do this, you've got to have that protection. That's where this act does not provide that protection. If you're going to have protection for public use, it should be protection for all time. Anything could happen.

1030

Interjection.

Mr Tascona: The member for York West can say what he wants. I know he's very familiar with the development industry.

I think the member for Kenora-Rainy River hit it on the head with respect to the municipalities or these other groups. There's nothing to stop them from selling it off to their developer friends, and the member for York West is very familiar with developers in terms of what they would be able to do with the land. That's a fatal flaw with this bill, and I think the member knows that with respect to the protections that are needed. That's one flaw in this bill that's going to have to be dealt with to protect it from getting into the hands of the developers—who the member for York West is very familiar with—from sales through the municipalities and other groups.

I would think you're going to have to have a fundamental amendment in this bill—it's (7) of this bill. It's going to have to be amended to make sure that the lands are protected for public purposes, because the way it's structured right now the transfer goes into the hands of the province and they sell it to, say, the municipalities or these other groups. These other groups can do whatever they want. They can put them into the hands of the developer, of the private sector, which the member for York West is very familiar with, and that's not what this bill should be doing. I think he should be looking at a friendly amendment to make sure, as the member for Kenora-Rainy River has said, to put the protections where they should be. Otherwise, this bill is just a sham, because it's going to end up in the hands of private developers, which the member for York West is very familiar with. That's the truth. If he's not in favour of a friendly amendment to (7) of this bill, then everybody should know where this land's going to end up: private developers in the city of Toronto. That's where it's going to end up, and that's not what we want.

Our goals for Hydro One are very clear: we want to protect electricity customers and future generations of Ontarians with a safe and reliable supply of power at reasonable cost. We want to pay down the \$38 billion in debt and liabilities inherited from the old Hydro One. We also want to ensure that the capital to fund necessary investment in aging electricity infrastructure is available, but not at the expense of provincial taxpayers. The most important goal of this government is to protect the consumer, and before we make any decision on how to best proceed we are listening to the public with respect to this matter.

I'll quite frankly come out, as the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, in favour of public control of Ontario Hydro. That's what my position is, but we do have to deal with \$38 billion in debt and we have to deal with the management that is still running up debt. We have to deal with their efficiencies.

I'll say that public control with respect to Hydro One, which I think is the intent of what the member for York West is looking for, certainly is the thrust of his bill. The

bottom line here, and the litmus test for the member across the way, is—the member for Kenora-Rainy River, the leader of the NDP, has said it very clearly—are we going to protect public lands in perpetuity or are we going to basically go ahead with what the member is trying to accomplish here without safeguards: transfer from Hydro One over to the province; the province transfers it over to the municipalities and others groups. It doesn't stop them from selling it off to private developers, so what have we accomplished? Is this just another mechanism, an indirect mechanism, for the member for York West to get those valued lands to the private developers, who he is very familiar with? We know he's very familiar with those private developers.

I can support the intent of the bill but we need protections for the public and they're not there.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): If somebody wanted to truly protect the public, you'd do the honourable thing right now and stand up and say you're putting an end and a stop to the sale of Hydro One. That's how you can protect the public. What you're doing right now is leaving the public so vulnerable with this foolhardy attempt to sell off Hydro One.

You don't recognize the importance of these corridors. In some places in an urban centre these hydro corridors are the only areas of recreation because of this mentality of pave, pave, pave. The only green space that's left in a lot of urban centres right now are these hydro corridors. You need to preserve these. You need to preserve these for the young people. You need to preserve these for everybody for recreational uses, for transportation uses, for the sake of the animals. There is still a lot of wildlife in urban centres and these are the only areas where the animals have an opportunity to thrive, and you're prepared to sell this off.

I think too that you need to recognize the effect these transmission corridors have in rural Ontario. These transmission corridors have been purchased with an understanding of trust between Hydro and the farmers. The farmer knows what he or she is getting in dealing with Hydro One, and they've developed a good working relationship in opening up these hydro rights of way. What you're doing is selling out the farmers of this province, you're selling out rural Ontario in this foolhardy scheme, because you're not going to guarantee that that farmer is going to have protection over that corridor, that right-of-way. You're opening it right up, and I think it is a very wrong move to make.

I think too you need to think through a municipal perspective. There are a lot of municipalities that have sold off—I can think where we sold off for two hydro towers to go up through the middle of one of our parks in the city of St Thomas. If all of a sudden this corridor comes into private hands, how is that going to affect the public's ability to use a public park when you've got some kind of private company owning this transmission corridor? You're not thinking it through.

I think the other thing you need to think about too is that a lot of these corridors pass through some very sensi-

tive environmental areas and some sensitive archeological areas. These are areas that need to be protected. The best way to protect these sites is to keep these sites in public hands and not allow them to be opened up and left to the whim of a private entrepreneur.

So why don't you do the right thing? If you're truly committed to trying to help the people of Ontario and doing what's in the best interests of the people of Ontario, stop the sale of Hydro One. Have the guts. Mr Tascona just spoke up there. Why doesn't he speak up in his caucus and say to Ernie Eves and Chris Stockwell, "Stop the sale of Hydro One"?

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, it's a pleasure to see you in the chair this morning.

I really do want to be on the record. The very first thing is that I want to make a point of being the first member on this side of the House to recognize the press release this morning that Al McDonald, the new member for Nipissing, has just been confirmed into this House with a sweeping number. I met Al when I happened to visit the riding and saw him as a young entrepreneur, and I heard him speak clearly on this issue. I think he was looking, like many members in this caucus, for the government to do the right thing.

This morning we're talking about Bill 13, from the member for York West, An Act to amend the Electricity Act. It's clear in this House over the last few days that it has been the issue of the day. On review of the bill, I can say in a general sense that I support the sentiment. The sentiment I've heard right from the beginning of this discussion is the importance of the public lands under these transmission and distribution lines. Having served on the municipal council level, I know that these lands in many cases serve as connecting areas and walking trails and public spaces, and I for one think it's important that the public have full access to those lands.

I think the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, who is a beauty—there's no question that he's a beauty; he uses that term regularly—has brought to light a very important weakness in Mr Sergio's private member's bill, and I'm referring to subsection 1(7). For those listening, some of whom are here, "Her Majesty in right of Ontario may sell, lease or otherwise transfer hydro transmission corridor land to municipalities, public transit corporations and similar entities for public transit, recreational, infrastructure development and similar public purposes and for no other purpose."

I think the weakness in here, as the member—the beauty—from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has stated, is a risk. Some municipalities in the generation discussion on Ontario Hydro reconfiguration have indeed sold a local utility, and that sale of the local utility in many cases ended up as a private sector entity, which of course was an option they had.

Now we're talking about Mr Sergio's bill. If we're going to transfer some of these public assets, which I'm arguing are important assets for the public right of

access, then there is a piece of very vulnerable language in this that developers, who in many cases are friends to the Liberal government—we understand that. I think the point I'm trying to make is I'm not sure if he deliberately designed this error or if it's just kind of a mistake in drafting. I want him to respond to this question.

1040

In my concluding remarks I want to put on the record our response to the issue of Hydro One rights of way. Our government has long been on record with its commitment to protect the province's interest in the ability to use the land along hydro transmission corridors for public purposes. Through SuperBuild, the government has taken steps to ensure hydro transmission corridor lands will continue to be available for public uses after the government decision on what to do with Hydro One. The government recognizes that the primary purpose of hydro corridors is for transmitting electricity while maintaining the public interest in the land.

At every briefing I've had, and I've heard Minister Hodgson speak on that and I've heard every one of the ministers involved in this issue, including caucus members like the beauty from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford—

Interjection: Beautiful.

Mr O'Toole:—the beautiful member says that is our wish as well. It's not clear enough in this bill. I support the theory, but I think there are some weaknesses in the bill. I'm a bit perplexed about how we're going to deal with it.

I think in reading—my final remarks here this morning—it's kind of a flip-flop that's gone to the other side again. I'm not sure of their position on the generation side. They kind of agree with the model that's out there now. But on the transmission side, they haven't clearly stated their position. Now they're criticizing our Premier because he is listening and he's prepared to look at a new model. This is, as he said in the throne speech, a new era. We have a Premier now who's listening. He is responding, and that does reflect in his comments more recently: "Eves said" yesterday "his new Conservative administration is open to Hydro One remaining in public hands." What could be clearer? Clearly the four principles—public interest, protecting the consumer, having safe, reliable, affordable electricity—are in our plan, and our plan includes looking at all the options. This bill leads some of us in the right direction, but it doesn't do the right thing at the end of the day.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Spin, spin and more spin. They're going all over the place. This very timely, very astute and very thoughtful bill is what is necessary, and I ask this question: why is it necessary? Why? They can't get it right. They're going all over the map, and they just don't know how to protect the people's interest here in Ontario. The public wants this bill. It protects 50,000 acres of land that we presently own on behalf of all the people of Ontario. They can't get it right. They call this a new era. Then why is the former Premier still in an office in this place, and why are we still paying for it? Is he job-hunting or something? What's going on with the new

era? It's all over the map. These guys are putting on the same spin they've been putting on since day one. They're just trying to make everybody else look like it's their fault. It's the blame game all over again.

Why does the public want this? It's a matter of trust. We want trust in our government. Why is that? Let me point out something to the public. We've got a bill that is now going to take care of something we put out, and we now know the trust factor is not there. The trust factor says there was a study done, as outlined in the *Globe and Mail*, a report from the University of Victoria, the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance. Ontario received 10 out of a mark of 100 in terms of protecting public land. The parks these guys take credit for, for creating this legacy of great wealth—what do they do? They allow logging on this; they allow mining on this. They're not protecting any of the land they presently have charge of. That's the matter of trust. We want to know if we can trust this government in terms of putting this project right. That's why this bill is necessary. This bill is necessary because it's correcting the faux pas of that government over and over again.

The member opposite wants to read a clause in here. Let me finish the rest of the clause that he did not point out to the public. Subsection (7) says that it can go over to the municipalities or public transit or the similar entities, for what? For what specific purposes? For the purposes of "public transit, recreational, infrastructure development and similar public" uses "and for no other" uses. So the baloney that's being spun over there is talking about private interests and developers and is impugning the good name of the member from York West. I think they should be ashamed of themselves for doing something like that. The fact that they're trying to make this spin as if it's some kind of personal agenda to take care of the public interests this way, they should be ashamed of themselves for trying to make a spin like that.

The letter is very clear here, very clear, that this member understood the problem from square one and designed a bill that was very timely and necessary. I thank the member for putting that bill forward and I support it 100%.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): The bill raises an issue that's well worth considering. It does, however, require a number of questions to be asked. Some of those questions are going to appear obvious, but they're also important. I'd like to suggest a few of those questions now for the consideration of the House and the public today and as this issue receives ongoing attention.

The first question we have to ask is, what precisely does Hydro One now need, and what does it need in the foreseeable future? That seems obvious, and it may well be that some of what they have now they don't need. It is also important to note that they don't necessarily have to have ownership of property in order to run lines across them. It may well be that their true need is not ownership but rather a right-of-way. Those are questions that I think are important. It's easy to ask and it's easy to stand here today and draw attention to these questions, but it's

actually quite complex to determine what the correct answers to those questions are.

It's obvious that whatever is needed for the purposes of electricity transmission has to be attached to Hydro One. The question this bill really raises is, how do we determine what's needed, and how do we determine what's not needed? This of course is now done by Hydro One itself. Perhaps that system should continue; perhaps it shouldn't. There are various ways of changing that if those are deemed to be better solutions than the ones we have now.

The bill also does not address what I would think is a fairly significant issue. Suppose lands are not needed by Hydro One but also aren't needed for recreational, public transit or similar purposes. What's to be done with them then? As I understand this bill, the lands would not be in a position to be disposed of by Hydro One. That doesn't seem to make sense to me.

This issue, however, also relates to the whole question of ownership of Hydro One, and ultimately that question has to be determined prior to the merits of this bill ultimately being determined.

We do know that Hydro as a whole—or the former Hydro—had \$38 billion in debt, and that does not include the unknown costs of the disposition of the nuclear facilities. Of that debt, \$21 billion is stranded, in other words cannot be paid by what was Ontario Hydro and what are the successor entities.

It's important to ask the question, how did that mess happen? I'd like to suggest to the House that it was because Ontario Hydro had no accountability to the shareholders because it wasn't the politicians' money at stake, and Ontario Hydro had no accountability to the lenders because the government was guaranteeing the money and the lenders didn't care whether or not Ontario Hydro could pay the money back. In other words, in sum, there was no accountability. That being the case, I think we have to address those issues before we address in a final form the issues raised by this bill.

In summary, all I can really say to the member is this: he raises issues that are important; he raises issues that do have to be further considered. I think he agrees with us that they can't be considered in isolation, that they have to be considered as a part of an overall problem. It's not a new problem; it's a problem really that has been with us in one form or another for almost 100 years.

But I think we have to invite the public to give some input on all these issues, we have to listen carefully to what their suggestions are and then we have to look at what is really going to work, both in terms of providing the right result and what would be an efficient process to get to the right result.

In sum, there is a lot more work to be done yet on this issue.

1050

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to commend Mr Sergio for bringing forward Bill 13, which is a response to the unwise efforts of this government to sell Hydro One to the private sector, although as I stand

in the House today, I'm not certain whether or not that's true. I listened to the member who represents, among other places, the city of Barrie, who says he wants it to remain in public hands. I understood, because I watched the Conservative leadership campaign with a good deal of interest—I watched with interest as several of them said, "Absolutely, we're selling Hydro One. It's gone." Now, with all the pressure that I see on the government, it looks like the government may be trying to beat a retreat on this; we don't know. But at least the member wants to address these lands, which should remain for the purpose of the public good.

I heard members across make reference to land developers and so on, trying to insinuate that there is a closeness between members of the House. I tell him to watch what is happening in Durham, the lands which were exchanged for the moraine. Watch very carefully who gets what in Durham and how closely connected they might be to the governing party. That's what we have to watch.

I couldn't help but be amazed by the fact that the other night Premier Eves was down at the convention centre or the Sheraton Centre, one of the two, raising \$2 million in one night. I think just a few of those individuals might be contributors to the Progressive Conservative Party. If you leave these lands in private hands, if Hydro One is sold, if you proceed with what you've been saying you're going to do for the last six months at least, and that is, sell Hydro One to the private sector, these lands might well fall into private hands.

What the member has suggested in this bill, which you can amend or improve if it goes to committee, if you don't like certain provisions of it, and we are always happy to hear those representations made by all members of the House, he clearly says they should be reserved for public transit, for recreation, for infrastructure development and similar public purposes—not for private purposes; for public purposes, for the public good.

This government has allowed, during its reign, the farmland of this province to be paved from one end of the province to the other, and there are members of this government who will not be happy until you have paved everything from the edge of Metropolitan Toronto to Fort Erie and the whole Niagara Peninsula.

You changed the law. There was a provision in the Planning Act of Ontario which was much tougher than what we see today. It would have prevented this urban sprawl. It would have called for what the government is now attaching itself to: true smart growth. What did the government do? It weakened that provision. So all across this province we see prime farmland being paved. I can tell you there are people in the Niagara Peninsula—developers—who are rubbing their hands, waiting to pave that good farmland, where the soil is compatible, first of all, with the growing of tender fruit and, second, where the climatic conditions are there.

The member for York West has certainly made an effort with this bill to try to save these lands for public purposes. We're going to need public transit, not 1,000

more highways in the province. We have to expand our public transit in this province so that we use our resources in a much better way than we have already. I want to say as well that for recreational purposes, we want to retain these lands as open space that people can enjoy; for infrastructure development when we require the renewal of certain services; and, as he says, for similar public purposes.

He wouldn't have to bring this bill forward if you people weren't trying to peddle Hydro One, the crown jewel of electrical production in Ontario, the transmission grid. If you weren't willing to sell that off to people, then the member wouldn't have had to bring this forward.

I turn to the whip and I say, am I supposed to sit down soon?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr Bradley: I am. So I simply want to congratulate the member. He's done a great job.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): It's always difficult to follow the member from St Catharines, but I will. The member for York West must be commended for bringing in this bill. The member for York West is trying to act in the interests of the public. The member for York West, Ontario Liberals and Dalton McGuinty seek to protect the public interest here. We have to do this because right now the executive, the Premier, the government of Ontario, is in fact engaging in an exercise that I think our kids and grandkids will look back at and find appalling—the year, the month, the day that the province of Ontario sold off Ontario Hydro, sold off the lands therein.

I think about some of the grave errors that governments have made historically in the past. You think about the great rip-offs that governments have fallen victim to in the past. You have to think of the sale of Manhattan Island to the Dutch for \$24 in the 16th century. They will say in the 21st century that this foolish government, which had options, which had a choice, which was told by the people not to sell off the electricity transmission grid, in fact did so. They did so, and it will be the equivalent—mark my words—of selling off Manhattan Island for 24 bucks.

What is the member for York West trying to do? He's trying to hang on to what little public interest we can rescue from this exercise. I think it's incumbent upon the members in this House, particularly on the government side, to hold true to the promise of the throne speech that this would be an open and consultative government. This, I would imagine, would be the very first test of that open and consultative promise. Why? This is private members' business. Here's an opportunity for the front bench of the radical right, by which I mean the backbench of the Ontario PC caucus, to have an opportunity to say on behalf of their constituents, "Yes, we don't want to sell off valuable public lands."

I listened very closely to the member for London West, who talked about Hydro One as if it were the same thing—

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): Do you want to nationalize the TransCanada PipeLines?

Mr Bryant: Princeton's prince of privatization has just arrived, ladies and gentlemen, to make sure that in fact the privatization agenda of this government continues. We look forward to seeing his position on this particular bill.

The member for London West talks about the sale of Hydro One as if it has got something to do with Ontario generation. The province of Ontario in the 1990s underwent a process of electricity restructuring reform, and it was all about generation. To throw in electricity transmission at the last minute would be like, in the middle of a debate over hospital restructuring, deciding to privatize the ambulances. One has got nothing to do with the other. In the 1990s the concern wasn't about the natural monopoly of the electricity transmission grid, and today Hydro One is a natural monopoly and a natural money-maker, generating more than \$300 million every year for the people of Ontario—we, the people. This government wants to give that away. Why this government would want to give that away is surely the question of this legislative session, whether they be fools or knaves.

I say to you particularly in the backbench there, we need to see the government's—

The Acting Speaker: The member for York West has two minutes to reply.

Mr Sergio: First of all, let me thank all the members who have participated in the debate. May I send a copy to my good friend Mr Tascona, please? I would invite my colleagues and friends the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and the member for Durham to share and read again my private member's bill. They don't have to go any further than reading the text, which for the benefit of the public, I'm going to do on behalf of the House again. This will help to eliminate any distorting or misleading statements which may be attributed to my bill here today.

1100

It says that the bill amends the Electricity Act to remove from it the assets of Ontario Hydro and its successor in case they sell it. The hydro transmission corridor lands are to be held by the province for recreational, public transit and similar purposes. Nowhere in my bill, Mr Speaker and my colleague Mr Tascona, does it make any mention of selling it to third parties.

Further to that, let me address just for a second the clause that they have picked from my private member's bill. I know they have no problems with this clause, because they are both lawyers, I believe, and I know they can read legal affinities. The problem is that they are getting orders from high above. It says that under no circumstances is the land going to be sold to anybody else unless it's given to the municipalities in case there is a need. If there is a problem, it's because they don't want to deal with the issue. They want to do what they want to do, and the public will not have this land saved for their future use.

TENANT PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT
(FAIRNESS IN RENT INCREASES), 2001
LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION
DES LOCATAIRES (AUGMENTATIONS
ÉQUITABLES DES LOYERS)

Mr Caplan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act to amend the Tenant Protection Act, 1997 to ensure fairness to Ontario's tenants / Projet de loi 134, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection des locataires en vue d'assurer un traitement équitable des locataires de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Today is a critical time to have this debate. It's incredibly appropriate. It's clear to me that Ontario's tenants are under siege. The Tenant Protection Act, so called, is a clear contributor to the attack on tenants.

I just want to very quickly clarify what Ontario's tenants are facing today. Vacancy rates are at an all-time low. Rent increases are going far beyond the rate of inflation. Evictions are being generated at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal at a record pace, and affordable accommodation is scarce, if not totally non-existent, in many communities across our province.

When you look at the bottom line for tenants, the picture is even more disturbing. Study after study shows that half of all Ontario's tenants pay more than 30% of their gross household income on rent. In other words, 50% of all tenants pay more than the government agrees that they should as an affordability measure. Even more startling, one out of every four tenants, 25% of all renters in the province of Ontario, pay half—half—of their gross household income on rent. That's the borderline; that's the edge of homelessness.

These same tenants are not only being assessed by the guideline rent increases that are allowed every year. The problem is that they've been hit over the past several years with above-the-guideline rent increases for capital repairs and for utility cost increases. Currently, 80,000 tenant households face rent increases above the guideline based on extraordinary utility costs alone. The problem arises that they pay these increases forever and forever. There's no relief when the landlords' bills have been paid off or when the utility costs come down. I don't know how many people could afford an increase in their homeownership costs of 6% to 12% every year over a number of years. Yet that's what tenants in Ontario face.

Let's be clear. For all members of this House, let me review for you how the increases work. Every year tenants get an annual increase based on a formula of 2% plus an amount justified for inflation and other costs and increases adjusted over a three-year rolling average. Landlords can then apply for above-guideline rent increases of 4% more for capital costs each year to re-

capture the expenditures. They can also apply for an unlimited increase related to so-called extraordinary cost increases. Once the rent increase is granted by the government's rubber stamp, the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, it becomes a permanent part of the rent the tenants pay. Even if the costs come down, the rents do not.

Once balcony repairs have been paid off, should the tenants have to pay the rent increases related to it? I say no. The government's law says yes. Natural gas prices have dropped since the dramatic increase in price that we saw last year. Now that the landlords' costs have dropped, should the tenants have to pay the increases related to that? I say no. The government's law says yes. It is patently unfair to tenants. If the landlord no longer bears the cost, then neither should the tenant—a basic measure of fairness. That's the intent of Bill 134: to bring some real fairness into the way rent increases are determined and administered. Frankly, it's the least we can do to bring a modest amount of fairness to the government's rent regulation rules.

Elinor Mahoney from Parkdale Community Legal Services put it this way: "At a time when deregulation and privatization of hydro is very much a public concern, Bill 134 provides a fairer and more rational approach to fluctuating utility costs than the Tenant Protection Act. Bill 134 provides the opportunity for the government to show that it is willing to make changes necessary to correct the unfairness of the current approach." Elinor is here today with her colleague Joe Myers from Willowdale Community Legal Services. Mary Todorow from the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario is also here. I just want to divert from the remarks on my bill and thank them all for their efforts in regard to tenant advocacy. Their ongoing work has, in part, inspired this bill.

I know that we're going to hear from members of the government, and they're going to say they can't possibly support this bill because the administration costs would be onerous. Nothing could be further from the truth. I'm sure the government members would be very aware of the fact that any landlord application for above-guideline rent increases has to be accompanied by the necessary paperwork, by the receipts and bills that they have. It would be a simple matter to file an appropriately updated financial statement on an annual basis, they have to do it anyway—to their same rubber stamp at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. To suggest otherwise is simply government members and government policy trying to find bad excuses in an attempt to further punish tenants in Ontario.

I want to speak about the other major provision in the bill. It's the restoration of something called orders preventing rent increases, or OPRIs. One of the most common complaints that I'm sure all members of this House receive is from tenants who are concerned that they're receiving rent increases when proper maintenance is not being done to their building. In many cases, the buildings have outstanding work orders from cities against them, yet nothing prevents landlords from seeking and obtain-

ing these kinds of rent increases. At the tribunal, tenants are routinely told by adjudicators, government appointees, that their claims of maintenance issues and the like are not valid. The adjudicators are supported by the so-called Tenant Protection Act, and that has to change. Bill 134 will do precisely that.

Every year landlords are granted, as part of the basic guideline increase, monies that are ostensibly for repair and maintenance, yet the law that supports this provides no means to enforce that these basic tasks are being done. OPRIs provide this incentive because they compel landlords to do basic maintenance which can complement the provisions to allow for increases for capital repair. These measures were removed from the Tenant Protection Act. The government will tell you that tenants can simply file an application for rent abatement with the tribunal. But it's a sad day when tenants are asked to spend money and wait an extraordinary length of time to get tenant matters heard at the tribunal. Members of this House need to realize that we're not talking about getting a new pool installed in the building or an upgrade to the health club. We're talking about mould, water leaks, broken appliances that are not being repaired, safety lighting, broken elevators, falling plaster. These works cover quality-of-life issues. To grant rent increases when the basic issues are not even being addressed is ridiculous and unfair.

Paul York of the Greater Toronto Tenants' Association summed it up well when he said, "The landlord argument that OPRIs will act as a disincentive to doing needed repairs is not compelling because a landlord cannot apply to recoup his costs for capital repairs until the repairs are done, which is the condition for lifting an OPRI." Bill 134 will ensure a greater state of good repair in apartment buildings by requiring landlords to do all the necessary repairs before they can get further rent increases. The current system of enforcing property standards is inadequate. Bill 134 will provide an additional incentive to provide a minimum standard of repair in Toronto's aging rental stock. Most property standards officials would agree.

1110

I'm looking forward to the debate on this bill. I'm hoping that members of all parties, all members of this chamber, will support this important, and modest, I would add, step to improving the lives of tenants in Ontario.

Just the other day I presented a petition in this House with thousands of signatures of tenants from across Toronto and Ontario. I want to thank all of those tenants who took the time to sign that petition. I'm hoping that all members of the House will respect the voices of tenants and their desire to bring fair and reasonable first steps in the needed reform of the so-called Tenant Protection Act.

I have received letters, faxes and e-mails from advocates and individual tenants across the province. I just want to read a few out to you today.

From Lyn Trow of the Older Women's Network: "The Older Women's Network is deeply concerned about the

crisis in shortages of affordable housing. Many older women trying to live on old age security are living in dire circumstances. Inability to feed themselves nutritiously because of high rents contributes to poor health and high health care costs. Bill 134 is a modest step toward improving the situation under the Tenant Protection Act. It has our full support."

From Joyce Waddell-Townsend:

"David, your Bill 134 sounds very reasonable to me. I guess I understand that landlords need to be compensated for repairs that they make to properties. But once they have recouped their costs, they should not be able to continue with higher rents.

"Good luck,
"Joyce, 169"—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member's time has expired.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm not going to take much time but I want to congratulate my good friend for bringing forward this motion. I think it's a progressive motion.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Don Valley East.

Mr Bisson: From Don Valley East. Thank you for pointing out the riding.

This government has done an abysmal job when it comes to rent control overall. They have basically stripped away the protections that were put in place by previous governments and more specifically the provisions that we had put in place under the NDP government of Bob Rae, which was real rent control.

I just want to remind the member that he's now, all of a sudden, the advocate of tenants across the province. That caucus voted against real rent control when we were in power. When we were the government, we brought forward real rent control that meant real protection for tenants. We knew the Tories would vote against us because they've never believed in that. We accept it; we don't like it. But we were shocked, because at the time the Liberal opposition voted against our rent control legislation. But that wasn't bad enough. When I was the housing critic in 1996 and brought a motion asking the House to reconsider the changes the Tories had made and return to NDP rent controls, the Liberals voted against it a second time. I understand it's the position of the Liberal caucus at this point that they still haven't adopted real rent control.

I think this is a step forward. It's a baby step but it is an important step. We will vote for it because we think it's progressive, but I'm asking the Liberals to take a step the whole way. If you're going to advocate for tenants, this is a good first step, but I want you to join us and our critic, Mr Prue, in calling on this government to reinstate real rent control for the people of Ontario and put in place real social housing programs that build the kinds of housing we need in this province.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to speak on the private member's bill from the member for Don Valley East. I'd like to

specifically address the issue of building maintenance and work orders, since that is what is at issue under Bill 134. It very clearly says that in the bill: "work orders."

Let me remind the House that under the former Rent Control Act, maintenance of rental buildings was poor. Some rental buildings in the province had hundreds of outstanding work orders. When there was an outstanding work order, the former act allowed orders prohibiting rent increases to be issued. This was an unfair system because all the outstanding work orders were treated as if they were the same. For instance, failure to comply with an order to paint a door had the same effect as a failure to comply with a work order for a major structural defect. It was obviously an ineffective tool, and our government chose not to carry this provision over into the Tenant Protection Act. Instead, the Tenant Protection Act got tough with property owners who failed to take care of their buildings and it gave property owners the incentive to maintain their buildings, including above-the-guideline rent increases based on capital expenditures.

These measures have worked. A recent survey has shown that the average capital repairs have gone from \$368 per unit in 1995 to \$1,178 per unit in the year 2000. When you translate this activity across Ontario's entire rental stock, it likely represents \$1 billion in capital investment and tens of thousands of jobs. Investments are being made to improve garages, elevators, balconies and a wide variety of other structural elements. Everywhere building owners are undertaking necessary maintenance and repair, which leads to better rental units and a higher quality of life for tenants.

If there is inadequate building maintenance, tenants are protected. The Tenant Protection Act allows tenants to apply for rent abatements. It also increases the powers of municipalities to enforce their property standard by-laws. Property standards officers have the power to issue a work order immediately to a landlord in cases where there is a violation. It's an offence for a landlord to fail to comply with a work order within a set time frame. Under the Tenant Protection Act, the maximum fine for a landlord who fails to comply with a work order has been increased to \$100,000. The actions of our government have already helped to ensure that landlords keep their buildings properly maintained and abide by work orders.

Bill 134: I think what I've heard here is an attack on the Rental Housing Tribunal, and it's also an attack on municipalities. In terms of their power, they have the power to deal with the issues we're dealing with right now. They are responsible. For municipalities, if a tenant wants a work order, they go to the property standards officer, say, "Take a look at my unit," and those work orders are issued. I haven't heard anything from the member opposite that the city of Toronto isn't doing their job with respect to property standards. They are doing their job. The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal is the institution, the administrative body, that deals with these problems and they have the power to correct the problems. I can tell you that the powers they have with respect to dealing with work orders and with protecting

tenants with respect to these rent increases are very broad and do the job with respect to any landlord who would try to misrepresent what they are trying to do. If they don't do it, quite frankly, they are going to be hauled back in front of the rental housing tribunal. It certainly would affect them in terms of future prospects of trying to get rent increases for their building.

It's sort of a vicious circle here. The rental housing tribunal is attacked by the member. We don't hear anything about the municipal body in terms of how they are doing with property standards. I'll have to take it from his silence that they're doing a good job with respect to enforcing property standards and issuing work orders in the city of Toronto. I'm not going to accept the member's argument that the city of Toronto isn't doing their job with respect to work orders, because that's what his bill is about—work orders. It has nothing to do with fairness in rents; it has to do with work orders.

As I said, the investment in building maintenance has increased tremendously in this province and the pressure is on landlords to maintain their buildings because of the powers that have been given to municipalities. So I think this bill does nothing to address the real issue here of maintenance and work orders, because it is already being dealt with.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I am pleased to rise in support of this bill brought forward by the member from Don Valley East. I represent a riding in which 68% are tenants—the second-largest proportion of tenants in Ontario. I can tell you that the tenants across the riding of St Paul's have fallen victim to the many injustices that are found in the Tory anti-tenant legislation.

1120

One of the injustices is the unjust enrichment that takes place whereby landlords get to keep above-the-guideline rent increases even in circumstances where the basis of that increase—for instance, an initial increase in utilities—goes away. So they get both; they get the double increase. They get the benefit of the increase in rent and they get the additional benefit of not having to pay for the initial expense. The purpose of this bill, in part, is to address that injustice; it's to address that unjust enrichment. That is why Dalton McGuinty and Ontario Liberals support this above-the-guideline rent rollback. That is why Dalton McGuinty and Ontario Liberals support real rent control across the board.

I listen to the other members, and I listen to the third party, suggest that somehow they have a monopoly over the concept of rent control. In fact, I know very well that the third party knows: that rent control in a reduced form was introduced by Bill Davis; it was improved upon by a Liberal government; and, I think, we had some evolutions as well under the NDP government. I think it's fair to say.

I like the idea of competition for the benefit of tenants. I like that. I like political competition for the benefit of tenants. But let's be clear, Liberals support rent control; Liberals support an above-the-guideline rent rollback; and Liberals support a crackdown on apartment building

disrepair. That's what this bill is about. It permits a crackdown on apartment disrepair. You want to raise your rent, landlord? Well, you better make sure that your building is in order. You get an above-the-guideline rent increase and the basis upon which that disappears, then you get a rollback. That's just fairness. Isn't that fair?

Mr Caplan: Fair.

Mr Bryant: That is fairness and these are circumstances where we're saying to the government—the new, open, consultative government—

Mr Marchese: With a heart.

Mr Bryant: —with a big heart, that we wish we could bring forth legislation that would repeal the Tenant Protection Act because we support the repeal of the Tenant Protection Act. We support that but we know that we're not going to be able to convince members on the government side to support the repeal of the Tenant Protection Act. We can say to members on the government side of the House, here's a bill that addresses two injustices: the injustice of apartment building disrepair—which I know the government does not support. They have an opportunity to show that they don't support that by supporting this bill and that they recognize the unjust enrichment that occurs when a landlord gets an above-the-guideline rent increase when the circumstances for that disappear after the award is provided. The government could not possibly support that unjust enrichment and today they have an opportunity to make it clear that they're not anti-tenant. Right now, I have to tell you, the people of St Paul's see the Tory government as anti-tenant, and today is an opportunity for you to say, "No, we're not." Here's a very fair and reasonable amendment to legislation. We may have fundamental disagreements about rent control—we're for it, you're against it—but fine, we'll settle that debate on another day, election day, but for now we have an opportunity to make a fair and reasonable change. That's the bill that's before you now.

How much time do I have?

Mr Smitherman: You have another 25 seconds.

Mr Bryant: So I say to you, on behalf of thousands of tenants in the riding of St Paul's, millions of tenants in the province of Ontario, who have seen rent increases of sometimes 30% over the last three years, here is an opportunity for this House to rectify this injustice.

Mr Marchese: I just want to say very clearly that I support la motion de mon ami from Don Valley East—and I've got more to say.

I want to say to you, Speaker, the Tories make no bones about whom they support. They love landlords; they do. The more money that can be given to them in whatever form, they like it. They make no bones about that. Do they like tenants? I suspect they do, but do they want to extract money from tenants to give to the landlords? Oh, yes. They call that fairness. We call that stealing from people who have so little money. You heard the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford earlier on. He makes no bones about whom he supports.

Tenants are hurting in this province. You may not know there are 3.3 million tenants in this province, if not

more—almost a third of the population. And why are they hurting? Close to 500,000 of them are paying over 50% of their income to live in those buildings. Almost half a million are hurting today more than ever before because of the policies of this government. Rents are skyrocketing under the Tenant Protection Act that was supposed to protect tenants but is really taking money from the poor and giving it to the rich. Those who own homes are almost twice as rich as those who live in apartment buildings. But under the policies of this government, rents are skyrocketing beyond people's ability to pay. They're not wealthy like the landlords and like most Tory supporters, yet the landlords are the beneficiaries of these bad policies presumably designed to support tenants. Tenants are hurting.

They didn't support our rent control act when we introduced it under the leadership of Bob Rae. Quite frankly, neither did the Liberals. But I don't blame the member for Don Valley East, because he wasn't here. I don't blame the member for St Paul's, because he wasn't here. I don't blame my friend George Smitherman from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, because he wasn't here. They could stand up and say they support rent control, but the others didn't. The others who were here when we introduced rent control did not support it. What did they support? They supported meaningful rent control. What is "meaningful rent control"? We don't know. What is probably meaningful rent control for the Liberals is whatever is fair. So the Tories say, "We love landlords." The Liberals say, "We love them too"—

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): We love everybody.

Mr Marchese: —yes, you do—"but we love tenants as well. We love them both, so what we try to do as the Liberal Party is find meaningful rent control, which is something that is fair to the landlords—God bless them, because they're not reaping enough money to enrich themselves; they're really in desperate shape—and something that helps tenants." This initiative brought forth by mon ami, the member for Don Valley East, attempts to introduce measures that were there in the rent control New Democrats brought in, but it doesn't go quite as far.

So the two measures that the Liberals have introduced are—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: —I would remind you that in the rent control act that the NDP brought in we had orders prohibiting rent increases on units with outstanding orders. These orders prohibited any increase, not just those above guideline. Those who were in the field of property standards, officials dealing with property standards, said our policies were effective. Why? Because if there was an outstanding order, they would fix it.

The Tories said, "It's not good, because if we leave that measure in place, the landlords are just not going to make enough money." They took it out. The Liberals are saying, "OK, that measure was good. We'll bring it in now as part of a private bill, but we won't go as far. We'll keep guideline increases." Good God, if a landlord

has guideline increases, that's a lot of profits for him. So the Liberal measure proposed today is OK, but it doesn't go far enough.

1130

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm telling Mac Makarchuk what you're saying.

Mr Marchese: What I am saying, Jim, is that as a measure it attempts to bridge the gap somewhat, but it's a half measure. Would I oppose this half measure? No. Is it good enough? No, but it's better than what these people are offering, so I'm going to support it.

The other measure speaks about under our Rent Control Act tenants could apply for an extraordinary operational cost decrease. Under the Tenant Protection Act you can't do it. They eliminated that. Caplan's bill would rectify this and would have the tribunal decrease the rent without a tenant application, but only for the first three years. After that, tenants would not be able to apply for such a decrease; they would be on their own. So as a measure, it's OK. Does it go far enough? It doesn't.

There are other measures that my colleague Michael Prue from Beaches-East York will probably get into so that I don't have to cover it. Otherwise, I would take it all and he doesn't have enough to obviously get into. So I'm going to leave those measures there for my buddy Michael Prue.

My main point is that this Conservative government is unequivocal about whom they support. They're for landlords. Their tribunal is made up of—you guessed it—all Tory appointments, most of whom are lawyers. They're all Conservative. They make no bones about it, and they're unashamed about the fact that these tribunal members are all Conservative. What we had under rent control was that if you had a problem you went to the courts. Judges dealt with these issues that now appointed, politically appointed members, are dealing with. Who do you think they are supporting? They're supporting the landlords. This is an eviction machine designed, crafted, manufactured by Tories to evict tenants and not to help tenants. These guys are so good. They're so good at beating up on 3.3 million tenants. The only thing I hope, Michael, is that one day these tenants are just going to rally against this government, rally against them, indeed rally against any political party that treats them so profoundly unfairly. I'm just waiting for that day. If 3.3 million tenants vote, this government will be defeated.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure this morning to comment on Bill 134 of the member from Don Valley East. On review of this private member's bill, in general I support many of the themes here. Double accounting, as I will call it, that is, having rent increases based on increased capital and other expenditures and then being compounded over a number of years and never being rolled back, I theoretically don't have a problem with that.

My problem is that it does have some what I call red tape issues, administrative issues of setting up a registry of some sort for these issues. So my position is that as it's currently drafted I can't support it. But here's my point.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Speaker, with your indulgence, I clearly want to put a few points on the record, if I'm not continuously interrupted by the Liberal Party.

The member from Trinity-Spadina: I have the deepest respect for his commitment to the constituent group that he speaks to and I do support his genuineness and sincerity because I know where he's coming from. But if I listen to his argument, it doesn't complete the debate. He makes the point—and I quote him to some extent—"Landlords make enough." If I follow through that argument and there was this gouging profit going on, I ask you, how come there are very few apartments being built? If it was that lucrative—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: I'm going to follow up with the member from St Catharines's interjection. It's a very valid point he makes. The real substantive issues here in affordable housing and rent itself is, why are developers not building rental apartments? It goes back to one of the premises inherent in the municipal tax system, which says that the property tax, which is embedded in the rent per month, is four times residential in Toronto. It's 400% more expensive on the property tax issue for a renter and a person who owns their own home. The municipalities could reduce that burden by reducing the burden on the renter, the tax rate. If you look at the rate, they pay four times, and yet all of the Toronto councillors—Mr Prue probably will get up and talk about it—have failed to address it. They, by resolution, did that in council: forced the renters to pay more taxes than the private homeowner.

There's another issue here that I don't believe is well understood. It's the federal government. When I look at affordable housing, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp—actually, Minister Hodgson raised this question. It's worth it for people listening at home to get a copy of Hansard from two days ago. The CMHC passes a premium on to the federal government for the amount of money raised in doing these finance deals under CMHC. Those premiums flow to the federal government, into general revenue. The annual value of the premiums is about \$400 million, and of that \$400 million, over 50% comes from Ontario, which would be \$200 million. What that really means is this: when the affordable housing debate and the Golden report comes back, what do they offer Ontario? About \$70 million. That isn't even meeting the commitment of the revenue they are already collecting from first-time homebuyers.

What have we actually done? We really do want people of all income levels to have affordable housing. The land transfer tax is eliminated on first-time homebuyers. We encourage—in fact, that's what this affordable housing argument is about. It should be providing, whether it's a condominium and having proper mortgaging under CMHC, for first-time, young families. That's the pride of ownership. At the end of the day, at the end of the paying, we encourage ownership over rental.

The tribunal itself as it is struck has very strict guidelines. The member for Scarborough East will certainly outline that, as the former Minister of Municipal Affairs. He speaks in caucus very passionately on behalf of renters. I can assure you that I am waiting to hear his comments and I'm sure that all the people in the House have been attending here this morning to hear from the member for Scarborough East.

With that, I will relinquish the balance of my time.

Mr Bradley: Almost needless to say, I'm very supportive of this legislation that my colleague has brought forward. Mr Caplan has a long history of speaking on behalf of tenants, and I certainly want to congratulate him on bringing this bill forward.

He brought forward a bill that I think has at least a remote chance of being passed. To bring a bill that is more extreme, there's no chance that the government will pass that bill. So I think he has been very wise in tabling before this House for debate a bill which has a remote chance of perhaps picking up a few of the red Tories—I can't find any; oh, there's one in the House—among the government benches, because it is needed.

Members have pointed out something that's a problem right now. I am the Chair of the government agencies committee, so I get to observe the people who are appointed. As a neutral Chair I would not offer a comment, but I would say that members of the committee who are there tell me that week after week, the people who are appointed all coincidentally happen to be strong supporters of the Conservative Party. I saw one who was a friend of my colleague from Scarborough East who was on the tribunal and now is on the environmental review tribunal. He went from the rent tribunal to the review tribunal. He was a good fellow, a generous fellow. He gave \$1,000 to the campaign of the member for Scarborough East, so a good friend of his. I want to commend the member for Scarborough East; he came in to committee to support his friend. Even though some other Tories on the committee were queasy, as I observed from my neutral chair, he still managed to get that appointment through, moving him from the rent tribunal to the environmental tribunal. But I think it's safe to say that the people who have been appointed are people who are certainly on the side of the major landlords in this province.

1140

I heard the argument made that somehow we're not having developers build apartments. I heard when you took off rent control—because in effect you've taken off rent control when someone moves from accommodation—that the developers would be falling over each other to build new rental accommodation, and it hasn't happened. I'm still waiting to see that happen, because that was a promise, that was an undertaking from members of this government.

I have to say this as an observation. The huge landlords in this province were certainly supportive of this government. In the riding of St Catharines, on every major property there were huge Conservative signs.

These are the major landlords in the province. A funny thing happened, though. The people inside the buildings were kind enough to support me instead of the Conservative candidate, and that may tell you something about their views on the legislation that exists.

The member identified two problems in this legislation and wants to address those. Most people are going to say, "Look, if a landlord incurs a cost in making necessary repairs to a building, we can understand that it would be reflected in the cost of the rent," but only for that period of time where that cost is incurred. What you people over there on the other side allow is for them to continue to pass that cost along to tenants for years and years. That's what this bill is trying to address.

Second, it's trying to address the problem of people who will not make the necessary repairs to buildings so that tenants can enjoy a quality of life that they deserve.

These are basic. This is not putting some fancy swimming pools in the apartments. This is talking about basic repairs that have to be made. So the member has identified two specific problems. He's brought forward a piece of legislation which is moderate enough that I think it can receive support on the government side. I would like to see us unite as a Legislature in support of this bill. Send it to committee to make any necessary modifications, if that is what you wish. But certainly I implore members of this House to support a bill which I think will rectify a major problem in this province.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I too will rise in support of this bill. Does the bill go far enough? I don't think so. But is the bill a good thing? Sure, it is.

People in the city of Toronto especially but also people in other cities like Hamilton, London, Kitchener and Ottawa know what is happening in the rental market.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: And Welland too—know what is happening in the rental market. They know their costs are going up much faster than the cost of inflation, much faster than their paycheque, and they know that it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to make ends meet. We know in the city of Toronto the average two-bedroom apartment is now \$1,027. We know in Ottawa it's \$998. We know across the province in many of our large urban centres the costs have outpaced the ability of people to pay for them.

We know that vacancy decontrol has happened, and this is insidious within this Tenant Protection Act. Whenever a person leaves their apartment, the landlord can charge whatever the market will bear. In places like Ottawa and Toronto, in places like London and Welland, where vacancy rates are less than 1%, the landlord is free to charge whatever he or she wants. We have seen apartments that rented for \$800 when the person leaves rent for \$1,200 to the next person who comes along. They have no choice. They must live in this city or Ottawa in order to work, they must live there because their families are there. They have no choice.

We have seen the poor and aged stuck in their homes. We have seen that they're afraid with every rent increase.

The calls that come into my office when the above-guideline increases go are absolutely huge. Not content with getting 3.9% or 2.9%, the landlord goes out for 6% and 7% and 8%, and that is taken from people who are pensioners, people who have seen their own pensions go up by a couple of percentage points, people we should be protecting. They are at the total mercy of this government.

I want to tell you, the energy blip that took place a couple of years ago, what a boondoggle that was. Gas prices went up for two months; tenants are paying for 200 years, because you will allow a landlord who is a poor businessman, who ran out and took a five-year lease on the gas and who's paying horrendous rates today, to be rewarded for that. His rent will stay up forever and the Tenant Protection Act is allowing him to do it.

Comments were made by the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. I wish he would come to Toronto, other than to this building, once in a while and take a look at what actually happens in the city of Toronto and look at what the city of Toronto council has done. The city of Toronto council has gone much further than this. They have asked for rent rollbacks. The city of Toronto council has asked for a rent freeze following that. The city of Toronto council has asked for real, meaningful rent controls, and the city of Toronto council has instituted a funding of tenants to fight above-guideline increases. They know—and 30 to 8 was the vote—that the tenants in this city are suffering. The council in Ottawa knows the same thing.

Will this bill go far enough to remedy all of that problem? No, it will not. But is it a good bill? Yes, it is. It's a good bill because it takes that first little, tiny step, a modest step. I wish the bill had said there would be no above-guideline increases if there were repairs needed to a building. I want to tell you, as the former mayor of East York, we enforced that bylaw and we enforced it very strongly. Those buildings were fixed up far better than they're being fixed up today. There was no rent increase and there was the incentive on the landlord to do what he had to do for the tenants. Today, he's doing it because he knows he can make a profit in the long term. He or she knows that by doing that, they can raise the rents not only this year while the repairs are made, but forever.

We've talked about gas prices and we've talked about repairs. There's another minor problem with the bill, and that has to do with the amortization period, because it mentions five years. Most major capital things like new roofs and retrofits to buildings are amortized over much longer periods, but I'll leave that.

The problem we're going to see, and I foresee it right now, is what's going to happen when electricity prices spike. When they start to spike, that is going to be a major problem to those poor tenants. It only has to happen one or two months under this legislation and the landlords, I can guarantee you, will be there asking for their pound of flesh. They will be driving the poor and the senior citizens from their homes.

We have to do more than just this bill, but I am delighted to support it today because it's a first step.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce the members of the assembly to the students from Heritage Christian School in beautiful Jordan, Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'm pleased to join this debate and to put on the record that I will not be supporting Bill 134, for a very simple reason. We've gone down this road before under the NDP, to maintain a registry to micromanage the repairs. That cost \$10 million a year, \$10 million that had to be borne by the taxpayers and tenants all across Ontario. And what did it achieve? At the time we were elected, buildings all across this province had, in some cases, dozens, even hundreds, of outstanding work orders against them.

The fact of the matter is, the previous system didn't work. In 1995, the year we were elected, the average unit in Ontario had capital repairs of \$368. This past year, the average apartment unit in Ontario had \$1,178 worth of capital repairs. That's \$1 billion that's been spent upgrading apartments all across this province, improving the quality of life for the tenants living in them. The members on the opposite side obviously don't understand the concepts of depreciation and why landlords have to make those investments.

But it's even more important to put on the record precisely why rents are where they are today. The member from St Catharines was mumbling when the camera was not him that we should be ordering municipalities to change their property taxes. I find it staggering, considering the number of times that member and other Liberals have commented that every time we even look sideways at municipalities, we're constraining them and abusing them. The fact of the matter is that here in the city of Toronto the property tax rate is 4.2 times what a single-family home pays per square foot. That means that the previous government and the government before them, and many of their members who were Toronto councillors, voted to add hundreds of dollars to the rent of the average tenant in this city. At the same time, they have the gall to stand here—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Scarborough Centre, the member for Don Valley East and the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, come to order.

1150

Mr Gilchrist: As I was saying, members opposite who were actually Toronto councillors at the time voted for budgets that put in place criminal, oppressive tax regimes. The fact of the matter is, to eliminate that differential, to have that apartment tenant have their property tax reduced to equal—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I'll not warn the member for Timmins-James Bay again.

Mr Gilchrist: —the tax of a single-family home would take \$200 a month off the rent of the average apartment in this city. Their garbage collection, their sewage disposal—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I won't warn the member for Scarborough Centre again.

Mr Gilchrist: —their sidewalk cleaning obviously don't cost more than for someone living in a single-family home. In fact, one could argue that because of the economies of scale of putting 300 units into one building, you should have charged them less property tax, but you didn't. You picked the pockets of tenants, and you have the gall to stand here and suggest that somehow you and the members of the Liberal Party who were municipal councillors are the paragons of virtue, the saviours of tenants. Well, the fact of the matter is you're the folks who put them into the predicament they're in today.

At the same time, we have a federal government that continues to give me a GST rebate if I build a building and call it a condo. If I build an identical building and call it an apartment building, I don't get my GST back, adding thousands of dollars per unit, millions of dollars per building. Small wonder developers aren't building apartment buildings; they're building condos.

The bottom line is, we've eliminated all the provincial sales tax on the construction of affordable housing. We've streamlined the planning process. There are 73,000 apartment units zoned, serviced and ready to be built, and the construction of those units is impeded only by federal and municipal greed. The reality is, the apartment building industry itself will tell you, the province has done everything we need to do to get out of the way. The time has come for the feds and for city councillors to stand up and be counted and stop picking the pockets of tenants.

Mr Smitherman: It's a great pleasure to have a chance to participate in the debate and follow on the forcefully presented comments of the member from Scarborough East.

I want to acknowledge at the beginning the strong presence in this chamber today of all the members of Team Waffle and their leader, the rightful Premier in the front row. It is, I think, extraordinary to have that contribution from the member for Scarborough East, who wears his politics so prominently displayed on his sleeve.

Another member of Team Waffle, the member from Durham, spoke earlier, and I wanted to just correct the record around some of the misinterpretations of policy that he put out.

First, there was a very forceful acknowledgement on his part that despite Al Leach's claims to the contrary, no building boom has taken place in Ontario with respect to rental accommodation. The member from Durham and the member from Scarborough East talked about the difficulty we've got in Toronto with respect to the property tax differential on multi-unit residential. But what the member from Durham failed to mention was that

there is a 35-year exemption for any new rental accommodation.

He also talked about first-time homebuyers. I think it's important to note that this policy of not forcing first-time homebuyers to pay the land transfer tax applies to new properties only, not resales. I think that's a policy we can all see has contributed pretty dramatically to the problems of sprawl we have in this province. Those are just a couple of things that are corrected.

For people watching at home, this is a complex issue for sure. The administration around it is complex; there isn't any doubt about that. But in attempting to muddy the waters, as the government typically does, I think it's important to relate this to people at home.

Imagine for a second that you took out a second mortgage, \$20,000 or \$25,000 to make some renovation or repair to your home. You paid that mortgage off over a period of time, but they kept collecting the bill. That's what the government is opposing today: that we want to have a situation that begins to level the playing field for tenants in this province.

In my own riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale I have the honour of representing, I think, the riding with the highest proportion of tenants in our entire province. I think the St James Town community, which is 18 buildings housing something like 20,000 to 25,000 people, the most dense development in North America, is a place where we need to look for the effect of this law, the effect this law has had on people. This is a government that talks all the time about reducing its taxes and getting government off the backs of its constituents. But at the end of the day, the working-class people in my riding, who live primarily in communities like St James Town, are being asked every year to pay a burden that is not resulting in any enhanced quality of life for them. It happens against the backdrop of continued decline with respect to the quality of life they enjoy in those communities.

What the bill that is before us, presented by my friend from Don Valley East, is designed to do is make sure you cannot benefit on an ongoing basis from costs that have been borne by the tenants, costs that have been paid for at the time that has been completed. We think it's appropriate that that needs to be rolled out.

Now, some of the government speakers stood up and said they had some sympathy with some of the elements that are there. So in keeping with the great traditions of this House, there is an opportunity before us for the government members, a few courageous souls even, to join with members on this side and allow this bill to go forward to committee, where we can work on elements of concern and strike out on a path toward finding those areas where there is a common sense that we can improve on behalf of the people in this province.

The last thing I want to say is that I've heard government members talk about the extent to which the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal ought to be viewed as some great saviour for the tenants in this province. It tells me that those members opposite aren't spending much time

at the rental housing tribunal, that they haven't gotten involved, engaged in trying to help tenants in this province to deal with that. For my part, I'm giving a lot of support to the St James Town tenant network, which is designed to assist the tenants in a meaningful way.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Don Valley East has two minutes to reply.

Mr Caplan: I want to thank all the members who took the time to speak to Bill 134. At this point I'd certainly like to recognize Dan McIntyre, from the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, for his presence and his support and organization for this very modest measure.

I want to focus on the comments of a couple of the members. The member for Durham talked a bit about this bill, how he supports many of the measures in principle. I recall that particular member standing in this place presenting petitions on behalf of his constituents who live on Liberty Street in Bowmanville. I will certainly make sure I send a transcript—the Hansard of the remarks of this debate—and his vote to those tenants, because he says one thing on behalf of his constituents but he votes a different way if he doesn't support this bill.

I also want to comment on the member for Trinity-Spadina. I remember the last piece of legislation that I introduced, Bill 36, which would reform the eviction procedure. The member spoke in very glowing terms about it and said he supported it. When the time came, members of the New Democratic Party didn't show up for the vote. I'll be very interested to see whether New Democrats are going to play partisan political games or whether they really support the interests of tenants.

This bill is about basic fairness. If the costs go up, if they're incurred, the tenants will have to fund a part of those costs. Fair ball. But if they come down or once they're paid for, tenants deserve some relief. What goes up must come down. It's a matter of fairness. I hope all members of this House will support Bill 134. It is a fair and reasonable way to support the tenants in this province.

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT
(HYDRO TRANSMISSION
CORRIDOR LANDS), 2002

LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ÉLECTRICITÉ
(BIENS-FONDS RÉSERVÉS
AUX COULOIRS DE TRANSPORT
DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal first with ballot item number 41, standing in the name of Mr Sergio.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will take the division after I've put the question on the second item.

TENANT PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT
(FAIRNESS IN RENT INCREASES), 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION
DES LOCATAIRES (AUGMENTATIONS
ÉQUITABLES DES LOYERS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We'll deal now with ballot item number 42, standing in the name of Mr Caplan.

Mr Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 134. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT
(HYDRO TRANSMISSION
CORRIDOR LANDS), 2002

LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ÉLECTRICITÉ
(BIENS-FONDS RÉSERVÉS
AUX COULOIRS DE TRANSPORT
DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Sergio has moved second reading of Bill 13.

All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Elliott, Brenda	Miller, Norm
Baird, John R.	Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.
Barrett, Toby	Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Mushinski, Marilyn
Beaubien, Marcel	Gilchrist, Steve	O'Toole, John
Bisson, Gilles	Gill, Raminder	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Boyer, Claudette	Guzzo, Garry J.	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Hampton, Howard	Prue, Michael
Bryant, Michael	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, David	Hastings, John	Ramsay, David
Chudleigh, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Sergio, Mario
Clement, Tony	Johns, Helen	Smitherman, George
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Colle, Mike	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Conway, Sean G.	Kormos, Peter	Stewart, R. Gary
Cordiano, Joseph	Kwinter, Monte	Tascona, Joseph N.
Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Tsubouchi, David H.
Cunningham, Dianne	Levac, David	Turnbull, David
DeFaria, Carl	Marchese, Rosario	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Di Cocco, Caroline	Martel, Shelley	Wilson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Maves, Bart	Wood, Bob
Duncan, Dwight	Mazzilli, Frank	Young, David S.
Dunlop, Garfield	McLeod, Lyn	
Ecker, Janet	McMeekin, Ted	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 79; the nays are zero.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
Shall the bill be referred to a standing or select committee?

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I refer it to the standing committee on general government, please.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise and remain standing.

A majority of the members are not in favour, so this bill is referred to the committee of the whole House.

We will wait 30 seconds for anyone to enter or exit.

TENANT PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT
(FAIRNESS IN RENT INCREASES), 2001
LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION
DES LOCATAIRES (AUGMENTATIONS
ÉQUITABLES DES LOYERS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 134.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Interjection: We did this part already. We're just doing the standing part now.

The Acting Speaker: Pardon me. I will punish myself properly afterwards for that goof.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martel, Shelley
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	McMeekin, Ted
Boyer, Claudette	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Prue, Michael
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Levac, David	
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

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

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 34; the nays are 48.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The business being completed, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm.

The House recessed from 1216 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I rise in my place here in the Legislature this afternoon to advocate for hundreds of special-needs students who are currently not at school in the schools operated by Renfrew County District School Board, because up in our part of eastern Ontario we have a now nearly two-week-old strike between the Renfrew County District School Board and a number of collective bargaining units—the educational assistants and others. What I want to do today is simply to stand in my place and advocate on behalf of these special-needs students who are not getting the education they require because of this work stoppage.

These special-needs kids are among the most vulnerable young people in our community. They need and expect not just education but routine and regularity in their lives. I want to say to both parties to this dispute—to the Renfrew County District School Board and to the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, which is the bargaining unit for the other side—in the interests of these vulnerable young people, get back to the bargaining table now. Get this strike settled, in the public interest, but most especially in the interests of these very special vulnerable young people.

HALTON CITIZENS

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I rise today to recognize some local heroes in my riding of Halton. These people have contributed significantly to their communities to enhance the quality of life for all. They have been named citizen of the year in their respective towns.

In Milton, Kathy Powell was recognized as a quiet but tireless servant of her community. She has been involved with Milton District Hospital, her church, the local long-term care facility, Allendale, and at several nursing homes. She organized a multi-denominational pastoral visiting program for Milton that last year arranged over 1,800 visits to people at the hospital. Kathy supported a chapel in the hospital and a library for patients.

In Acton, local pharmacist Gary Barton was honoured for his contributions over 33 years on the job, including supplying formula to needy babies, sponsoring local sports teams and organizing foot care clinics for seniors. Consulted on what to do when a young boy swallowed some raw cookie dough, Gary calmly told the mother to

place the boy on a heating pad for 20 minutes at medium temperature. When asked if this would help kill the germs in the dough, he replied, "No, but it'll sure be cool to see if he passes a cookie."

Doreen and Manley Densmore were recognized as Georgetown's citizens of the year. Doreen is very involved in the fall fair and the local chapters of several charitable organizations. Manley is very active in the fall fair and the Georgetown farmers' market. He volunteers with Boy Scouts and has coached youth baseball and hockey teams for more than 20 years.

These types of local heroes can be found throughout all communities in Ontario. Kathy, Gary, Doreen and Manley are in Halton, and I salute their contributions to make Ontario a better place to live, work and raise a family.

EDUCATION ISSUES

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): One hundred high school students from Sarnia walked out of school yesterday to highlight the deterioration of their quality of education. One student, Natalie Frijia, noted that changes to curriculum have been brought in so quickly that the imposed new curriculum is not yet completely written. As a result, the teachers still have no way of knowing what materials they should prepare for the next term.

Not only have these issues eroded the quality of education in the classroom, but students like Natalie are facing the double cohort in 2003. These students are concerned that the quality of education has deteriorated, which in turn has not prepared them well to compete with double the number of students who are applying to post-secondary education in the near future.

These students are fed up with being pawns as the Ministry of Education makes one uninformed decision after another. These students walked out yesterday and took a stand, because they wanted to send a message to this government. The message is that education in the classroom is suffering and the students are paying the price.

OPHTHALMOLOGICAL HEALTH CARE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Down in Niagara region, the crisis around access to ophthalmologists carries on unabated. This government has persisted in ignoring the incredible and critically important shortage of ophthalmological services. You've got to understand that Niagara is an aging community. It's among the oldest communities in Ontario and indeed in Canada. Although the services of ophthalmologists aren't restricted to people who are aging, it's that population that places the greatest demand, most significantly for cataract surgery.

What's happening down in Niagara, because of this government's refusal to respond to the crisis in ophthalmology, is that patients have to wait nine months

or more, which is more than double the average waiting period for ophthalmological surgery like cataract treatment—more than double the average across the province.

It is imperative that this government respond to the pleas of ophthalmologists, the pleas of the Niagara District Health Council and the requests that have been made numerous times in this Legislature by myself. It is imperative that this government deem the Niagara region to be eligible for SRI exemption so that ophthalmologists can address the demand being placed on them.

If they don't want to hear it from me, they can call Dr Beiko, like I did earlier today. I interrupted him in the operating room down in Niagara, and he confirmed for me that there is a crisis, that people are suffering and that this government can resolve that crisis. It has refused to do so for over two years now. It's time for this government to move promptly. Deem Niagara to be eligible for SRI exemption with respect to ophthalmologists.

VERONICA BRENNER

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I am pleased to rise today to pay tribute to a constituent in my riding of York North.

Veronica Brenner promised to save her best jump for a special occasion. That special day arrived on February 19 this year, when the 27-year-old Sharon resident was true to her word, uncorking for the first time in competition a triple twisting double flip to score an Olympic silver medal in women's freestyle aericals at Deer Valley Resort in Park City. Actually, Brenner wasn't saving the trick as much as she was working feverishly to prepare it for the Salt Lake City Olympics.

The back full-double full was one of two jumps she had been perfecting. She had not performed either of these jumps on snow, much less under the pressure of competition on the world stage, prior to a final week of training leading up to the games. She really had little choice but to go for the gold, as it were, sitting in fourth place after the first round of jumps in a field of 12 finalists. The second jump was among the best Brenner had executed in her career.

Veronica Brenner, the World Cup champion in 1997, missed all of last season because of reconstructive knee surgery, and now she must compete with a knee brace.

Congratulations, Veronica Brenner, a great silver medalist we are all very proud of.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): It's extremely difficult to understand how the provincial government can continue to treat the frail and elderly in our province so shabbily at a time when they truly need our support and certainly deserve our respect.

The decision last year to drastically cut back support to our home care sector has left many people simply unable to stay in their homes. Unfortunately for those who are able to get a placement in one of our long-term-

care facilities, the level of care that is available to them is sadly inadequate, and the reason for that is that the government will simply not provide the needed operating funds to allow the caring staff the time they want to spend with their residents.

The family and friends of these residents are understandably distressed by the day-to-day reality faced by their loved ones, and they want all of us in the Legislature to make a plea to the health minister to improve this tragic situation.

As part of this effort, the Ontario Long Term Care Association has launched a province-wide campaign to raise awareness of this great need. Last Friday, Thunder Bay representatives Mike Kopot and Yvonne Mason brought in over 500 postcards, which I would like to have delivered to the health minister today. Daniel, could you do that.

Minister, the people who reside in our facilities in Thunder Bay deserve to be treated with dignity. They supported our community, they raised families and they paid their taxes with the hope and understanding that when they needed help, it would be there for them. Now they're lucky to get one bath a week and frequently have less than five minutes of help getting up, washed and dressed. This is a heartbreaking reality for the residents, their family members and the staff, who are run off their feet trying to provide decent care.

Minister, do the right thing. Provide the needed operating funds so that proper care and dignity can be restored to those people to whom we owe so much.

1340

POLICE WEEK

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): This year, Ontario's policing community celebrates Police Week from May 12 to May 18. It's a tremendous opportunity for all Ontarians to say thank you to the men and women who keep our streets and communities safe. This year's theme is Standing Proud—Careers in Policing.

The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police has told us that the recruitment of appropriate candidates is an issue for municipalities. Ontario needs more top-quality men and women to help ensure the continued safety, security and prosperity of our communities and our province. Through Police Week, we can help promote the benefits of policing as a good career to good candidates. It has all the hallmarks of a great career. There's challenge, room for advancement, good salaries, benefits and pensions, and there's something many other careers don't offer: an opportunity to make a real difference in people's lives and the community. Police officers have the satisfaction of knowing that every day they are on the job, they are making our world a better and safer place.

We owe the police officers of this province a tremendous debt of gratitude. They willingly place themselves on the line every day to protect the rest of us. Sometimes they die in the line of duty. It was to honour the valour and contributions of these men and women that the

government erected the police memorial, the theme of which is Heroes in Life, not Death.

I invite all members of this House to join with me to recognize the contributions of our provincial, municipal and First Nations police officers across Ontario.

MINISTRY SPENDING

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Chris Stockwell seems to have an addiction to misspending taxpayer dollars. Yesterday it was revealed that the reason Stockwell didn't make his staff pay up for boozing on the people's tab was because his expense records show that he was in the same bars and clubs at the same time. Even though he is breaking his own rules, he thinks it's OK to buy alcohol with taxpayers' money and he's refusing to pay up.

This isn't pub-crawl Chris Stockwell's first time getting busted for abusing the people's money. In 1990, when he left Metro council to be an MPP, it was revealed that he attempted to collect a \$10,000 severance payout even though he hadn't missed one day of work. Remind you of anybody? Here's what he had to say at the time: "Now it looks like I am a greedy bastard. Every one of those suckers are getting it. I'm no oinker. I have always kept my spending down, but now it looks like I have been caught red-handed."

Yet again, Stockwell has been caught red-handed being an oinker. Ontario Liberals are very concerned that this is the same kind of market discipline that Chris Stockwell and Ernie Eves are going to bring to Hydro One. Ontario Liberals stand in this Legislature today and one more time, in the presence of the minister of Everything, the front-row leader of that government today, ask that he stand in his place and fork over the dough, that he pay back the taxpayers for boozing on the taxpayers' dollars. In this day and age, that's the least we can ask of that minister.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTIONS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Members will be aware that there appear on today's Orders and Notices paper two notices of an opposition day to be debated next week. Under standing order 42(d), the Speaker is required to select one of the notices for consideration, taking into account the order in which they were received.

I would like to advise the members that the motion by Mr McGuinty, the leader of the official opposition, will be the one that will be selected for debate next week.

I'm sorry; we missed a member's statement. I apologize. I was up too quickly. The member for Peterborough.

MONIQUE HARTIN

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): The first time I get to speak to other than Galt or O'Toole, I want to make sure I get it in.

Today I would like to recognize Peterborough's Monique Hartin for her recent sports achievements at the International Challenge in Florida. Monique came home with two gold medals, a silver pennant and a world record. What an accomplishment.

Monique, a paralympic athlete, has cerebral palsy. At the International Challenge, she struck for the gold in discus with a throw of 21.27 metres, breaking her former world record throw of 20.74 metres. She also won the gold in javelin.

She's continuing in her sports activities in local competitions and in other provinces. This week, she will compete in British Columbia at the nationals, where she hopes to make the Canadian team in all three events. If she is successful, she will represent Canada in July at the International Paralympic Committee world trials in France.

We in Peterborough are very proud of Monique's success. She is a true athlete in her field. Please join me in showing our appreciation for this outstanding athlete.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LOI DE 2002 SUR L'AUTOROUTE PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU HIGHWAY ACT, 2002

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun afin de nommer l'autoroute 417 Autoroute Pierre Elliott Trudeau / Bill 21, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to name Highway 417 the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Highway.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): 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. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):

Pierre Elliott Trudeau a rempli les fonctions de premier ministre du 20 avril 1968 au 4 juin 1979 et du 30 mars 1980 au 30 juin 1984. Le commencement et l'achèvement de l'autoroute 417 ont eu lieu au cours du mandat de premier ministre du Canada de Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Pendant la durée de ses fonctions, M. Trudeau a passé un grand nombre d'heures sur l'autoroute 417, voyageant en direction et en provenance de sa résidence privée.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau was named Canada's top newsmaker of the 20th century in December 1999, and will be forever credited with the valuable contribution to the promotion of democracy in this country and abroad. Naming Highway 417 in Pierre Elliott Trudeau's honour

would not only recognize his contribution and commitment to this great highway, which links Ontario and Quebec, but would also acknowledge his legacy of nation-building in Canada.

SOLICITORS AMENDMENT ACT (CONTINGENCY FEE AGREEMENTS), 2002

LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PROCUREURS (ENTENTES SUR DES HONORAIRES CONDITIONNELS)

Mr Bryant moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act to amend the Solicitors Act to permit and to regulate contingency fee agreements / Projet de loi 25, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les procureurs pour permettre et régler les ententes sur des honoraires conditionnels.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The bill amends the Solicitors Act to permit solicitors to enter into contingency fee agreements with their clients and to regulate such agreements. Contingency agreements are prohibited in criminal and family proceedings. Except with approval of the court, the maximum amount of a contingency fee is one third of the amount recovered. Contingency fee arrangements shall not permit the solicitor to recover costs as well as a proportion of the amount recovered unless approved by the court. Contingency fee arrangements shall be deemed to include a provision to make the solicitor liable for costs awarded against his or her client in the same proportion as the solicitor would recover if the action or proceeding were successful unless the agreement explicitly provides otherwise. The bill allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations governing contingency fees.

1350

VISITORS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to take this opportunity to ask all members present today—and in particular the member for Huron-Bruce, the Minister of Agriculture—to welcome one of her constituents today, Donna Murphy, who's here visiting and sitting in the members' gallery.

Interjection: Her name's Brenda.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Brenda. Nice to have you with us, Brenda.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to add that Miss Brenda Murphy fought the Ontario government and won in court. When the government wanted to sell other than liquor in LCBO stores, she went to court and she won and the gov-

ernment is no longer selling other than booze in their liquor stores.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list for private members' public business:

Mr Martin and Ms Martel exchange places in order of precedence; and

Mr Tascona and Mr Wood exchange places in order of precedence; and

Notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot items 43 through 46 be waived according to the clam chowder act.

The Speaker: Mr Stockwell moves that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list for private—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Dispense. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HARRY WORTON

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for five minutes on the passing of Harry Worton.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mrs Elliott: I would like to take a moment here in this Legislature to recognize an esteemed former member of our Legislature who recently passed away at the age of 81 in my community on March 2. I refer, of course, to Harry Worton, who served as the member of provincial Parliament for Wellington South from 1955 to 1977.

Mr Worton was born and grew up in Guelph. He served as an alderman for the city of Guelph and was mayor of Guelph from 1952 to 1955. He did his business as a baker, and in fact at one point we used to joke in Guelph because our MP was a butcher and we wondered when next the candlestick maker was going to come along to represent us. But Harry represented us well. He was also the president of the Guelph Chamber of Commerce in 1958.

He was a very effective spokesman for all provincial issues and was well respected, I understand, by members of all parties here in this House.

Harry won an amazing seven elections in a row with relative ease, something I think all of us here can appreciate, especially since Harry spent most of his time on the opposition benches. After one of his many provincial election victories, Harry attributed his repeated successes to "keeping the fences mended" between campaigns.

He was a tall, striking man with an easygoing manner and a constant smile. He endeared himself to constituents, preferring to look after their interests at home rather than seek the greater glory of the Legislature here, despite his many years of seniority.

Always a frugal politician, he never had a constituency office. He preferred to work from his Queen Street home, and in 1975 his constituency office expenses were \$624. The average MPP in Ontario filed for expenses somewhere around \$17,000.

I remember having conversations with his wife, Olive, about this very topic, and I want to say to his family that I know, and I'm sure many others in Guelph know, that Harry's ability to deliver his constituency work from his home was not done without the dedicated support of his devoted wife, Olive.

He served as the Liberal Party whip for most of his time here. He was a whip because he had the authority, I think, and the affability to get the job done well.

I'm sure he may have preferred to spend his time on the governing side of the Legislature. But Harry was elected again and again to represent my constituents in Guelph because he understood that the most important part of his job, and our job as public servants, was to stand and speak for the people who elected us back home. It is a tribute to Harry that he spent most of his time here and represented us all with dignity and pride, and I think what was important to him was that he represented the community he had grown up in.

One of our local reporters said of Harry, "As a representative from Guelph-Wellington, I know the tremendous impact Mr Worton had on the region of Guelph as a father, a friend, a member of the provincial Parliament and as a businessman.

At his retirement party in 1985, Guelph's then mayor, Norm Jary, summarized the feelings of most everyone who knew Harry Worton. "He's a man for all seasons and for all reasons, an outstanding political representative and a wonderful friend to everyone here tonight."

I know my colleagues here in the Legislature will join me in saying to Harry's family that we remember him as a fine man and a good legislator, and we miss him, as I'm sure his family does.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I'm delighted, on behalf of my Liberal colleagues, to join Ms Elliott in paying tribute to one of my former colleagues and one of the longest-serving members of this Legislature. Harry Worton, as Ms Elliott has rightly observed, was here for very nearly 30 years, all of it, from beginning to end, in the opposition.

Harry looked like someone straight from central casting. He was tall and erect. He used to walk in the

north wing about this time of the day, a little earlier, with a dark blue suit and a homburg, and he had just disembarked from a very prominent-looking vehicle. Harry never needed to be a cabinet minister to drive a car that looked ministerial.

He was a genial soul. Harry made very few speeches here. There's an irony in my paying tribute to Harry, because Harry once said to me, "You know, young Conway, more people have talked their way out of this place than ever talked their way into this place." There was a lot of wisdom in that observation.

Harry was a baker. His good friend Bob Nixon once said of Harry Worton, "You know, Harry was the MPP for 30 years, before which he was the mayor of Guelph, before which he was an alderman in that wonderful city." Nixon used to say of Harry that in all his long years of distinguished public service, Harry Worton made only one political promise, and that was in the beginning he promised to put more raisins in the buns. And apparently he delivered.

I say to my friend O'Toole—and I want you to just think about this—Harry Worton was first elected in the June 1955 election. He beat an incumbent cabinet minister, Bill Hamilton, at a general election when Les Frost and the Progressive Conservatives were on their way to winning 84 of 98 seats. Can you imagine being able to say you won your first election in that kind of Tory tide, and you beat a cabinet minister to boot? And for the remaining elections, it was never close. Harry built a wonderfully bipartisan coalition that returned him through good times and mostly bad times, if you are a provincial Liberal in the Frost, Robarts and Davis era.

1400

Harry once told me a story that I do want to tell, and I just want people to think about this, because it speaks to a time that is gone for good. Harry was the opposition member for Guelph. He knew Leslie Frost well. A Conservative cabinet minister was hospitalized in Guelph. The Conservative Premier of the day, Leslie M. Frost, asked the Liberal opposition member from Guelph to go up to his office after question period, which Harry did. Leslie Frost gave to Harry Worton confidential cabinet documents for Harry to deliver to that Tory cabinet minister in that Guelph hospital. Harry did it, and I want to tell you that those confidential cabinet documents were never in safer hands.

Laughter.

Mr Conway: I seriously ask my colleagues—we all laugh, but, you know, this is a system predicated on the Victorian notion of honourable members. When we laugh at that story, at whom and at what do we laugh?

Interjection: Ourselves.

Mr Conway: I hope not. It was a different time, absolutely.

My friend Bradley will remember that not only did Harry make few speeches, but I can't remember Harry asking very many questions. I'll tell you what Harry used to do during question period. Harry went up and down the benches doing his business, asking the Minister of Finance some question, then moving on to the Minister

of Agriculture and then moving on to the Minister of Natural Resources and sometimes being asked by the Speaker of the day perhaps to move aside to let one of his Liberal colleagues ask that minister a question in the question period. That's how Harry did business.

Ms Elliott is absolutely right that his public life could not have been as successful or as long-term as it was without the enormous contribution made by his wife of 57 years, Olive. So, to Olive, to his two children and to his memory, we, his Liberal colleagues present and past, say thank you and, Harry, a job well done and one well remembered.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I too, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, would like to take this opportunity to say a few words about a colleague I didn't know, and quite frankly I don't think many of us did, because we weren't here when Harry left the Legislature. But I had the opportunity to talk to some of the members who knew him and also to do a bit of research.

One thing that really stands out, and our friend Mr Conway raised it, is that he was a person who never took himself seriously, but he took his job seriously and, more important, took the people he represented seriously. He wasn't a person to grandstand on anything. He was an individual who believed that his first job and number one responsibility was to the people who elected him in his riding and to work on behalf of those particular individuals.

In all the reading I've done of the very few speeches he made in this Legislature, which Mr Conway talked about, and I went through some Hansards to look for some of the questions, of which there were not many, what was interesting were the accomplishments he had in his riding. He was an individual who didn't have to come to the Legislature and stand up every day and ask a question in the House or stand up every day and make a speech in the House or go back to his local riding and do a whole bunch of media events. He was one of those individuals who just went along and did his job and basically understood that the reason he was here was not, in his view, to grandstand but to actually go out and do the work on behalf of the constituents he represented.

It was pointed out that he first came to Parliament defeating a cabinet minister at a time when it was not easy to be elected as an opposition member. That is something that I think a lot of us in elected capacity here in the Legislature understand is not easy. Obviously, he was and must have been a very popular mayor, but it also was the confidence that the people of his riding put in him and in his ability to get the job done.

As you look at the many accomplishments he had, they were a lot of things that were very important to the people he represented. He was the type of individual who said, "If there's something that needs to be done for the local hospital, I will go and speak to the minister responsible. I will speak to the bureaucrats. I will do what I have to do at the local level. I will do the fundraising. I will do all the hard work that needs to be done to get the job done at the end."

What's interesting, in speaking to people like Elie Martel and Mr Bill Ferrier, who served here at the time, is that he did that in a way that inspired others to do it with him. He didn't grandstand. He didn't stand up and say, "Look at all the hard work I'm doing, the member elected for this riding." He led by example and showed what needed to be done at the grassroots level, to get involved at the local level on the boards in order to be involved in the fundraising and in order to do all the hard work that needs to be done in the trenches in order to be able to get the job done. I think that's really a tribute. It's something we should all recognize.

My legislative intern, James Cairns, in doing the research will probably be a little bit mad, because I'm not reading this speech. But that's all right. But there are some interesting points that he puts out in that. One of them is a comment that was made by Donald MacDonald, the former leader of our party. He said there was never anybody he ever served with in the Legislature who was so non-partisan. He said he was very partisan at election time. He was a proud Liberal and a fierce Liberal when it came to elections and one guy who really worked hard on behalf of the Liberal Party of Ontario of the day.

But something that I think we should learn and we should pay attention to, and if there's a legacy that Mr Worton could leave to us, is what he lived for, which was, that yes, at election time and, yes, at certain times you need to be partisan, but you need to work with individuals from all political walks of life in order to be able to get the job done in your constituency. Talking to people, it didn't matter if it was a Conservative or New Democrat who came to him in his constituency; to him it didn't matter. Party colours in between elections meant nothing. He was blind to those colours and represented the people who walked through his office. No matter what issue, if it was important for his community, he did it.

He was not a person who was afraid to stand out to be counted on issues. Back in the early 1960s—and we need to appreciate the time—Mr Worton was one of the few MPPs who stood up in the House and fought in order to get the federal government to make divorce laws such that they were not as hard on women as they were in the days of the early 1960s. He recognized as a legislator that the rules of the day really were against women and made it very difficult for women and trapped women in relationships that we all know far too often in those situations could be quite abusive. But being a person of quality and being a person who was non-partisan and a fair person, he said, "It's a good issue, it's the right issue and I will do what I have to do in order to not only do my job as a member in this Legislature but to try to convince the federal government to be able to make those laws better for people after me."

He understood the very simple rule: once you walk into the Legislature, your job is very simple. It's to leave things, once you leave, a lot better than when you came in. He understood that and did that each and every day he served in this Legislature.

He had said one thing when leaving the Legislature, and I thought it was interesting. James Cairns, my legislative intern, whose speech I didn't read, who is sort of looking at me now, said in one of the comments in there that as Mr Worton left the Legislature, he had one very simple thing to say: "Been around here a while. It's about time that I retire." He left and continued the work that he did in his community.

So let us all take this opportunity to remember the work Mr Worton did in this Legislature and for Ontarians in his riding; remember fondly and wish the family well in this time of sorrow.

The Speaker: I thank the members for their comments, and we'll ensure copies will go to the family.

NURSING WEEK

SEMAINE DES SOINS INFIRMIERS

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for approximately five minutes on the subject of nurses.

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

Hon Mr Clement: It is with great pride that I rise today in honour of Nursing Week, which was from May 6 to 10 this year. Indeed, while we were busy and being occupied as members with the speech from the throne, it was also an opportunity for many of us to spend part of our day with some of our local nurses.

I indeed had the opportunity to attend at St Anthony School. I don't know whether they chose that school deliberately to remind me that I should be more saintly, but in fact it was a great opportunity to witness our public health nurses in action and see the kind of leadership they were providing, which in turn meant that the students of that school could provide leadership in public health and dietary issues.

I would like to inform this House that over the past few months both Premier Eves and I have had the opportunity to criss-cross this province, engaged in a certain activity. But we were, as part of that, listening and learning about the priorities of Ontarians. We've been hearing the thoughts of families from a variety of communities, from tiny hamlets to the megacity here in Toronto. We found that regardless of where home is in this vast province of ours, the people of Ontario are consistent with their priorities. They range of course from education to the economy to the environment, but unquestionably and perhaps most importantly of all, at least from my perspective, to health care.

1410

When it comes to health care, the messages are very clear as well. The people of Ontario appreciate and value the work of nurses and doctors but tell us we need more of them.

They tell us nurses need to know that they are important to Ontario. Nurses need to know that there are

jobs available here in Ontario. Nurses need to know that training and skills upgrading are available here in Ontario, that the professional and personal rewards of a nursing career are available in Ontario, that opportunities for nurses to achieve their best are available here in Ontario. The commitment our government made to nurses in 1999 to strengthen and enhance the nursing profession continues today. The Ernie Eves government has sent a clear message to the people we serve, to nurses of all disciplines all across this province, to those of you here today on both sides of this House, a message that says that the Ernie Eves government and I, as Minister of Health, support the nurses in Ontario.

Le gouvernement d'Ernie Eves a lancé un message clair aux électeurs, aux infirmières et infirmiers de toutes disciplines de par la province, et à vous ici aujourd'hui des deux côtés de l'Assemblée, un message qui dit que le gouvernement d'Ernie Eves et moi-même, en tant que ministre de la Santé, appuyons les infirmières et infirmiers de l'Ontario.

I want you to know that we will do what is necessary to enable the nursing profession to grow and meet the challenges facing them in Ontario in the coming years. We are moving forward with an advanced-practice nursing strategy. As part of that strategy, and in conjunction with our commitment to primary care reform, \$3 million will be invested over the next three years for an innovative demonstration project that will place up to 22 more nurse practitioners as the first point of access in as many as 12 high-needs communities. These are communities with few or no doctors and whose residents have the nearest ER as their only form of primary care. Many times these residents simply have to do without. To our government, that is simply unacceptable. It is our priority to ensure we have the doctors and nurses to provide primary care for you when you need it and where you need it.

Notre priorité est de faire en sorte que les médecins et les infirmières vous offrent les soins de santé primaires au moment et à l'endroit opportuns.

That is why we have made the commitment to more than double the number of nurse practitioners in the next three years. We need more well-trained nurses and nurse practitioners working in stable and satisfying environments.

I'm excited about our recent announcements and our commitment in the throne speech to work with NPs to break down any remaining barriers they face. I've seen the tangible results of our previous collaborations with nurses and nurse practitioners, and it works. Our previous investments in nurse practitioners are making a real difference in the lives of patients. We want more nurse practitioners working in Ontario, and we want them now.

I want nurses from all of the disciplines across this province to know that I know you are facing great pressures. I know that you feel overworked and tired at times. But I also know how much we all care about the people we serve. I know that we can work together and that we will work together to address the pressures nurses

face. We have common goals, and I will work with nurses to achieve them.

Just like you, the Ernie Eves government wants a rewarding professional environment for our nurses, a system that gives nurses the needed tools and supports, a lasting solution to nursing shortages and overwork, and a positive working relationship between nurses and our government.

These goals fuel our commitment to a health care system that gives you the tools you need to stay healthy and takes care of you when you are sick, a health care system that is universal, that works together with doctors and nurses to bring you the care you need when and where you need it.

I look forward to working with our nurses to achieve their goals to enhance the nursing environment and to ensure the best possible patient care.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I too, along with the Liberal caucus, want to celebrate nurses, and last week was in fact Nursing Week.

Based on what we just heard today, I would suggest that the Minister of Health is in fact on a different planet and not in Ontario, where the struggles of nurses are seen every day and heard certainly by members of the Liberal caucus.

I ask you, what are the nurses looking for? They are looking for stability and they are looking for the ability to practise as they were trained. That currently does not exist in the province of Ontario.

I ask you, what are the patients and families looking for? They are looking for those nurses to be able to provide care, thorough care with compassion.

I ask you, what has the government created? In fact, the government has created a system that is literally drumming them out of the business. Just last week I sat, along with many of my caucus colleagues, at a round table of nurses and heard the most disturbing of things. These are the things that we heard—not like, unfortunately, what the minister apparently has heard.

Samples of the nurses who expressed grave concerns: senior nurses in hospitals taking the first opportunity to retire, just when they are the most valuable at providing the kind of mentoring required for new young nurses. Those nurses talked about the stress levels in the system today. They talked about the highest level of stress leave among nurses ever, nurses who are off because of back issues, nurses who are off on sick time. There were great concerns around the table as well about part-time nurses. They can't get jobs full-time here in Ontario, stable, full-time jobs, so those same nurses scramble with two or more part-time jobs. Why? Because hospitals don't have stable funding to provide that large decision to hire them on full-time and they are loath to make that decision.

As to nurses who work in the home care sector—those nurses who just maybe have a job next year, depending on, after the next bidding war through the CCACs, what company will become the provider—this government always assumed that those nurses were like widgets on a conveyor belt that would just move from one company to

the next, depending on who won that bidding war. Depending on that company they happen to work with, are they even paid for travel time? Are they paid when they jump from one patient to the next? What do they do with each of those patient visits? Today they spend the lion's share of their time on the phone lobbying for help for that patient because the CCACs are so dramatically cutting back those services.

What did the government answer to these needs? They brought in Bill 130. What did that bill do for home care, and in particular for nurses in that sector? The government-appointed boards that answer directly to the health minister: no community input, no access by the community to information about how services are being cut in the home care sector. That home care patient, the most vulnerable of all—many are seniors whose only contact is that same service provider—is loath to say a word lest those services somehow be affected.

Those nurses, the same group, told me of running from room to room down the hospital corridor, the negotiation with the family, begging that family, "Please understand the time constraints we're under, that we can't do what's required on a timely basis for your family member because there just aren't enough of us." Those families we've talked to—all of us have talked to them—are loath to leave their family member alone at the hospital, uncertain when help would come for that most basic of care, things like a trip to the bathroom. How many needless catheters, how many needless diapers have been applied in this province just because we lack those human hands in that hospital room?

The most disturbing information of all, the most disturbing to me and many others, is the significant level of abuse that nurses are now facing in Ontario—abuse, absolutely dramatic. Imagine a system that has so frustrated patients and their families that they take their anger at an inept system out on the nurses, those providing the care.

1420

We must mention nurse practitioners, almost 300 of them trained in Ontario today. Last week's announcement, 22 nurse practitioners sent to work in underserved communities where there isn't a doctor in sight—so much for allied professionals working together to help carry that load, nurse practitioners who could be assisting, lifting the load from overburdened physicians. Even today's announcement of the opening of the primary health network in Oakville—not a nurse practitioner in sight at that network.

What kind of policies are we setting in this province when we don't know where we're going? Surely and clearly you don't know how you're going to get there.

This week, like all the other 51 weeks, we should celebrate nurses in our health system, celebrate their courage and their stamina that keeps them in a system determined to drum them out. We applaud the nurses who work actively to make life better every day for patients and their families. We applaud them and, as

well, with this strain of a much-mismanaged system, we pray for them.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's my privilege to acknowledge Nursing Week on behalf of the New Democratic Party.

You will know that Nursing Week is a celebration of the achievements of the nursing profession, of their commitment to their patients and the dedication of nurses to providing high-quality patient care. Frankly, this is also a week to increase awareness among the public, policy-makers and many levels of government about the continued and significant contribution that nurses are making to the overall health and well-being of Ontarians.

There were some 46,000 members of ONA who celebrated the theme "Nurses: Trusted. Essential. Committed to Saving Medicare." I want to congratulate both the ONA and president Barb Wahl for the many activities that were undertaken across Ontario. I also want to thank them very specifically for their commitment to the Save Medicare campaign and for the money that was invested in their province-wide radio campaign to support medicare.

I also want to congratulate the Registered Nurses Association. The theme for Nursing Week for them was "Nurses: Real Heart. Real Smart." We have very much appreciated the leadership of president Shirlee Sharkey, who has now stepped down, and we want to thank her for her contribution. We also want to welcome the new president, Dr Adeline Falk Rafael, who we know will be a very strong leader for nursing. If I might, I want to thank personally the executive director, Doris Grinspun, because she has provided us with help many, many times with respect to initiatives that nurses are undertaking.

There are about 140,000 nurses who take care of us, of our children and of our aging parents. They really are at the heart of the health care system. Last week our leader, Howard Hampton, accompanied nurses to Evergreen Centre for Street Youth and learned how they are doing extraordinary work providing primary health care to very many marginalized youth, many of whom don't have homes to go back to.

My colleague Rosario Marchese also joined nurses at the Hospital for Sick Children to learn how they are coping with understaffing in terms of trying to recruit new nurses who deal with very sick children.

The reality is that despite some heroic efforts of many, many nurses, nurses are undervalued and overworked, and the cumulative effect of underfunding by this government and this government's general negative attitude toward nurses has created many challenges for this dedicated, hard-working profession.

In the submission we made to the Romanow commission, we said health care reform is essential and nurses have to be a part of it. We need their skills and their expertise. The reason we say that is because health outcomes are very much improved by nurses. There was a recent study done by ICES that showed that fewer patients die within a 30-day period after discharge when their hospital nurses have higher levels of education.

A recent University of Toronto study also showed that patients needing home care required fewer visits if their home care provider was a university-trained nurse. We know that nurses working in CHCs are providing much better outcomes because of their influence in health promotion, not just treatment.

But what is happening to nurses? What is the reality? The nursing job statistics produced by the College of Nurses of Ontario last week show that in fact the nursing shortage has gotten worse in Ontario once again. There were a total of over 2,800 fewer nurses employed in nursing in 2001 compared to the previous year; 1,971 more nurses have left the profession. What has the government done in the face of this?

The minister announces a pilot project, a demonstration project for nurse practitioners, 22 to be hired over the next three years in 12 communities. I tell you that nurse practitioners don't have to demonstrate again and again their skills and their expertise. This government should find a way to compensate nurse practitioners so that they can provide primary health care to the over 34 communities in northern Ontario that need them. We've got 268 nurse practitioners who are under-employed or unemployed, and this government is doing nothing to deal with that. Despite the government's rhetoric of its family health network—the minister officially opened the first one today—there is not even a nurse practitioner working at that family health network in Oakville.

Thirdly, this government has had a freeze on new community health centres since they were elected in 1995. The Association of Community Health Centres has a proposal in for 80 new community health centres that would hire probably 160 nurse practitioners. This government has done nothing to take the freeze off that program and get nurses and nurse practitioners hired.

This government has done nothing to respond to a report done in January 2001 by PricewaterhouseCoopers that showed that seniors in Ontario are getting 14 minutes of care from an RN, in comparison to 24 minutes a day in Manitoba and 35 minutes per day in Saskatchewan. We know that many long-term-care facilities are lobbying the government now for more money. We agree there should be more money, but there should be strings attached so that money goes to hiring more nurses in long-term-care facilities to provide care to our seniors.

Finally, this government's got to close the wage gap between community and hospital nurses, so that community nurses will be retained and deliver long-term care. I call on this government to end the funding freeze that CCACs are now facing, so that they will be in a position to increase pay so they can retain community nurses.

In conclusion, this government, if it really wants to acknowledge and support nurses, must urgently deal with some of the proposals I have just put forward on behalf of the New Democratic Party. If we want to recognize that nurses are critical to the health care system, then this government has got to start treating nurses in that way.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO ONE

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier. We're very troubled by the activities at Hydro One. It appears that while you're saying all options are on the table, the management at Hydro One has an enormous vested interest in proceeding with the initial public offering. We're referring now specifically to what can only be called the kind of golden parachutes that the senior management have negotiated for themselves.

The prospectus shows us that the president has an employment contract that gives her a huge vested interest in selling Hydro One. According to the numbers in the prospectus, she would get a pension immediately of about \$1 million a year, fully indexed. She would get a cash payment, it appears, of around \$6 million. My question to you is this: recognizing that the public doesn't want to sell Hydro One but the president has a contract that gives her a vested interest in selling it, is this employment contract appropriate, in your view, Premier?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): If the facts were as the honourable member said, then, no, it would not be appropriate, in my opinion. However, I have asked the Minister of Energy today to look into the compensation packages for not only the CEO but for others in Hydro One.

I understood from your party's questioning yesterday that this was some sort of payment that was made if the company was sold. I am told that is not the case. The case is that there is a severance package for the CEO and others, I guess—I don't know the answer to the question—at Hydro One. I am quite prepared to look into it, and I've asked the Minister of Energy to do so.

Mr Phillips: I look forward to your tabling what does happen on compensation. I'd be happy to review the prospectus with any of your officials. As we read it, if the company is sold, it allows her to trigger an enormous pension, an enormous severance package.

I want to follow up what Hydro One is doing. As you know, they're running ads. It was just a week ago that this ad appeared, sponsored in part by Hydro One. Among other things, it says, "Ignore the myths and focus on the facts. Call your MPP and let him or her know you favour a stronger Hydro One through a public share offering." This was just a week ago. So we see Hydro One essentially spending Hydro One money, ratepayer money, to urge us to go ahead with something they have a vested interest in. Is this advertising appropriate in your mind, Premier?

1430

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member is linking advertisements that Hydro One is doing to compensation packages. I don't think the two necessarily follow.

Having said that, there is of course divergence of opinion with respect to the future of Hydro One and the

sale of shares being one particular option. Obviously some people, it would appear, are very convinced that the sale of shares is the only option. They are expressing their opinion doing so. I believe that CUPE has a very strong opinion that may differ from that of Hydro One. I believe the Power Workers' Union of Ontario has a different opinion.

Mr Phillips: The issue is that Hydro One, what the people of Ontario own, is expressing an opinion and essentially saying to all of us, "Listen, you're all wrong if you do not believe the best approach is the initial public offering"—including you, Premier. They're saying, "Ignore the myths." Frankly, they're making fun of you. They're saying, "Phone your MPP and tell Ernie he's wrong."

I say to the people of Ontario, this is absurd. The board of directors have allowed the senior management to negotiate what I regard as a contract that rewards them immensely if the thing is sold. They're spending public money, money from Hydro, telling the Legislature that you're wrong if you do not believe the single best thing is to sell it in an initial public offering.

I repeat, Premier, is it appropriate for Hydro One to be spending Hydro One money telling us in the Legislature we're all wrong if we don't believe the best approach is an initial public offering; yes or no?

Hon Mr Eves: I don't believe the ad is saying that people are wrong. I believe it is expressing a very strong opinion, obviously, for a particular option, which is the sale of shares of Hydro One. The honourable member wants to link the two. I don't happen to share that.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question?

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Premier. Premier, your appeal of the decision of Mr Justice Gans is being heard on June 17, in a few short weeks. Will you agree to hold off introducing any bill amending the Electricity Act until such time as you've heard from the Court of Appeal?

Hon Mr Eves: I think it's important that the issues Mr Justice Gans has ruled on are clarified. We don't think it was an appropriate ruling. However, I understand that there are differences of opinion about these things, certainly among lawyers and obviously among judges as well. We believe that there are some certain inherent property rights that belong to the province of Ontario that belong to other owners as well.

Mr Bryant: I understand that, Mr Premier, and I accept that. You are making those arguments before the court on June 17. But I don't know how many times I've heard you rise in your place as the Premier or as the Deputy Premier and say the government will not proceed on a matter because it's before the courts. From Ipperwash to same-sex benefits, *M. v H.*, going through to the Supreme Court of Canada and then back before the Legislature, the government waited to hear from the courts. You're the one appealing the decision.

My question for you, Mr Premier: you say you're open and consultative. The ink hasn't even dried on the throne speech, from that commitment. What's the rush?

Hon Mr Eves: The two are not analagous at all. Ipperwash has nothing to do with a piece of legislation. The honourable member obviously knows that. Neither did Patti Starr have anything to do with a piece of legislation, by the way.

Interjection: That's not relevant.

Hon Mr Eves: Well, what is relevant is that in both of those cases, the province of Ontario decided, and the courts decided, for that matter, in the case of Patti Starr, that there should not be a public inquiry going on while a case was before the courts. This has nothing to do with a statute, which is in this case the province of Ontario and the Legislature of Ontario clarifying their rights of ownership in law.

Mr Bryant: Mr Premier, I say that you should understand the importance of this issue maybe better than many other members in this House. You've sat in opposition and watched governments rush through misguided missions. You've sat in the backbench of a government and watched executive excesses. You have watched governments make mistakes and rush forward with misguided errors.

Now you have an option, sir. You have an option to listen to the Legislature before you proceed with your decision, your final decision. You have an option, sir. You can listen to the courts before you bring forth legislation. And on both counts you refuse to listen. On both counts you're not going to wait to hear from the courts.

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: The Premier says it's not true.

You're not waiting to hear from the courts before you proceed with your decision. So I ask you: you want to be open and consultative; you won't listen to the courts. You want to be open and consultative; you won't put the matter to the Legislature. Would you at the very least consider, Mr Premier, putting this important matter before this divided House via a free vote?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, the court case involves many points of law and many issues, some of which have nothing to do with this particular statute.

Mr Bryant: You're not listening.

Hon Mr Eves: Yes, I am listening, and the point is that you're asking us to consult. The Minister of Energy is consulting and we will be consulting through the Legislature. The matter will be fully debated before a committee of this Legislature and fully debated in this Legislature before any action is taken.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is also for the Premier. Premier, the prospectus for the privatization of Hydro One makes for very interesting reading, because what it outlines is not so much Hydro One improving or maintaining service in Ontario. It talks about purchasing transmission systems in New England states, purchasing transmission systems in mid-western US states, putting new high-voltage transmission

cables under the Great Lakes. In short, it's about moving Ontario's electricity for sale into the United States.

On January 1, I released a legal opinion from a trade lawyer, Steve Shrybman, where he points out that the combination of selling off our electricity system and the NAFTA agreement creates all kinds of problems for Ontario consumers. Are you not worried about Ontario losing control over its own hydroelectricity system, about people being forced to pay higher American prices just to keep our own electricity?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The leader of the third party is making a lot of assumptions in his question and in the summary of his facts.

I would agree with the leader of the third party in that I think our objective here as a government and as a Legislature is to ensure a secure supply of electricity and electric power for the people of Ontario for many decades to come at a competitive cost, and to protect the consumer while so doing.

Mr Hampton: Premier, "at a competitive cost," with the hydro generators privatized and Hydro One privatized, means in essence American prices, which are on the whole already much higher than our own.

Read the prospectus. The prospectus talks about literally hundreds of millions of dollars of investments putting transmission cables under the Great Lakes and buying up transmission facilities in the United States. This should be about serving Ontario consumers. It should be about ensuring that Ontario people have access to electricity. But the Hydro One privatization plan is all about expansion into the United States.

Premier, I've challenged your Minister of Energy and your former Minister of Energy to present a legal opinion which says we don't have to worry. Until now, none of them have come up with that legal opinion. So I'm asking you now: if you have a legal opinion that says we don't have to worry about the North American free trade agreement, we don't have to worry about paying much higher prices just to keep our own electricity, would you produce that legal opinion now, please?

Hon Mr Eves: The NAFTA rules that the leader of the third party talks about already apply to the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Eves: Yes, they do.

I don't happen to share his summation of the opinion or his summation of the facts. If there's some discriminatory practice under NAFTA, then any business investor has the right to bring a challenge under NAFTA. They have that right now and they will have that right down the road in the future.

1440

Mr Hampton: No, Premier, that's where you're wrong, because provinces that operate their hydro systems as public utilities—Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and hopefully Ontario will continue—are essentially exempt from some of those NAFTA rules. Right now in Ontario, Manitoba, Quebec,

BC and Saskatchewan, you can look after your own consumers and then, if you've got any surplus, you can sell that into the United States. But if you privatize, you cannot control exports, you cannot set a two-price system, a lower price for our own consumers and then a higher price into the United States. All of that is in Mr Shrybman's legal opinion.

So I'm asking you again, if you've got a legal opinion that says something different, produce it so the people of Ontario can see it before you do a dirty deal with your Bay Street friends.

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the third party might be familiar with BC Hydro and its vast exports of power south of the border. They had something to do with the entire California fiasco.

There are all kinds of smaller utilities that generate power that export to the United States of America today. Nothing has changed depending on who owns what; NAFTA applies regardless.

HYDRO ONE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): The next question is to the Premier as well. I asked you twice, if you've got a legal opinion that substantiates your position, to then produce it. So far, over two years, you haven't produced it.

My next question with respect to the prospectus is about what happens should your government finally decide not to sell Hydro One. It would appear that if you decide not to sell Hydro One, Eleanor Clitheroe alone would pocket \$5.2 million. If you decide not to sell, she could simply walk out the door of Hydro One and say to the taxpayers and the ratepayers of Ontario, "You owe me \$5.2 million." Premier, do you intend to allow this rip-off of Ontario ratepayers? Is this your idea of a sound hydroelectric policy?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): If the leader of the third party was listening to the answer I gave to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, he would know that I've asked the Minister of Energy to look into this matter of compensation for the CEO and other executives at Hydro One.

Mr Hampton: I would expect that you should know about it already. It's contained in four pages of the prospectus. If you add up Ms Clitheroe's \$5.2 million; then one of the other executive officers, Mr Taylor, at \$2.5 million; another executive officer, Ms Ng at \$2.5 million; and then another executive officer, Ms Prior at \$2.4 million, your top four officers over there at Hydro One, should you decide not to sell, can walk out the door and the people of Ontario would have to pay them in excess of \$12.7 million for doing nothing. Is this your idea of a sound hydroelectric policy for Ontario? If it is, please tell us how the people of Ontario are going to pay rates sufficient enough to pay these inflated corporate executive salaries.

Hon Mr Eves: I think the leader of the third party just made the best argument anybody could make for

changing the structure of Hydro One in the first place. We're looking into the matter.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a question for the Premier. Premier, you and your Minister of Energy have stated that it is your intention to bring forward enabling legislation with respect to the possible sale of Hydro One before the completion of this session on June 27. Both of you have further indicated that you will not announce the government's decision with respect to which of the growing list of options you might choose from until at least into the summertime. In light of your undertakings in the throne speech, in light of your undertakings to the media and in this House with respect to meaningful consultations, how is it that we can be expected to debate, vote and pass within the next 20-some-odd days a major piece of enabling legislation without in fact knowing what the government intends to do with that legislation, at least until the summertime?

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member refers to the prospective legislation as enabling legislation. It is legislation that will be designed to clarify the rights of ownership of the province of Ontario in light of Mr Justice Gans's decision. You can call it enabling legislation if you want, but it will clarify the rights of ownership that the province of Ontario has, which it thought it had as inherent rights ownership in the first place.

You say that we won't make a decision until the summer. I've never said that. I don't know where you get that from.

Mr Duncan: Actually, it was your Minister of Energy who said the decision won't be made until the summer.

Further to that point, Premier, how is it that we can even have a meaningful discussion of any legislation (1) that deals specifically with the Gans decision and (2) in the short time frame we have left? We have roughly 43 sessional days left between now and June 27. We in the official opposition have offered to sit through the summer, as this House did in 1985, to consider a major piece of legislation around broad public policy. How is it that you're going to pass that, in addition to 20-odd bills that your government left on the order paper in December, in addition to dealing with a budget? We say that you're not about consultation, that nothing's changed. Plus ça change.... You're going to try to jam through this legislation which will have everything to do with giving you the power to sell Hydro One. Why don't you let the House sit this summer? Why don't you announce your intention with a decision on Hydro before we're forced to debate the legislation? Let's sit for the summer and have a full discussion.

Hon Mr Eves: Even some of the honourable member's colleagues were having great difficulty keeping a straight face while he was talking about sitting through the summer.

There will be many weeks of debate before a legislative committee about legislation that clarifies ownership rights on the part of the province of Ontario. I think there will be ample opportunity for members opposite

and other members of Legislature to ask questions and to deal with the matters that come before the committee.

DURHAM COLLEGE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As you know, we are moving forward in Durham region with Canada's newest university. I'm proud to say that, although the university will serve all of Durham, and indeed all of Canada, it actually resides in my riding of Durham.

You can well appreciate the fact that the university is facing very strict timelines in order to open for 2003. One of the conditions that must be met is the passage of Bill 139. Gary Polonsky, president of Durham College and one of the founding members and one of the founding members of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, advised Durham MPPs that it is important for the bill to be improved before the end of this session. This will enable the university to proceed with hiring faculty, recruiting students and taking all the necessary steps to move ahead with the new university. Minister, could you please update the House on the progress of the Durham university bill?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): In light of the heckling from my good friend whose help Durham College needs to get this legislation through, there were a number of bills that were before the House in December, as our colleagues in the opposition have reminded us. We intend, of course, to get through a piece of legislation, with their assistance, that will take care of both the University of Ontario Institute of Technology and the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act—which, of course, is the charter, which we've worked at—the Ontario College of Art Act, which many people in the opposition are supportive of, and the Ontario Education Communication Authority Act. All of this work was done in full, leading up to last Christmas. The college charter alone—both the legislation and regulations are ready, and we expect, with the help of our colleagues in this House, to get this legislation through before the end of this session.

Mr O'Toole: I know how hard all the members of Durham region have worked for this new university. I know there are many students across this province who want to receive a degree and go to university. The issue is tied to the double cohort; it could be argued that if the opposition blocks this, they're trying to block spaces that you and this government have provided for this new university. However, just one initiative and one university could provide a brief update of Ontario's progress in responding to the broader issue of the double cohort.

1450

Minister, in the House today I ask you, our Premier and the House leader to address this issue of Bill 139 prior to the rising of this House at the end of June or sometime in July or August.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: The rhetoric is not complimentary to the hard work of Durham College and of course to our own members of this assembly who worked very hard to get this done before Christmas. So I hope that you're interested in assisting us in this regard.

With regard to the double cohort, right now we are ready. We have a plan. Students are excited about this opportunity. We of course have built the buildings. We now have the operating funds, as the throne speech stated. Building on these previous commitments, your government will provide further resources to post-secondary institutions to meet the higher-than-projected student demand. We are keeping our promises on the operating. We've also made a commitment to renovate older buildings, \$297.5 million in just the last three years. And the list goes on.

In Durham, for the member, Centennial College: 4,480 spaces, \$71.54 million, a new building. Durham College we've mentioned: \$47.95 million, 3,009 spaces for the manufacturing and IT centre—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

HYDRO ONE

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Premier. It concerns the future of Hydro One.

In this debate, Premier, I try to imagine that I'm a regular Ontario consumer trying to understand what's going on here. You and I have been around this debate longer than most, and we know the history. It's a very bipartisan history of trouble. The history of this Hydro question is that normally governments, at the behest of Hydro boards, make a quick decision with very little public attention, announce all the good news that's going to happen, and years later we find out that the promise was a lot better than the performance.

So my question is very simple: do you as leader of the current government of Ontario intend soon to bring to this Legislature a specific proposal for the future of Hydro One, a proposal that is going to be subject, in the broad light of legislative day, to full public scrutiny so we can all decide what the specific proposal is and how that proposal might in fact serve the public good, the public interest, and not the myriad of special private interests that are everywhere in this debate?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Recognizing the honourable member as an ordinary consumer, as he puts it, is a bit of a stretch on some days. I don't think ordinary consumers talk nearly as eloquently as the honourable member opposite about this or any other subject.

We do share one common goal and belief, I believe, and that is to ensure that there is a future supply of electricity and electric power in this province, to the benefit of the consumers of the province, at competitive prices for many, many generations to come. I believe we also have to have the necessary funding of capital infra-

structure needs as Hydro One goes forward, in whatever form, to provide that opportunity for the residents of Ontario. And we have to protect the consumers while we're so doing. He can rest assured that any decision the government takes with respect to the future of Hydro One, those will be the main objectives and they'll be taken into account.

Mr Conway: If one is just a regular consumer, a regular taxpayer, you've been able to follow this debate largely in the financial press, and it's been raging for months. We understand why. There are tremendous private interests. The bankers have over \$100 million to be made, apparently, if there's an IPO. We all know that. My friend Phillips has just talked about the management pecuniary interests that may be at issue if Hydro One is sold.

This is presumably, first and foremost, about the public interest. What I want to know from you is, are we going to see in this place, soon, a specific proposal that details your government's plan for the future of Hydro One, and are we going to get an opportunity to take that proposal and cross-examine it in a serious and thoughtful way to assure ourselves and the millions of Ontario consumers—taxpayers and ratepayers—that notwithstanding the problems of the past, this future plan for the electricity highway is, first and foremost, going to look after and protect the consumers' interest and the public interest?

Hon Mr Eves: I share with the member opposite his concern about protecting consumer and public interest. I would point out, however, that yesterday your leader was more concerned about the international banking community and how it would look to the international banking community if we didn't proceed with an IPO on Hydro One than he was about the consumers. On Monday he was concerned about the consumers, on Wednesday he was concerned about the international banking community, and we don't know whom he's concerned about today.

My answer to the question is that the honourable member can rest assured that (a) there already has been some public consultation through the Minister of Energy and (b) there will be further public consultation through a committee of this Legislature looking at all options with respect to the future of Hydro One. And he can rest assured that the best interests of the consumer and the people of Ontario will be what drive this government in making its decision.

ORGANIZED CRIME

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Attorney General. Recently, the government followed through on its promise to help victims and make communities safe with the proclamation of Bill 30, a bill meant to provide civil remedies for those victimized by organized crime. I understand the legislation is the first of its kind in Canada. Minister, could you explain to this House how this legislation will help prevent those who

prey on innocent people from profiting from their crimes?

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the honourable member for raising this point. I know that this issue and the issue of law and order generally are of great import to him. I thank him for being so diligent and vigilant in his approach to this subject.

Organized crime has a bottom line. In fact, most unlawful activity has a bottom line, and that indeed is to make money. Money is the lifeblood of that activity. I say to you that as of last month, when this bill was proclaimed, Ontario and Ontarians have a new bottom line: that assets seized as a result of illicit activities will be returned to the victims.

This bill—and the member is quite right; it's the first of its kind in Canada—will enable us to do just that. It will enable us to go to a court to get authorization to return money to victims in a timely fashion.

I'm very proud of this legislation, and the honourable member deserves a great deal of credit for bringing this forward initially and again today.

Mr Johnson: Minister, I think it's important and timely that we direct more attention to cracking down on organized crime. My concern is, what range of activities will this bill cover? It's vital that it deal with many of the newer methods used by criminals to prey on their victims.

In my riding, for instance, in the K-W area there has been a proliferation of homegrown marijuana operations, often in a new house rented in a new subdivision.

I'm also interested in how the victims will be able to reclaim some of the money that's been stolen from them through these illegal acts. Could you please give me further detail on that?

Hon Mr Young: He raises two excellent points. Let me start by the method that exists under this bill to allow for proceeds to be returned to victims. Indeed, it is a relatively simple activity that will allow for victims to apply to a designated fund and have money returned to them. Wherever possible, we will return the money directly to the victim who is affected. In some instances where victims cannot be located, it will be returned to other organizations and community groups that work to assist victims at various stages of court proceedings and prior to their involvement with the law.

The issue of homes that are utilized to grow illicit drugs is an issue I raised with the current Minister of Justice in Ottawa. I asked that there be some action taken, because this not only disrupts individuals but disrupts communities generally. I am hoping we will hear from the federal minister and see some corresponding changes to the Criminal Code in the not-too-distant future.

1500

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Premier. The minimum wage in this

province has been frozen by you for the last seven years. It has been stagnant since the NDP raised it to \$6.85 an hour in January 1995. Since then, the cost of living in Ontario has increased by 15.8%.

Your freezing of the minimum wage has meant that hundreds of thousands of our lowest-paid workers and their families have sunk deeper and deeper into poverty. Your freezing of the minimum wage has constituted an outright assault on the most vulnerable workers in this province. When will you end that attack on those workers, and when will you raise the minimum wage in Ontario?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): First of all, the province of Ontario was interested in keeping the province competitive with other jurisdictions. As the honourable member will know, I think the best security you can give somebody is the opportunity of a job, and over 882,000 net jobs have been created in this province since September 1995. In addition to that, there are some 735,000 low-income Ontarians who are off the tax rolls entirely, as the result of initiatives this government has taken. I do appreciate the points he makes. However, we have had a very thoughtful process, I believe, in improving the lot of more-modest-income Ontarians as we go forward.

Mr Kormos: Premier, during the course of the last seven years you had no qualms about raising tuitions, and you had no qualms about raising user fees across this province. You have done nothing with respect to affordable housing or ever-growing rents. You've given the wealthiest in this province bigger and bigger tax cuts, not to mention giving yourselves and your Bay Street friends like Eleanor Clitheroe huge bonuses and wage increases. You thought nothing of approving a huge salary increase for MPPs, but not a penny for the lowest-wage workers in this province. You've imposed a new-found poverty on hundreds of thousands of those minimum wage workers and their families.

Why don't you simply stand up and say, "Now is the time to do it"? It's long overdue. You've raised MPPs salaries, you've increased tax cuts for your wealthy friends. Now is the time to increase the minimum wage for those hundreds of thousands of workers, most of whom, as you well know, are women, many of them single parents raising their kids.

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member in his initial question, I think, certainly exuded some sincerity and some concern about more-modest-income Ontarians. His grandstanding and his use of certain language in his supplementary don't help the situation.

If you want to get political about this, your government—Bob Rae's government—raised tuition far more than this government has. It never had the decency to put a cap of 2% a year on student tuition. It didn't have the decency to take 735,000 people off the tax rolls completely through the Ontario tax reduction program, which this government has done. You talk a great game, but you didn't deliver when you were there for five years.

PRIMARY CARE REFORM

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. Today I note that after seven years your government is finally getting around to some very small baby steps in primary care reform. But I need to remind the Minister of Health that there are literally hundreds of thousands of people in Ontario today with no family doctor. The Ontario Medical Association puts that number around 900,000.

Your own ministry staff informed me even last year that there are some 1,500 foreign-trained physicians here in Ontario, perfectly prepared to start to work tomorrow in a system that badly needs them. But you won't let them. You've put out roadblocks at every turn. Your announcement last June, which you made with great fanfare, has done virtually nothing to make the situation easier. In fact, you're offering only 50 spaces for these foreign-trained physicians, and that's if they can properly fill out the application.

Minister, your mismanagement is apparent. What are you intending to do for the some 900,000 people without a family doctor?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Indeed, today was a great day for primary care reform in the province of Ontario, with the opening of the first non-pilot family health network in Oakville. We are pleased to see that happen, and of course it's a harbinger for greater news to come in this area.

I would tell the honourable member that this government is proceeding with the strategy first employed by the Mike Harris government to increase the recruitment and retention of physicians, both foreign-trained and domestically trained. We have increased medical school enrolment by 30%. We've increased the number of foreign-trained doctors who are accepted and certified in each and every year from 36 to 90. That includes a program to get 40 new foreign-trained physicians to underserved and rural areas as quickly as possible. We are moving with great rapidity in this area, because we know that the need is there and we're intending to meet that need.

Mrs Pupatello: The minister fails to realize that the attrition rate of physicians is not going to keep up with what you are putting into the system in education for physicians. Your own ministry staff told me—last year, yet—you have some 1,500 foreign-trained physicians. Those are just the physicians who are trained at schools that we recognize to be equal to or better than our own medical schools and these are the doctors who could begin tomorrow.

You announced an application form. I brought your executive assistant into a roomful of individuals who are foreign-trained physicians who told you what was wrong with the application.

Seven years after your government took over, almost a million people in Ontario are without a family physician, something that you could fix tomorrow, yet all we see are baby steps, hurtling in a direction that we know not

where you are going. There are 1,500 foreign-trained physicians here in Ontario today. I ask this Minister of Health again, what are you prepared to do immediately to get these foreign-trained physicians who can work in Ontario to work for Ontario families?

Hon Mr Clement: Incidentally, I neglected to mention that earlier this week Premier Eves was able to announce an equal campus for Thunder Bay when it came to the northern medical school—another step in the right direction when it comes to training our medical professionals when and where they're needed.

The honourable member knows full well that this government is absolutely committed to opening up the medical system to train medical professionals, including foreign medical professionals. The honourable member should know, if she was listening to the throne speech of Premier Eves, that we are moving ahead and we are committed to moving even further ahead with greater rapidity than even the previous government.

We are committed to this area. We are showing improvement in this area. We are actually putting into place the improvements in this area. We are going beyond more words and we are moving into action. That is what the people of Ontario want and desire and that's the demand that we are meeting.

FEDERAL AIRPORT SECURITY FEES

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Tourism and Recreation and it relates to what turns out to be a very bad April Fool's joke wreaked on the people of Ontario and Canada by the federal government.

On April 1, the federal government imposed a new air traveller security charge on people travelling by air and that was to cover security costs resulting from September 11. This new tax has turned out to be an unbelievable burden to people travelling domestically. Let me give you an example. This means that someone travelling round-trip from Kenora to Toronto who has to change airlines in Sudbury pays this tax four times, because the person is charged for each leg of the trip.

Minister, I've received complaints from individuals who are being subjected to these costs; I've received complaints from people in the travel business; and no doubt it negatively affects tourists travelling in our province. What are you doing to address this issue on behalf of travellers and the travel business in Ontario?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I want to thank the member for Oak Ridges for his question. The government is very concerned about how this new federal Liberal security tax on air travellers will affect domestic travel within our province and international tourist travel from outside the province. This is particularly unfair to northerners in our province, who pay twice as much as the average person in southern Ontario. That's why our ministry has commissioned a study to look at the negative impacts that this new tax is going to have on travel and tourism in our province. In

fact, the Canadian Tourism Commission agreed to pay half the cost of this until the federal minister interceded and said, "You can't use public money to examine something that might be critical of the federal government." Frankly, I thought we did that all the time in Ontario, but apparently they won't tolerate it at all in Ottawa.

My point is simply this: this new tax will raise more money than is required to do what it says it will do: provide security. That's why our province has added \$10 million—

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

1510

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The standing orders dictate that questions relate to the policies and laws of this House and of the province of Ontario. The question as originally placed did not deal with a policy of the province of Ontario or a ministry and did not deal with an item of taxation dealing with this House. I would submit that you must find out of order any supplementary related to that question.

The Speaker: I listened very carefully, and if you word it carefully, which they do sometimes—he asked specifically what the government is doing in response to it. If you word it like that, it will be found in order. But I say very clearly to members that you can word it properly, or sometimes you can word it improperly, when it's definitely out of order. This member did do it properly.

Having said that, we walk a very fine line. What he did was ask what the response will be from that minister to a problem, and that's quite within the purview of the minister.

Supplementary, the member for Oak Ridges.

Mr Klees: Minister, I understand you will be meeting with provincial tourism ministers from across the country as well as federal ministers this coming weekend in Halifax. Will you give this House your undertaking that you will raise this specific concern with your colleagues? More importantly, will you raise this issue that affects Ontario consumers with the federal ministers responsible for this unfair tax that is affecting the people of Ontario and tourists who travel here?

Hon Mr Jackson: In fact, this is the third year in a row. I was in Calgary with the other Ministers of Economic Development and Tourism three years ago. At that point the federal government refused to come and speak with the ministers. Last year, when we in Ontario hosted this conference right here in Toronto, the federal government refused to participate, and this weekend Allan Rock refuses to attend the meeting to discuss these important issues about the travel rights of Canadians in this country.

After three years, we've been able to convince Robert Milton of Air Canada to finally come and meet with us, after all these years, to discuss the competitive issues of route abandonment across this province and across Canada on an international airline review, so that more airlines offering lower cost rates can bring more tourists

to Ontario. We will raise these issues with the federal government. They've done nothing but raise the tax to help tourism in Ontario.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a question for the Premier. I see his books are still here, but I don't see the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): For clarification, the government House leader.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): I did notify the opposition parties earlier, before question period, that he would be gone at 3.

The Speaker: Maybe direct it to the Deputy Premier.

Mr Crozier: Actually it's a consumer question, and so that's the route I had to go.

Deputy Premier, your government's Ontario Gas Prices Review Task Force report, Fairness at the Pump, tabled almost two years ago, contained a number of recommendations for provincial action to ensure fair gas prices for consumers. Let me remind you of the recommendations. They were made to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services and in turn to your government, so it's a recommendation by your government to your government that the government of Ontario undertake a review of current tax collection legislation and remove unnecessary financial barriers; that the Ontario government expand its price monitoring of retail gasoline prices during peak driving season; and that the Ontario government consider whether a statutory requirement that gasoline retailers provide advance notification of price changes should be put into effect.

Deputy Premier, what evidence can you provide to this legislature, and more importantly to the consumers of Ontario, that you have in fact done this?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I appreciate the question. I think we can all understand that the escalating price of gas has certainly been an issue of concern. If you remember, we set up our own task force of gas-busters, who have gone out. I will certainly take the question you have asked under advisement, and I will provide you with a response.

Mr Crozier: Since it's obvious that either you don't know the answer or you've done nothing, I'll give you something else you can take under advisement as well. Victoria Day weekend is approaching, as we all know, and it's common knowledge that gas prices traditionally are on the rise during a period like that. Ontarians are concerned about that very matter as we sit here today. This is your opportunity to give them some assurance, although I guess it won't be done before this weekend.

In addition to the previous recommendations I mentioned, the report also recommended that vertically integrated oil companies voluntarily produce segmented earnings reports—I don't think you've asked them to do that—and that gasoline retailers voluntarily initiate a

policy of ownership transparency or the Ontario government should require this measure by statute or the government of Ontario should require businesses to post their prices prior to raising them. I see no evidence of any of these. I see no real protection from a report that was tabled two years ago.

Now today, prior to the Victoria Day weekend, when gasoline prices may be on the rise, we can't even get an answer from the government. Will you take that back to the minister as well?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I certainly will. I think we have to put this into some context. We all know that political uncertainty in the Middle East has continued to drive up the price of oil. Your federal cousins would certainly agree that has happened. But let me tell you what we have committed to do in Ontario. We have committed to reduce the cost of driving by phasing out the retail sales tax on motor vehicle insurance premiums, vehicle repairs and placements. On the other hand, the federal government has benefited from high gasoline taxes through increased GST revenues. So, presently, for every cent-per-litre increase in the price of gasoline, the federal government is collecting an additional \$9 million in tax revenues. In contrast—and I think this is what's important—while the federal government is getting more money, Ontario gasoline taxes have not been increased under this government. The federal government should take a hint and do likewise.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and minister responsible for seniors. The Globe and Mail today reported that the United States is considering changing the length of time allowed for visitor stays to 30 days from the current six months. This will affect up to 100,000 Canadian snowbirds, many of whom reside in this province.

Minister, would you please comment on what steps Ontario is taking to ensure that Ontario snowbirds enjoy the freedom of movement they have always enjoyed with our good neighbours to the south.

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I'd like to thank my colleague for this question, a question so important today to Ontario snowbirds that I'm surprised my colleagues on the other side didn't think of asking a question on that issue.

First, I'd like to point out to my friend that this is a matter of federal jurisdiction. However, my office has already been in touch with the Canadian Snowbird Association and will be taking action to ensure that our federal Liberal partners are aware of the impact this may have in Ontario and on Ontario seniors. We will continue to strongly urge the federal government to obtain written assurances from the US government that these restrictions will not impact adversely on the citizens of Ontario.

Mr Miller: Thank you for that answer, Minister. As you know, there is a lot of planning needed to spend part of the year in another country. There are accommodation needs to be met, there are many health concerns to be addressed, bills need to be paid and commitments need to be made. Seniors are concerned that they may arrive at the border with suitcases and pets in hand only to be told they will be limited to a 30-day stay or even turned back completely. According to media reports, US cross-border security staff may decide whether an Ontario senior meets the criteria for a longer-than-30-day stay.

Minister, how can seniors be assured, after they have done all this important planning, that they will not be turned back at the border?

1520

Hon Mr DeFaria: I appreciate the concerns my colleague is raising on this very important issue today. I want to assure the member that while this is a federal immigration matter, Ontario is firmly committed to raising these issues with our federal counterparts. A meeting was held this morning between Deputy Prime Minister John Manley and Tom Ridge, the American homeland security director, and the indications are that verbal assurances have been made to resolve this issue on a permanent basis.

I will be meeting this afternoon with Minister Coderre, the federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and I will speak with him directly about this issue and will reinforce our concerns on behalf of Ontario snowbirds. This is a major issue: the ability of Ontarians and Ontario seniors to obtain visa entry and freedom of movement within a country with which we have such a close relationship.

EDUCATION ISSUES

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, I want to know when you're going to start listening to students and parents and repair the massive damage your government has done to our classrooms. Thousands of students walked out of their classes yesterday to protest your government's mismanagement. They want answers, and they want action. Students and parents are frightened and frustrated, and they're beginning to get angry. I told the students I spoke to at Korah Collegiate in my riding that if they went back to class, I would raise their issues with you.

Minister, when will you put the needs of students ahead of tax breaks for the wealthy?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I certainly share your concern for the students. In fact, I think if you take a look at the initiatives that our government has introduced in the last few years, our desire has always been to ensure that the needs of students are met. That was why we introduced the funding formula, that's why we are reviewing the funding formula, that's why we have introduced the new curriculum and that's why recently we announced \$65

million for new textbooks and also new initiatives in literacy and math.

I can tell you we will continue to always do what is in the best interests of the student.

Mr Martin: One of the issues the students were protesting yesterday was the education curriculum rushed through by your government. This curriculum is riddled with problems. It gets an F from everyone, but your government has refused to make any changes.

School boards are telling us that the number of students trying to drop out before the age of 16 has increased dramatically. Parents are telling us that their children in the double cohort year are being placed at a disadvantage for coveted university spots. Professors at the University of Toronto say your new curriculum is producing students who are not prepared for university science.

Minister, your curriculum is failing. Will you commit to an immediate review of that curriculum?

Hon Mrs Witmer: There were a lot of points made in that question. Let me take a look at the whole issue of the curriculum.

The curriculum has been very, very well supported by people in the education field. I want to quote, for example, Phyllis Benedict, who is the president of ETFO, who said, "The curriculum itself is excellent. It has all of the preciseness and grade expectations that are worthwhile for teachers. They know where the child has to get to during the school year."

I also want to quote Dalton McGuinty: "I want regular standards and I like this idea of a core curriculum, a good, solid core curriculum, and I like the new report cards. I like the standardized testing so I can compare."

I simply say to the member opposite, I can appreciate the concerns of the students, the concerns of the parents. I can tell you that we are continuing to respond to those concerns—

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

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'm sure everybody saw in the news today the disastrous situation facing the agricultural community, not only in this province but across this country. My question is for the Deputy Premier.

We've heard for over a year now talk about a made-in-Ontario safety net program. Deputy Premier, could you please inform this House today where this much-awaited, long-anticipated made-in-Ontario safety net program is?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'm going to refer that to the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): As the member opposite knows, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the farmers of Ontario came together and developed a made-in-Ontario program. That made-in-Ontario program consisted of a financial contri-

bution from the farmers of Ontario, the Ontario government and the federal government. My colleague before me, Mr Coburn, took that made-in-Ontario solution to the federal government.

Last week, I once more handed the made-in-Ontario solution proposal to the federal Minister of Agriculture. He has promised to work with Ontario to try to come up with a compensation package that has a strong investment for the agricultural community in Ontario. I believe that if we work co-operatively with the federal government, we should be able to do the right thing for the agricultural community in Ontario.

Mr Peters: That will be a first, to see this government work co-operatively.

Let's hear some of the facts since this government has taken office. We're down 8,000 farms; 8,000 fewer farms since this government has taken office, a 2.7% decrease in the acreage in this province. Expenses outstripped farm income at an alarming rate. The prices for farm goods have risen only 1.8%, yet input costs have risen by 8.7%.

We've heard lots about the made-in-Ontario safety net program. We heard no mention of the made-in-Ontario safety net program in the throne speech. You talk about the feds. In 1998, the province acted unilaterally. You're going to stand up and you're going to tell us what you did for the farmers in 2000. You haven't done anything for the farmers for the crop year of 2001. When are you going to stand up and recognize the desperate situation that the agricultural community is facing in this province? Don't stand here and blame the federal government. Stand up and tell us what this government is going to do.

You don't have the guts to do it. You have the money to do it. Why don't you stand up and put your money where it's much needed: in the hands of the farmers of this province? When, when, when are we going to hear something from this government in support of the agricultural community?

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

Hon Mrs Johns: I am completely surprised by the tone and the question.

What happened last year in the province of Ontario was that the provincial government gave more than their fair share to ensure that the agricultural community had a strong investment in it, \$20 million more, and what happened? The federal government did nothing about it. The Liberal federal government did nothing about it. So now he wants me to put more money forward again so the federal Liberal government will do nothing about it a second year in a row. What he wants me to do is to have the same thing happen that's happening in health, where the federal government won't put up their fair share. What's going to happen is that the agricultural community of Ontario is going to be ripped off. No way. I'm here to protect the agricultural community. They're going to invest, and we're going to invest.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have a brief point of order to be helpful to the House. For the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, the problem was solved three hours before the question was asked. I just wanted to help him out on that.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): If that was the criterion for question period, there wouldn't be a question period.

1530

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 55, I have a statement of business of the House for next week.

Tuesday afternoon will be an opposition day. As I understand it, the Liberals won the race.

Wednesday afternoon's business is still to be determined.

On Thursday morning, during private members' business, we will discuss ballot item 43, standing in the name of Mr Ramsay, and ballot item 44, standing in the name of Mr Christopherson.

Thursday afternoon's business is still to be determined.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM-CARE FACILITIES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are over 525 long-term-care facilities across the province of Ontario housing over 60,000 Ontarians;

"Whereas over 60% of individuals living in long-term-care facilities suffer from dementia, 90% need assistance to eat and get dressed, and 56% have circulatory disease;

"Whereas government funding of long-term-care facilities by the government of Ontario has failed to keep pace with the growing needs of individuals in long-term-care facilities;

"Whereas government funding currently allows for only four minutes per day of assistance in washing and dressing long-term-care facility residents;

"Whereas government funding currently allows for only 10 minutes of assistance with eating per day and 15 minutes of programming per week;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide additional funding to Ontario's 525 long-term-care facilities to ensure adequate staffing and service for long-term-care facility residents and appropriate levels of care such that

Ontario's thousands of long-term-care users can enjoy their later years in comfort and contentment."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with this petition.

HYDRO ONE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ernie Eves is planning to ram through the sale of Hydro One without a mandate from the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas an Ontario Court judge has ruled that the sale of Hydro One is illegal; and

"Whereas Ernie Eves's Bay Street friends will benefit from the sale of Hydro One at the expense of Ontario's working families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to encourage Ernie Eves to take Dalton McGuinty's advice to put working families ahead of his Bay Street friends by immediately stopping the sale of Hydro One."

I affix my signature to this petition.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have a further petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ernie Eves is planning to ram through the sale of Hydro One without a mandate from the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas an Ontario Court judge has ruled that the sale of Hydro One is illegal; and

"Whereas Ernie Eves's Bay Street friends will benefit from the sale of Hydro One at the expense of Ontario's working families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to encourage Ernie Eves to take Dalton McGuinty's advice to put working families ahead of his Bay Street friends by immediately stopping the sale of Hydro One."

I concur with the petition and I will affix my name to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): The member for York South—sorry, my apologies. The member for Parkdale-High Park. It takes a while to get back into the swing of it.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The people of Parkdale-High Park appreciate it. They have given me a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Conservative government plans to sell off Hydro One and Ontario's electricity transmission grid—the central nervous system of Ontario's economy;

"Whereas the government never campaigned on selling off this vital \$5-billion public asset and never consulted the people of Ontario on this plan;

"Whereas Ontario families want affordable, reliable electricity—they know that the sale of the grid that

carries electricity to their homes is a disaster for consumers;

“Whereas selling the grid will not benefit consumers—the only Ontarians who will benefit are Bay Street brokers and Hydro One executives;

“Whereas selling Hydro One and the grid is like selling every 400-series highway in the province to private interests—selling the grid means the public sector will no longer be responsible for its security and protection;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature as follows:

“To demand the Conservative government halt the sale of Hydro One until the government has a clear mandate from the owners of Hydro One—the people of Ontario.”

I am in agreement with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the residents of Centre Hastings are facing an immediate and critical situation in accessing physician services; and

“Whereas a retiring family physician has been unsuccessful in procuring a replacement physician, potentially leaving 5,000 patients without a doctor; and

“Whereas accessibility to already overcrowded hospital emergency departments and walk-in clinics is limited because of distance and availability to transportation; and

“Whereas Centre Hastings has been designated as an underserved area in need of five physicians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act immediately to establish a community health centre in Centre Hastings.”

Because I agree with this petition, I’m very happy to affix my signature to this petition.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and reads as follows:

“Whereas the auto industry accounts for approximately 50% of Ontario exports to the United States, supports another three or more jobs elsewhere in the economy and contributes billions of dollars in tax revenues to governments; and

“Whereas the auto industry is the economic lifeblood of communities, such as St Catharines, Oshawa, St Thomas, Alliston, Windsor, Oakville, Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo; and

“Whereas the auto industry has experienced job losses and seen challenges due to competition from industries in

Mexico, the recent recession in the United States and delivery problems at Ontario’s borders; and

“Whereas the prosperity of the province of Ontario is dependent in large part on an auto industry that is competitive and dynamic; and

“Whereas select committees of the Legislature tend to be task-oriented and non-partisan in their deliberations;

“Be it resolved that the Ernie Eves government convene a select committee on the auto industry that consults with labour, business and the public in a timely fashion to address the challenges and opportunities that the engine of Ontario’s economy will be facing in the future.”

I’ve already advocated this myself. I affix my signature and I’m in agreement with those who have signed this petition.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

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

“Whereas the Ontario Conservative government hastily amalgamated Niagara’s ambulance dispatch services into the Hamilton Central Ambulance Communication Centre;

“Whereas an independent review of Hamilton Central Ambulance Communication Centre found several major shortcomings, including inexperienced dispatchers, high call volume and out-of-date equipment, hindering the dispatch of ambulances in Niagara and in other parts of the province;

“Whereas poor training of central ambulance communication centre dispatchers by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has led to improper emergency coding, resource misallocation and waste and increased wait times for those requiring ambulance services;

“Whereas the Central Ambulance Communication Centre dispatchers are handling 1,300 more calls a year than recommended by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

“Whereas these shortcomings in ambulance service restructuring are putting lives at risk in Niagara, Hamilton and throughout the province;

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has been in possession of the independent review since October 31, 2001, which provides recommendations to greatly improve ambulance dispatch services in Niagara and Hamilton;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately act upon recommendations presented in the independent review of the Central Ambulance Communication Centre and eliminate the grievous imperfections which are placing our citizens at risk.”

I affix my signature as I’m in complete agreement with that petition.

1540

HYDRO ONE

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ernie Eves is planning to ram through the sale of Hydro One without a mandate from the people of Ontario; and

“Whereas an Ontario Court judge has ruled that the sale of Hydro One is illegal; and

“Whereas Ernie Eves’s Bay Street friends will benefit from the sale of Hydro One at the expense of Ontario’s working families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to encourage Ernie Eves to take Dalton McGuinty’s advice to put working families ahead of his Bay Street friends by immediately stopping the sale of Hydro One.”

I also affix my signature.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have a further petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas due to the government’s unfair methods for education funding, the Toronto Catholic District School Board intends to close St Gaspar Catholic School effective June 30, 2002; and

“Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board hastily developed a process for accountability framework for pupil accommodation with inadequate time for parents and other stakeholders to prepare possible alternatives for due consideration; and

“Whereas despite the opportunity to do so, there has been no indication that the Toronto Catholic District School Board sought an extension of the Ministry of Education deadline on the accommodation planning while other boards in the province have done so;

“Now, therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

“We call upon the Minister of Education, who has the primary responsibility for providing quality education for each and every student in Ontario to:

“(1) Listen to the views being expressed by the parents, community and other stakeholders who are concerned with the undue haste of the decision to close St Gaspar plus nine other schools by the board;

“(2) Grant the Toronto Catholic District School Board a one-year extension of the deadline for school closings;

“(3) Demand that the Toronto Catholic District School Board establish a credible and reasonable process for school accommodation reviews that adequately addresses the needs of parents, the community and, most of all, the children who represent the future of our province.”

I strongly support the petition and its intent, and I will affix my signature.

ONTARIO DISABILITY
SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I seem to be duelling with the member for St Catharines today; sorry. Anyway, a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas the Ontario disability support program is an important source of income for disabled people who cannot work due to a disability; and

“Whereas there has not been an increase to the amount eligible recipients can receive under the Ontario disability support program since before the current government was first elected to the Legislature; and

“Whereas there have been substantial increases in the cost of housing and other necessary living expenses during the same period of time; and

“Whereas the maximum monthly allowance available for a single disabled person at \$930 is wholly inadequate to meet monthly basic needs; and

“Whereas the Honourable Tony Martin”—that’s me—“introduced Bill 118, An Act to amend the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997, to require annual cost-of-living adjustments to income support payments on October 24, 2001, which would have the effect, if passed, of increasing the rates under the Ontario disability support program annually on April 1 to keep pace with increases in the cost of living;

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

“(1) That it support Bill 118, or similar legislation, through second and third reading; and

“(2) That it resolve to increase the allowances payable under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997, to reflect the actual costs of living in the province of Ontario.”

I add my signature to this petition.

HYDRO ONE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ernie Eves is planning to ram through the sale of Hydro One without a mandate from the people of Ontario; and

“Whereas an Ontario Court judge has ruled that the sale of Hydro One is illegal;

“Whereas Ernie Eves’s Bay Street friends will benefit from the sale of Hydro One at the expense of Ontario’s working families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to encourage Ernie Eves to take Dalton McGuinty’s advice to put working families ahead of his Bay Street friends by immediately stopping the sale of Hydro One.”

I affix my signature. I find myself in complete agreement with the sentiments that those who have signed this petition have expressed.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I have another petition here regarding a relatively similar issue.

“Stop the clawback. Give the children back their money.

“Whereas one in five children in Ontario live in poverty; and

“Whereas, as part of the national child tax benefit program, the federal government gives a supplement to low-income families across the country to begin to address child poverty; and

“Whereas that money, up to approximately \$100 a month per child, is meant to give our poorest and most vulnerable children a better chance in life; and

“Whereas in Ontario the Conservative government claws back the child benefit supplement, dollar for dollar, from those living on social assistance; and

“Whereas this is leaving our province’s neediest children without the extra money they desperately need to begin to climb out of poverty; and

“Whereas all children are entitled to a fair chance at life;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, call on the provincial government of Ontario to stop the clawback of the national child tax benefit supplement and ensure this federal money reaches all low-income families in Ontario.”

I sign my name to this as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 15, 2002, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Mr Speaker, I believe we have all-party agreement to allow me to finish off the final seven minutes of the member from London North Centre.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): OK, let’s just test the House. Is there unanimous consent to allow the member for Niagara Falls to finish the address? Agreed. The member may take the floor.

Mr Maves: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the remaining seven minutes and 55 seconds of the member for London North Centre.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the throne speech and stand here today in support of it. Let me start off by congratulating, as many members of the House have already, Premier Ernie Eves for his leadership victory of our party and his ascension as Premier of the province of Ontario and, also, obviously, on his suc-

cessful by-election victory; along with Al McDonald, who, it was confirmed for the third time, won the by-election for former Premier Harris’s seat in Nipissing recently. That went from four votes, I believe, to nine and ultimately to 19 votes recently. So congratulations to Mr McDonald too, and we look forward to welcoming him to the Legislature.

In speaking of the throne speech, there were many aspects of the throne speech that caught my eye. One of the very interesting parts of the throne speech came from Premier Eves, who is a former finance minister. I think it’s important that he said he wanted to move to three-year base funding formulas for school boards and hospitals. We’ve already moved down this road with colleges and universities.

Many people will wonder about this, but the situation is such that many of our transfer partners like school boards, colleges, universities and hospitals, the people the province of Ontario funds—what happens is that we traditionally let them know how much money they are going to get very late into their own fiscal year. This has been the practice of Ontario governments for as long as anyone can remember. They have asked for many years for the Ontario government to give some consideration to letting them know on a two-, three- and sometimes maybe even a five-year basis what kind of funding they would be looking at so they would be better able to plan their own financial resources and how best to utilize their resources.

We, as a government, moved that way already with the colleges and universities. We announced that last year.

I know Minister Clement in health has been working with the hospitals and the Ontario Hospital Association for quite some time now to try to come up with a new hospital funding formula, one that would allow us and allow hospitals to know what their funding would be three years out.

A lot of people at home probably say, “That seems like a no-brainer. Why isn’t that done already?” Well, the obvious reason is that we don’t know our revenues from year to year. We can do estimates. We can do very good and close estimates. Sometimes we do awful estimates—not traditionally this government, but I know previous governments in Canada and in the province have done terrible estimates of their expenditures and revenues in future years. It is very difficult to do, so it’s very difficult to be able to say with a great deal of certainty, “This will be our revenue for the next three years,” and therefore each hospital, each school board and each college or university is going to get a certain amount of money. At the same time, while it’s difficult, we realize that it is difficult for those institutions to not know their funding on a longer-term basis. So the throne speech indicated that we are going to continue to work very hard to include not only colleges and universities in that process but hospitals and other agencies.

1550

Another part of the throne speech that obviously caught my eye was that we reiterated the \$65 million that

the new Premier allotted to textbooks. This is on top of a couple of years ago, when we gave \$100 million over and above what's in annual budget allotments to school boards for textbooks. We gave \$100 million over and above the normal annual amount for textbooks, science materials and other learning materials.

We also announced \$25 million to expand the early reading program and introduce a new early math program across the province to help students with those very important subjects.

The throne speech also indicated that we would ask Dr Mordechai Rozanski, president of the University of Guelph, to review the current funding formula for education. As all members in the Legislature should know and many people across the province of Ontario should know, in 1998 we embarked on a new funding formula. We gave the municipalities of the province school board tax room. We transferred with that some responsibilities for them to look after. We then took on a greater funding role for education in the province. By the way, that was the subject of many reports dating back to post-Second World War that said we need to get K to 12 educational funding off of the property tax, and we've moved in that direction.

However, when we did that, we came up with a funding formula. We spent a lot of time on it. We worked with school board chairs, school board finance people, all kinds of people in the education community, and came up with a province-wide funding formula to make it more of an equitable solution. We had a situation, when it was based on property tax alone, where some areas of the province were getting something like \$8,000 or \$9,000 per student and other areas of the province were only getting \$4,000 a student. We thought that was inherently unfair and we moved, with the new funding formula, to change that. That funding formula has now been in place for three or four years.

People do get used to something new. As school boards have worked with it and the Ministry of Education has used it, we've tinkered with it a little bit over the first few years of its existence, and now Premier Eves has said, "Look, we've heard from rural boards that they have certain problems with it. We've heard from urban boards that they have certain problems with it. It's time to have an independent third party have a look at it and see what other changes we might want to make to that." I think that's good and fair management on behalf of Premier Eves, so I was happy to see that in the throne speech.

A couple of other things that caught my eye include the health field, of course. We talked about some new investment into research, especially for things like prostate cancer and breast cancer, which are striking many people in the province of Ontario and throughout the country; more research to find treatments and cures for those, also addictions.

The throne speech said that since 1995 we've added 31 MRIs across Ontario. We're now up to 43 MRIs. One of the problems is that most of those MRIs work from 9

to 5. The Premier has indicated, through the throne speech, that we're going to try to double the number of hours those MRIs are working across the province. I think that will be welcome news.

There are many other fine things in the throne speech, but time doesn't permit me to get to them all today. I want to thank the member from London North Centre for allowing me her seven minutes and 55 seconds.

The Deputy Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): A little bit later on this afternoon I'm going to have a more thorough opportunity to offer some comment on the government's throne speech. Listening to the member from Niagara, I was interested to hear his use of the word "tinkering" to describe what these guys have done to the system of public education in Ontario. My goodness, if that's tinkering, I'd hate to see what would have been left of this system if they'd really set their minds to doing something to change it. I can tell you that the parents and students in the public education system in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale and, I think, in too many parts of our province are reeling from the devastation, the havoc, that has been brought to bear on our system of public education in Ontario.

Last week, like the very happy ruler over the trampled-upon masses, the Deputy Premier stood and talked about an investment of \$350 million put back into the system of public education. Well, doesn't that really, really pale in comparison to the amount of money they've squeezed out of the system, to the point where the kids in the classrooms and schools in Ontario are dealing with circumstances where there are too few textbooks, where there are too few supplies and where the rooms are dirty.

I had the opportunity during the campaign in North Bay to visit a small school. While I was out canvassing, I was in need of the use of facilities. I checked in with the office and was astonished to find that in that community too they're suffering from exactly the same kinds of challenges as we are here in the city of Toronto; that is, inadequacy of funding and a lack of commitment on the part of this government to a public education system that truly works for the province. Instead, they squeezed all the money out that they could in exchange for \$2.2 billion in corporate tax cuts with which they charge forward bullheadedly.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I listened with amazement to that word "tinkering" too. I have to ask you, is it tinkering when the city of Toronto school board is \$135 million in the hole and, even after you give back some money here, probably is \$90 million in the hole and has to close down schools, put kids out on the street, lay off teachers, lay off caretakers and close pools? Is it tinkering when the city of Toronto is starved to the point where they've had to raise taxes for the third year in a row and will probably have to raise them forever, and at the same time see declining services, see garbage on the streets, see poor, see the homeless dying, see all

the things that are happening inside this once great city? Is it tinkering when we see the hospitals filled to overflowing and not enough doctors and nurses? But we tinker on. We change this little thing and change that little thing, and hopefully all the mess we made before will be tinkered somehow better.

Is it tinkering when we look at the CCACs and see that there's no money for our veterans and no money for people who are coming out of hospitals and are forced to look after themselves? Is tinkering what this government is doing when governments in Quebec and British Columbia have signed deals for housing and this government sits there and does absolutely nothing? This government got an F from the Homelessness Network last week, and it's not surprising to see why.

I have to tell you that Mr Maves, the member from Niagara, said it all best. They are tinkering, and as they tinker, things burn.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): It's always interesting to hear the rebuttals that come from the official opposition and the third party. In fairness, I understand the role they play, having played that role for 10 years. But I think we have to inject some real facts into those comments. When the Toronto members stand up and talk about the increase in their property taxes, my goodness, my heart bleeds. I just feel totally destroyed with concern for the fact that any member would talk about property taxes in the same sentence as they talk about swimming pools. Really, even with all the free recreational programs the people who live in Toronto are given, they do not pay property taxes that are relative to the value of those properties even with the new Assessment Act in place. You can compare property taxes throughout the GTA any day you want. Even though we have made some progress, when we look at property taxes compared to other communities and areas around the city of Toronto—my constituents have user-pay policies imposed on them by the city of Mississauga, which I support, by the way, whether it's skating, ball games, swimming. They pay for any recreational aspect that's open to them. But in the city of Toronto it's subsidized by the fact that we are bailing out the city of Toronto with more money every year.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mrs Marland: My residents pay to support—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Would the member take her seat.

1600

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I'd like to comment on the point made by the member for Niagara Falls. It's true that the funding formula was created three years ago. But when we look at the whole preparation and also the study that was done, I really believe that the study—before coming down with a final funding formula, we didn't go out in the rural sector. In the rural sector at the present time, this funding formula has created some major financial problems in all rural school boards.

When I look right here in Toronto, the city has a school board that qualifies under the rural funding formula. This is unfair. When I brought that up with the minister, the minister said, "Jean-Marc, it's impossible." She came back to me and said, "Yes, you are right, Jean-Marc. There is one school board right here in Toronto that has qualified for the rural funding formula."

When I look at it, at the present time we have to close schools in the rural sector because of that funding formula. I look at one of my school boards. From one end to the other it is 410 kilometres. When we created that funding formula, we looked at the empty spaces. How can you move a person from, let's say, the Brockville area to the Châte-à-Blondeau area? It's impossible. That's 410 kilometres. We have to move our secretary around to really meet that new funding formula. It's impossible. A school principal has to be the principal of three or four different schools. How can you manage properly? This is what that funding formula has created in the rural sector.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Niagara Falls now has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Maves: I want to thank the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and the member for Mississauga South, who actually listened to my comments. The member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell pointed out some problems he has uncovered with the funding formula since it was introduced in 1998.

However, the member for Beaches-East York and the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale didn't listen at all. It's not surprising to me that they didn't listen to my comments. My comment about tinkering was that between now and 1998, when we introduced the funding formula, we have tinkered with that funding formula. They decided to take everything out of context and didn't pay attention to anything I had to say. It doesn't surprise me whatsoever. But, as I said, the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell did listen and did comment on my comments about the funding formula. I appreciate that, and I'll make sure we put forward again to the Minister of Education his observations about the funding formula.

As I said, in the throne speech Premier Eves has indicated that after several years of having the funding formula in place—it's a new thing; it's something we developed in 1998 and have implemented for three or four years now in the province of Ontario—it's time to have a look at it and find out where there are problems with it.

There are some other things I would talk about quickly. We are moving forward with family health networks. These are fantastic. I know in my riding eight doctors are involved in one of my family health networks. They have taken on an initial 2,000 patients. So as the family health networks become more prominent within the province, you'll see more and more people without family doctors get family doctors.

We're doubling the number of nurse practitioners. This was something this government introduced. We had 109 initially. They've been well received throughout the

province, and that's why I think we've indicated in the throne speech that we're going to double that number. I think that's a great initiative.

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is now open for further debate.

Mr Lalonde: Mr Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague the member for Windsor West.

Je suis heureux d'avoir la possibilité aujourd'hui de féliciter notre lieutenant-gouverneur, l'honorable James Bartleman, de sa nomination. Je veux également féliciter le nouveau premier ministre, Ernie Eves, et je tiens à le remercier de sa présence aux obsèques du sergent Marc Léger, qui ont eu lieu dans ma circonscription, et plus précisément dans le village de Lancaster le mois dernier. Je leur souhaite du succès dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to express my views on the throne speech presented at the opening of the third session of the 37th Parliament. As I reviewed the throne speech, I said, "What a positive-sounding document." But then I said, "Is this the same old message from the same old government, with all kinds of promises but without—yes, without—the necessary funding to keep many of these promises?"

The throne speech states that Ontario today is a different place than it was a few years ago, and it further states that the actions your government has taken over the past seven years have contributed to these changes. I agree. I agree with this statement. Our education system is in complete chaos, our hospitals are underfunded, our home care system does not have the necessary funding to take care of our sick and aging population and our Ontario farmers do not have a safety net program in place to make them competitive with other provinces and the United States.

On several occasions, I have addressed the issue of the funding formula for our rural schools with the previous Minister of Education. Although in the throne speech your government acknowledges that the funding formula is inadequate, there is no commitment to immediately proceed with changes. I ask, why is it necessary to wait another six months when the rural schools have been underfunded for several years and many studies have already been completed? I would like to see this government act immediately. There is the real possibility that 12 schools in my riding will be forced to close this year, as there is not enough money to keep them open. When we lose a school in a small rural community, the community also loses its future. When youth move to an urban area for their education, they never return. We are losing the spirit and heart of these rural communities. Schools are the central focus of rural communities and a place where our youth organizations, as well as seniors' groups, gather.

Recently, the Minister of Education announced an additional \$65 million for textbooks and learning resources. So I ask the minister to ensure that the necessary funding is allotted to our francophone schools, as many of these schools do not have the necessary textbooks

either for their teachers to teach their classes or for students for reference and homework.

Récemment, j'entretenais des discussions avec un éditeur canadien important de manuels en anglais qui m'a dit qu'il était trop coûteux de traduire le contenu de plusieurs cours. Plusieurs de nos étudiants francophones sont donc désavantagés. Je demande à la ministre de l'Éducation de mettre tout le monde sur le même pied d'égalité et de ne pas laisser tomber les étudiants francophones.

Monsieur le Président, j'aimerais prendre quelques instants pour parler de notre réseau de soins de santé, la question la plus importante aux yeux de tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes. Durant la campagne de l'élection partielle, le ministre de la Santé et le nouveau premier ministre ont parcouru la province et ont fait beaucoup d'annonces concernant nos hôpitaux et le financement à venir.

1610

During the latest by-election, hospital announcements were hot. I hope these announcements were not made only to grab media attention or to attract votes during the past election. I ask, will the money really filter down to our underfunded hospitals? I remember just last year in Ottawa when this government made a big announcement concerning new MRI equipment at Ottawa General Hospital. This MRI equipment, which had been fully paid for by fundraising within the community, had been in storage—yes, in storage—for about a year because there was no money provided by this government to hire qualified medical and technical staff to operate this equipment. Mr Speaker, did you know that you could get an MRI for your cat or dog faster than you could get it for someone who desperately needs it? Or, if you are able to pay for or support two-tier health care, you can always go to another province or to the States.

Comme je l'ai dit précédemment, je suis très inquiet des réductions dans les soins de santé à domicile. Nos régions rurales ont énormément besoin de fonds supplémentaires pour financer les services aux malades et aux personnes âgées. Ce n'est pas comme dans les régions urbaines, où les soins de santé sont à proximité et où les transports en commun sont disponibles. Nos personnes âgées sont fières. Elles veulent demeurer chez elles et dans la région qu'elles connaissent. En fait, elles économisent de l'argent au gouvernement en demeurant à leur domicile. Il faut quand même qu'elles aient accès à des services à domicile quand le besoin s'en fait sentir. Elles méritent bien cela.

I would also like to tell you what this government has done to the radiology clinics in our riding. A few years ago, our clinics were taken over by an Alberta company called Diagnosticare, which later decided to close many of them, leaving our constituents and doctors without X-ray services. Recently, this government bailed out the Alberta-based Diagnosticare company to the tune of \$9 million. Instead of reinvesting this money to upgrade the equipment as they were supposed to, they left with the money and left our community high and dry. I would like

this government to investigate this situation and reinvest the necessary funding into our radiology clinics so that rural Ontarians are not treated as second-class citizens. I quote from the throne speech: "All Ontarians, no matter where they live, must have health care close to home."

As agriculture is an important industry in my riding, I would have liked to see a commitment to our farmers, but all I see is a commitment to another round-table discussion. The time for discussion is over; the time for action is now. We must have a safety net program in place immediately. The Liberal Party and our leader, Dalton McGuinty, have been listening to our agricultural leaders, and when elected we will act to protect this industry and our family farms.

I would also like to know what approach this government plans to take when they say municipalities will be allowed to offer opportunity bonds, tax-free, to investors. God knows municipalities need the money. With all the downloading your government has done under the present SuperBuild program, this government has made it so difficult for municipalities to qualify for the infrastructure funding project that many of them have given up.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member for Windsor West for the balance of the time.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'm very happy to speak in response to the throne speech and speak especially to the residents of Windsor West, who I hope will realize that I will be back in this House again fighting for issues that matter to the people of Windsor West, and in particular matters of health, because once again, for the seven years that we've now been in this House under a Conservative government, health care in Windsor continues to suffer.

When the House is not in session and we're at home in our ridings, I still meet regularly with people who cannot access health services in my community. In particular, we have a severe doctor shortage. Remember that Windsor was the first southern urban centre to be designated an underserved area. Here we are again with doctors leaving on a regular basis, to the point where when we learn of another doctor, another specialist who is leaving our area, it hardly raises an eyebrow. That's how regular an occurrence it is.

Here we are today asking the Minister of Health questions about foreign-trained physicians. A couple of weeks back we brought the executive assistant of the Minister of Health to my riding to a roomful of foreign-trained physicians, people who practised in their own countries before they came here, who were excited last year when this government brought forward with great fanfare a new application process to try to get them in the system. When we looked at the application process what we found were the same hurdles that existed in the last application process. This executive assistant sat there with me and listened to the stories of how ridiculous it was, the questions we were asking these people.

Back in 1993, when the NDP government actually cut spaces available for medical students, some students who would have gotten in in 1993 and should be practising

today and would have come to Windsor went off to another country and got their training, got their medical degree. They are being asked in this application form to submit themselves to an English test—people who were born and bred in Windsor and Essex county. This is the kind of thing we still have on this application form that has not been rectified. The executive assistant had to agree that people need to understand that the actual application of this process is ridiculous and it needs to improve.

The ministry's own figure is that 1,500 family practitioners who were trained elsewhere could be practising in Ontario today because they were schooled in places that we here in Canada consider to be of high standard, equal to or above our own, and these people still are not practising in Ontario.

When I realize that the primary, first step into the health system is through the family doctor and that it's incumbent on this government to solve this problem and seven years later we're still at an impasse, it's very difficult to have sat through the throne speech and see that we really are no further ahead today than we were seven years ago when I first entered this chamber.

Last week was nurses' week and off I went to Hotel-Dieu Grace. Just before that, the Minister of Health had been in my riding and delivered a big cheque of capital money, a big cheque to wild applause, money that was designated four years ago, because that's how long it took to kick-start that funding. In the meantime our Windsor hospitals, which are desperately trying to restructure, which offered restructuring before it was forced on them in this Health Services Restructuring Commission, have struggled with additional financing costs because they have had to go to banks requesting money that was supposed to have come from the government. So four years later our Minister of Health arrives with the cheque for capital money, and that sum might be in the order of \$40 million. That's not a surprise. In fact, most of Ontario is finding a wild underestimating of capital money required to do the restructuring necessary in their communities.

What we have in Windsor is a total of \$35.5 million of operating deficits. I and many in my family, my friends, would just as soon go to a barn if that barn were equipped with the staff and personnel and medical equipment necessary to give us the care that we need. I ask this government, as it has gone traipsing across Ontario lately with cheques that were due some four and five years ago and only now they're distributing, what about operating funds for these facilities? What good is it to bring in the MRI if the government doesn't have the money to give the hospital to actually operate it in a timely fashion, to get people to access good diagnostic treatment so that they can start that intervention immediately?

I asked these nurses when I saw them only a couple of weeks ago about their working conditions, and have things improved? After they finished chuckling, they told me story after story of what they experience on a day-to-day basis.

I've got to caution this government. I must caution them on a Michigan law that will have significant impact on my community and every other border community, and that's just in the beginning.

1620

We all know that Ontario nurses are probably the most highly trained in the world. The Michiganders know this as well and so they have a bill, which is House Bill 4994. The rationale for this bill in Michigan is to address severe shortages of health care professionals that they're facing in Michigan. This bill will affect all health professionals in Ontario because what they're choosing to do in Michigan is—I'll give you the rationale: "There have been and continue to be reported shortages of health care professionals, particularly in certain disciplines in certain parts of this state. To satisfy this need, many people believe that Michigan should recruit Canadian health professionals, since Canada's training requirements are said to be comparable to those of this state."

What this bill, which has been passed and is now hurtling toward implementation in Michigan, will do is eliminate all of those hurdles—the bar exams, all of that red tape—to allow our Ontario nurses and other health professionals to practise in Michigan.

Essentially, their bill goes on, in their supporting argument, to suggest, "Canadian-trained medical professionals are highly qualified, and Canadian licensing requirements are sufficiently stringent that it makes sense to focus recruitment efforts there." Just what we need: Michigan hospitals—HMOs—coming in, as they already do now, making it even easier for our health professionals to dash across the border and work. With the American money being what it is, they have an instant increase just there. Moreover, when a nurse starts at a hospital, one of those HMOs, they're sometimes given \$5,000 for every other friend they can bring along with them. In downtown Windsor in the mornings, if you were to come to downtown Windsor, you'd see the shuttle bus coming from those hospitals to Windsor to pick the nurses up and take them to work every day. That's how convenient they're choosing to make it for our health professionals to go. With this passage of the bill it will only get worse.

What our nurses, what our health professionals, require is stability—stability in the health system. It's incumbent on this government to provide that kind of stability, and that means funding at the appropriate time, funding the appropriate people—nurse practitioners who need to be working at the high level of education that they now have. The government just this week—just yesterday—announces that only 22 of the some 300 nurse practitioners we have available to practise in Ontario now are being funded to practise in Ontario. This is woeful and, frankly, neglectful on the part of the government because real people need access to service and real people in Ontario are not getting it.

I'm very disappointed that our newly minted Premier, Ernie Eves—who states clearly that he's a Windsor native—is going to ignore a \$35.5-million operating

deficit of our hospitals. Really, if he decided to launch his leadership in Windsor, he owes it to the Windsor community to take a good look at what we're lacking in the Windsor community: infrastructure money. To not even speak of SuperBuild and the money that just comes in dribs and drabs out of this huge portfolio that most communities don't quite know how to access yet—their spin on this private sector leveraging of dollars. In the meantime our roads suffer. Municipalities are straining to get at infrastructure money wherever they can and the Ontario government instead, like a fortress, is not allowing any of this money to flow. The last time we looked, \$14 million of a \$2-billion fund had actually flowed from SuperBuild. I ask, on behalf of Windsor residents, where is our SuperBuild money?

Not just infrastructure. I want to talk about schools, our education system in Windsor and Essex county where we have to go begging for books; where parents and teachers still spend most of their after-hours working bingos to pay for the most basic of materials. This was not the case before this government came to office, and this is what we still face and what we've repeated in this House today. We saw nothing in the throne speech that could see any way out of this.

All we can say is that we're looking forward to more hydro debate, more education debate, but especially health care debate. The things that really matter to the people of Windsor West are the things that I intend to bring forward in this session, as short as it may be.

The Deputy Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Mr Prue: I listened with great intent, as I always do—and I'm sorry the member from Niagara Falls is not here—to what they had to say, and in the two minutes there are two particular points I'd like to focus on.

The first one is the statement made by the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell relating to municipalities and bonds and what was contained in the throne speech. I want to tell you that out there in the municipalities of Ontario, some 450 of them that still exist, the idea of floating municipal bonds is not a big seller, because they realize only too well that to float a municipal bond and to get money in that way, although that is preferable to going out to banks and other places where they loan money, is not the answer. The answer for the municipalities of this province is to have firm and stable financing, to have financing, from tax revenues or revenues of some sort, that is theirs in perpetuity so that they can plan and work with it.

We have suggested two cents on the gas tax to help build homes or two cents on the gas tax for transit, or transfer of some of the funds that presently flow into the government of Ontario, that instead should flow to the municipalities so that they can do what they need to do. For us to suggest to them that they merely need to get money from a bond service as opposed to where they're getting it from now—borrowing it from banks et al—is not the answer. That will drive them further into debt than they already are.

The second one is—and I've only got a few seconds left—the ridiculous tests for doctors. I agree they are ridiculous, but that is but the tip of the iceberg. We take nearly 250,000 immigrants in this country every year. We take them with a lot of skills and abilities and, once they are here, we do not use those skills and abilities. We need to use all of them, from doctors and nurses, from teachers, from lawyers, from dentists, from everyone. We need their services and we ought to be taking them.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is a pleasure to perhaps spend a couple of minutes in answer to the members from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Windsor West and Beaches-East York.

Several things have been mentioned. The member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell talked about many promises having been made. The member should know, and I'm sure he does realize, that this government is the one that keeps its promises. I think he knows it's a Mike Harris legacy: "Promises made, promises kept." I'm surprised he brought up the promises scenario there.

He talked about the funding formula. In the throne speech, as we all know, there is a clear indication that if the funding formula is not working, there's always time to try, and we are now reviewing it. There's nothing wrong with that. I think that's a great step.

I know the member from Windsor West talked about foreign-trained doctors. I can say that my better half is a foreign-trained doctor. Now having spent 15 years with one of our local hospitals, she just got her pin the other day. In fact, at the end of this month she's doing a golf tournament to raise funds for the local hospital. The system is working. More needs to be done. Let me agree with that totally.

Mrs Papatello: What's she working as?

Mr Gill: She is a foreign-trained doctor, by the way, as I said. She did teach medical science students at the U of T after having been trained in a foreign country. Nonetheless, more needs to be done, and our government is working, opening up more spaces—the northern medical school—whereas the NDP had closed spaces. That's one of the problems. Many of our graduates—and I agree with the member from Windsor West—have to go to foreign schools and I don't think they should have to. We should have more spaces here. So I'm glad the government is working at that.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to my colleague from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and my colleague from Windsor West. First of all, both of them spoke with eloquence to what was lacking in this throne speech. My colleague from Windsor West particularly emphasized what's gone on in health care over the past few years in our community and what is happening this day in our community.

1630

You know, after September 11, each of the states in the United States had to submit an emergency plan to Washington. In the Michigan submission, Governor Engler argued for keeping the border open because, at

that time, in October of this past year, 1,600 nurses a day were crossing into southeastern Michigan—a day—to work at hospitals in Detroit. When the border was slowed down, they had buses coming to pick up our nurses and bring them to hospitals in the United States.

We are faced with a crucial shortage of doctors and nurses. We in Windsor challenge the government to move beyond a satellite medical campus in our community associated with the medical school at Western, and develop a full medical school at the University of Windsor to train more doctors. Even with the announcements the government has made with respect to additional medical doctor training, we will still be behind the state of Michigan, the province of Quebec, the state of Illinois, the state of New York, in terms of the number of first-year medical school places we have, even though in most instances our population is larger and we train doctors for other parts of the country.

In short, my colleagues are right to say this throne speech failed the people of our communities and of this province miserably.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to also compliment the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and the member for Windsor West for their comments here this afternoon. I think it's important that we relate everything that goes on here, statements by the government, to what's actually happening at home in the communities that we all represent and to the issues that we all feel so strongly about and are here to actually champion on behalf of our constituents. They certainly tell a compelling story. They do an interesting critique. I'm not going to do a critique as much as to say, though, that what was lacking in the throne speech was, I think, a failure to understand the underpinnings of the economy that have served us so well in this province for so long and the underpinnings of the society that we have developed that had prided itself on its ability to look after everybody.

On the economic front, there was no reference whatsoever to the declining resource sector economy that's affecting so directly and in such a negative way that part of the province that I come from, northern Ontario. I say to you that you neglect that at your peril, because it's the resource-based sector that serves the north that in fact drives the economy of the whole province.

We may be excited about, and taking advantage of, some of the American good times that are happening, but if we're not careful, that will pass and we will have claimed nothing.

On the front of the underpinnings of a civil or just society, the lack of reference to the poverty and homelessness and social housing that exists in this province is telling as well. There was no understanding of the need for government to take a leadership role to be providing resources to make sure that people who are marginalized, at risk, our poor among us in our communities, are looked after. That will come back to bite us in the long haul as well.

Those are things we need to be looking at and need to be doing some things about.

The Deputy Speaker: One of the two original speakers may now take up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs Pupatello: It's clear that there is more debate to be had in this House about how we will solve these significant issues. But I can tell you that since my time here, those issues have become larger and more severe, and they are of a nature that affects people in every way, especially in the area of health care.

When there is a health issue in a family, nothing else matters. I can say that with certainty, having experienced that myself. When there is a health issue in the family, nothing else matters. That's why it is under provincial government domain to solve these problems. When the problems are laid out for you, it's incumbent on this government to answer them, to problem-solve with us.

We have submitted more documentation that has offered more solutions in the area of physician shortages: stop-gap measures; funding of community health centres; bringing in nurse practitioners and all of the other allied professionals; moving forward faster with primary care reform by taking a significant look at how to pay our professionals, which seems to be the biggest stumbling block here.

Can you imagine that this morning we had an announcement of the first stand-alone primary care health network? It doesn't even include a nurse practitioner. What is the concept of primary care reform if we are not bringing in a new relationship with all the professionals? Our goal in the Liberal Party is to have the right patient seen by the right professional, getting the right level of care at the right time.

The issues remain constant through generations. People want access to the system. They need to have access and timely treatment. This government needs to focus on prevention. There is so much to do in the area of health. As I said earlier, when there is a health issue in the family, nothing else matters.

I urge this government to pay attention to the woes of our health system.

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mr Martin: It's my pleasure this afternoon to follow on the heels of my leader from yesterday and to offer some suggestions as to things this province could and should be doing or that we would do if given an opportunity to be government after the next election.

I think it's fair to critique the speech from the throne of the government, but it's even more important to proffer, to put forward, to put on the table, alternatives to their vision. In fact, there isn't much that was in that speech from the throne that lends itself to critique, because there wasn't anything of substance in it to give people any confidence that the government understands some of the challenges that confront us or that they understand what it's going to take to recover some of those things that have been allowed to deteriorate and simply disappear over the last six or seven years during their tenure, under their leadership.

The leader of our party, Howard Hampton, spoke yesterday of things that would be in a speech from the throne that we, as New Democrats, would present as government for this province and, indeed, will present once we're government after the next election. He spoke of that issue which he has become so compassionate and energetic about over the last number of months, in fact years, because he understands more than anybody in this place the important role, the significance, of having fundamental underpinnings to an economy if it's going to be sustainable, if it's going to be under our control and if it's going to serve all of us well, both now and into the future. He speaks of the issue of Hydro. I suggest to you that there are a number of other issues that are important, where underpinning, building a foundation upon which an economy can grow, is based.

For the last five or six years, the government has been the beneficiary of a very exciting and thriving US economy that we have ridden the coattails of. We've been on the wave of that economy. But unlike other jurisdictions in the world that have ridden the wave of this good US economy and the good overall global economy that has been happening, have done some significant things, primarily behind the scenes, to make sure that what was happening was taken advantage of in a way that would stabilize and give some confidence into the long haul, to make sure that once the smoke of this interesting economy that is proving itself to be less solid now as it shakes out than many had thought or hoped it would be—to guarantee their particular jurisdiction some long-term viability and sustainability where their economy is concerned.

For example, I've been over to Ireland, as you know, on a number of occasions over the last couple of years looking at their economy, trying to get some relationship going between my own community of Sault Ste Marie and a small part of that country that is working to take advantage of the good times that are booming in that country. When you dig below the surface, when you get beyond the obvious reality of there being a very competitive corporate tax structure in that country, you begin to understand that there's a lot more to the Celtic Tiger than just that. You begin to understand that the Irish people, intelligent as they always seem to be in front of tremendous challenge and difficulty, have begun to look at how they might strengthen their own indigenous industry and root it in a way that would keep it in locally controlled hands and link it up with enterprises of similar ilk in other parts of the world. In other words, they want to stabilize their economy, root it in the underpinnings of a locally owned, locally controlled, indigenous industrial base that will serve them into the future, that will provide the kinds of jobs and opportunities for their populace that they know they will need to provide as life unfolds.

1640

In Ontario, if we simply look at the north, for example, and the diminishing of the resource-based economy that has served that part of our province for such a long time, we begin to understand what is meant

by the need for us to stabilize and refocus and begin to develop once again a foundation base that will serve us and give us some local control and ownership.

That's why our leader is so passionate about the issue of hydro, because hydro is one of those underpinnings of the means of production that needs to stay in public hands so that it can continue to evolve in a way that speaks to a reliable source of energy there for us as we develop and take advantage of new opportunities and become more attractive to investment. It serves us as well in terms of being competitive so that we have prices that will give us an advantage.

Why shouldn't we have an advantage? Why shouldn't we in Ontario, and particularly in northern Ontario where we are still very much dependent on a resource-based, heavy industrial sector, be able to take advantage of the fact that we own, by virtue of our citizenship, the streams and rivers and waters that generate so much of that energy? Why shouldn't we, as does Alberta where oil and gas are concerned, be able to take advantage of that wonderful enterprise and industry that exist in our province and have served us so well for so long? Why shouldn't we be able to continue to have it in public hands, be able to continue to control it and use it to our own advantage out there in a global economy that is becoming ever more competitive and that is seeing jurisdictions like Ontario scraping and scratching to find advantage when we already have a natural advantage, a substance that everybody out there, given the nature of the economy that's evolving, is desperately seeking, wants and will pay any price for? Why shouldn't we be able to have enough of that at our disposal such that we can use it for its competitive advantage? It will also help us, I think, as we try to refocus on the importance of our resource-based economy that serves northern Ontario so well.

Over the last six or seven years, the resource-based economy in this province has shrunk significantly. If you look at Stats Canada and some of the indicators they put out, you will notice that some of the obvious sectors—fishing and trapping, logging and forestry, mining, quarrying and oil wells—and the manufacturing that is connected there, have all diminished, have shrunk. Those industrial sectors that have served this province so well have been neglected, have had a back turned on them and have not been given the resources they need, the leadership they need to continue to be the foundation block that I think they have the potential to be.

If you combine that with the deterioration or the recession that happened as well in the public-sector of our economy, you begin to see that northern Ontario has been hit over the last six or seven years by a double whammy that this government spoke nothing of in its speech from the throne just a couple of days ago, to give us to believe that they don't understand. Either that or they don't care.

I'm saying to them here today that we as a political party understand the important role that the resource-based economy has played and continues to play and

could continue to play well into the future if we'd only bring resources to the table, if we'd only sit down and develop a strategy around it and begin to imagine how it might be developed such that it takes advantage of some of the newest of technology that's available or gives us an advantage as we develop some of that technology to begin to sell that someplace else in the world.

My colleague from Timmins-James Bay is wont to say that we've developed in northern Ontario some of the best mining equipment that's available in the world today, and yet it's the best-kept secret in this province and in this country. Why aren't we taking advantage of that? Why aren't we setting up a centre of excellence in mining technology so that we can continue to develop that technology, and not only develop that technology, but sell it out there across the world to places looking for that kind of intelligence and information and equipment?

The northern Ontario economy has been hit by a one-two economic punch since 1995. First, the resource sector of the economy has been in recession. Second, the public sector has undergone a major retraction. The result, not mentioned in the speech from the throne of a few days ago, is that while the rest of the economy has boomed because of the USA economy, increasing by an average of 5% per year, the sectors most important to the northern Ontario economy have undergone a recession, I suggest, largely created by this government, both by its lack of action and in fact by some of the initiatives that it took particularly in the public sector, where vehicles that were put in place over a number of years by different persuasions of government to stabilize the northern economy were either done away with altogether or significantly diminished.

It starts with the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. That exists today as a shadow of its former self, a ministry that was put in place at the insistence of John Lane, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, who convinced his government, the Bill Davis government of the day, that there needed to be a lead ministry in northern Ontario to develop a context within which every other ministry would operate up in that part of our province and to give leadership and direction and to provide information and resources. But it has become a shadow of itself.

Within that ministry there were vehicles like the Northern Ontario Development Corp that is now gone. There were vehicles like the norOntair air service that served every major community in northern Ontario with safe, reliable and coordinated air service so that they could connect with the larger centres and the rest of the world in a way that gave them hope that perhaps some investment might come and take root in their community. That's gone as well. The northern Ontario heritage fund, which was put in place specifically because there was this very cyclical nature to the northern economy, has been changed now such that it has become nothing more than a vehicle for the government to curry political favour and to take up the slack that has been left because

all of the mainline ministries have had their capital budgets reduced to almost nothing. So you get the northern Ontario heritage fund now that has become a slush fund for the government, as well as SuperBuild, which in fact has the same rationale there. They've taken all the money that was available through the mainline ministries for capital and put it into the SuperBuild fund so that they could then decide politically where it would be most helpful for them to actually announce and invest that money.

What would we do? We would develop a northern strategy. We would develop strategies in the resource-based sector of our economy. We would develop strategies for transportation. We would develop strategies for new technologies. We would give the colleges and universities of the north the kind of money that they need to be those vehicles of economic recovery and development and training that we so desperately and absolutely need, not only in the big centres, but campuses in the small centres as well, the same as they were in the 1970s and 1980s.

1650

The colleges in particular are in need of some major resources—money—if they are going to even survive, never mind thrive. We would be giving them the footing they need if we were government, and we would be encouraging them to partner with universities, the private sector, communities, the labour movement and other organizations to develop community economic development strategies that would serve everybody well in the long haul.

We would give tourism a priority like it hasn't now. We know the government is announcing day after day more money for marketing in tourism, but if you have nothing to market, if you're not putting money into the actual attractions themselves, if you're sitting back while major attractions that have been struggling for a number of years sputter and fail or end up changing hands two or three times, then all the marketing in the world isn't going to do you any good. We would be looking at a major tourism strategy that would see us invest in infrastructure, as well as continue the marketing that is so important.

Also, we would like to focus on our aboriginal brothers and sisters up in the north, communities with tremendous potential to develop, to build on some of the very rich cultural assets they have in terms of their history, their language, the art they create and so many other things they are doing in their communities and across the north. They need, as well, a partnering. They need a friendly government that is willing to come in and sit and talk to them about what it will take to actually put them over the top in terms of connecting with the rest of the world and some of the other aboriginal communities that are out there so we can capitalize on that; set up a centre of excellence in aboriginal studies or in aboriginal development and enterprise so that they, as well as the rest of us, can take advantage of some of the economic

opportunities that are out there, so that they can have communities that are healthy and vibrant and forward-looking.

In the last few minutes I have left, I want to focus just for a minute on the issue of how it is that we reclaim some of the fairness and justice we need to see in our society that seems to have slipped and disappeared over the last six or seven years. I have said over and over again in this place that government has no more fundamental a responsibility when it becomes government than to make sure it is supporting those who are most at risk, vulnerable or poor among us. That calls for us to be looking at how we support and develop and resource communities that are sustainable, that work together for people.

It would require a recognition by this government that we have some major problems. We have some housing problems. We have problems with poverty. We have transportation problems. We have problems of crowding in many of our communities. With the government's downloading of so many services on to municipalities, we have problems of where we are going to get the money to provide all of that infrastructure that's required and necessary if communities are going to be viable, healthy and strong and able to support all those who live within their boundaries or in their jurisdiction.

I think we need to be supporting those communities and the individuals who live in those communities, no matter what their circumstance. That's where I would call on this government to immediately increase the income of some of the poorest of our citizens so that they and their children can in fact live in dignity and can begin to participate in a more active way in community life, so we can all benefit from the resource that's there and the health that will come from that, not only to the individuals but to the community itself.

I want to just focus for a minute on the plight of the disabled in our communities, who have not had a raise in their pension, in their income, since the early 1990s and who struggle every day because there isn't the opportunity for them. When this government wiped out the Employment Equity Act, they took away a very important vehicle from the disabled to actually begin to take advantage of the skill that they have are to participate in their community. In taking that away, you would think the government would see it as necessary to make sure that at least they have a decent standard of living, that they have enough money in their pockets to pay the rent, feed themselves and participate in their community in ways that speak to their being full partners in those communities. But alas, that's not happened.

That's why on June 20 I'm going to be bringing forward to this House for second reading debate a bill to increase the pension to people on ODSP in this province, to those disabled citizens and individuals in this province who are in desperate need of that. We're going to be bringing in a bill that will not only increase the pension for those folks but will tie it to the rising cost of living every year, as of April 1, so that automatically, without

having to come cap in hand or on bended knee, they will get that increase.

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is now open for questions and comments, up to two minutes for four members.

Mr Gill: It is again a pleasure to take part in this discussion. I will be spending some more time a little later on to perhaps take more part in the debate on the throne speech.

The member from Sault Ste Marie spoke about many things, and a couple of things were pretty frightening. One of the things he said—twice, actually—was, “When we form the government.” People still have not forgotten the NDP government, the doom-and-gloom days, the tax-and-spend environment where they threw money at everything. In fact, BC had an NDP government recently, and I believe people made the right choice, where they have a different government which is following some of the policies for prosperity that our government has been bringing forward.

The member for Sault Ste Marie spoke about Ireland, that he has had the privilege of travelling to Ireland in the last couple of years. One of the things that Ireland has been doing is lowering taxes, stimulating growth, attracting investment. Those are exactly the policies I suppose they are learning from us.

You know, whenever the NDP members speak, they also talk about the economy, that our economy is tied to the economy to the south, that we’re riding on the coattails of the US. They fail to recognize that we in this province are growing much more than any of the G8 countries.

I had the pleasure recently of heading the Ontario trade mission to India. We signed a lot of good deals. Businesses were very happy to be there, and they were very happy to look at the booming economy of Ontario and the lower taxes, the law and order. Therefore, they want to invest in Ontario. That is the kind of economy we are promoting, and that’s what we are saying in the throne speech.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): There are two sets of vulnerable people I know the member would be concerned about who have been advocating their cause to members of the Legislature.

One group are people who reside in nursing homes, seniors’ homes and long-term-care homes at this time, who are in a very vulnerable position because the amount of money that is allocated by the provincial government for the purposes of providing services for these individuals is far too modest, not enough money. The families of these individuals, the seniors themselves, who often don’t enjoy the kind of health that they would like to enjoy, and the owners of the homes, who would like to provide better service to these individuals, all recognize that there’s a need for an injection of funds. I’m sure the member, if he didn’t get a chance this time, has that in the back of his mind.

The second group of individuals—and I know the member again is concerned about these—are people who

receive benefits and are disabled in this province. I know the member has been advocating on behalf of those individuals. It is my understanding that essentially we have not seen any increase in the amount of money that is allocated for individuals who are on disability, that the amount of money they receive does not take into account the increases in rents and increases in other costs which people must meet on a daily basis. These are areas that I didn’t see addressed appropriately in the speech from the throne, and I know the member for Sault Ste Marie would share my concern about those.

1700

On a more parochial basis, you in the chair would know the disastrous situation we’re confronted with in the Niagara Peninsula and near the Niagara Peninsula in terms of ambulance dispatch services, the chaotic situation and the report that was hidden for six months. I’m very pleased that the member was able to speak, and he may be able to address some of these issues in a subsequent speech.

Mr Prue: I would first like to commend my colleague from Sault Ste Marie for a very thoughtful speech. He spoke eloquently and touched on the very special needs of the north, and it is to those special needs that I turn my attention.

First, he is quite correct that the resource-based industry of the north seems to be very much in decline, and as it declines so does the population of those northern ridings. As the population of the northern riding declines, so does the economy and everything that goes with it. One need only travel across northern Ontario to towns that were once booming with excellent mines and mills and to see that the resource-based economy of Kirkland Lake, for example, or Atikokan or other northern towns, is simply not there any more. What is starting to happen is that the economies are faltering, the young people no longer have a place to stay and therefore they don’t. He is quite right: more money needs to be put into those communities if, in fact, there is a will for them to survive. I believe they have a will to survive, and we should be assisting them.

The second point he made that I think has not been touched on before and is very important is what has happened to our native peoples, many of whom come from the north but increasingly we are seeing in southern Ontario in places that we really didn’t see them before. As a boy who grew up in Toronto, I did not know many native Canadians. But you need only go on the streets of this city today and you will see them in great numbers, sometimes in very unfortunate circumstances. It is said that about 2% of the population of Toronto is now native Canadian but 10% of our homeless are. Therefore, they are five times as likely to be homeless in this city and five times as likely to be unemployed in this city as those who were otherwise born in Canada or who came from somewhere else. I do not see that addressed satisfactorily in the throne speech. I know it is federal responsibility, but we all have a responsibility for those people in our midst.

Mrs Marland: When we talk about northern Ontario, and particularly someone speaking from the New Democratic Party, I agree that there is something or, in this case someone, who is not there any more. I think with great respect and high regard of a New Democratic member, Bud Wildman. I believe that Bud served in this House—Jimmy, you probably know better than I—was it 19 years or 17 years?

Mr Bradley: From 1975 to the last election.

Mrs Marland: Twenty-three years—incredible service. Of course, the irony is that we are having this debate on Thursday afternoon, and I miss that member very much because Bud Wildman always had House duty on Thursday afternoons as well, which I could never understand because he certainly had a far greater distance to go home to his riding than I do to Mississauga South.

I never really had the opportunity at the time he was leaving to take part in a tribute to him. Actually, if I'm not mistaken, he decided to retire after the House had adjourned, and I don't think any of us had an opportunity to pay tribute to him. So I'm using a bit of licence here, Mr Speaker, with your permission. I think Bud Wildman is one of the finest representatives that not only northern Ontario but all parts of Ontario have ever had, in both the longevity of his service and the ethic with which he represented the needs of his people as he saw them from his philosophical viewpoint. I still miss him, and I miss his humour and his good nature and his Thursday afternoon jokes.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, and we'll make sure a copy of that tribute goes to the family.

With that, the member for Sault Ste Marie has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Martin: I want to thank the members who participated in the debate this afternoon in response to my speech and, first of all, to say to the member for Mississauga South that Mr Wildman is doing well. He's working hard as chair of the board of governors at Algoma University and doing some contract work with the federal government. He will actually be going to Ireland with me in a week. I will be the recipient of, and will be able to enjoy, his humour and good conversation there and will certainly tell him of the nice things you said here this afternoon when I see him this weekend.

The member for Beaches-East York, as usual, understands the issues of the city but is also able to connect them to some of the real challenges we're facing in northern Ontario, and I thank him for that.

The member for St Catharines, as usual, was watching the television and heard everything I had to say. He recognizes that I always talk about the poor and the marginalized and those who are vulnerable. Certainly those who are in our retirement homes are at risk at this point in time and are in need of resources.

I wanted, though, to spend a bit of time on the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, because he threw out a challenge and I think it needs to be responded to. He talked about Ireland. But when the Conservatives talk about Ireland, they forget that the European Union has

literally shovelled buckets of money in to take up the vacuum the good corporate tax structure has provided. The investment by the European Union and the Irish government in infrastructure in Ireland would make Ontario look sick, and it's paying dividends.

I say to you that over the last five or six years, this province has enjoyed the best of economic times, unlike when we were government between 1990 and 1995, and if you look at the stats they have generated some \$40 billion in excess revenue above and beyond even the tax break they've given away. The question we need to be asking is, where is that money? Where is it?

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I am delighted to have the opportunity this afternoon to add my voice to comments about the throne speech. I've been listening with interest to the comments this afternoon, and I guess I look at this from a very different perspective.

The throne speech began by talking about spring, a bright, new era, and quite frankly in my riding of Guelph-Wellington that's how people are viewing things. It is spring. People are excited. They recognize that we have a new leader, a new Premier. They are pleased that I have a new portfolio, and certainly I'm very excited about that. With our new session come new challenges and new opportunities, and on this side of the House we are very excited by that.

In my own riding of Guelph-Wellington, we are celebrating something very special. This is Guelph's 175th anniversary, and our city has been full of celebrations and different events for several months now. My riding encompasses not just the city of Guelph but also Guelph-Eramosa and the township of Puslinch. Generally in my riding, we are thriving.

Oh, Speaker, I must apologize. I was to indicate that I was sharing my time with Mr Gill, and I do hope you'll allow that to continue. Thank you. My apologies to my colleague.

To continue, in my riding, including the two townships, our unemployment is generally below the provincial average and the national average. We have a wide variety of businesses. We have a thriving university, in the University of Guelph, and Conestoga College. We have a fantastic citizenry. We have thousands of volunteers who participate in many activities. I am told that in Guelph we have more organizations per capita than many other jurisdictions, and there are some days when the invitations to different events certainly seem to me to reflect that. But for the most part, my community of Guelph-Wellington is very fortunate. We are safe, we are happy and for the most part it's a very successful community.

But it hasn't always been like that. When I came here in 1995 to do my part to turn Ontario around, I came from a community that was very worried about its future, very troubled by the misguided policies that were being foisted upon the province by the Liberal and NDP gov-

ernments. I saw first-hand, as a small business person, the damage those kinds of tax-and-spend, high-deficit policies could do. I came here not for myself but for the most part for my children, to do what I could to make sure that our future was brighter. I was not about to be part of a province where debt and lack of prosperity were going to be placed before my children's and other children's future.

1710

I can remember going to events and people would be saying to me, "Brenda, if you're elected you must do something to change this province, because I can't continue to do business here. I'm going to have to move to the States." I haven't heard that since 1995.

Today I had the opportunity to pay tribute to a colleague, Harry Worton. I have never worked closely with Harry, other than in the community, but he represented our riding in this Legislature for over 30 years. My community greatly respected Harry. He and Alf Hales, who represented our riding for many years in the federal House, were both remarked upon for their kindness, for being wide decision-makers and for being very attentive to the riding. I hope that the day I choose to leave politics that's exactly how I will be considered.

I referenced the throne speech. There are a couple of lines here that I thought reflected how I feel about what government is to do:

"Responsible government knows its place. It understands where it does not belong and is prepared to get out of the way.

"But responsive government also recognizes where it has a role to play to provide leadership and to take action in the best interests of all Ontarians. And it has the courage to play that role.

"Your new government promises to deliver both responsible and responsive leadership....

"Leadership with the strength to listen and the courage to act, blending common sense solutions with a common sense of purpose."

That's very much, I guess, how I feel my role should be. I'm here to represent the interests of my riding in Guelph-Wellington. I'm here to consider and make my wise decisions in the interests of the province as a whole, to assist all of our citizens to the best of my ability. We work very hard on this side of the House to do just that.

The key areas referenced in the throne speech were education, jobs, health and the economy, sound planning and safe communities.

I was listening to my opposition colleagues across the way bemoan all the terrible things they seem to think are wrong in Ontario. That's certainly not the case in a riding like mine. Just in the last few weeks my riding has had millions of dollars more for education. My university at Guelph has been greatly benefiting from the kinds of research and challenge money that we have put into their university and many other research institutes across the province.

In my community we have a brand new long-term-care health facility being built. We have a new hospital

almost completed. We have a new community health centre. We have new long-term-care beds underway. The health system in my community has never had greater opportunities to deliver better health care in decades, and that's because of the decisions and the investments that this government has made. My constituents absolutely can say with great confidence that the services delivered to them are better than they've had for many, many years.

We do have some problems. For instance, doctor recruitment is a challenge. My community is underserved and we don't have as many doctors as we would like. There are many reasons for that and it's happening, sadly, not just in Ontario but across the nation. I have to say that I'm very impressed that our Minister of Health has worked very hard to try to implement every single worthwhile idea that's come before us, to find ways to recruit and to encourage physicians to move into parts of our province where they are greatly needed.

The throne speech I thought was comprehensive in that it touched the areas that the constituents I represent in Guelph-Wellington think are priority areas that governments need to deliver services in. To say that everything we have done on this side of the House has been perfect would of course be foolish. That is impossible for any government. But to be responsive and to listen and to look to the future to make things better, to always strive to provide new services and better services, is exactly what we are trying to do, ever mindful of living within our means, ever mindful of the fact that we cannot generate money as a government; we can only set the stage for our businesses, for our entrepreneurs to in fact create the jobs, to send in the tax revenue, to serve our citizens. That is in fact their role, not the role of government. I think we've done very well at that.

I have a book in front of me that reflects what happened in my community 175 years ago. The founder of my community was John Galt. He was a storyteller as well as a land speculator. On April 23, 1827, together with Dr William "Tiger" Dunlop—"a fellow adventurer and author," he's called here—and Charles Prior, who was a manager that was hired, they felled the first tree in Guelph. This is how he wrote about it:

"The tree fell with a crash of accumulating thunder, as if ancient nature were alarmed at the entrance of social man into her innocent solitudes," Galt wrote.

"It was no accident that the ... tree came down on St George's Day," because he "believed Guelph would become an important city, and chose the national holiday honouring the patron saint of England as a day fit to launch the city with the royal name. He chose a name steeped in history, dating back to the Hanoverian Welfs and the Guelfs who controlled the dynasties of Northern Italy in medieval times. King George I brought his ancestry as a Guelph and elector of Hanover to the British royal family with his accession to the throne in 1714."

This book also mentions that, "The land that would become Guelph ... was beside a large tributary of the

Grand River, which Galt called the Speed. He saw it as a logical choice for the company's first major development, within trading distance of York and many of the surrounding townships—including Waterloo, Erin and Eramosa—that were already active settlements."

When my community was founded, it was founded with hope and a vision of entrepreneurship, of community spirit, of activity where people would gather and work happily to build things together, to make their families and their businesses prosperous and happy.

It's the role of government to play its role, as I said, to be responsible and responsive, to make sure the citizens are able to carry out their lives successfully and happily. I believe in the throne speech we have outlined a plan to do just that, to support communities like mine in Guelph-Wellington.

I would like to close my comments with these remarks that closed the throne speech: "Your government knows that the trust of Ontario's citizens is something that must be earned each day.

"Your government will work hard to earn that trust."

I know that I do just that, and I know my colleagues on this side of the House do just that as well. We make our wisest and best decisions in the interest of all Ontarians, ever mindful of the needs of our local constituents, and I believe the throne speech is a blueprint to help us do that successfully.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

Mr Gill: It is my pleasure. I want to thank my colleague from Guelph-Wellington, the Honourable Brenda Elliott, the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services, for allowing me some time this afternoon to perhaps share some views on the throne speech.

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): You'll be better than her, don't worry.

Mr Gill: Thank you for the encouragement.

I'm pleased to stand in the House today and join in this debate on the speech from the throne. Last Thursday, May 9, exactly one week ago today, our government kicked off the new legislative session with a plan to protect and enhance the economic progress of the past seven years under our new Premier, Ernie Eves. I want to welcome Premier Eves on his return to public life and I want to thank him for giving me the opportunity to serve him and the people of Ontario as his parliamentary assistant.

We call it a New Era for Ontario. It lays out the most important measures we, as government, will take to ensure Ontario's growth and success.

Ontarians know our government keeps its promises. That is the legacy of Premier Mike Harris. He brought credibility back to politics. Our government protects their jobs, keeps their families' finances sound and ensures Ontario—

Mr Sorbara: After seven years of lies, lies and more lies.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Take your seat, please. Sorry to interrupt. The member from Vaughan-King-Aurora, you're not in your seat. You've done more heckling in the short time you've been here than everybody else combined this afternoon, and I'm asking you to withdraw those comments you just made.

Mr Sorbara: You'll have to wait until I get to my seat, Mr Speaker. I certainly would withdraw those comments.

1720

Mrs Marland: We had a good afternoon, Greg, so don't change—

The Deputy Speaker: Exactly the same thing would apply to the member for Mississauga South, whose seat is way over there, not way over there. So now it's contagious. We've had a little levity. If would could now focus on the—

Interjection: This has been the best part of Gill's speech.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I'd ask the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale to please continue.

Mr Gill: Thank you for bringing order back to the House; you're doing a wonderful job.

I'm proud of Premier Eves and his willingness to listen. I'm proud of his long record of service to this province and this Legislature. I'm proud of his straightforward and direct approach to acting on the concerns of Ontario citizens. When it comes to showing leadership, this government has been there. I know it will continue to be there when Ontarians need it, and I'm pleased to see that our government's commitment to smart growth has been carefully restated and confirmed.

In my own riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale we are very pleased to see the new pedestrian tunnel at the Bramalea GO station. It's within days of being complete. This tunnel will increase the ability of our station to handle the many thousands of commuters who use the train every day. When they take the train, they are saving themselves the hassle of driving and are avoiding pollution, traffic congestion and road maintenance costs. Indeed, so many of my constituents are getting on the GO train that they recently got new train service throughout the day to Malton and Bramalea stations. This is proof that the province will ensure that GO Transit can move the people of the GTA where and when they need to go. I think it's important that we do everything in our power to make a trip on the GO train as comfortable and convenient as possible and that we keep encouraging commuters all over the GTA to get on the GO. This is smart growth at work.

It's also a good start to see that the government's transit renewal plan is continuing. Two of the communities I serve received funding this year under this program. Brampton Transit got more than \$1 million and Mississauga Transit got more than \$3.5 million. This money is going to help them refurbish and maintain their fleets of buses to keep the people of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale moving. This is an example of the

great things we can do for our constituents when different levels of government work together.

I'm getting the feeling that even our MPs in Ottawa are starting to listen, especially after the recent by-elections. The people aren't going to let the federal government get away with doing nothing forever. They aren't going to win by default forever. Our MPs federally are starting to get nervous. Perhaps they know that we had by-elections on May 2 and we did well. As I said, they had by-elections on May 13 and they didn't do too well. Those federal MPs are perfectly correct to be nervous.

It is interesting that, after much coaxing, even our federal counterparts have started to come to the table to co-operate on issues like transit funding. Whether their contribution is worthwhile or not remains to be seen. I know it will be compared to the \$3 billion that our government has offered. I hope that it isn't as inadequate as their contribution to health care funding has been.

It's also encouraging that the throne speech reaffirmed our government's commitment to training, colleges and universities. I had the honour, as you know, of serving as Minister Cunningham's parliamentary assistant over the past year at that ministry. I came to realize the important fact that education is an economic development program, not a social program. Education is investment, not merely spending. Our continuing commitment is that every willing and qualified Ontario student will continue to be able to attend college or university. Our government works closely with universities and colleges to project enrolment every year. Again, the results of co-operation are showing. Advanced learning is becoming more accessible. Ontario's post-secondary participation rates are increasing. The percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in colleges and universities has increased from 28.5% in 1990-91 to 36.4% in 2001-02.

Now we are coming up on the double cohort. As a double cohort parent myself, I was one of the stakeholders Minister Cunningham had to convince when we planned this out. I had to be convinced and I had to see the plan with my own eyes. I knew that the ministry and the government had listened and that they are going to be ready for the double cohort.

Increasing enrolment is the reason why in the 2001 budget this government committed to increasing our support for colleges and universities by a projected \$293 million. Provincial funding to support post-secondary education increased by about \$78 million in 2001-02, and an investment of over \$1 billion through SuperBuild, combined with our partners' contributions, will result in a total of \$1.8 billion in capital construction at colleges and universities across the province. SuperBuild is supporting 59 new capital projects at our colleges and universities, thus creating 73,000 net new spaces, the largest capital investment in Ontario's post-secondary system in more than 30 years. In addition, colleges and universities have agreed to create additional spaces through better use of existing facilities. To help them plan, the province has

invested another \$300 million since 1999 in the renovation and renewal of existing post-secondary facilities.

At the same time, we've seen years of accusations and fearmongering from the opposition benches. They said that fewer students will be going to universities and colleges. They saw political advantage in frightening students and parents. They took political advantage of parents and students by telling them that the doors to post-secondary education were closed. That is contrary. More and more people are going to universities.

More needs to be done, nonetheless, and I'm proud to be part of the government that creates the environment to keep the economy going.

The Deputy Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I am pleased to respond to the comments of the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. He made several points, several of which I'd like to comment on.

One is that I was very pleased to hear him talk about education as an economic development tool. I agree totally with that. I believe—and my leader, Dalton McGuinty, in his economic platform, believes—that Ontario can be North America's leading economy and that we will do that by being fiscally responsible, by making sure this is an area that attracts investment, but we will distinguish ourselves by our ability to have a superior workforce.

Our concern, frankly, is that the government has embarked on a policy of having corporate taxes in this province 25% below the US, below all our competitors—below Michigan, all the border states, Alabama. As a matter of fact, they are pushing the federal government to get it well below 25% below.

So as we look to some investment in our education system—and you see our elementary and secondary schools desperate for funding—I would say to the member that the universities and colleges have informed us that they've taken on about \$1.5 billion of new debt, capital debt, for the double cohort. Of your increased annual expenditures, at least \$100 million of that is going to go every year to pay interest on the debt. So while you talk about an investment—and we agree that education is an economic tool—you are starving the tool, and corporate taxes 25% below the US as an economic engine is wrong. We think we can distinguish ourselves by a superior workforce.

Mr Prue: I listened to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. I have seen many times true believers on that side of the House, but he has to be one of the truest of the true believers. He stood there and he gave his speech and he read it with such aplomb. Every word he was saying I honestly believe he believed from the bottom of his heart.

1730

Interjection: He used to read our Liberal speeches.

Mr Prue: He used to read the Liberal speeches just the same way, but he now believes that, and I want to just comment on two of the things he was talking about.

The first was GO Transit. I congratulate him on having a new walkway in his riding where the people can get on GO Transit, but the reality is that most of the people from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale who get on GO Transit end up in Toronto. And when they end up in Toronto, they don't have the same good, lovely services. They have the Toronto Transit Commission, which has been starved for years and continues to be starved. It continues to have inadequate funds to do the job as it should be doing and as is being done as well in his riding out there in Brampton.

The second thing he's talking about which I think needs to be commented on is the money for schools. I listened to that as well. Sure there was all kinds of money, huge amounts of money, being talked about here, but the reality is that the schools in this province are on a very bad downward spiral. One need only go around—the Catholic board invited members, and not one member on the other side of the House went either to their press conference or on the bus tour to see the very bad condition of those schools. They're in terrible condition, and the public schools are in exactly the same condition. The money is not being put where it is needed. They are \$135 million short in the Toronto system, the Catholic system is short and that's where the money should be put.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise to say a few words this afternoon. I'd like to thank the member from Guelph-Wellington, the Honourable Brenda Elliott, for her comments, as well as my colleague Raminder Gill from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. I'd also like to compliment and congratulate Premier Eves on his election in his new seat of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey. Today it's been acknowledged that our member from Nipissing, Al McDonald, is the successful candidate. It was a close race up there, but I have to tell the audience and the members who are in the House today that it's the first time in over 50 years that when a Premier has left his seat the seat has been won by the party in power. We're very proud of that because we know the Liberal Party in fact thought they had that one in the bag. We're very proud of the work Al did, and previously Mr Harris as well.

I'd like to make a couple of comments on Mr Gill's comments. First of all, on the SuperBuild announcements, he would certainly know, as former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, that the announcements are coming forward now and there's a lot of construction taking place. We're very pleased in Simcoe county that Georgian College has started its construction on 2,700 new pupil places. It's a \$17-million investment. Georgian College has approximately \$6 million from partners contributing to this project as well. We're looking forward to opening that late next summer and the double cohort taking place and 2,700 new pupils entering Georgian College in Barrie, Ontario.

Mr Sorbara: I listened very carefully to the remarks of my friend from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and I just want to raise two topics because the kind of

propaganda and platitudes that we saw in the throne speech and replicated here in the speeches that are read by the members opposite in support of their new Premier and his government really need to be unmasked. A strong light ought to shine upon them.

First, on the issue of transit, to refer to a tunnel that has finally been built at a GO station in Brampton in the face of the extent to which transit right across Ontario has been ignored by the Conservative government of Ontario is a terrible shame. It used to be that American jurisdictions came to Ontario to look at the progress and the leading edge of transit development. They now come and tell us that over the past 10 years this province, and in particular the greater Toronto area, has fallen behind.

I want to mention as well his defence of the terrible mess in post-secondary education, particularly on the community college side. I invite him to speak to the board of directors of Sheridan College, which exists in his very riding. They will tell him, because they have told me, that the level of funding per student is now so low at Sheridan College and at every community college that it is virtually impossible for them to meet their responsibilities and their mandate. For that member to stand in his place and say, "Isn't it wonderful and fine?" is an abdication of his responsibilities to represent his constituents rather than his government.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale now has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Gill: I do appreciate everyone who took part in the debate today: the members for Scarborough-Agincourt, Beaches-East York, Simcoe North and Vaughan-King-Aurora. I think it's a very healthy debate. It's interesting that different parties have different views.

The wonderful news that comes out of government every day is always being knocked by the outside. The proof is really when the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities talks to the university heads and they all agree that they are ready for the double cohort. I'm very satisfied, as I said earlier on. One of my daughters is going to be starting university this year, and the other one next year, which is part of the double cohort. We can say all the wonderful things we want, but when the university heads themselves agree that they're ready, and every child who is willing and able to go to university will be allowed and will have the space to go to university, I'm satisfied with that kind of investment and that kind of assurance that the universities themselves are giving us. I'm very, very happy to say that most of her classmates are going to university and getting early admissions. I'm very happy. So I want to encourage the young people, including some of the pages here, who are taking part in the curriculum and the new studies.

When we talk about how the curriculum has been condensed—and a lot of people say, "Well, the sky's falling. All of a sudden, we're going to have a great failure rate"—the world has moved ahead. The world has secondary school up to the level of grade 11, grade 12. We are just realizing it, because it was a hard decision to

make. Somebody had to get up and say, "Grade 13 has to be eliminated. We have to have grade 12." We made those choices, and I'm glad to be part of that government.

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is now open for further debate.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I want to share my time with the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

I want to speak to one particular line from the throne speech, on page 17: "The people of Ontario should have a voice in the future direction of one of Ontario's most important resources. Your government has the courage to listen, the willingness to consult." It's becoming incredibly clear to all of us in this Legislature—and I can't believe that people in the government benches are happy either—that in fact the government does not have the courage to listen and does not have the willingness to consult when it comes to the future of electricity transmission in the province of Ontario. We have been told by the Premier and the energy minister that what we are going to get is a blank-cheque bill whereby the government will, as it's explained by the Premier, address the issues that arose from the decision of Mr Justice Gans; namely, the ability of the province to dispose of the assets of Hydro One. That very subject matter, the future of electricity transmission, is probably the most important debate we are going to have this year in the province of Ontario, certainly this legislative year. It is about deciding what we're going to do with a natural monopoly. The electricity transmission highway takes electricity from generation upstream and brings it downstream to people's local communities from where it is distributed. So it's the highway, the river, the stream.

1740

For all of us here dealing with this incredibly valuable asset, we deal not only with something that affects our lives but really a commodity like none other: electricity. We need electricity for everything. The people need electricity to turn on their televisions and listen to this speech.

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: They just turned it off.

Moreover, we're talking about a very valuable asset. Just forgetting for the moment about how important electricity transmission is, we're talking about a company, Hydro One, that makes net revenue of over \$330 million each year for us, the people. We, the people, have this natural monopoly that we in fact benefit from. If we want to seriously address stranded and residual debt resulting from the old Ontario Hydro, we wouldn't engage in a one-time sale, a fire sale. We would rather take that \$330 million each year and put it toward the debt. That just makes sense.

If a farmer is having a bad year, does the farmer sell the farm? The problem, of course, is that there's nothing left for the future. If you sell 20 acres and then another 10 and then another 10 and another 20, suddenly there's no farm left. The government wants to sell the farm, and it's a fire sale. We on this side of the House say it's all about balancing the budget. It's all about the government

getting the proceeds of the electricity transmission highway and using them to deal with their current fiscal situation.

Mr Justice Arthur Gans made it explicit in his decision that in fact the proceeds from a Hydro One IPO would necessarily, absent legislative changes to the contrary, which don't exist, have to go to the consolidated revenue fund. It's not like it can magically go off to automatically pay the debt. It doesn't. It goes into the consolidated revenue fund. Granted, the commitment can be made to pay it, but it's got to go through that fund. If you want to deal with the debt, if you want to make that the linchpin of the argument for the sale of Hydro One in whatever form—income trust, IPO, not-for-profit, lease or strategic sale—you would want to take the money you earn each year and over time you would be able to pay down more than you could in a one-time payment. That just makes sense.

But there's a more fundamental issue here. Imagine that you came home one day and found out that one of your kids had sold your car, just sold your car, and you said, firstly, "You did what? I never said you could sell my car."

"Look, we got a pretty good price for it."

Two problems: first, you sold the car without being able to do so, without any authority whatsoever. "That was my car," you would say. "That wasn't your car; that was my car." Similarly, the electricity transmission grid is the people's grid.

Second, what if the sale is a crummy one? "You sold my car for what?" This is my other concern; it's a fiscal concern. It's this: are our kids or our grandkids going to look back at the sale of the electricity transmission highway and say it is the 21st-century equivalent of selling Manhattan Island for \$24? Are we giving up and ripping off the taxpayer by selling it? I say yes. We're going to hear from the government on this.

But wait a minute. We're not going to hear from the government on this. This is the worst part about what is happening with respect to what the government refers to as having a voice in the future direction of one of Ontario's most important resources: the blank-cheque bill. The blank-cheque bill is going to be the mother of all legislative battles. The fight over the blank-cheque bill—and Ontarians should be aware of this—is going to really be a fight about the state of our democracy in Ontario and the abuses and excesses of executive power. This may end up being the most putrid perversion of parliamentary process that one could possibly imagine, whereby the executive gives itself the power to do something that the Legislature hasn't had an opportunity to speak to.

Not only will this government not listen, not only will this government not wait to hear from the courts—and I don't even have time to get into that. That's too bad, because the most bizarre thing is happening. Normally the government wants to wait to hear from the courts. The court finishes its dialogue, it comes back to the Legislature and then the Legislature can have the last

word in most cases, absent a charter case, but even then they can have the last word by invoking section 33, the notwithstanding clause. We have a democracy that is built in a way that is supposed to be working in a way where the people get the last word.

Under the blank cheque bill that will be introduced by the government of Ontario to give itself the power to do whatever the executive council wants to do with respect to the future of the transmission grid, we, the people, will not get a say. "What do you mean you won't get a say?" I mean this: the people get an opportunity to have a say on matters of government business, what we used to refer to as the business of the Queen, by electing people to represent them in the Legislature. The executive presents bills. The government presents bills. They are government bills. This is the executive's opportunity to present to the Legislature what it wants to do, and then the Legislature has the opportunity to vote on it.

We know that in a system of majority government in the 21st century, modern-day Parliaments create honourable tyrannies. We know that. I understand that. But that doesn't mean we don't at least give everybody the opportunity to be held accountable to their citizens. So in fact the honourable Mr Guzzo, who has said he is opposed to selling off Hydro One—and he said it several times in published reports—won't get an opportunity on behalf of his constituents to say, "No, I don't want to sell off Hydro One."

Mr Tascona said in private members' business this morning, "I'll quite frankly come out as the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford in favour of public control of Ontario Hydro," reading from the draft Hansard in that debate on Hydro One. I'm presuming he means he's in favour of keeping Hydro One public, but I'll let him clarify that. In fact, that member, that backbencher, will not have an opportunity to have a say on behalf of his constituents as to the future of Hydro One.

This government doesn't have the courage to listen even to their own caucus, even to this Legislature. It is going to be a sad, sad day when Princeton's prince of privatization gets the last word on the future of Hydro One.

Mr Smitherman: It's a tough act to follow here on a Thursday afternoon, my friend the member from St Paul's, but I will do my very best.

Last week, on May 9, the day of the throne speech, I woke up with a splitting headache. I now have more sympathy for those sufferers of migraines. I think I have a slightly better understanding of what it's like. It was a pain like I think maybe people who have an arthritic knee and can tell about the coming onslaught of bad weather get. I've written that pain off about the coming onslaught of one more big, fat document full of flowery words and lousy execution.

I just listened to the presentation by the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and I thought, this guy is out of touch. He doesn't have the right message track installed, because he's back on the Mike Harris message track of promises made, promises kept. He obviously isn't up to date and hasn't read the right

messaging line from the know-it-alls who write the speeches for these guys. People will quickly see—

1750

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): As opposed to those who write yours, who don't know what they're talking about.

Mr Smitherman: Unlike the Minister of Finance, who heckles me, I don't need to have every word written and scripted for me. I can go from my heart because I have a set of values which inform where I'm going.

But the member opposite can't do that. He's stuck on, "Promises made, promises kept." He has already spoken, therefore, and rejected a new era for Ontario, which will be rejected, without doubt, just as quickly as this government's last year's "21 Steps" throne speech was rejected. That one, if you recall, should have been rephrased "Mike Harris's last 21 steps: an exit to political oblivion," because he couldn't reignite public support for his government which has the stamp on it. You know, during the course—

Hon Mrs Ecker: How come we won two by-elections?

Mr Smitherman: Oh, they won the by-election. Yeah, those results were really terrific.

I want to take the opportunity this afternoon to talk a little bit about some of the issues that I think this throne speech has failed to address.

First, I want to say that if Ernie Eves really wanted to do something that significantly sent a message about the extent to which this government had rejected its mean-spirited ways of the past, they would move—and my friend from Sault Ste Marie spoke on this issue earlier. One of the most insidious, disgusting, disheartening things that this government has ever put its grimy little fingerprints on is the way that they have clawed back from the poorest kids in our society the federal government's efforts to make their lives better. The child tax benefit clawback is the single most disgusting thing I've seen these guys up to. I would lay down that marker. I don't think you'll see any change because Ernie Eves and Mike Harris are interchangeable. One of them has got a slightly better quality of suit, but beyond that their golf games are almost identical. So too is their work ethic and, regrettably, we see from this throne speech, and from the presentation of the government subsequently, it's the same old business.

I saw the Premier, Mr Eves—I wish I could wear a button in the Legislature. I'd wear one of those buttons that was oh so prominent during the leadership race, "Another MPP for Ernie Eves," because with every passing day I am more excited about the prospects of this guy at the head of government vacillating back and forth on the issue of Hydro One. Were it not for the member for St Paul's and the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and my leader Dalton McGuinty and Gerry Phillips to keep this story straight, even the government would have a more difficult time than they're clearly having knowing where they stand on the issue of the privatization of Hydro One.

I saw that Premier speaking about the importance of multi-government support, all three levels of government working together to solve the homelessness crisis. Well, I'll tell you, as someone who represents a downtown riding, this government's record on this issue is disgusting. With every passing day, people who are living in the downtown, whether they're in shelters or whether they are adequately housed, are becoming increasingly despondent.

I will tell you that we need a government with a vision and with energy and with the capacity to meaningfully address the problems that are caused when people are getting housing in the form of shelters. This government thinks that shelters are housing. I wish that the real Premier was here—Mr Flaherty, the Minister of Opportunity. The only opportunity that he's ever taken is to belittle the plight of those people who find themselves in the unfortunate position of being homeless. I would challenge him to spend just one night in a shelter, to see the extend to which these places are a warehouse for human misery that can have no effect but to diminish the heart and soul of the people who find themselves in those predicaments. I've done that and I would challenge members of the government to do so.

I want to say that I'm here in the presence of the member for Parkdale-High Park, who served so ably as our education critic and would no doubt serve ably in a ministerial capacity something like that as well.

For those of us who have the responsibility of representing ridings in the city of Toronto, we look at last week's great announcement by the Deputy Premier and Minister of Education of some \$350 million across the breadth of this enormous and great province. Not an unsubstantial sum to people sitting at home, but when you consider that we have something like a \$65-billion budget, this reinvestment in education had the net effect to the average kid in an Ontario school of restoring something like \$14 per kid into the classroom, versus the circumstance in Toronto, where something like \$1,800 per pupil has been cut out of classroom education. They chip in 14 bucks and expect us to stand up and applaud in lockstep with the messaging that all of them are all so excited about.

Against the backdrop of that minor reinvestment, the city of Toronto school board, which grapples with challenges that many other school boards do not have to face, continues to struggle with the challenge of finding additional cuts of something like \$500 per student, cuts that will hit right at the heart of the matter, which is classroom education. A shameful circumstance, because they continue to be committed to \$2.2 billion in tax cuts to our corporations because the Ernie Eves government

continues to think that Ontario should be competing, that we should be in a race to the bottom with the state of Alabama. I reject that. That's not the kind of province I want to be part of.

With respect to health care, my citizens in Toronto Centre-Rosedale continue to struggle with a government that has been so slow—the Minister of Health is here. He has been so slow in living up to the directives of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. In 1996, they ripped the heart out of a community and they said, "We will close your hospital," the Wellesley Central Hospital. "We will force its amalgamation with St Michael's." Here we are, six years later, after an ambulatory care centre was promised, and we see a little bit of renovation going on, but no commitment from this government in terms of the program funding. The minister always talks nice when I ask him a question or when he's behind the stack here, and yet we see no progress on that file.

Recently we've had the circumstances where St Michael's, which is an enormously important health care provider in the city of Toronto and in my riding, has cut programs without notice and, frankly, without consideration for anything except living within the budget that the minister has provided. There is no consideration of what impact that's going to have on the people who require those services. I think that's a shameful predicament here in Ontario. We have money for private school tax vouchers. We have money to drive Ontario's corporate tax rates to competitive rates well below the state of Alabama; we're in a race to the bottom with them. We can give money back for that, but we can't provide adequate resources for education, health and housing. I think this is a shameful record on the part of the government's opsite.

Other members in my caucus have done such an effective job this week. I've been so enormously proud of the way that we've exposed the fact that the government is flipping and flopping around like a fish that's been pulled from the sea and is lying on the dock, gasping its last breath, hoping to be thrown back into the water.

This issue of Hydro One is pathetic, a joke. It would require some computer program so sophisticated it's not yet been invented to figure out where these guys really are. It looks to me like it's a game of policy-making that is based on the principle of pin the tail on the donkey. They're in a blindfold and I'll leave it up to the people looking in to determine who's the real donkey over there.

The Deputy Speaker: It being pretty close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, May 21 at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

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A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 16 mai 2002

AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

**Loi de 2002 modifiant la Loi sur
l'électricité (biens-fonds
réservés aux couloirs
de transport de l'électricité),
projet de loi 13, *M. Sergio***
Adoptée..... 144

**Loi de 2001 modifiant la Loi sur
la protection des locataires
(augmentations équitables des
loyers), projet de loi 134, *M. Caplan***
Rejetée 144

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

**Loi de 2002 sur l'Autoroute Pierre
Elliott Trudeau, projet de loi 21,
*M. Lalonde***
Adoptée..... 147
M. Lalonde 147

**Loi de 2002 modifiant la Loi sur
les procureurs (ententes sur des
honoraires conditionnels), projet
de loi 25, *M. Bryant***
Adoptée..... 147

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

M. Lalonde 169
Débat présumé ajourné..... 184

AUTRES TRAVAUX

Semaine des soins infirmiers
M. Clement..... 150

CONTENTS

Thursday 16 May 2002

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Electricity Amendment Act (Hydro Transmission Corridor Lands), 2002, Bill 13, Mr Sergio	
Mr Sergio	127, 134
Mr Hampton	128
Mr Tascona	130
Mr Peters	131
Mr O'Toole	131
Mr Levac	132
Mr Wood	132
Mr Bradley	133
Mr Bryant	134
Agreed to	144
Tenant Protection Amendment Act (Fairness in Rent Increases), 2001, Bill 134, Mr Caplan	
Mr Caplan	135, 143
Mr Bisson	136
Mr Tascona	136
Mr Bryant	137
Mr Marchese	138
Mr O'Toole	139
Mr Bradley	140
Mr Prue	140
Mr Gilchrist	141
Mr Smitherman	142
Negatived	144

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Special education	
Mr Conway	144
Halton citizens	
Mr Chudleigh	144
Education issues	
Ms Di Cocco	145
Ophthalmological health care	
Mr Kormos	145
Veronica Brenner	
Mrs Munro	145
Long-term care	
Mr Gravelle	145
Police Week	
Ms Mushinski	146
Ministry spending	
Mr Smitherman	146
Monique Hartin	
Mr Stewart	146

FIRST READINGS

Pierre Elliott Trudeau Highway Act, 2002, Bill 21, Mr Lalonde	
Agreed to	147
Mr Lalonde	147

Solicitors Amendment Act (Contingency Fee Agreements), 2002, Bill 25, Mr Bryant	
Agreed to	147
Mr Bryant	147

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Mr Stockwell	148
Agreed to	148

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hydro One	
Mr Phillips	153
Mr Eves	153, 154, 155, 156, 157
Mr Bryant	154
Mr Hampton	155
Mr Duncan	156
Mr Conway	157
Competitive electricity market	
Mr Hampton	154
Mr Eves	155
Durham College	
Mr O'Toole	156
Mrs Cunningham	156
Organized crime	
Mr Johnson	157
Mr Young	158
Minimum wage	
Mr Kormos	158
Mr Eves	158
Primary care reform	
Mrs Pupatello	159
Mr Clement	159
Federal airport security fees	
Mr Klees	159
Mr Jackson	159
Gasoline prices	
Mr Crozier	160
Mrs Witmer	160
Border security	
Mr Miller	161
Mr DeFaria	161
Education issues	
Mr Martin	161
Mrs Witmer	161
Assistance to farmers	
Mr Peters	162
Mrs Johns	162

PETITIONS

Long-term-care facilities	
Mr Bradley	163

Hydro One	
Mrs Dombrowsky	163
Mr Sergio	163
Mr Kennedy	163
Mr Lalonde	165
Mr Bradley	165
Doctor shortage	
Mrs Dombrowsky	164
Automotive industry	
Mr Bradley	164
Ambulance services	
Mr Bradley	164
School closures	
Mr Sergio	165
Ontario disability support program	
Mr Martin	165
National child benefit supplement	
Mr Martin	166

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Mr Maves	166, 168
Mr Smitherman	167, 183
Mr Prue	167, 171, 176, 180
Mrs Marland	168, 177
Mr Lalonde	168, 169
Mrs Pupatello	170, 173
Mr Gill	172, 176, 179, 181
Mr Duncan	172
Mr Martin	172, 173, 177
Mr Bradley	176
Mrs Elliott	177
Mr Phillips	180
Mr Dunlop	181
Mr Sorbara	181
Mr Bryant	182
Debate deemed adjourned	184

OTHER BUSINESS

Opposition day motions	
The Speaker	146
Visitors	
Mr Peters	147
Mr Sergio	147
Harry Worton	
Mrs Elliott	148
Mr Conway	148
Mr Bisson	149
Nursing Week	
Mr Clement	150
Mrs Pupatello	151
Ms Martel	152
Business of the House	
Mr Stockwell	163

Continued overleaf