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of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 22 May 2002

Mercredi 22 mai 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 22 May 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 22 mai 2002

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): The Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation is today convening a round table to address problems facing the automobile industry in attracting new investments in Ontario's automotive sector.

This meeting is being held in an environment of several plant closings, the loss of 15,000 well-paid jobs and the reality that in 1999 Canada ranked fourth in world auto production. In 2001, we had dropped to seventh place, and it is estimated that by 2005 we will fall to ninth place.

Of 16 new assembly plants built or announced in North America since 1990, Ontario received just one. This is a concern because new assembly plants create jobs as well as support the many automotive parts companies. The auto sector employs one in six people in Ontario, and a major determinant for attracting automotive investment is support for infrastructure and skills development.

Shortly after the government assumed office in 1995, the then Minister of Economic Development and Trade stated that it is not his government's role to provide assistance to particular industries. During estimates committee in November 2001, the then minister spent 30 minutes in an opening statement about his ministry and never once mentioned the automotive sector.

With evidence of such indifference, how can we have any assurance that the round-table discussions will be little more than a public relations exercise with no real, tangible commitment to the sector that provides the engine that drives the economy of Ontario?

CHINESE FREEMASONS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I rise today to inform all members of the House that the 82nd anniversary of the London chapter of the Chinese Freemasons and the 21st anniversary of the Dart Coon Club, which was incorporated to hold the properties of the Chinese Freemasons, will be celebrated in London on May 26 with an anniversary dinner and dragon dance.

Last year, the London chapter hosted the 32nd National Convention of Chinese Freemasons in Canada, with representatives of the Zhi Gong political party from China in attendance.

Chinese Freemasons have been in Canada for 140 years. Because immigration laws discriminated against Chinese and prevented families from joining husbands and fathers, the Freemasons provided financial and social support for the men. Today, the Freemasons have 10,000 members in 19 branches.

The spirit, traditions and values of the Chinese Freemasons are constant. Their goals are to support their motherland, to participate in social services in their adopted country and to assist the Chinese communities in Canada.

The organization shares roots with the better-known Masons in Canada. They have a logo, handshake and some ceremonies in common. An important difference is that the Chinese Freemasons have regular memberships for women.

I know all members of the House will join me in wishing the Chinese Freemasons a very successful 82nd anniversary in London.

CANADA SOUTHERN RAILWAY

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I rise in the House today to bring attention to an issue of great importance: the future of the Canada Southern Railway. This is a railway that spans 220 miles from Windsor to Fort Erie. Canadian National and Canadian Pacific, the owners, are abandoning the stretch of line from St Thomas east to the Niagara Peninsula. Understandably, municipalities from Elgin and Oxford, St Thomas and Tillsonburg, and Haldimand and Norfolk are very concerned about the future of this important transportation corridor. A number of meetings have taken place in an effort to find a way to preserve the corridor and allow the municipalities to purchase the line.

In 1998, this province spent \$2 million in partnership with Barrie to acquire a CN line; \$2 million also went to assist in purchasing the Orangeville line.

I was very pleased to hear the encouraging comments made by the Minister of Transportation last week, demonstrating his recognition of the railway's importance. The minister said, "I only wish that we had, over a longer period of time, kept more of the railway corridors so that in the future we would have the opportunity to bring forward many of the transit options for the future."

With these words in mind, and on behalf of all those municipal representatives and politicians who have worked so hard to preserve this corridor, I am today formally requesting that the Minister of Transportation meet with these officials in order to preserve CASO's future. I'd be very pleased to participate in any co-operative efforts between the ministry and those municipal officials with the goal in mind of preserving the Canada Southern Railway.

HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): For the first time, students in Haldimand and Norfolk counties are being given the opportunity to access a Catholic secondary education in their home community. Holy Trinity Catholic High School opened its doors in Simcoe this past September, giving Catholic teens in our area a real choice for their secondary education. Previously, students from our area would have to be bused into Brantford if they wanted to attend a Catholic high school. Students and parents deserve the right to choose. Holy Trinity gives parents in Norfolk and Haldimand choice and provides a nearby, close-to-home Catholic high school without sentencing students to a bus ride to the city.

I was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity recently to attend the blessing and the official opening of Holy Trinity. The bishop of London, His Excellency John Michael Sherlock, officiated at this momentous occasion. He arrived and was escorted by the Knights of Columbus. The evening was the culmination of years of hard work and planning by the board, director Joe Rapai, principal Floyd Kennedy, staff, parents, volunteers and other members of the community.

After getting a first-hand look at this impressive facility, I'm happy to say that we have a wonderful new state-of-the-art learning institution that's positioned to serve Catholic secondary education needs in our area for many years to come.

DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): While thousands of acres of prime agricultural land are gobbled up by development each month in Ontario, and the number of farms and farmers shrinks every day, the Conservative government of Ernie Eves stands on the sidelines, failing to take action to halt the loss of an irreplaceable agricultural asset which has permitted our province to grow much of its own food. The most recent agricultural census results show that there are now 27.6% fewer farms in Ontario than 20 years ago, and we have lost 11.5% of those in the last five years alone.

Bowing to pressure from developers who have poured millions of dollars into Conservative campaign coffers, and to some municipal politicians who will not be

satisfied until they have paved every last square inch of the land in their jurisdiction, this government weakened those provisions of the act that would put the brakes on ill-conceived, unjustified and unwise development of agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands.

Pressure to put asphalt and cement on the remaining fruitlands of Niagara is building, with severances granted without justification and farmland taken for development, aided and abetted by the Ontario Municipal Board.

On November 16, 2000, the Legislative Assembly passed by a margin of 51 to 8 a resolution that I presented to this House stating "that this House requests that the provincial government, through provincial policy, provide long-term protection for the unique agricultural areas both within the Niagara Peninsula and throughout the province."

It is time the government of Ernie Eves heeded that resolution.

1340

NORTHERN UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations has released a report showing northern universities get less provincial funding than southern universities. This means Algoma, Nipissing, Lakehead and Laurentian are trying to cope by placing more demands for revenue on the backs of their students. All but one have higher tuition and fee revenue than the system average of 41.4%, which itself is already higher than the 35% the Conservative government deems acceptable.

This discrimination adds to the crisis facing these universities as they try to find money to prepare for the double cohort. If the government thinks northern universities are in a position to do even more to meet enrolment needs, this government had better think again. In Sudbury, Laurentian University is already facing a 17.7% increase in enrolment for September 2002. At Cambrian College, applications are up 16.7% from last year, and at Collège Boréal, 18.9%. Northern universities and colleges can't look to fee and tuition increases to have the operating funds necessary to meet increased student enrolment.

The throne speech did nothing to ease student and faculty concerns about access and space. The vague statement that the government will provide the resources necessary to meet the double cohort, without announcing what these will be, doesn't solve this serious problem. The government must quickly announce that it will cover the financial needs of colleges and universities to meet the double cohort. The government must stop discriminating against northern universities, so that northern students don't suffer an added financial burden while trying to get a university education.

QUILT PROJECT IN STRATFORD

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise to promote The Quilt, a breast cancer support project in Stratford. The Quilt was started by Carol Miller, the project's founder and executive director. Carol is a breast cancer survivor herself. In 1997, she began quilting as a way to keep her mind active and her hands busy. Carol and her support group created the first quilt project and requested donations from across the country. She was hoping to receive 35 quilts for her first year, but ended up receiving 134.

The Quilt project continues to grow. Last Thursday marked the launch of the 2002 exhibition of hundreds of quilts that have been donated from across Canada. One hundred per cent of the money raised goes directly to the Canadian Cancer Society. Carol Miller and her support group are to be commended for their passion and their commitment to this noble cause.

I also want to recognize The Quilt's honorary chair, Loreena McKennitt, the board of directors, the patrons and the many sponsors of this exhibition.

I'm pleased that the recent throne speech indicated that our government will build on the reputation that Ontario has as a global leader in cancer research and that it will launch a concerted effort to eradicate this disease.

I would encourage all members to visit the exhibition in Stratford all this summer or the exhibition at Casa Loma in Toronto from September 6 to October 27.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Last Wednesday in this House, the member for St Catharines, Jim Bradley, and myself raised an issue regarding ambulance dispatch service in Hamilton, Niagara, Brant and Haldimand-Norfolk, this service being run out of Hamilton. This was the result of a report which was an absolute indictment of this government's performance in dealing with this dispatch service and their staffing, low morale, high staff turnover and lack of training. The minister, in response, said, "All the positions have been filled."

The reality is that I have a staff list from the Hamilton dispatch office. In reality, only 29 of the 44 recommended positions have been filled. The minister intentionally stood up and gave this House wrong information in regard to this.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. You can't say "intentionally stood up and gave wrong information." You're going to have to withdraw that.

Mr Agostino: I withdraw that. The minister gave wrong information to this House on a very serious issue, one where seconds in dispatch could mean life and death, one where there are two deaths in St Catharines being investigated as a result of problems with the dispatch system. This minister, instead of fixing the problem, sat on the report for six months and then came into this House and told us he had filled these 44 positions, when

the staff list very clearly indicates only 29 full-time positions have been filled.

This minister is more interested in public relations, damage control, than looking after the health and well-being of people in this area. It is a disgrace. This minister has to come clean with this House, fill those positions and stop playing games with people's lives in the province of Ontario.

RICHARD LOVEKIN

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to pay tribute to a distinguished citizen from my riding of Durham, Judge Richard Lovekin. Sadly, he passed away on May 15.

Richard Lovekin lived a life devoted to his country, his profession of law, his community and his family. He was an officer in the RCAF in World War II. He served the legal profession with distinction and was appointed in 1977 as judge on the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, retiring in 1992.

The Lovekins have been part of the Newcastle community since 1796, when they were one of the first two families to establish farms in Clarke township. Richard Lovekin was the beloved husband of Lynn and father of Kathy Ewert, Carol Little, Rick and Janet. He was stepfather to Susan Davis and Michael Housley. He was a proud grandfather of 12 and great-grandfather of two. He was a loyal friend to his former law partner, Sam Cureatz, who was the MPP for my riding as well.

His many friends will remember his service to countless community organizations. Judge Lovekin was a member and past president of the Newcastle Lions Club and past president of the Durham Central Fair board. He was an active member of St George's Anglican Church in Newcastle and a director of the Newcastle Village and District Historical Society. Those are just a few ways Richard Lovekin served his community. Just last year the Lovekins' farm, Kilcolman, was one of the settings for a very successful exhibit of Massey farm equipment in Newcastle.

At the memorial service on Monday, Charles Ewert gave a fitting eulogy to Richard Lovekin's leadership in his community and family which sets an example for all. It is only fitting that I pay tribute to Judge Lovekin, and I extend condolences to the Lovekin family.

VISITORS

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have some very special guests up in the Speaker's gallery today, residents of Leisure World from Don Valley East. I'd like to introduce Anne Skelly, Samantha Hamid, Kate Turvey and Ese Atiyota, who are here with residents Olive Gray, Bett Brockelbank, Terri McInnis, Mary Lepard, Mary Tyrrell, Robert Giles, Anthony Fernandez and Laura Lee Hodgins. Welcome to you all.

WORLD CUP CELEBRATIONS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm asking for unanimous consent from the members—and I'm going to do this as quickly as I can:

“Whereas soccer is an Ontario sport enjoyed by millions of people right here in Ontario; and

“Whereas soccer fans around the world and indeed in Toronto, Ontario, are gearing up for soccer's biggest event, the World Cup, which begins on May 31;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario will take all the necessary steps to make sure the province's soccer fans enjoy the best World Cup celebrations Ontario has ever seen—for example, by supporting the opening and staffing of SkyDome so fans like me can view and cheer all the live televised broadcasts of World Cup games during this highlight in soccer history.”

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

VISITORS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have with us in the members' gallery west—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: If I can get the attention of the Liberal caucus for just one second, I'd like to introduce to the Legislative Assembly Chief Mike Metatawabin and his son, Meshen, who are here from Fort Albany, and I wish them well in all the work they do in that fine community.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr1, An Act respecting the Tilbury Area Public School and the William J. Miller Trust.

Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill Pr2, An Act respecting Wycliffe College.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS
EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT, 2002LOI DE 2002 SUR LA PROTECTION
DE L'EMPLOI DES POMPIERS
VOLONTAIRES

Mr Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 in order to protect the employment of volunteer firefighters / Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie afin de protéger l'emploi des pompiers volontaires.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I am very privileged to rise on behalf of my constituents in Waterloo-Wellington to introduce this bill to the House. This bill would protect salaried firefighters who also work as volunteer firefighters. They may not be disciplined by an association of firefighters or dismissed by a fire department for holding both positions if this bill is passed into law. It's my understanding and my hope that this bill will be debated at second reading on June 6.

1350

SCHOOL BUS DRIVER
APPRECIATION WEEK ACT, 2002LOI DE 2002 SUR LA SEMAINE
DE RECONNAISSANCE
ENVERS LES CONDUCTEURS
D'AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES

Mr Parsons moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to make the first week in September school bus driver appreciation week / Projet de loi 45, Loi faisant de la première semaine de septembre la Semaine de reconnaissance envers les conducteurs d'autobus scolaires.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): School bus drivers in Ontario are truly unsung heroes. We call upon them to drive a large vehicle with over 70 students in it, at times at highway speeds, maintaining discipline on the bus, also ensuring students can get off and on the bus safely, also serving as counsellors and advisors—just a tremendous range of roles for what is really a part-time occupation. This bill is an opportunity for the people of Ontario to recognize their contribution to the province and to our children and to say thank you on an annual basis.

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT
(CONSUMER PROTECTION), 2002

LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ÉLECTRICITÉ
(PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR)

Mr Hampton moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to protect consumers / Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité afin de protéger les consommateurs.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): The bill amends the Electricity Act, 1998, to provide that only distributors may sell electricity to consumers. Contracts for the sale of electricity to consumers by other retailers are without effect if made after the bill receives royal assent and voidable by the consumer if made before that time. The Minister of Environment and Energy is required to advertise the amendments to bring them to public attention.

GENOCIDE MEMORIAL WEEK ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LA SEMAINE
COMMÉMORATIVE DES GÉNOCIDES

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to proclaim Genocide Memorial Week in Ontario / Projet de loi 56, Loi proclamant la Semaine commémorative des génocides.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): This bill proposes to observe an annual Genocide Memorial Week in Ontario beginning in late March. The response to my earlier bills on this subject indicated a consensus in favour of the observance of such a week. I hope this bill will assist in determining whether there is a consensus around when such a week would be observed.

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 there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr Kwinter and Mr Brown exchange places in order of

precedence; and Madame Boyer and Mr Arnott exchange places in order of precedence.

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

VISITORS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As we've all welcomed the new pages to the Legislature and Travis Weagant from my riding is a page, I'd just like to take this opportunity to welcome Travis's mom, his grandmother, his aunt and his two sisters. So if everybody would welcome them, please.

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Recognizing that the second anniversary of Walkerton is upon us, I would seek unanimous consent to put a motion that next Monday, the leaders of the three parties in the House be invited to reflect on what happened at Walkerton, and that at that time the House have a chance to hear from all three leaders for up to five minutes each.

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

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I have no difficulty if that's to be brought to the table at the House leaders' meeting. Any kind of notice would have been helpful, but when you do it that way, it becomes very difficult for me to make a snap decision on the spot. We have a meeting tomorrow at 10 o'clock; let's talk about it.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: What we're asking for is that the three parties have the opportunity to commemorate the second anniversary of the tragedy at Walkerton. So what I'm asking for from the government House leader is simply—and you can discuss the details tomorrow at the House leaders' meeting—an undertaking that it will happen.

The Speaker: What we'll do, members, is give the government House leader a point of order and then we'll wrap it up very quickly. You're going to have your government House leaders' meeting. We do that in private, not in the Ontario Legislature.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Speaker, I appreciate the point you made. That's exactly the point. But when they start saying, "What we're asking for," it's fairly apparent that they've had conversations about this, excluding me.

Interjections.

The Speaker: That's why I'm glad I'm the Speaker and not a House leader.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Further to that point of order, Speaker, let me assure the government House leader that we would never exclude you, Mr Stockwell.

The Speaker: We'll be here all day if everybody tries to get the last word in.

The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound did advise me that he wanted to do a point of order prior to this, so the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and yes, I did advise you. I thought it would only be appropriate today, since it is the second anniversary, that we do have a moment of silence for the people who suffered in the tragedy in Walkerton.

The Speaker: The member is asking for a moment of silence regarding Walkerton. Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Would all members and our friends in the gallery please join with us in a moment's silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

1400

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO SECURITY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first set of questions today is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security. Ontarians will rightly be very concerned by the information you provided to them just a short while ago. You told us that there are terrorist organizations in Ontario and you told us just recently that an al-Qaeda sleeper cell was here in Ontario. Minister, having raised these concerns, what assurances can you now give Ontarians that these terrorist organizations are being rooted out and do not pose a threat to us?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): I think the view of the OPP and other law enforcement agencies in the province and in the country is to give prevention the priority in terms of dealing with any perceived threat to this country or this continent. The indication that I was given yesterday during a security briefing is that the officials in this country, in this province specifically, have had some success not only in identifying a number of organizations within Ontario, within Canada, but with having a very direct and positive impact in discouraging the continued existence of one particular organization in the province. So I can indicate to members in the House that our law enforcement officials are doing an outstanding job in identifying and effectively ensuring that these kinds of groups, organizations and individuals do not inflict damage on this province or country.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, having raised these concerns, of course, you have a responsibility now to allay fears. You told us today that a sleeper cell of al-Qaeda terrorists—and that is your language, not mine—was located here in Ontario. That cell was under police observation until it left the province. You told us that you do not know where these terrorists went. If, as you tell

us, these people were in fact terrorists in Ontario under police observation, why were these terrorists not arrested?

Hon Mr Runciman: These individuals were under observation, as are other individuals, organizations and groups within the country and within the province of Ontario. Until they break the law, or plan to break the laws of this country, they can walk the streets of Canada as you and I can. They were under very clear and close scrutiny and surveillance and were discouraged from continuing their operations in this province. I think this is a good-news story in terms of the law enforcement agencies in the country and we should be applauding them.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you tell us that there was an al-Qaeda sleeper cell in Ontario. You tell us that the members of this cell were and are terrorists. Surely the question I put to you is the one that would be weighing on the minds of Ontarians: if we had these people here in Ontario, if they are terrorists as you describe them and if they were in fact under police observation, how could you let them slip away? Why would you not arrest those people before they become terrorists? You called them terrorists. Surely there's a law in Canada against terrorism. You called these people terrorists, Minister. You raised this matter. Why did you allow these people to slip away and why were they not arrested?

Hon Mr Runciman: These are recognized international terrorist organizations. They are recognized around the world as such.

We do have the rule of law in this country, and the police cannot act unless there is some reason to do so.

One of my concerns—and it was a concern in my previous portfolio as well—is complacency in this country with respect to any threat to our security. This is not an American problem; this is a continental problem. We have to address it. We are addressing it very effectively in Ontario, and we should be proud of that.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): This question is to the Minister of Education. On Thursday last, in fact in the morning, two teenage girls were attacked and sexually assaulted in Hamilton. At the time, these young girls were in school. They were in their study hall at the high school.

I believe—and I am sure that you would support this, Minister—that our children have the right to go to school in a safe and secure environment, and I am sure you would also agree that Ontario parents have the right to know that their kids are safe when they are at school.

As you know, Minister, I've laid out a safe schools plan just recently. One of the things it calls for is an investment in surveillance cameras, video cameras. That is a matter that is optional for individual schools and individual school boards, and it would be up to those boards and those schools to make a determination as to whether or not it would in fact serve their purposes and meet their needs.

Madam Minister, my question to you is, do you support my plan and will you make video surveillance cameras available to those schools that wish to have them?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I certainly share the concern of the Leader of the Opposition about the safety and security of the students and staff in the schools throughout the province of Ontario. Upon becoming Minister of Education, I had instructed the deputy and the staff at the ministry to take a look at a review of the Safe Schools Act in order that we can take a look at what we're already doing. In fact, that's legislation that was introduced by our government because we recognized a long time ago the need to keep our students and our staff safe and secure within our schools. We are going to be reviewing the legislation, and I can tell you that certainly the use of video cameras—and obviously whatever other means are necessary we are prepared to consider.

I just wish that when we had first raised this as an issue, you and your members had taken this issue seriously at that time.

Mr McGuinty: Madam Minister, I'm hoping that at some point in time you will truly recognize how serious a matter this is, move beyond the political rhetoric and make an important decision on behalf of Ontario children.

In March, a grade 2 student was molested by an intruder hiding in a washroom at Holy Name Catholic elementary school here in Toronto. A month later, a 13-year-old girl was confronted by a man in a washroom at Don Mills Middle School. Also, in April, two female students discovered a man lurking in a washroom at the St Lawrence elementary school. I wish these incidents were not escalating, but the fact is that certainly more are being reported.

Madam Minister, what I'm asking you to do is to consider a proposal I have put forward. I put it forward with a spirit of genuine commitment to ensuring that our schools are safer. I'm not talking about an expensive program. Principals and school board representatives are now saying that this is a good idea. I think it is inappropriate and unacceptable for you to say the matter is under review. I think you have to make a decision now. Will you or will you not fund video surveillance cameras for those schools which wish to make use of them?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think if the leader had listened to my response—I'm quite prepared to discuss and include the issue of surveillance cameras with school boards and those who are concerned about the safety and security of our staff and our students. We are moving forward. I believe there is far more that we will need to do, because I would agree with you: the incidents of violence are increasing, and certainly the safety and security of our students and staff must be paramount in all of the decisions we make. So I can assure you I will certainly take this under consideration and I will discuss this with the school boards.

1410

Mr McGuinty: The superintendent of education in Hamilton, Jim Wibberley, said that all schools in his board would choose video surveillance, but they can't afford it.

The principal of Delta Secondary School, Mr Dave Hutton, echoes my call for cameras. Chris Murray, the chair of the parent council at Delta, the same high school where those two girls were assaulted last week, agrees that cameras are needed for security.

I respectfully suggest to you, Madam Minister, that the time for consideration is over. The time for action is here. I've put a plan on the table. It is very inexpensive, all things considered. What you should do in your capacity as minister is make video surveillance cameras available to schools today in Ontario to protect our kids. Will you do that?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just again emphasize the fact that our government in 2000 did introduce the Safe Schools Act, which did establish the Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. We've had our little yell back and forth. It doesn't matter to me; we'll sit here and there will be no question period. The minister gets to prepare the answer and listen more, so if you want to yell, she can prepare more to answer. It's fine by me.

Sorry for the interruption, Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, I would just say that we have taken steps in the past. I've mentioned the Safe Schools Act in 2000. Let's also take a look at the access-to-school-premises regulation on September 1, 2001, which did give principals the authority to regulate who was allowed on school property.

Having said that, I agree with you: more needs to be done. I already have under consideration a review of the Safe Schools Act, and certainly the whole issue of surveillance cameras, which are already being used in some of our schools today, is an issue which I am prepared to discuss with our school boards.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. The people of Ontario want to know you aren't going to pull a fast one when it comes to privatizing public services. You've repeatedly said you intend to bring in a bill allowing you to privatize Hydro One. We think that's wrong. In court, your lawyers argued that your government could sell off any public entity or asset it chose. The judge, however, disagreed.

Premier, we don't want you to privatize Hydro One. Moreover, we want a guarantee that you are not going to introduce legislation that would allow you to privatize Hydro One and a number of other public agencies as well. Would you make that guarantee now?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy is preparing legislation that would clarify the province's rights that it

thought it had inherently with respect to the ownership of certain assets and property. He'll have to wait until he sees that legislation, and then he can tell me whether he agrees with the fact that the province of Ontario has those inherent ownership rights or whether it does not.

Mr Hampton: Premier, it was a simple question. I'm asking that you guarantee that you will not be introducing an omnibus privatization bill, that after your statements that you're going to consult the people of Ontario, we're not going to see legislation that in effect would allow your government to privatize Ontario Power Generation, the Ontario Clean Water Agency, TVOntario or the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. It's precisely that kind of arrogant attitude that Justice Gans ruled against, and it would be a disaster for the quality of life in this province.

I'm asking you again, will you rule out here and now that your government intends to introduce legislation that would amount to an omnibus privatization bill?

Hon Mr Eves: I know of no plans that the government has for an omnibus privatization bill.

Mr Hampton: Then I take it the Premier would also agree that if he's going to introduce legislation with respect to Hydro One, there will be public hearings held throughout the province. After all, Premier, it was you who said you wanted to consult with the people of Ontario and you wanted to listen to the people of Ontario. I'm asking you now: whatever legislation you introduce with respect to Hydro One only, will there be public hearings across the province so that the people of Ontario can truly be consulted?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, the Minister of Energy of course has visited several communities, but any legislation would be referred to a committee of the Legislature, and that committee of the Legislature would determine what hearings were held and where they were held.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Another question for the Premier: the people of Ontario have been waiting patiently for your government's first budget. Many are even hopeful that, for example, school and education budgets will get an honest hearing in a budget, that hospitals and municipalities will have some of their issues addressed. The problem, though, is that we're hearing that your government may in fact not be willing to bring forward a budget this spring session. I'm asking you for a guarantee. Will you bring forward a budget this spring session?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): If that's the case, the Minister of Finance has been wasting her time recently.

Mr Hampton: Then let's get to the root of the issue. Will you tell us today on what date this spring you intend to bring down your budget? There are schools, hospitals, municipalities and a number of other public bodies in this province that want to know what their budget situation will be, what amounts of money they will have to look after the children in our schools, the patients in our

hospitals and to address a number of services that you've downloaded on to municipalities. Would you have the decency and the respect to announce here today to all of those hospitals, schools and municipalities on what specific day this spring your government will be bringing down its budget?

Hon Mr Eves: The Minister of Finance will be announcing in due course the date of her budget.

However, having said that, the date of the budget doesn't necessarily tell anybody when people will know what their transfer payments are. I can recall your Minister of Finance in the Bob Rae government making a great production out of rolling out transfer payments to schools one day, hospitals another day and municipalities another day, and it wasn't done on budget day.

I would say with all due respect that you should be the last party to be talking about wanting to know when budget day is, to know what the transfer payments are. If you were paying attention, you would know that school boards across the province found out that they have an extra \$440 million for educational budgets this year. They found that out last Friday, thanks to the Minister of Education.

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ALCOHOL AND GAMING CONTROL

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): A question for the Premier: your Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario has turned down the city of Toronto's unanimous request for extending bar, café and restaurant hours during this year's World Cup of soccer. As you know, this year the World Cup is in Japan and Korea and there's a 23-hour difference, so a couple of the games occur at very unusual hours.

The World Cup, as you know, is one of the most popular sporting events in the world, celebrated by nations and cultures, especially in Toronto, which is usually the most active focal point for World Cup celebrations. I have written your minister of consumer affairs and asked him to sit down with the gaming commission officials to see if they can accommodate this request and work out a situation where this celebration can take place in our great city.

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I do appreciate the concerns that have been raised by some members in the community, especially in the city of Toronto. However, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission is a quasi-judicial independent body. They are charged with making these decisions, and I am sure that if the government interfered with any quasi-judicial body and tried to tell them what to do with respect to any decision, your party would be the first that would jump up and complain about us interfering.

Mr Colle: It's disappointing to see the Premier hide behind another unaccountable body. I think what the people of Toronto are asking the Premier is to perhaps stand up and say that he will encourage his minister to sit down with the gaming commission to accommodate this

very modest request. All it is for is two games on a Friday and Saturday night, and I don't think it's too much for the hundreds and thousands of people who have called Toronto home and who love soccer to ask you to at least ask your gaming commission to talk to the city officials to see if they can accommodate something. Just talk to them. We ask you to at least talk to them.

Hon Mr Eves: It's my understanding that the only times exceptions have been made to the extension of hours are where there have been specific events held in specific communities, and the events were held in Ontario, where they took place. And I would say to the honourable member that it's my understanding that the Toronto Police Service had some very specific concerns with respect to this request, and the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, a quasi-judicial body, has made an independent decision as to what they think is best in this particular circumstance.

MUNICIPAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for urban issues, as opposed to my friend for rural issues. The continued competitiveness of our urban centres is really important. From a city of 300,000, we know that it's essential that these urban centres continue to be strong and healthy. You recognize, Minister, that well-administered, economically healthy municipalities are a significant part of Ontario's competitive edge and we must continue to introduce initiatives that achieve prosperity for residents and for our province. I'd be interested in knowing what your direction is to strengthen this municipal sector.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member from Brampton Centre for his question. I know he is a strong voice for economic growth in his community and for his constituents.

Our government has taken a number of steps to strengthen and give flexibility to the municipal sector. The new Municipal Act, the memorandum of understanding with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which is supported by all of the municipalities, brownfields legislation and the government's Smart Growth initiative, for example, are all intended to give municipalities new, flexible tools to encourage local economic development and improve municipal revenues.

Our government recognizes that to maintain Ontario's competitive edge, we need an appropriate legislative environment, an environment that provides municipalities with the tools they require, simultaneously protecting public health and safety without creating red tape. This is necessary in order to sustain and improve the competitive edge in our municipalities and for our economy.

Mr Spina: Thank you, Minister. Brampton is the third-fastest-growing city in Canada. Currently at 325,000, we're going to hit half a million very soon.

We're choking on gridlock. Highway 410 has been dragging its heels in terms of development for the last four or five years. What we need is a government committed to a stronger, more mature provincial-municipal relationship, a relationship that can take municipalities into the 21st century. How is this government fulfilling its commitment to helping municipalities deal with their infrastructure challenges like Highway 410, like public transit, to get in and out of Toronto?

Hon Mrs Molinari: Certainly the member from Brampton Centre is very concerned with a number of issues, and transportation is one of them, and the gridlock.

I want to say that Ontario has recently announced a 10-year, \$9-billion transit plan designed to reduce gridlock and to maintain economic competitiveness and environmental quality. This money is in addition to Ontario's initiatives to improve highways with a minimum of \$10 billion in private sector and government investment over 10 years. Other examples include the Toronto waterfront redevelopment project and recent cultural funding announcements.

We have continued to build upon provincial-municipal relationships with the expansion of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to include the focus on both rural and urban issues. Also, our Smart Growth panels will be coming forward with some recommendations.

HYDRO CORRIDOR LANDS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. Hydro One owns 55,000 acres of land. That land is absolutely invaluable in terms of meeting future public transportation needs as well as providing a continuing opportunity for recreation and enjoyment of green space. Premier, will you guarantee that hydro transmission corridors will remain public lands for public uses like transit and recreation?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Absolutely, and I've asked the Minister of Energy to make sure that any legislation he brings in would do exactly that.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I appreciate and thank you for that response.

Further to that, immediately upon the conclusion of question period today I will be moving a motion seeking immediate third reading for Bill 13, which received unanimous support in this Legislature a short while ago, a bill put forward by my caucus colleague, Mr Mario Sergio. Will you provide your support for third reading passage of this bill immediately after question period today, Premier?

Hon Mr Eves: There are many pieces of legislation that are very important that should proceed with third reading immediately, such as the farm nutrient management bill, for example, in Ontario.

There are many pieces of legislation that should be passed immediately. This particular situation is going to be dealt with in any bill that the Minister of Energy

brings forward, and the honourable member and his colleagues will have an opportunity to vote for it in the Legislature.

ONTARIO SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, today you announced the launch of the Ontario summer jobs 2002 program. Since the creation of this program, we have helped thousands of young people gain employment and valuable training within the Ontario workforce. That's a workforce that has gained some 850,000 net new jobs since we took office back in 1995.

Minister, as this program begins another year, could you please explain to the people of my great riding of Northumberland what changes have taken place in the Ontario summer jobs program and how these changes will ensure that the young people of Ontario have the best possible opportunity for a good job this summer?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): In response to my hard-working, great representative from Northumberland—like all of us in this House—this announcement this morning is about our students; it's about the summer job program. All of you should remember 1-888-JOBGROW for your constituency youngsters who call.

We kicked off the program this year, and the difference is that we have a program called Job Connect which just used to operate in the summer—young people leaving school looking for work. We have an 80% success rate in this program; it's one we're very proud of. Today, Mr Member from Northumberland, we announced that this program is all year round. Students have changed. Young people now are going to semesters in school. They're looking for jobs, looking for work experience. The response to the real question is that this program is all year and this is different from in the past.

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Mr Galt: It's great to get that kind of report from one of the best ministers in the Eves government. It's certainly good news for Ontarians, especially young people in my great riding of Northumberland. Young people deserve the benefit of work experience. A summer job is a great way to learn about different careers and helps our young people focus on their goals. For example, a second-year Queen's student, Sally Harris, is just doing a fabulous job in my office and I really appreciate it.

In today's economy the need for skilled workers is growing strongly, yet apart from this need for a skilled labour force, there's a growing market for the self-employed. Minister, can you please tell my constituents in Northumberland how many youth are projected to be helped by the Ontario summer jobs program this year, and does this program only help those people who want to gain employment within a company?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: We're looking at 57,000 students who took advantage of this program last year. We're looking for a slight increase this year. It's going to cost us \$53.1 million. In raw data, in 1995 it was one half the number of students for \$7 million more, so we're getting twice the number of students for half the money.

I will say it is about efficiency and effectiveness. I wish my Liberal colleagues across the floor from me would speak to the federal government so that we could do these kinds of training programs together, which means we need a labour market training agreement.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: It doesn't matter what you say, the facts are there. Every province has it and we don't. We could be doing this every single day, for young people and unemployed people, if we worked together.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Have you signed the deal, Dianne?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Yes, we offered to sign the deal, actually. An announcement—we made an offer to sign the deal four months ago and the federal government rejected it.

SAFE DRINKING WATER LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Tomorrow is the second anniversary of the beginning of the Walkerton tragedy, the day the first of seven victims died from the tainted water. Last year your government refused to allow all-party statements in recognition of that anniversary and I was pleased to hear you say today that you will consider allowing that tomorrow.

Beyond the realm of symbols, there's an extremely important substantial step that we could take here in the Legislature to honour the people of Walkerton: we could pass the Safe Drinking Water Act, to ensure we do everything we can in Ontario to make sure this never happens again. I'm asking you, when will you bring Bill 3, the Safe Drinking Water Act, before the House for third and final reading?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): First and foremost, it was a terrible tragedy in Walkerton. I think we all can understand the devastating impact on the community.

When discussing whether or not to speak to the moment in this Legislature, I consulted with the local member. The local member is Mr Murdoch. Mr Murdoch requested on behalf of his constituents that they would feel more comfortable having a moment of silence. That's the direction he brought to our caucus last year and that's the direction he brought to our caucus this year. I can think of no better thing than to go to the local member and ask him how he feels the constituents in that community would best be honoured, thought about and remembered. Mr Murdoch brought that request forward again this year and I accepted that request. I think we all in this House would not play politics with such an issue

as this. I respect the member's view, I respect his view of his constituents and I'm following the request of Mr Murdoch to handle it in the same way this year.

Ms Churley: I thought the minister said, in response to an earlier question, that the request would be looked at in the House leaders' meeting tomorrow. I do hope that's still an opportunity, because I too talked to some citizens from Walkerton, and I know they would like us to have that opportunity.

But I asked you a specific question about Bill 3, the Safe Drinking Water Act. I've been fighting for this legislation, Minister, in this House since June 2000, just after the Walkerton tragedy hit. The bill would recognize that we have a right to clean and safe drinking water. It would take the necessary steps to make sure that this doesn't happen. It would be enshrined in legislation. It was approved in principle in this House on September 28, 2000, but then your government killed it in committee. I brought the same legislation back as Bill 3, and it again passed second reading last October 11.

So this is a real test of your government's intentions on the environment. Will you block this bill, approved twice by all of the members in this House, or will you commit now to speedy passage to honour the people of Walkerton?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Once again, the point is not that I will not discuss the issue. The point I was making today is that we had discussions with the local member about honouring the people of Walkerton. I informed the opposition members an hour before the House sat that this was the approach we were taking. I had no knowledge that the members opposite were going to stand up and ask for this action. So that's the situation as it is.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): What about the Safe Drinking Water Act?

Hon Mr Stockwell: With respect to the Safe Drinking Water Act, I think the new Premier has been as clear as you can be. He's looking forward to introducing legislation for Ontario's clean water legacy trust and creating a clean water centre of excellence in Walkerton. We are dealing with the issues. Those initiatives in the ministry have strengthened the annual inspections, doubling the number of inspectors, continuing annual inspections and ensuring one out of three annual inspections will be unannounced, introducing more comprehensive training, having follow-up inspections in case of non-compliance.

I'm not going to stand here and start arguing about the implementation and necessities. We believe, as a government, that we have taken this situation very, very seriously and acted in a very admirable, forthright fashion. We have tried our best to deal with the issues as they are before us. We know that was a tragedy that should never happen again. The undertaking for this government is to implement Walkerton report 1. We're going to get Walkerton report 2. We should read it and move on from there. But as a government, we have never taken any issue that has faced this government more seriously.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Members on all sides of the House have received over 55,000 cards from Ontarians all over this province urging the government to increase the operating funding for long-term-care facilities. As a matter of fact, these cards are here. I will have one of the pages deliver them to you shortly. These cards have been signed by residents and their families who are pleading with you to provide additional operating funds to our long-term-care facilities.

Minister, you noted in your own independently funded study, completed last summer, that Ontario ranked last in meeting the needs of our seniors in nursing homes and homes for the aged. Our residents received the least amount of registered nursing care and personal support care. Current levels allow the staff of the homes only four minutes to assist residents with getting up, washed, dressed and to the dining room daily; 10 minutes to assist residents with eating; 15 minutes of programming per day; and only one bath a week for the residents.

Minister, when are you going to increase funding so that our seniors can live out their lives with dignity and respect and with as much comfort as possible?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for the question. I would say to the honourable member for Kingston and the Islands that we have increased funding. We have increased spending. I, as minister, as part of a government, increased the operating funding, the per diem funding, just last year. So in answer to the honourable member's question, the answer is yes, we have done that. Of course, we wait for this year's budget.

But I would tell the honourable member I'm quite happy to accept these cards. In fact, I will also pass a note along to the federal Minister of Health, who contributes exactly zero dollars and zero cents to the issues that he is so concerned about.

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Mr Gerretsen: Minister, you have not increased any of the funding for the personal care and nursing care for our seniors. This government over the last five to six years has underappreciated, underrated and underfunded the plans for the seniors throughout this province. As a matter of fact, the health care needs of our seniors weren't even mentioned in your recent throne speech.

You know that our residents receive only two hours of nursing care per day, the lowest of all the jurisdictions. As a matter of fact, in Mississippi they get twice the amount of nursing care on a daily basis as here in Ontario.

Ontarians living in long-term-care facilities are older, frailer and sicker than ever before and they require a higher level of palliative care than at any time in history. There is a widening gap between the needs and the care required for our seniors. The impact on our grandparents, parents and relatives has widened and deepened.

Minister, when are you going to do the right thing? Stand up to your cabinet colleagues around the cabinet table and demand additional operating funding so that our seniors, who have contributed so much to the welfare of this province, can continue to live out their lives with comfort, dignity and respect. Over 55,000 residents and families in Ontario demand that you take action on this today.

Hon Mr Clement: I don't need any lectures from the honourable member or from the party opposite. The fact of the matter is, we are very generous with our long-term-care residents. Compare us to other provinces. Compare us to the public health care system that we have in Canada. I'd be happy to compare what residents in Mississippi get when it comes to publicly funded health care with what we get in Ontario.

The fact of the matter is, we have been there for long-term-care residents after a 10-year hiatus, which this party contributed to. When it came to the moratorium on building new long-term-care residences, we didn't just have the rhetoric; we acted: 20,000 new spaces for our long-term-care residents. We are planning for the future. We are there for our long-term-care residents. We have a plan for the future. They don't. They don't know what they're talking about, and this is another piece of evidence of that very point.

We in fact will be there for our residents. We in fact have been there for our residents. This party on the other side talks about rhetoric. When they get into government, they don't act, because they don't care.

SMART GROWTH

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. About one year ago this government introduced the Smart Growth initiative. Indeed, it was just a year ago, in fact last June, that we had a very successful community consultation in Durham region to discuss your initiative.

Last June, some of the stakeholders invited from my riding included Robert and Philip Brown of the Kedron Dells golf course, Ron Hooper from the BIA—the Business Improvement Area—Hans Verkruijssen from the Newcastle chamber of commerce and Roy Moore from Goodyear, just to name a few. Others included Wayne Clark, president of the Durham Region Home Builders' Association, Bob Malcolmson, general manager of the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce, Brett Puckrin as well as Sue Larsh of the Durham Environmental Network.

There were representatives not only from business but also from municipal leaders, major employers, the agriculture sector, health care, education and the environment. Each group had valuable insights into how we can encourage smart patterns of growth, not just in Durham but indeed in the whole GTA.

Minister, could you give us an update in the Legislature on the Smart Growth initiative and how it will benefit the people of Ontario?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): To the hard-working member from Durham, the Smart Growth initiative for Ontario was laid out about a year ago, and since that time I'm pleased to update the House that we've had two major series and rounds of consultation, which have led to the creation of five regional panels to be established. Three are established and two are to be set up.

We are doing what we set out to do. Components have already been established with the brownfields legislation to allow for the cleanup of contaminated sites in our urban cores and in the downtown areas of our small communities throughout Ontario; and the Oak Ridges moraine act, which I know all members of this House supported, which says that certain areas should be protected and passed on as a legacy to future generations.

Going forward, we plan to have these panels up and running and come out with concrete suggestions on how to manage and promote growth in this province.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for that update, Minister. I know the Smart Growth panel does include membership that certainly recognizes Durham. Mayor Marcel Brunelle, the mayor of Whitby, is certainly one of the members I'm aware of. I'm confident the panels will address not just the urban issues and the expansion of growth but also the rural issues, the quality-of-life issues, and that's because the Smart Growth concept will benefit all of Ontario.

Could you tell us what the role of the panel is in planning in the province of Ontario?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The panels were set up because it was suggested that one-size-fits-all wouldn't work for a province as vast as Ontario, with differing needs in different regions. Second, people didn't want to see another level of government; they wanted to see a coordination of government decisions within the province and across municipal boundaries, and hopefully get the federal government engaged as well.

We want to have a strong economy, so we need more growth. We also want to have strong communities and a healthy, clean environment.

The province of Ontario has grown by over two million people in the last 15 years. It's projected conservatively that it will grow another two million to three million. Where these people settle and where the jobs are located and the infrastructure to support these communities is very important.

I hope to have the central Ontario panel reporting back on how to solve gridlock, come up with better options for solid waste management for municipalities and have a strategic framework of where growth should take place in this province in the next 20 to 30 years.

HYDRO ONE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Energy. You have been assigned the responsibility to review the pay packages, compensation packages, for Hydro One exec-

utives. You've had about a week now to look into that. Can you tell us specifically, the \$175,000 allotted to the president and CEO of Hydro One—that was a car allowance. What was that \$175,000 used for?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): I requested the chair of the board of directors of Hydro One to provide the information for how they arrived at the decision. They hired an outside consultant—I believe it was Hay consultants—to reach the conclusions they reached. They're getting that information and providing it to me so that we may review the compensation packages for the senior staff at Hydro One. When I receive that information and go through it and am informed of how they arrived at those decisions, I'll be able to answer in a more fulsome way. But the fact of the matter remains that they have arrived at it through an associate, through a contract that they hired an outside consultant. That is a very broad report, very voluminous, and as we work our way through it we'll be happy to respond to the questions.

Mr McGuinty: I guess I missed the funeral of Chris Stockwell, the man who used to stand on this side of the House and who would be swinging from those chandeliers today if he learned that the head of a public company was getting \$175,000 for a car. What happened to that Chris Stockwell? Boy, do we miss him now.

In part, Minister, you and your government have to take responsibility for this mess because you pulled the shades down on Hydro One and OPG and you exempted them from the ambit of the freedom of information act. So we can't get access to that information.

Here's an undertaking I want from you now, Minister: will you agree to review not only the pay packages at Hydro One but also at OPG? Will you also agree to restore the freedom of information act so that it applies to Hydro One and OPG?

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Where is that Stockwell?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I can take heckling, but it's difficult to take it from Mr Ruprecht.

The fact is simply this: I'm ahead of you by one step. I've requested the same information from the board of directors at OPG. As a matter of fact, I met this morning with—

Interjection.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Maybe it's two steps, then.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes, maybe it's two or three steps.

I met this morning with those involved at OPG and requested the exact same information from those people as well. Yes, I've done that already. Yes, when I receive the report and work through it we'll have a decision to take. We will provide that information to the public; we'll provide it to this Legislature. Obviously the situation is that we need to go through the facts. Before we finish going through the facts, it would not be acceptable to start commenting on what the deal is until we understand it completely.

Yes, I requested the information from Hydro One. Yes, I'm ahead of you on the OPG and requested that information as well. So now, today, you're two for two. You asked about the Hydro lands and the Premier said, "Already doing it." You're asking about OPG; we're already doing it. That's why we're in government and that's why you're over there.

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NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food, the hard-working, efficient, effective member for Huron-Bruce. I want to revisit the comments made by the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell Monday evening last. The member opposite commented on the hypothetical proximity of a hog farm to the arena in which the Ottawa Senators and the Toronto Maple Leafs were playing their playoff series. He said, "Imagine if the water they used to flood the ice ... were taken from a creek or river where there is a hog farm in the vicinity. The ice wouldn't be white; it would be brown." He went on to say that hog farms are omitted from the Nutrient Management Act.

Considering the vast number of hog farms in my riding, I was shocked to hear this. Minister, will the Nutrient Management Act not address these important issues concerning hog farms, large and small?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'd like to thank the member for the question. I would like to say that the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell also predicted that the Ottawa Senators would win that series. He's wrong—wrong on his ability to predict hockey games and wrong on his ability to be able to read the nutrient management bill when it comes to hog farms.

The government is indeed committed to preserving Ontario's clean waterways and groundwater system. The bill creates a comprehensive framework of regulation and best management standards to be included so that manure produced by hog farms will be spread effectively. These regulations will be clear requirements about what hog producers and other farmers across the province have to do.

We all know that farmers across Ontario are great environmental stewards. They're stewards of their land. They want safe, sustainable growth. I can tell you that the Ontario pork producers will be very upset to hear of the comments from the member opposite because—

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

Mr Johnson: Thank you, Minister, for clarifying that point. The member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell was mistaken about hog farms and he was offside with his Leafs-Senators prediction.

I'm sure my constituents are concerned about the environmental impact of the hog farms in my riding and they'll be happy to hear that, as I'm sure will your con-

stituents who also share their communities with large hog farms.

The opposition has been critical of the amount of time it has taken to make this piece of legislation a reality in Ontario, as have many farm organizations. Could you please explain to the members of this House and Ontario farmers why it's taking so long, and when you expect it will be passed?

Hon Mrs Johns: I'd like to thank the member from Perth-Middlesex. I would like to say once again that the Ontario pork producers publicly stated that they embrace the principles of the Nutrient Management Act and they in effect ask everyone in this House to move forward, get going and pass this bill. This bill has had more consultations—several public meetings were held across the province, there were initial consultations with approximately 130 presenters, and 200 written submissions. It went out after first reading and was consulted on. It's out again after second reading to be consulted on. What we need to do is pass the bill and get started. We happen to be blocked again because the opposition members won't put it to third reading. Come on, give the farmers a break.

RAPPORT DE L'ENQUÊTE SUR WALKERTON

WALKERTON INQUIRY REPORT

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Ma question, si le premier ministre voudrait prendre son écouteur, s'il vous plaît—on sait que vous ne parlez pas le français.

Vous savez, monsieur le premier ministre, que le 14 janvier de cette année votre gouvernement a déposé le rapport de Walkerton, et le 18 janvier, avec cette information-là, le rapport en question a été donné au public avec accès à travers l'Internet, à n'importe qui veut l'avoir. Une petite erreur : aucun rapport n'a été produit en français le mois de janvier.

J'ai soulevé, avec mon chef, M. Hampton, cette question en janvier et février : « Pour quelle raison n'avez-vous pas déposé le rapport en français ? » On nous a dit : « Ne vous inquiétez pas. Le rapport va être préparé dans les plus brefs délais. » On se trouve à la fin du mois de mai, monsieur le premier ministre. Pour quelle raison ce rapport n'a-t-il pas été produit en français jusqu'à cette date ?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'd ask the Minister of Environment and Energy to answer this question.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): The member's quite right. It's very unacceptable. I spoke with Ministry of the Environment officials and asked them to do it immediately. The second report will come out. I will give you my undertaking that it will be out as quickly as humanly possible. There's no excuse.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I have a question to the Minister of Environment and Energy. Minister, following your public-expense pub crawls and your mishandling of the Hydro One consultations, it would appear that you're not comfortable with or willing to play by the rules of proper procedure.

As you know, last Thursday you met with the mayor of Kirkland Lake down here to discuss a PCB incinerator proposal for Kirkland Lake, the mayor being a very strong proponent of this facility. As you know, Bennett Environmental is yet two weeks away from submitting their environmental assessment information and we haven't had the public consultation period yet, nor have you received the recommendations from your ministry before you would make a decision.

Minister, don't you see that holding a meeting like this really destroys the perception that you're an independent arbiter of this decision-making process?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): I take some exception to the original part of the question. I've already responded to those. As I said again, it was a mistake. We apologize and we've paid it back.

With respect to the second part, my door is open. If a mayor of any community in this province would like to speak to me, I don't vet them and organize them on what it is I'm going to speak to them about. They come down and talk to me about the issues that are germane to their constituents and themselves. I would expect that to be a good thing. I always thought that if you folks across the floor wanted me to meet with local municipal representatives because there are issues they feel are important, and I agree to do that, I would expect you people to say, "Gee, that's good. I'm glad he's an accessible minister who's open to hearing from people around the province." To the member opposite, if you're saying to me that I shouldn't meet with officials in your riding without the consent of yourself and others, that's very difficult for me, because they are elected and they have local issues.

I heard their concerns and I didn't question his agenda. There was nothing done that was inappropriate. A simple request for a meeting was made. I accommodated your mayor, the mayor of Kirkland Lake. I would think that's a good thing.

Mr Ramsay: I've been in your position and I know a minister doesn't accept an appointment without knowing fully what's to be discussed on that agenda. Don't tell me that people come in and have surprise meetings in your thing.

Minister, what I'm talking about is that the legitimacy of the procedure is what you've negated here. You know this has to be independent. The mayor, the ministry and the EA rules say that politics shouldn't be entering into an environmental assessment. These decisions must be made based on science, and before all the science is gathered, you are allowing yourself to be lobbied by one of the key proponents.

When you were in Kirkland Lake just two months ago, you said there are a lot of jobs and opportunities that you can create in Kirkland Lake, and you can create a waste disposal mecca where you can deal with incineration and landfilling. Your mind is already made up, and we haven't seen the science. As you know, the siting of this PCB incinerator breaks the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment siting regulations on setback from habitation, schools and homes. It does that in a very grave manner. You've got to ask somebody else on the executive council to make this decision, because you've prejudiced the outcome of this.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I take great exception to that, great exception. That is just cutting at the integrity of what I stand for as Minister of Environment. I was requested by the mayor of Kirkland Lake to have a meeting. No, I didn't vet every subject. He wanted to meet with me about issues of concern. Never in that meeting, nor would it ever happen, would I ever compromise the existence of the Environmental Assessment Act, nor would I discuss it. To make the allegation without one shred of evidence is not only dishonourable but demeans you and me in this House. If you have any evidence of the fact that I spoke to him about the environmental assessment process, then table it. I did not speak to him about that. I never spoke to him about that. He asked me questions to take into consideration, and I committed to nothing.

Mr Ramsay: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In today's Northern Daily News clip, the mayor outlines the full discussion—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. That's not a point of order.

1500

PROBATION AND PAROLE SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the minister—I've forgotten his new title—for community safety.

Interjection: Just call him Bob. Just ask Bob.

Ms Mushinski: Actually, he's Brother Bob. He's one of my favourite ministers, and he will forgive me if I've forgotten his title. I understand that he's the minister responsible for public safety.

Interjection: Who's that?

Ms Mushinski: Mr Runciman.

Minister, during the OPSEU strike, many of your front-line parole and probation staff complained that their caseloads were too high and that many serious offenders were being left unsupervised. In my riding of Scarborough Centre, I know that the community is unaware of what types of supervision community-sentenced offenders actually receive. I wonder if you could please reassure my constituents that community-sentenced offenders are appropriately supervised.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): I want to reassure the member and all members of the House that the government is taking

valuable steps toward improving the caseload numbers for front-line staff. We announced two years ago that we would hire an additional 165 new parole and probation staff and I'm proud to say that we've accomplished that goal.

The federal Liberal government seems to think that at least half of the entire offender population belongs in the community, and since they're the ones that write the legislation, that leaves us with few choices.

That being said, the ministry is in the middle of a procurement process where we're trying to find private sector partners to help us expand our electronic surveillance program. We're looking for a variety of tools that front-line parole and probation staff can use to enhance supervision capabilities. These tools will ensure that any community-sentenced offender will have an adequate level of supervision, both by the parole and probation officers and by this advanced technology.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of the Premier's comments today, I would seek unanimous consent to make a motion to grant third reading to Bill 13, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, as introduced by Mr Sergio.

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

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just like to read into the record the quote in this thing that was attributed to me in this comment: "Stockwell said the assessment—"

The Speaker: Order. Will the member take his seat, please.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM-CARE FACILITIES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): A very timely petition from the people of St Catharines to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"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" some form of "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. I am in complete agreement with the sentiments of this petition.

Hon John R. Baird (Associate Minister of Franco-phone Affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I’d like to note the presence in the gallery of the only member of this House who has 100% attendance, the member for Nipissing, and he hasn’t even taken his seat yet. Congratulations to Al McDonald.

SAFE DRINKING WATER LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This is a petition about safe drinking water. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the people of Ontario have the right to receive clean and safe drinking water; and

“Whereas clean, safe drinking water is a basic human entitlement and essential for the protection of public health; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario have the right to receive accurate and immediate information about the quality of water; and

“Whereas Mike Harris and the government of Ontario have failed to protect the quality of drinking water in Ontario”—these were done in the intersession—“and

“Whereas Mike Harris and the government of Ontario have failed to provide the necessary financial resources to the Ministry of the Environment; and

“Whereas the policies of Mike Harris and the government of Ontario have endangered the environment and the health of the citizens of Ontario;

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

“Immediately restore adequate funding and staffing to the Ministry of the Environment; and

“Immediately pass into law Bill 3, the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2001.”

I will affix my signature to this petition.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE CENTRE

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Sarnia-Point Edward and area is experiencing a crisis in a shortage of health care professionals, specifically doctors; and

“Whereas the community health care centres are a proven primary health care system that can attract professionals and deliver primary health care in a cost-effective, efficient manner;

“Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario approve a community health care centre for Sarnia-Point Edward and area as soon as possible.”

I will affix my signature to that.

HYDRO ONE

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): “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.”

It’s signed by a number of concerned citizens from Blenheim, Ridgetown, Morpeth and Chatham, and I too sign this petition.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

“Whereas electricity rates in deregulated, private, for-profit markets such as Alberta and California fluctuate wildly in price and supply and are much higher-priced than in comparable public power systems;

“Whereas deregulation in California caused more blackouts than Ontario has suffered from ice storms or other natural disasters while public power has protected us from market fluctuations in supply as well as price;

“Whereas at-cost electricity has helped build and support Ontario’s economy, while deregulation would destabilize the economy, with soaring rates, reduced reliability and increased production costs leading to plant closures, job loss and economic decline;

“Whereas soaring electricity rates would put a significant burden on school boards, hospitals, public transit and other public services which cannot afford to pay double for their electricity;

“Whereas seniors and other members of our communities on fixed incomes would be hard hit by increasing rates, and the living standards of millions of Ontarians will be harmed;

“Whereas privatization will trigger NAFTA provisions, making it practically impossible to reverse this dangerous experiment and would cost us Canadian control over electricity;

“Whereas privatization, deregulation and loss of sovereignty would close the door on public accountability of the industry in regard to environmental safety and energy security concerns; and

“Whereas an alternative exists in the form of a truly accountable, transparent and affordable publicly owned and controlled system operated at cost for the benefit of all Ontarians;

“Therefore, we demand that the Ontario government immediately halt the planned privatization, sell-off and deregulation of the public electricity system.”

This has been signed by a number of constituents in my riding. I agree with them and I've affixed my signature to it.

1510

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a number of names on petition to the Legislature Assembly. These have been forwarded to the Honourable Helen Johns, Minister of Agriculture, and I wish to present them as parliamentary assistant to the minister.

“Whereas electrical energy is an essential service used by 100% of all Ontario citizens; and

“Whereas the experience in deregulating and privatizing the generation and retailing of electrical energy in other jurisdictions has led to enormous problems, including huge increases in hydroelectricity rates;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop further progress and action on the deregulation of electrical energy.”

I sign this petition.

HYDRO ONE

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario with regard to Hydro One.

“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.”

In support I affix my signature.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the recipients of benefits under the Ontario Disability Act have not received a cost-of-living increase since a \$2.50 increase in 1987; and

“Whereas the cost of living in Ontario has increased in every one of the years since, especially for basic needs such as housing, food, utilities, transportation, clothing and household goods; and

“Whereas disabled Ontarians are recognized under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997, and as such have the right to have their basic needs met, including adequate housing, a proper and healthy diet, a bed that does not make them sicker and clothing that fits and is free of stains and holes; and

“Whereas their basic needs are no longer being met because the Ministry of Social Services has not increased the shelter and basic needs allowances of disabled Ontarians eligible to receive benefits under the Ontario disability support program to reflect the increased costs of shelter and basic needs (and in fact have reduced these benefits for those recipients who receive a disability benefit under the Canada pension plan);

“Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, request the Ontario Legislature to urge the government to respect their own definition of basic needs and provide a cost-of-living increase to recipients of benefits through the Ontario Disability Support Program Act that is sufficient to cover the increased costs of their basic needs as of 2002 prices, and that this benefit not be reduced as a result of increases in the Canada pension plan benefit.”

As I'm in agreement, I'm adding my name to this petition also.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition in regard to the controversial issue of Hydro One, and it reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned residents of Toronto, demand that the government immediately stop the process of privatizing our electricity transmission system, the network of steel towers, transformers, wooden poles which transmit power from generation plants to our homes, and further postpone the electricity deregulation process until the Ontario public is given proof that privatization will not result in price increases, and place a moratorium on any further retailing of electricity until the Ontario Energy Board comes up with a standard contract to be used by all retailers; and

“That a standard contract spell out in clear terms that the residential users are waiving their rights to future rebates in exchange for fixed rates over a specified period of time.”

Since I'm in agreement, I'm signing my name to this petition.

CHILD CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

"Whereas an internal government document states the Conservative government is considering cutting the regulated child care budget by at least 40%; and

"Whereas the same internal document states the government is also considering completely cutting all funding for regulated child care and family resource programs;

"Whereas the Conservative government has already cut funding for regulated child care by 15% between 1995 and 1998 and downloaded 20% of the child care and family resource budget on to municipalities;

"Whereas Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain identified regulated child care and family resource programs as integral to early childhood development;

"Whereas the Conservative government will receive \$844 million from the federal government over five years for early childhood development;

"Whereas Ontario is the only province which didn't spend a cent of this year's federal money on regulated child care;

"Whereas the need for affordable, accessible, regulated child care and family resource programs continues to grow in Ontario,

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the Conservative government protect the current regulated child care and family resource program budgets and invest significant federal Early Years funding in regulated child care and family resource programs. We demand future federal Early Years funding be invested in an expansion of affordable, regulated child care and in continued funding for family resource programs."

This petition has been sent to me by Michele Giroux of Bells Corner Co-operative Nursery School in Nepean. I agree with the petitioners. I have affixed my signature to it.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE CENTRE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Sarnia-Point Edward and area is experiencing a crisis in a shortage of health care professionals, specifically doctors; and

"Whereas community health care centres are a proven primary health care system that can attract professionals and deliver primary health care in a cost-effective, efficient manner;

"Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario approve a community health care centre for Sarnia-Point Edward and area as soon as possible."

I'm pleased to affix my name and submit this petition on behalf of the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

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

"Whereas electrical energy is an essential service used by 100% of Ontario citizens; and

"Whereas the experience in privatizing electrical energy in other jurisdictions has led to enormous problems, including huge increases in hydroelectricity rates;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop further progress and action on the privatization of electrical energy in the province of Ontario."

I'm in full agreement and will sign this petition.

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO SAVINGS OFFICE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Province of Ontario Savings Office was created in 1922 by united farmers and labour as a unique banking facility that allowed Ontarians to invest in their province; and

"Whereas the Province of Ontario Savings Office enjoys a strong popularity among Ontario residents, with over 100,000 accounts and over \$2.8 billion on deposit; and

"Whereas the Province of Ontario Savings Office offers customers attractive interest rates, generous chequing privileges and personalized efficient service, and every dollar deposited is guaranteed by the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas POSO has 23 branches serving 17 communities across Ontario, including Hamilton, Windsor, Ottawa and small communities in northern Ontario not served by other banks or trust companies. Places like Pickle Lake, Armstrong, Killarney, Gogama and Virginiatown; and

"Whereas the Harris government announced in its latest budget that it will put the Province of Ontario Savings Office on the auction block, even though it is a consistent revenue generator, and even though this revenue could help Ontario's crumbling infrastructure after years of Tory neglect;

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

"To save the people's bank, the Province of Ontario Savings Office, so that it can continue its historic role of providing excellent banking services to families in communities across Ontario; so that people in small towns will not be forced to go further afield for banking services and forced to go to private, for-profit banks."

On behalf of my constituents, I add my name to this petition.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have been listening very carefully to the last petition. Since I agree with it 100%, I hope you don't mind that I sign it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That is not a point of order.

1520

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 16, 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.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): When we left off, Mr Bryant, the member for St Paul's, and Mr Smitherman, the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, had just finished their debating time. So we will go into the procedure for questions and answers by four members in rotation, and then one of those two members will have two minutes to respond.

Comments and questions?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It is with regret that I've got to tell you I didn't hear a single word that either Mr Smitherman or Mr Bryant had to say to the throne speech, but far be it from me—

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I'll send you a transcript.

Mr Kormos: I didn't hear it. I simply wasn't paying close attention to what you or Mr Smitherman were saying. But it remains the case that I am going to utilize the opportunity for questions and comments. I want to tell you, Mr Speaker, that New Democrats will be joining in the debate this afternoon. Ms Churley will be speaking to the throne speech. I will be speaking to the throne speech in approximately 40 minutes' time.

One of the things we noted in these questions and comments was that this throne speech was, if anything, underwhelming, and in the opportunities we've had when we've been—

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Well, think about it. When we've been back in our ridings and had a chance to talk to folks in our ridings, whether it's retirees and seniors, whether it's patients in hospitals, whether it's people who have had their home care torn away from them, whether it's students who face higher and higher tuition increases or whether it's workers who have just begun to receive their round of decertification notices with their paycheques—it's no longer the big posters on the workplace billboard, which didn't last very long, I should tell you, and ended up being a repository for some rather acute comments—not cute, but acute comments—regarding the Premier, his predecessor and the Conservatives. Again, the Ministry

of Labour now is including those pamphlets in pay envelopes.

We have great concerns about the people for whom the throne speech held out no promise whatsoever, no relief from the seven years—and think about that: seven years. There's something Biblical about that—of policy pestilence and torment that's been imposed on them by this government. Now, that holds some promise for the next seven years, I must say, and I will be speaking to that, along with Ms Churley, in short order.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Just picking up on the member for Niagara Centre's comments about overwhelming or underwhelming, I think the opposition day yesterday is an example of an underwhelming experience. This two-minute hit that I'm doing actually is with respect to Mr McGuinty's response yesterday. Really, he was talking about the issue of Hydro One and trying to have our Premier take this whole issue off the table. In fact, that's exactly what the opposition normally do: they don't want to deal with anything. I think the best template, if you want to understand the Liberal policy, is to look to Ottawa. The only way you can make no mistakes is to not do anything.

In fairness, later on today I'll be speaking on our response to the throne speech, A New Era for Ontario.

Certainly, if you're looking at the dilemma of the Hydro One debate and looking at the full amount of information, starting, I might say, with the Macdonald commission around 1996, where they evaluated the total assets at about \$40 billion and the debts at about \$38 billion, it was clear something had to be done. There were a number of options put forward by the Macdonald commission.

This government, as usual, is keeping its promise. The promise is to fix a system that was spending way in excess of its means and had no mechanism of accountability. We heard in question period today of senior executives making exorbitant amounts of money. It just demonstrates to me that bringing this back and dealing with some very difficult issues in a policy sense—I can only tell you this, having a riding with a nuclear plant, the Darlington generating station. They're now operating at efficiency levels because of the accountability mechanism that this government imposes on them. So I think it's open for debate. I certainly want to make sure that we have safe, reliable, affordable power, specifically for people on fixed incomes. I know our Premier, Ernie Eves, will do the right thing at the end of the day. This government has a reputation for, and in fact our mark is, doing what we promise.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'm pleased to respond to my colleagues from St Paul's and Toronto Centre-Rosedale, and I know the efforts that my colleague from St Paul's has put into the issue of Ontario Hydro and Hydro One. I think what he tried to get across and what we didn't hear from this government and what the people of Ontario wanted to hear in this throne speech was some clear words that the government is putting an end to the sale of Hydro One. Of course, we

didn't hear that. Once again this government is abandoning the citizens of Ontario.

My colleague from Toronto Centre-Rosedale is in an interesting position, because Mr Smitherman has a farm in his riding, the Riverdale zoo. It's one of the few farms in Toronto, the only farm in what we know as downtown Toronto. What I know Mr Smitherman would have liked to talk about, and it's something that I'm going to talk about right now, is the lack of commitment in this throne speech to agriculture in this province. We did not hear the magic words "made-in-Ontario safety nets." They skirted; they talked about consultations. Farmers in this province, I believe, feel that with three ag ministers in the past 14 months, they've been consulted to death.

We heard about the nutrient management legislation, but the most pressing crisis facing the agricultural community in this province today is depressed prices as a result of the government to the south and the unfair subsidies they are putting forward in support of their farmers.

We've heard talk from this government for over a year about a made-in-Ontario safety net program that's going to be there to look after the needs of the agricultural community in this province. But did we hear any discussion in this throne speech about made-in-Ontario? No. Nada. Zero. I think that lack of commitment shows very, very clearly to the agricultural community in this province that the government likes to talk the talk right now; they're talking consultations and they're going to do this and they're going to do that. But why don't they stand up? Why didn't the Minister of Agriculture ensure that included in this throne speech was support for the made-in-Ontario safety net program?

The Acting Speaker: I want to recognize the member for Timmins-James Bay in just a moment, and that is that you have some constituents who have been suffering the last little while, having to leave their homes for flooding. Please pass along our official best wishes to them, and my personal ones as well.

The Chair recognizes the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I will pass that on to Chief Theresa and the rest of the community of Attawapiskat. As you well know, 1,800 people were evacuated just last week. Luckily, the city of Timmins, which always has its door open and always does a fine job when it comes to being able to assist our neighbours to the north, did an excellent job in being able to provide emergency assistance to some 900 people who came into our community, as well as people into the community of Moosonee. So I will make sure those words are passed on.

In response to the speech that was made by Mr Bryant, if I remember correctly what was happening the last time we were here, I just have to say this, and I am going to be partisan here. I just want my Liberal friends to know I'm happy, I'm very happy, that finally you guys have come onside with New Democrats and Howard Hampton and that you believe the privatization of Hydro One is a bad

idea. Because I remember reading the fundraising letters that Dalton McGuinty or Mr Sean Conway had sent to the hydro industry, where you guys were in favour of privatization and deregulation. I also remember the comments in the paper where Mr Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal Party, was saying he was in favour of the sell-off of Hydro One. But I'm glad that you changed your mind. I'm glad you're with us. I just want to congratulate the Liberal Party for having flip-flopped on its original position, because we think we are right and the Tories are wrong.

But I want you to go a little bit further. I want the Liberals to also flip-flop on the issue of hydro deregulation and on the privatization of Ontario Power Generation, because the Liberals are saying it's bad to privatize Hydro One but it's good to privatize Ontario Power Generation, and market deregulation is a great thing. We as New Democrats, and my leader, Howard Hampton, think that is a bad idea. So we're asking the Liberals: you've taken a baby step. You've come out in support of the NDP on the issue of the privatization of Hydro One. We're asking you to take one giant leap for the people of Ontario and go all the way and oppose the privatization of OPG and the deregulation as well. I look forward to those responses from my good friend Mr Bryant.

1530

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Paul's has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bryant: It would be tempting to respond to the member from the third party, other than saying this: his suggestion with respect to the activities of the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke are totally inaccurate and I wouldn't be surprised if a point of privilege is coming. But I'll leave that to the member.

In fact, the third party, the New Democrats, along with the governing party and the official opposition, all agreed in 1997 in a joint committee report that electricity restructuring was necessary. There was a recognition that in fact we all had to change the way in which we created electricity in the province of Ontario, because either we were going to have to buy our electricity from New York or we were going to have electricity made in Ontario. I think the New Democrats did the responsible thing then in 1997, as did the government and the official opposition.

I'll tell you who flip-flopped: it was the New Democrats. They then saw a political opportunity. They abandoned the responsible position they took in 1997 and decided to make the same kind of promises we heard in 1989 and 1990, the pipe dreams of public auto insurance. Then the hard, cold reality sunk in when they became the government and they saw they couldn't fulfill those promises.

It would be grossly misleading to the people of Ontario to let them think that the status quo with respect to electricity creation is satisfactory. It's not. The easy thing to do is to promise the Dark Ages, to promise that we can go back and engage in some nostalgic moment. In fact, those days are over. We need to move forward.

We oppose the sale of Hydro One because that's in the public interest, but we want to create more electricity in the province of Ontario because that's in the public interest.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr O'Toole: Mr Speaker, I just want to make sure we're starting the second round, which is in fact the order of the day, the response to the speech from the throne.

It's my privilege and it's certainly my duty today as the member from Durham to reflect the mood and sentiment of my constituents. I do that with a great deal of sincerity.

When reviewing and preparing for this occasion and this opportunity, I did reflect and review the Hansard from May 9 and the comments made by our Premier, Ernie Eves, and of course the remarks made on his behalf by the Honourable James Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor for the province of Ontario. I'll look at it in a general sense first, and then I'll get to more specifics later.

If I look at it in terms of the general themes, it started with a very reflective tone, appropriately I think, given September 11 and other events. He outlined a number of significant contributors to this great province who have left us: Kenneth Bryden, MPP for Woodbine, as well as Ed Good and Lorne Henderson and Harry Worton. He went on to mention as well the Queen Mother's passing and Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon, the Honourable Pauline McGibbon, as well as the recognition that this is the 50th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth.

He then went on in tone from reflection to commitment. It picks up a serious resolve by reviewing a number of commitments that the government made. I'm just going to review a number that, for me, represent important goals, objectives and targets for this government to commit to. One is the challenge now to guide our province smoothly through to a new era. "We must protect the best of what we have while changing what is necessary to improve the lives of Ontarians."

We as elected members here on a daily basis get perhaps 50 phone calls a day, a number of letters and other means of staying in touch with not just our constituents but indeed all people of Ontario. As the parliamentary assistant to the then Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, and now the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, the Honourable Tony Clement, I know something about some of the issues and how difficult the choices are.

On education, I was very happy that the Deputy Premier, Elizabeth Witmer, along with our Premier, has committed—Dr Mordechai Rozanski, the president of Guelph University, has agreed to lead a task force reviewing the current funding formula in education. I heard that in the pre-budget consultations, and I'm pleased that this government has listened and that this government is responding. The Education Equality Task Force will report back sooner than later, on November 1, 2002. Last week, we heard from the Minister of Education, Elizabeth Witmer, that the government has

announced the GLGs, the general legislative grants, for the coming year, and indeed there is more money. In the case of one of the four publicly funded boards in my area, there is more money, and in many cases including in an environment where there is declining enrolment.

Education was just one of the many issues I think the government made commitments on. Minister Cunningham, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, has invited the federal government to sign the labour market development agreement. Of course, this much-debated agreement on training issues and the labour market would allow Ontarians to access up to \$600 million in apprenticeship and skills training funds. If one looks at the fact that the province of Ontario represents about 50% of the total economy of Canada, then this is long overdue to help not just new Canadians but new people to the workforce generally, in many cases young students graduating. I think that's an important part of what this government's message is about: creating opportunities for young people.

I look at the record of this government since 1995. There have been 882,000—almost 900,000—new jobs created, this against the backdrop of September 11 and other economic pressures. Ontario does remain competitive, a great place to invest and do business. Earlier today, Mr Kwinter from the opposition spoke with some questioning about the auto caucus round table being held today in Toronto. I was there for the minister's opening comments and those from the leaders of the industry, and I can assure you, representing the riding of Durham, which includes General Motors and many employees of General Motors, it was breathtaking. The leaders of all the industry were there—General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, Toyota, Camry—as well as the tier-one parts suppliers, and Buzz Hargrove was there, along with Minister Flaherty. I did notice a great deal of willingness to address—but the most important issue I heard from that sector was dealing with the bridge in Windsor. The minister—not in his words, but others around the table, all of the leaders, Buzz Hargrove and others, demanded that all levels of government work together to make sure that this barrier to trade be removed by governments—municipal, provincial and federal—working together. So the Huron Church Road bridge across the river, across the border, is important, while maintaining our controls and security at the border points as well.

To continue to focus on the economy, one of the themes I saw throughout this throne speech was the importance of trying to understand the basics. The basics are as simple as this: the first and most important thing is to have a strong economy. Without a strong economy—that is, jobs and investment—you cannot possibly have a strong quality of life. There are those on the other side who think you can spend your way into a higher quality of life. It's an important debate to understand the economic and fiscal policies that are necessary to have an enhanced quality of life.

The opposition, on every single occasion, has voted against every single tax reduction, yet I hear and read in

the papers the importance of having competitive tax rates. I'm specifically in support of reducing taxes such as the capital tax, which is a very regressive tax on investment and research and development, not just to the auto industry but to the health industry as well.

So the strong-economy argument has to be seen as a continuing thread throughout much of the debate to make our province the greatest place in the world to live.

I was also happy, when reviewing the comments, to address the important urgency of—since 1995, the province of Ontario, in its commitment to technology in health care, has increased the number of MRI machines by adding 31 in the province for a total now of 43, and OHIP funding would be extended to the operation of 90%. All Ontarians, no matter where they live, must have health care close to home. That has been our theme right from the very beginning.

1540

There are many sectors, but there are many agendas in the sectors. There are the doctors, the nurses, the pharmaceutical companies, the hospitals themselves, as well as other stand-alone research and other investments in health care that need to work together. More importantly, it all comes together in the recent debates on community care and long-term care.

I think the government has tried to address the physician shortage. I'm going to mention just a few initiatives. They have proceeded with the new northern medical school. Full campuses at Sudbury and Thunder Bay will train more doctors and encourage them to remain in practice in underserved areas, specifically in the north. The government is working with health care communities in Ontario to encourage more foreign-trained physicians to locate in underserved areas and increase the certification rate of these skilled individuals who are, in many cases, new Canadians.

I also think of the initiative whereby Ontario started to address the problem by helping to pay the tuition of doctors who choose to locate in areas that need doctors. The tuition plan, I believe, is \$40,000 that the province is willing to pay people who are committed to working in an underserved area.

Also, the family health network will be a raging debate as part of primary health care reform. The family health network increases access to services and is an important part of our government's plan. There are 14 pilot projects underway around Ontario, and the government's target is to have about 80% of eligible family practitioners in these family health networks in the not-too-distant future.

As I said, in the Ministry of Health there's a lot to be done with technology, with the integration of patient records and laboratory results being shared with hospitals and doctors—all of course under a very strict umbrella of patient consent, confidentiality and security of records—to try to make the best use of testing dollars so that there isn't duplication and to make sure we have the latest information.

Telehealth is another initiative of this government to try to bring services closer to patients.

Also, there's the good work done by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Chris Hodgson, with Smart Growth but also the whole Oak Ridges moraine debate. I really feel that the environment and that debate overflows into agriculture, with the Nutrient Management Act also an important debate.

As a member of the current select committee on alternative fuels, I can tell you that the report that I believe will be tabled next week by Dr Galt—Tuesday, he tells me right now in the House for you, the public, the first to hear it. It will be Tuesday next week. This report will have some very envisioning and very empowering language. It's my understanding that it's an all-party, unanimous report. It's good work by Dr Galt and, I might say, by all the members who sit on that committee in bringing together the very best examples—not just in hydrogen but in other fuel sources and options—to create better sustainable fuel sources in the future. That is all part of the environmental debate.

We heard the Minister of Agriculture today speak on the importance of moving ahead as quickly as possible on the Nutrient Management Act, and I know in my riding of Durham that agriculture and farm practices are very much waiting for those regulations. I commend the community people working on community councils, Arnot Wotten and his committee in Clarington. There's one in Scugog township as well that is working and anxiously waiting for this bill to pass.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention one of my pet peeves, the act that will give the charter to the newest university in the province, the Ontario Institute of Technology at Durham, which is anxiously awaited. I'd encourage the third party and the opposition to support that so there will be student spaces—some 5,000 to 8,000 student spaces created—to meet the double cohort needs, to allow students to avoid the expense of going away to university and to receive a first-class education closer to home, saving them and their families endless amounts of dollars. I can tell you, as a parent of five, that is a very expensive part, just living away from home.

I also want to recognize the new era in Ontario with a few specific comments from my riding. The input comes very clearly with respect to the current debate which in the last week of course has been the Hydro One issue. I have the greatest confidence in our Premier, Ernie Eves, that he will do the right thing, and the right thing does not include the do-nothing option. The do-nothing option is going to be very difficult for the opposition to try and have it both ways. I'm anxious to hear the remarks of the member from St Catharines because he may have the courage to step out and make a statement about some of the choices that should be considered. Hopefully he will ignore the do-nothing option, as I'm sure his leader is trying to tell him to do.

I was pleased with the Premier's comments in the House here today that the lands of Hydro One will remain in public hands. The councils in my area have all

passed resolutions. I have Hansard today, as you do, and that question's been responded to.

The other theme I see in this throne speech—and I've just gone through the actual copy of it—which I thought brought the whole thing together was reflection and commitment. The last part that I think is important is to act. There's a lot of action in this; in fact, it's already flowing.

The throne speech meant a lot to the agricultural community. In the last few minutes of my remarks I want to speak about the way of life in my riding and what it means to farm families: Dale Mountjoy, region 4 director of the Ontario Corn Producers' Association; Anna Bragg, former president of the Ontario Corn Producers' Association; Arnot Wotten, chair of the Clarington Agricultural Advisory Committee; Jacqueline Vaneyk, president of the Durham Regional Federation of Agriculture.

It may be of interest to this House to know that the Durham Central Agricultural Society is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Orono Fair this year. I would encourage all members to make a special effort as a significant indicator of support for their important 150th anniversary fair this year. I would also wish well the fair manager, Gord Robinson, who's also a municipal councillor, and the board of directors and the many volunteers who make up that board.

But the agriculture community needs more than congratulations. That's why I am pleased with the commitment by Helen Johns, our Minister of Agriculture, to committing to the round table on June 6 and the process that will lead to policies that come directly from the farm community itself. We look forward to this process as we develop made-in-Ontario solutions that will ensure a strong farm and rural community for present and future generations.

What does the throne speech do for me and the members of my community, the business improvement area in downtown Bowmanville, Newcastle and Orono? What does it do for the membership of the chambers of commerce of Scugog and Newcastle? What about the Clarington Business Group and the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce and the Courtice Business Association?

Businesses in ridings like mine have always understood the value of partnerships and working together. That can be recognized in the few business organizations I've already mentioned.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention the Main Event, which was recently held in my riding with many leaders from industry and the community, the region and the federal government. David Collenette made the keynote speech. I can assure you that it was a very successful event. Congratulations especially to the board of trade president, Ed Vanhaverbeke; vice-president Donna Eastwood; vice-president Ron Hooper; past president Paul Halliday; and directors Terry Caputo, Ron Hope, Bill Hyde, Tom Morawetz, Michael Patrick, Evelyn Rosario, Don Terry, Masood Vatandoust, John Wells and Frank Wu, representing the municipality of Clarington.

Again, it's an example of partnerships by the boards of trade, chambers of commerce and economic development offices throughout Durham that made the Main Event, held on May 15, a wonderful success. It included 700 business leaders from across Durham region. It was an opportunity to celebrate a positive business climate as we get prepared for the largest mega project in Canada, and that project of course is known as ITER, the international thermonuclear experimental reactor, our fusion project on the shores of Lake Ontario at the Darlington plant. I'm proud to say the province of Ontario is a partner with this business.

Let me also mention a few points from the throne speech that demonstrate that partnership in economic growth and innovations. As I said, there have been 882,000 new jobs, with 59,400 in the last six months. For instance, good news came from General Motors whose president, Michael Grimaldi, recently announced the addition of a third shift and 1,000 jobs in order to expand production at the number one plant in Oshawa of the best-selling car in North America, the Impala.

The business community can count on us continuing to focus on improving Ontario's competitiveness.

As I mentioned earlier, maintaining the free flow of goods and services across our borders is absolutely important to our export-based economy.

1550

I wanted to thank the education community. I recently visited a class taught by Donna Paquette of St Joseph's French immersion school down in Bowmanville. These grade 5 students were part of a Canadian citizenship special ceremony. We met with Cathy Abraham and the Clarington District School Board. There have been great things happening in our community schools. With the cooperation among parents, staff, students, the community and the province we can achieve even more in the future by working together.

There's much more to say and so little time to say it all, but I want to conclude with the double cohort issue. I want to go back to basics here. The future really is about our young people, not just the pages here today, but the young students in our classrooms in elementary and secondary schools and indeed university.

The greatest investment we can make is to educate our future generation and to have the right skills for the right place and the right time. I believe that educators are looking for a strong curriculum. I commend the College of Teachers; it had some difficult choices to make. But in that place there have been greater investments in capital, in schools and in trying to solve these problems. Having been a trustee for a couple of terms, I am familiar with the struggle that's been going on for about 15 years that I am aware of, since I was involved in the 1980s.

The issues aren't too much different than they were then, except the tuition issue in secondary school, as I am mentioning here, is a large issue. With the double cohort graduating starting next year we need to have 73,000 new spaces across the province. I know that the Ontario Institute of Technology in Durham is an important part of

that solution and I am a great supporter of that. I hope the opposition will support it. The student opportunity trust fund will help those who lack the family resources to reach their full potential.

Education includes each of us. Each of us is on a daily basis learning how to live life and meet the challenges, and that's what this throne speech meant to me and my constituents. It is a new era. It's a new opportunity, an opportunity to work collaboratively to find solutions. If all we have is empty political rhetoric, then I don't think we'll be achieving as much as our potential. We each are an example to our children. We should do our best each day in this House.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The issue the member should be addressing is that raised today by Mr John Gerretsen, the member for Kingston and the Islands. That is the issue of the treatment of senior citizens in our nursing homes and our seniors' homes across the province. We call them long-term-care homes.

I met with the representatives of those individuals. I have on many occasions communicated with the residents themselves, many of whom we would refer to as patients because of the care they need. I've met with their families and their friends. I've met with those who operate the homes and work in the homes and clearly there's a need for sufficient investment in them to provide better services.

They all note that services have deteriorated because there are simply not a sufficient number of staff there to meet their needs. On the cards they sent to each one of us they note, for instance, that 95% of those residents require assistance to get dressed, 94% to eat, 63% suffer from some form of dementia, 39% are aggressive and 56% have a circulatory disease. These are some of the afflictions that they have. There are only four minutes given to assist with getting up, getting washed, dressed and to the dining room; 10 minutes for assistance with eating; 15 minutes of programming per day and one bath per week.

For our senior citizens who have done so much for our society in years gone by, made many sacrifices, to see these individuals treated the way they are today, without the kind of dignity they require, the kind of medical care they require, without meeting their daily needs is tragic indeed. I think any government that is giving a \$2.2-billion tax gift to corporations in this province can well afford to invest that in long-term-care homes.

Mr Kormos: What the member for St Catharines wanted to tell folks but didn't have time to was that in around eight minutes' time he's going to be speaking. He's going to share his time, I'm told, with his colleagues, simply because that's the kind of guy he is. He cares about his seatmates, and he's going to share. But after he does his time with his colleagues, I'm going to have a chance to speak. I'm going to be speaking 20 minutes to this throne speech, which is unfortunately the maximum amount of time I've got. But then my colleague Ms Churley, the member for Toronto-Danforth, is

going to speak. She's going to be talking about environmental issues and environmental issues as they relate to the privatization of Hydro One and OPG. She's going to be talking about poverty. She's going to be talking about things that matter not just to the folks in her riding of Toronto-Danforth but folks across the province.

One of the things that Jim Bradley may not have a chance to tell you because he's sharing his time is that he and I deeply regret not being with our friends at the Slovak Club down in Thorold right now, down on Front Street in Thorold, with our friends at the Native Centre up in Niagara-on-the-Lake and with our friends at Club Sardegna. As we explained last Friday when we were down in St Catharines with the kickoff of the folk arts festival, regrettably we were going to have to miss some of those events. So we extend our regrets to the Slovak Club, to the Native Centre and to Club Sardegna, as has been pointed out.

But I tell you, Mr Bradley's going to be joining me on Sunday at the Croatian National Centre up in Niagara-on-the-Lake, at Club Heidelberg, at the Canadian Polish Society, at the Ukrainian Youth Association, and indeed, on the Saturday and Friday before at numerous other folk arts festival events. I'm looking forward to joining with folks down in St Catharines and across Niagara North in that folk arts festival.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): Thank you for including me, Speaker. It is a pleasure to get up and address the remarks made by the member for Durham, particularly when he talks about his fulsome conviction and new relationship with the double cohort, a creation of this government. They decided to take tens of thousands of young people and throw their future into disarray because of their mismanagement. This is the thing that's going to catch up with this government: the absolute mismanagement of public objectives. Each one sits, and Mr O'Toole particularly, talking about the defence of this government when in fact 25% of the spaces that those young adults look forward to being able to achieve, look forward to being able to qualify for, don't exist and can't exist, according to the various institutions that are going to provide them. In fact, the member opposite provided reference to an institution that doesn't even yet exist in terms of providing some of the alleviation for some of those spaces.

Those same young adults have learned first hand the difference between what's said in the throne speech and what hangs around the neck of that gentleman just speaking just like a seven-year-old pork chop: this government's record. The record, when it comes to the double cohort, is to put them through a mismanaged school curriculum, to inflict on them half-baked ideas they rented from the Republican shop down to the south—unfortunately, they went to the discount bin—and they instead have put upon this group of people a curriculum that doesn't work, uncertainty in terms of where they're going to be headed in terms of their further education, deregulated fees that have increased their costs 60%, at

the same time when the average wage, particularly at the low end where young people can expect to participate, has dropped under this government in terms of their ability to earn their own income.

The people opposite are happy to hide behind the new, gentle rhetoric. They're happy to find comfort that maybe they can put on a new suit, but I can tell you, the stench of the last seven years sticks to them, just like it will reveal itself when the double cohort becomes the car crash this government set it up to be.

1600

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'll tell you, them's fightin' words. I don't think I can compete with that, but I agree.

I wish, by the way, I had my schedule here and I could tell the people in my riding the events I'll be at this weekend.

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): You'll never make it to Morningside, Marilyn.

Ms Churley: That's true, but Peter Kormos will.

I'm disappointed in the member for Durham and the members so far who have spoken in response to the throne speech, because I was expecting that some of them would break free by now. You're not going to. The member for Durham, I don't think he's going to make it into cabinet now. He doesn't have to continue—what's the polite word I should use here—

Mr Sorbara: Prop up.

Ms Churley:—propping up his government. The people like Mr O'Toole from Durham and others who have spoken are continuing to put their heads firmly in the sand and not look at the reality of the Ontario that has been created under their previous Premier, Mike Harris.

Now, Ernie Eves, the new Premier, did say that he wanted to create a kinder, gentler Ontario, and some of the language has changed and the government has indeed put a few more dollars—not nearly as much as the dollars they took out of the budget for education. We've yet to see what they're going to do about the environment in response to the second part of the Walkerton report—all kinds of other areas where billions of dollars have been taken out of our system and still have not been replaced. A few dollars have been thrown at some critical areas, yet the problems that have been created by this government are still there.

Members are getting up, like the member for Durham, and praising the throne speech, praising the new government, and not admitting, not finally sticking their heads out from under the sand and saying, "We've got some problems here, and we'd like to address them."

That's why I'm disappointed. I will talk more about these issues when I get a chance to speak later on in the program today. I could go on now because the Speaker is busy. Those are the kinds of things I will be talking about later on. I have a report here called—

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Bradley: Mr Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the members for Davenport, Parkdale-High Park

and Ottawa Centre. Unfortunately, with the rules of the Legislature, my friends from the New Democratic Party get to speak four times as long as members of the Liberal Party, which of course irks those of us who have a lot to say in this House. I do want to share with members of the Legislature some concerns I have in that short five minutes.

First of all, I was deeply disappointed that members of the government did not join with the opposition in agreeing to the motion put forward in the House by Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal Party, to stop the sale of Hydro One. I thought perhaps, as I saw the government moving away from that position, they finally would simply concede that they were wrong in doing so and they would take off the table the whole issue of selling Hydro One to the private sector. I think that would have been a good move on the government's part. Perhaps we'll drag them kicking and screaming to that point soon.

The second issue I want to deal with is that of the appalling situation with disabled people in this province. First of all, the criteria to receive payments, to receive a pension as a disabled person, are very tough and unfair criteria to follow. The procedures to follow are demeaning. Nobody wants people who aren't disabled to get funding, but I'm going to tell you that people who are genuinely disabled are having a very tough time and are put through a very demeaning process.

I could be wrong in this—I don't think I am—but I can't recall an increase in the funding in terms of the pensions and payments they might receive that disabled people have had in this province. They contact my office and say, "We have not had an increase while others in our society have." That's appalling, because these are people in a very vulnerable position.

We've not had proclamation of the bill for the disabled in this House. There are many services that disabled people have to get that they have to pay for, and sometimes they have to go cap in hand to volunteer organizations to receive that funding. That just isn't right in a society which has considerable wealth and with a government that is giving a tax break, a tax gift, to the corporations of some \$2.2 billion, has \$500 million for the private school sector and is giving another \$945 million in income tax cuts, that it cannot find the funding for those individuals who are vulnerable.

Second is the issue of the ambulance dispatch service. The member for Hamilton East has raised the issue, I've raised the issue in the House, the member for Niagara Centre has raised the issue in the House. There's an appalling situation where the government kept secret for several months a report which said that the ambulance dispatch system is in disarray, that people's medical conditions are deteriorating considerably because the ambulance isn't arriving on time. There's a contention and accusations that people have even died because ambulances have not been dispatched in time to reach the people and it's because of the disarray in which the

dispatch centre finds itself as a result of inaction on the part of this government.

The minister rose in the House in questions from myself and the member for Niagara Centre the other day and contended that, well, he was acting on it, that he had the report; he didn't make it public, but he was acting on it. We find today that representatives of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union have shared with us the fact that virtually no new action has taken place, that the government has been sitting on this matter, a matter of life and death. That is not acceptable.

I spoke earlier today as well about farmland preservation. I made a statement in the House on it. I am absolutely appalled when I see the amount of farmland being gobbled up. In my statement today I noted that we have 27% fewer farms than we had 20 years ago, 11.5% of that in the last five years. This is irreplaceable land. The agricultural industry should be seen as, because it is, an extremely important industry that is valuable in terms of the amount of money it brings in and because it gives us the security of knowing that we have our own food supply. Yet we're allowing municipal councils to rezone lands, to give severances willy-nilly and to simply pave every last square centimetre of farmland within their jurisdiction. Clearly, the provincial government should not have weakened the Ontario Planning Act, which permits this to happen, but at the behest of their developer friends who contribute millions of dollars to their coffers, over the past six years they have done so. That is wrong. We must take a strong stand to preserve our farmland because we cannot, once it has been paved over, lift the pavement and start farming it again.

I now pass it along to our next speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I'll make sure the member doesn't lose any of his time.

If Travis, the page from St Thomas, were here, he would want me to—and of course I would have to tell him I couldn't. There are no rules in this House that would allow me to introduce, in the members' west gallery, his mom and his two sisters. He would want me to introduce his mom and his two sisters, his aunt and his grandma. We welcome you.

Travis is here, to my extreme right. He would also want me to mention that he comes from St Thomas, in the heart of the riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London, represented by Mr Peters.

I'm sorry to interrupt the member for Parkdale-High Park. I will make that up to you.

Mr Kennedy: It is a pleasure to join this debate. It is about the throne speech, and the throne speech, I think, has had a disproportionate amount of attention for a pile of words. Any government normally can depend on a certain amount of good faith on the part of the public: "This is what they say; this is what we can start to believe." A new government, which the slightly retreaded Eves government can at least make some claim to be, is going to get that, is going to get some benefit of the doubt on the part of people who are out there. I, for one, think in some ways it's justified, up until the point where

they actually start to do or not do the things they've set for themselves, the expectations they have set for themselves.

So I think somewhat uncomfortably the government here has assumed the mantle of actually having an interest of some description in public education, an interest other than using it for political gain and advantage and having something and someone to attack from time to time when they need to avoid some of the tougher questions that come with governing. Instead, that lazy approach has brought them around now to where the throne speech actually talked about equality of opportunity as a goal of this government, equality of opportunity which this government has not, for many years now—because it is many years, seven years—lifted a finger to advance, has never bought into or measured itself by, of people advancing themselves based on their ability, based on their willingness, based on their hard work to do that, particularly when it comes to the public systems that exist to facilitate that development.

I'm sorry to report to the people of Ontario today that the early returns are in on the throne speech, that is, those with respect to education, because the government has made its announcement. It has said, "Here are the actions to match those words about equality of opportunity, about stability and other things we would lay claim to as the slightly revamped, retreaded kind of government that we'd like you to believe us to be." Instead of a real commitment, the kind of commitment that would come if the members who are here today from Thornhill, from Etobicoke North and so forth were actually to stand up in the caucus room and say, "We need to do something for the schools that are struggling in our ridings," actually do something on their behalf instead of something else—because that's the price of credibility, the price of translating these words into something that can be believed, not anything that is said here today but what the government actually does.

1610

When those school boards looked at their allocations on behalf of two million students around the province, numerous people represented by this government, essentially they found that priority is not only not reflected but bears the inherent contradiction of this government when it comes to being believed or understood or having even a scintilla of respect, let alone credibility, when it comes to education. Those numbers show this: that this government could only muster \$14, after inflation, per public school student in this province in enrolment this year. That's all they could find in their hearts and in their priorities to make available across the province. The context for that is a government that has taken away some \$950 over the seven years of their government. They have deducted that. They have decided they have better uses for that; that that should be in tax cuts, that that should be financing other things they believe in, but patently not public education.

One of those other things becomes more evident this year. Not given much attention in the throne speech is the

\$1,400 that each of these members supported and voted for in the last session, that public money should be put into private schools and toward the education of private students. Each one of them, supported by the members of this government, receives 1,400 new dollars, 100 times the \$14 this government decided to make available to public school students. They have decided not to address the needs of students out there this year in the double cohort, as I mentioned in my response before, but also special-needs students. It is unethical, I say in this House, to have this government put forward the ruse, the pretense of actually responding to education when all around this province are thousands are special-needs students who have been taken away from in terms of their education, who have actually lost out because of this government's lackadaisical, lazy approach to trying to provide a quality education. They have instead been, like others, curriculum casualties of this government's lack of commitment to actually seeing them succeed.

In the final analysis, we know now, we have a very strong indication, we have a good idea where this government is headed in terms of its approach. The contrast is there in terms of education: on the one hand, high rhetoric; on the other hand, low ambition, low priority, and certainly nothing the people of Ontario are looking for when it comes to an improved direction for this province.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I am delighted to participate in the throne speech debate. Quite honestly, I must tell you I was pretty disappointed in what I heard. As you know, I introduced a private member's resolution in November 1999. It was calling for greater access to our trades and professions, especially as it relates to the practice of keeping out foreign-trained professionals.

Right now in Ontario we need at least 200 doctors. Consequently, we have a number of applicants, at least 2,000, who are foreign-trained professionals, foreign-trained physicians—I have the numbers right here—and they can't practise. We're asking why. Why can't we open the door so that foreign-trained professionals, especially physicians, are able to practise?

We know that in some cities of Ontario emergency departments are being shut because we're unable to find professionals, physicians who want to come and practise in Ontario hospitals. They're unable to join us simply because of what's taking place in terms of the process that's holding up these professionals.

It's not just doctors; it's nurses, it's engineers, it's veterinarians. I can go down the whole list of professionals who could come but they're not; they're not being allowed to practise. What happens instead? Well, some of them are going to the United States, and that means of course that they are adding to the brain drain. Some are forced to drive as taxi drivers. Some are forced to clean restaurants. Some are forced to deliver pizzas. Those are the kinds of people that we need in the professions and not doing this kind of work.

So was that part of the throne speech? Did the government address that issue? Absolutely not. Nothing has been done in terms of opening the doors.

I'm not saying that the standards should be lowered. No, the standards should be maintained. But we're saying there should be an appeal mechanism and we're saying there should be certain processes established that would open up the doors so that professionals from other countries would be able to practise in Ontario.

The other issue I want to address myself to briefly is the issue of Hydro One. I see that my good friend Mr Kormos is here right now. I was kind of expecting in the throne speech, as was said before by some of my colleagues, that the government would simply accept that it was wrong and would take it off the table. But apparently Mr Eves has decided that, no, we're still going ahead in some way to ensure that Hydro One is being sold; at least that's what I understand. Maybe I'm wrong. I hope I am. But there was nothing in the throne speech that would make me believe Hydro One is off the table. It's a tragedy, a real tragedy, that the crown jewel of Ontario is being sold, that the crown jewel of Ontario is being considered expendable.

We know, of course, that private corporations are there to make a profit. But if private corporations are making a profit, why couldn't the province of Ontario make that profit? Are we lacking money? No. We know what the deficit is. We know that in terms of our own needs in Ontario, the government needs money to run: to run our hospitals, to run our schools and so on. So what we need, of course, is obvious. We need to have a base from which we can take the money to pay for the services. To sell the crown jewel of Ontario and to think that we can make a few bucks at a time and not consider the future, the future of our children, is really something that needs to be re-examined, and it was not in the throne speech.

I therefore propose that what we've got to do today is try to ensure and try to convince Mr Eves to change his mind. We will continue to demonstrate until this is done, until there's some sense in this government, where they will say, "No, we cannot sell Hydro One."

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm pleased today to respond to the throne speech. It was an interesting one, if somewhat confusing. Suddenly we're embarking on a new path, led by the man who was in charge of the cuts that led to most of the havoc and confrontation in this province, the same government that gave tax breaks to Bay Street and cuts to most of the vulnerable in our province.

I'm going to address a particular area that is most important to me, because I get the most calls, the most letters, the most e-mails about people who are being deprived of home care, some of the people in this province who are the most ill or the most frail, who are in need of our support at this time, at this particular stage in their lives. I'm talking about the cuts to community care access centres.

In Ottawa, we have 500 on a waiting list. These people are waiting for what? They're not waiting for some kind of frivolous service; some of them are waiting for a bath, a bath that they can only have once a week. Some are waiting for some grooming. Some are waiting for food.

We have a woman in Ottawa, Joan Crawford-Shanahan, who has been blind since 1992. Originally, she was assessed for eight hours of home care. Those hours were cut to six. Then they were cut to four. Last week she learned that there would be no hours at all. I remind you that this woman is blind and lives alone. She wants you to tell her, in asking the government, what does she have to do to receive services in this province? This government says it wants seniors and the disabled to be at home, to stay at home where they need and can get the support. Our particular community care access centre is reassessing about 6,000 people right now who are receiving services. Over the last three years, demands for care have grown by 36%.

1620

Let me tell you about another person's, Gail Blackburn's, experience. Instead of reacting and providing the CCACs with the needed funds, this government fired the messenger—just like they did right across this province—fired an excellent manager of that CCAC and put new people on the board—their people—by passing Bill 130. So who's left to speak for the most needy? It's we in the opposition and the people in the community. They still have money, of course, to give to Bay Street. Maybe our new Premier will have a rebirth and finally provide some funding to our CCACs—and we're not alone—so that seniors and the disabled can get the care they not only need but deserve.

Home care was to be an alternative to expensive hospitalization, but by starving home care, it can't do the job. It leaves people hurting and it can't replace and take the pressure off the hospitals. So what's the point? You starve it and it's a waste. You're hurting people, you're hurting the services and you're putting pressure on the hospitals as well.

I know my time is almost up, but I did want to say that there are many more areas in this throne speech that I would like to have addressed. I don't have all the time, but I would like to address and comment on Gail Blackburn, who said:

"I am very angry at our new premier, Ernie Eves, because his government froze funds that our community gets for home care.

"My case worker notified me that on June 10 my home care service will be cut to three hours a week from 6.15 hours. I live in constant pain as I suffer from fibromyalgia and lupus," which, as many of you know, can be terminal. "I also have to deal with the depression that the pain brings with it. I worked for 29 1/2 years for the Department of National Defence but now I am not able to work.

"Last year I had been receiving eight hours." Now she's cut down to hardly anything at all. It's been cut "by

half, which is ludicrous and sadistic." These are her words.

"I am allowed to have the bed changed once a month. Would anyone sleep in a bed that was only changed once a month? I can't afford to pay someone to come in and make sure that my floors are clean and that my bed is changed.

"The home care worker wanted to know if I have any family nearby." She does not.

"I live alone and ask nothing more than to be able to live my life with a little respect and dignity. Mr Eves needs to look at how this funding enables disabled people to be independent." That's what she wants to be.

This is from Gail Blackburn in Ottawa. There are many more people in this situation. It is a crying shame. It was not addressed in the throne speech. It should have been, if this government is truly saying it wants to address the needs of our people.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Kormos: I have but two minutes now. In fact, there are going to be a few other speakers taking their two-minute opportunities and Ms Churley is going to be amongst them. Then I'm going to have a chance to spend some 20 minutes responding to the throne speech. So if folks are at all interested in the issues I want to raise about this government's assault on Ontarians, stick around. If you're not, go down to the Slovak Club in Thorold, go down to Club Sardegna in St Catharines or go down to the Native Centre in Niagara-on-the-Lake, which I would—

The Acting Speaker: Would you get done with the commercial and comment on the speakers, please?

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. That's why people have these choices. I believe in choices, too. But look, we've seen people in this province suffer seven years now of attack upon seniors, attack upon the environment, seven years of attack upon students, seven years of attack upon single mothers—I'm going to talk about some of those single mothers in a few minutes and tell you what women like Ms DiMartile down in Niagara have had to endure. I'm going to talk about some of the workers that have been under attack, like the workers at Anagram out in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I'm going to talk about some of the workers like hotel workers right here in Toronto under attack by this government.

I'm going to talk about folks like the kind of folks that Ms Churley and I represent in our ridings, who have not only not been served well by this government but who have suffered a gross disservice and whose lives have become far worse over the course of the last seven years.

Ms Churley will be speaking this afternoon as well, addressing environmental issues, poverty issues, addressing issues around the privatization of one of our most valuable assets, Hydro One and OPG. I mean, the privatization of Niagara Falls—who'd have thought it?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like to commend my four colleagues on their presentations in the last 20 minutes. Certainly, we look at the shortcomings of this throne speech because we know that this throne speech

impacts negatively on the people of Ontario. Again, as is so often said in my part of Ontario, there is the same old barn with a new coat of paint on it; but the reality is the structure is still the same and nothing has changed. In fact, in the Premier's own words, we've only changed Premiers, not principles.

Let me tell you that the principles of the Harris-Eves Tories have hurt Ontarians. So when the member from Davenport comments on the need for access to trades and professions, he speaks from authority because he's listened to the people of his riding and the people of Ontario. We heard very sad commentary about Gail Blackburn and Ms Crawford-Shanahan, two people who require services and aren't receiving them from this government. They are only reflective of the many, many thousands of people who require extra services and are not receiving them from this government, because this government likes to talk the talk but doesn't believe that it's important to walk the walk.

Nothing has changed in the province of Ontario—just the Premier. The failed policies of the Harris-Eves government remain in place, and that's why we as the official opposition will continue to hold this government to account.

Ms Churley: I listened with pleasure to my four colleagues from the Liberal Party. I would say to Mr Bradley, who commented that the NDP gets to speak more and we have fewer members than they do, be careful what you wish for because it is our goal to make sure that after the next election you will be sitting over here with maybe six or seven or eight members. I can tell you if you look at the ledger, if you compare the benefits and disadvantages to having fewer members, I would say that when you have a number of critic areas to cover and a number of committees to cover, I think the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. But do be careful what you wish for. If that happens to you, we will negotiate in good faith your ability to stand here and speak on behalf of your party.

The Liberal members spoke about a lot of issues and a lot of things that are missing from this throne speech, the kind of things that I'll be speaking about later and that the member for Welland-Thorold will be talking about: real people and the effects that government cuts, because of tax cuts to the wealthy—the Liberals are just talking now about corporate tax cuts, but let's remember where this all started, when this government, the Tory government came into being. The first thing they did was cut welfare rates and education. They cut the environment drastically. Right throughout the government there were cuts. It's important that we stand up and talk about the real affects that it's having on real people in our ridings.

I can tell you that when we go to our constituencies on Fridays when the House is in session and we hear some of the heartbreaking stories and the real impact these cuts have had on people, then it becomes incumbent upon us in the opposition to address those omissions from the throne speech and urge the government to do something about these problems that have been created—

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

Ms Churley: —by those very cuts and have not been addressed.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time expired some time ago.

1630

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): In the few minutes I have—actually, it's the first opportunity, since this government has taken its long holiday, to be accountable and to face us, so we can make them accountable.

But I just want to use a few minutes to talk about how proud I am of the Liberal Party, this opposition, who have kept this government, over the years, accountable. Yesterday I saw the Premier get up and say with glee that he was giving back the \$78,000 in severance pay. George Smitherman, my colleague, was at him for days saying, "Give back that money. It's not fair." When he got up and said, "I'm giving it back," they all got up and applauded. That is the consistency of the Liberals, who are saying, "You must be accountable," and when we made them accountable they were applauding. So therefore, I say to you all, that's good.

Mr Speaker, you remember the Walkerton situation. All along they were saying, "There's no way we're going to have an investigation," and they were blaming it on everyone. The Liberals and Dalton McGuinty insisted that they do that. Then there was Ipperwash. My colleague Gerry Phillips continues to make this government accountable and pushes them and pushes them until, I'm sure, they're going to have to be accountable one day. Because do you know what we're saying? The people out there want you to be accountable. The day will come when this very accountable Liberal Party that has listened to the people, in forming the government will then say to the people, "We listened."

All of a sudden this new Premier is saying, "I'm a listener. Listen to how much I'm listening." What we want is a doer, not a listener. They have all these ears. I want to tell you, when Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus get to be the government, you will see a government that is accountable and a government of action.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bradley: I appreciate the comments of all of my colleagues on the speeches that were made by the Liberals. We had to divide our 20 minutes into five minutes apiece.

I want to indicate very much how pleased I am that the government has now come along to our point of view on the hydro corridors. We've been at them now for several months about those corridor lands. The member for York West, Mario Sergio, brought a bill before the House, you will remember, last Thursday that the government ultimately defeated or sidetracked so that it wouldn't go anywhere, and today the Premier announces that he's going to do what Mr Sergio essentially said he should do. I was hoping that yesterday when we had the resolution

from Dalton McGuinty on Hydro One, telling the government not to sell Hydro One, in fact we would see them turn around and finally agree, after having seven different positions, that they wouldn't sell Hydro One. I know that is a hot issue. I read in the newspaper that my friend from Ottawa West-Nepean was opposed to selling Hydro One. I don't know if you can always believe the newspaper, but I read that in the newspaper. I would respect him for saying that within his caucus, because more than once he has annoyed the powers that be within the Conservative hierarchy, and I don't blame him.

Listen, another thing the government should do, and I'm sure all of us in the opposition agree with this: I cannot see why they won't develop Beck 3, which is a new water-power operation that can take place in Niagara Falls—no emissions into the air, water power, and it can add to the electricity grid. Why this government has resisted what we in the Liberal Party have advocated for so long I do not know. I guess it will remain a mystery.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kormos: Last Friday, May 17, back down in Niagara, of course, I was with a group of 70 workers, young women and men—mostly young women and men; some not so young, but by and large young women and men, and quite frankly, you might want to know, mostly women. They had been forced to be on strike on a picket line—forced to—since April 15. Workers down at Anagram ResCare in Niagara-on-the-Lake, just east of Virgil. It's important to understand who these workers are. They're members of the Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Canada. But you see, they're rehab workers in what has become a private, for-profit, corporate and, oh yes, very American brain injury treatment program. Since the privatization of that facility we've seen not only the importation into Canada and right into Niagara of for-profit, American-style health care, we've seen the importation of not just American-style but Texas-style, George Bush-style labour relations.

Let me explain to you what the issues are in this labour dispute, because it is the workers themselves who have raised as an issue that they want to see resolved during this labour dispute the issue of adequacy of training. It's the workers who are calling for more training. It's the workers. And yet another issue on the table during the course of these negotiations is that it's the workers calling for management to ensure that every worker has first aid and CPR training. You see what's going on? It's not even wages that are their front issue, and I've got to tell you, the wages there are atrocious—wages of \$10 and change for people working with our parents, sisters, brothers, spouses, family friends who suffer brain injuries.

Let me tell you what else is on the table. Let me tell you what else is at issue in this labour dispute. These workers have been denied eligibility for WSIB, for workers' compensation. You've got to understand that, like everybody working in the health care area, injuries are not infrequent. When you're working with people in a very physical way, as so many health care workers must

and do, injuries are part of the job. But these 70 workers at Anagram are denied workers' compensation benefits, WSIB as it's called now.

Who are the clientele? Who are the participants in the treatment program at Anagram ResCare? Why, one of the largest single groups of participants, clientele, patients, if you will, at ResCare are referrals from WSIB. So WSIB is one of the largest sources of funding for this treatment program, to a private, for-profit corporate Texas, George Bush private health care corporation. The WSIB is one of the largest sources of funding. So even though WSIB is one of the largest sources of funding, the people who work in this program don't have WSIB coverage. Is that fair? Of course it's not fair. Oh boy, does that Texas management ever feel at home in this new Ontario, because those George Bush-Texas policies aren't just for Dallas and Houston any more. After Mike Harris and the Tories—and, yes, now with Ernie Eves—they're right at home here in the province of Ontario too.

These workers who have been forced out on the picket line since April 15, 2002, are now seeing, yes, very American-style scabs crossing their picket line to do their jobs, or at least try to do their jobs, because one of their real concerns is that the scabs—Mike Harris scabs, because, after all, you understand it was the Conservatives who repealed the NDP anti-scab legislation. And you should note this—and you might recall this, Speaker—that during that period of anti-scab legislation, labour strife was at an all-time low here in Ontario.

I joined those workers at Anagram ResCare down in Niagara-on-the-Lake last Friday morning, and not only did I join them but other trade unionists joined them, other working women and men, labour leaders. The steelworkers' Local 1005 brought out their sound truck with the amplifier on the back and the big speakers and, oh boy, they played "Solidarity Forever" over and over and over again. All of us together, all of us, were trying to bring some public focus on the plight of these workers.

Yes, wages are on the table, but they are the last of the concerns of these workers. The primary focus of these negotiations is the quality of the care being provided participants in this privatized, corporate, for-profit, US of A, American, Texas-based, private health care company. The primary focus of the workers is the quality of the care, the quality of the brain treatment programs.

1640

I tell you, there was nothing in this throne speech—nothing, not a thing—to speak to the encroachment of privatized and, yes, more often than not, American, corporate, for-profit health care here in the province of Ontario. This government has opened the doors wide open. It used to be that the lineup over at Niagara Falls in Buffalo, New York, was three wide and a mile long. Now that lineup's moving through the border as those American, for-profit, corporate health care providers are coming in here, into Ontario, and taking on business, setting up shop. They are bringing with them substandard treatment programs, they are bringing with them new

risks for the participants in these programs, and they are bringing with them American-style labour relations.

Well, let me tell you, Speaker, just like I told those workers, those IWA members, those Anagram ResCare workers down in Niagara-on-the-Lake, that the owners of Anagram ResCare, from Texas, as they are, may think that type of labour relations and that type of private, for-profit health care is OK in Texas, and it may well be, but it's not OK in Ontario. Ontarians are clearly saying no to private, for-profit health care, no to American-style labour relations. I'm convinced that Ontarians are standing firmly with workers at Anagram and other workers like them.

Oh, yes, there are other workers like them. You see, I've written to the Minister of Health; I've written to the Minister of Labour. I've written to the Minister of Health, because the Ministry of Health has the responsibility to accredit this treatment program for brain injuries, saying, "Look, you've got an obligation here to look into what's happening at Anagram to the level or the quality of treatment as a result of the labour dispute and as a result of the utilization of scabs by Anagram ResCare." I also wrote to the Minister of Labour. I said, "Minister of Labour, it's unconscionable that these health care workers should be disentitled to WSIB coverage. You, Minister of Labour, have a responsibility to use your power to tell Anagram ResCare that we expect health care workers to be covered by WSIB."

There are other workers like them. The other day I was walking up to Bloor Collegiate. There was a meeting of injured workers at Bloor Collegiate, down on the west end of Bloor Street. As I'm walking down Bloor on the north side, I'm passing a Quality Inn and I see a picket line, so I figure I'd better stop and inquire as to what's going on. There's rarely a picket line I've ever met where I haven't stopped and said hello. There's never been a picket line that I've crossed; I'll tell you that. I saw workers from the Quality Inn up there on Bloor Street who weren't on strike but were conducting an information picket. Stopping and talking to them, I learned that they, as members of HERE, are calling for region-wide negotiations, a region-wide contract, because right now HERE is negotiating at some of the big hotels, the big three—the Sheridan Centre, the Delta Chelsea and the Toronto Hilton—and the workers are looking for a little fairer share of the incredible new revenues that these hotels are enjoying. Do you understand? These hotel workers are the ones who clean the rooms, scrub out the toilets, the bathtubs and the showers, who change all the linens and vacuum and mop up the floor. Fair enough. Common sense tells us that some rooms are easier to clean than others, not because of the room but because of the person who inhabited it the night before. But these people are on a quota of 18 rooms a day to clean, less than 30 minutes a room for an eight-hour day, and these people are making \$10 and change an hour.

I know the line: these people get tips. I'm sorry. I don't expect any working person to have to rely on tips for their income. That's not what it should be about. I put

it to you that there's nothing in this throne speech to address the interests and the needs of low-income workers like those hotel employees I met on Bloor Street back last week on my way to an injured workers' meeting at Bloor Collegiate.

I'm saying to you that I could have been far more enthusiastic about this government's throne speech had it included, let's say, a reference to an increase in the minimum wage. Howard Hampton and the New Democrats have been calling for it now for seven years. Again, that seven years, there's something Biblical about that, isn't there? But maybe it speaks well for the next seven years. Did you ever think about that, Speaker? Maybe it speaks well for the next seven, in view of the fact that the last seven have been so horrible and so painful and that so many have suffered.

You've got a government here that has cultivated an anti-union climate, that's cultivated enhanced levels of poverty among the poorest workers. You see, over the course of the last seven years the cost of living has gone up by some 16.8%, 17%, give or take a half a point, yet minimum-wage workers continue to earn \$6.85 an hour.

Things were different when we were kids; I've got to tell you that as well. I think you know what I'm talking about. When we were kids, we did minimum-wage jobs in the service industry, in the retail industry and in the hospitality industry as part-time jobs. In and of itself, it wasn't the worst thing in the world, was it, for a teenager to earn minimum wage? But the problem is that now, in 2002, it's not kids doing minimum-wage jobs to earn part-time money; it's their parents doing minimum-wage jobs to support their families.

If you think for a minute that I'm not being straight with you, by God, I can take you down to Niagara. I can take you down to the Avondale store or the doughnut shop and I can introduce you to inevitably woman after woman after woman who's working 12, 13 and 14 hours a day for minimum wage to support herself and her kids. Yet this government can't for the life of itself find anything compelling about the call for a modest increase in minimum wage, at least to the minimum of \$7.50 an hour, which would barely put us on par with the United States. Ontario's minimum wage is lower than that of the United States, and the United States has never had a minimum wage to be particularly proud of.

You've got, inevitably, women out there—not teenagers; you've got 40- and 50- and 60-year-old women—continuing to work for the same minimum wage they were earning seven years ago, not a penny in salary increase in seven years, and no prospect of any with this government. The throne speech certainly didn't give it even the slightest notice.

Mr O'Toole: It's a new era.

Mr Kormos: Nor was there any reference whatsoever—well, you'd better tell me, you'd better use your two minutes and stand up and tell me, that these people don't exist.

Mr O'Toole: It's a new era, Peter.

Mr Kormos: Oh, a new era, some Tory backbencher says. You're darned right it's a new era. It's an era when working people become poorer and poorer. It's an era when their government looks at them with disdain and disgust. It's an era when the province of Ontario and its government tell poor working people, "Stay poor." You're darned right it's a new era. Seven years is enough.

Too many people have worked too long for this government's minimum wage for them to tolerate this government a moment longer. A modest increase in the minimum wage would have gone a long way to keeping some kids fed. A modest increase in the minimum wage would have gone a long way to keeping some poor working people housed. You've got people at risk of homelessness now for whom 10, 15 years ago the prospect of homelessness would have been unthinkable.

1650

I've got seniors in my riding who own their homes—they do—modest homes. These are hard-working people. Whether they're Croatians and others up in Welland south, off Broadway Avenue, whether they're Slovaks down in the east end, Italians down on Griffith or the Hungarians on Park Street, you've got folks down there in their 70s and 80s who have paid for their homes. They haven't seen a penny in increased support by way of seniors' assistance, but they have seen incredible increases in property taxes, incredible increases in natural gas rates, who now face the prospect of incredible increases in hydroelectricity costs and who, notwithstanding that, have worked hard all their lives. As far as they were concerned, they did all the right things. They saved and they sacrificed. By God, I'm old enough to have watched these people. They dug their own basements by hand. These same people are at risk of losing their homes. They're at risk of losing that small front and backyard that they care for so tenderly. They're at risk of losing the modest homes where they raised their kids and where they helped raise their grandkids. This government has abandoned seniors too.

There used to be a time when I was young and when you were young where people were worried about not living long enough. Now we're talking to seniors who are worried about living too long. They can't afford to be old because the supports for them in the event that they start to lose some of their mobility or some of their eyesight goes, where they need a little bit of help by way of home care, are being slashed and cut in every community in the province, Niagara region among them. These people worked hard and paid taxes all of their lives. Some of them in 1995 voted for this government. They did and they've been betrayed in a way that defies history, in a way that's cruel and mean.

New Democrats will continue to stand with working people. We will continue to stand with trade unionists. We'll continue to stand with hotel and restaurant employees. We'll stand and continue to stand with the IWA members down at Anagram. We'll continue to fight for an increase in the minimum wage. We'll continue to

fight for the restoration of anti-scab legislation, and we'll continue to fight for the right of working women and men to organize themselves into trade unions.

This government snubbed its nose at the appellate courts in this country by virtue of its reference of the appellate courts' determination that agricultural workers—and don't give me the line about the family farm. You guys are doing as much to destroy the family farm as anybody could. We're talking about workers involved in big, megacorporate farming. You don't want to see them organized either.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I appreciate the opportunity to be able to respond to the comments made by the member from Niagara Centre. His speech wasn't that different from many other speeches he's made in this Legislature. I was a little disappointed he didn't stick more to the throne speech. He talked an awful lot about strikes, about the WSIB. He talked about picket lines, how he'd stop and visit them. He talked a lot about minimum wage. I'm a little surprised at the position he'd take on minimum wage when his riding, as I understand it, has a fair amount of farmland in it. It's a fruit-growing area. I hear from farmers in my area that they're pretty concerned if the minimum wage is raised and what it would do to them and their cost of production. I'm very surprised, considering the area he represents, that he'd be commenting on that.

What I would have thought he'd be talking about is the nutrient management bill that was mentioned in the throne speech. I thought he'd be very supportive of that, especially when the socialists talk so much about environment. I thought that would be an area he would be on to.

He did get on to Hydro One and talked a bit about that, but from what I can gather, his option is: do nothing; the status quo is satisfactory. Well, the status quo is not satisfactory, but he seems to think it would be.

I thought he might have made reference to the select committee, when he had an interest in environment. That was mentioned in the throne speech. His seatmate is chatting with him there. I thought Ms Churley would be telling him what wonderful things were in it and I thought maybe he would be talking about that just a little bit.

I thought he'd be talking about action from the throne speech, because we are, as a party, extremely well known for doing what we said we were going to do. I thought the throne speech was dead on. I thought his concern would be, will we in fact follow through and will we continue to do what we said we were going to do?

Mr Curling: The member from Niagara Centre made some very important points. As a matter of fact, if he had four hours to go on, he would still talk about the inadequacy of this government. The only concern I have with that party is that, at a time when they find themselves in bed with the Tories, they find themselves being pushed out on the ground. But again, he made some extremely good points here.

As the member would say, he neglected to mention this and he neglected to mention that. What he is emphasizing is what the throne speech neglected to do, and there are so many things.

As a matter of fact, the picture that shows all those homeless people inside that place, all lying like that, came as a great surprise to the Conservative government. Surprise, surprise, surprise. This government, which has declared war on the poor, on children, on many struggling working families in this province, is now surprised that they are struggling to survive.

My surprise is what an effort they are making now to convert themselves as this rather compassionate government. But the people of Ontario are far more intelligent than many of us here, far more intelligent than the government of today. They have seen in what direction you are all going.

Of course you're feathering the beds of the rich and giving tax grants to all those who already have it. I have spoken to some of those individuals on Bay Street and they have said, "Enough. I don't want any more of that money. I'm embarrassed about it." But this government has continued to give.

The tuition fees continue to increase, denying people an education, denying individuals in our city who are qualified to work, not making the right legislation in order to make them accessible to that.

I'm kind of glad that this government is waking up to say, "We should speak more of what is not in the throne speech."

Ms Churley: I appreciated the comments made by my colleague from Niagara Centre—I got it right this time; not Welland-Thorold, which was what it used to be called at one time. To the members who didn't understand what he was talking about, it was very clear. He was talking about what was omitted, what wasn't in the throne speech, the kinds of things that are affecting a large segment of our population.

He's talking about the workers who haven't seen an increase in the minimum wage for seven years. At a time when the economy is growing in this province and MPPs are getting increases to their salaries and big corporations and rich people are getting tax breaks and higher salaries, the poorest, the lowest-paid people in our province, families, have not seen an increase under this government. There should have been at least a line in the throne speech recognizing that pathetic fact and stating that the government would finally, at last, increase the minimum wage in this province.

What is happening, what we're seeing more and more, is that these working families cannot afford to pay their rent and feed their kids. Many of them are showing up at food banks. Many of them, if they have not become homeless—and there are more and more children sleeping in the streets and motels in this city and in cities across this province. That's what the member for Niagara Centre was talking about.

I have a report here from the United Way that talks about the decline of people's standard of living and their opportunity to have a place to live. That—

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.
1700

Mr O'Toole: I would like to rise and respond to the members for Niagara Centre and Toronto-Danforth, because they speak with one unified voice of disdain. I only have to look back to their time in office. Both were in cabinet at one time; one longer than the other, I might say. The problem is that they really mismanaged us into a difficult situation in 1995. We don't have to recount the terror of those five years in office. Whether they addressed long-term-care needs or the health insurance and auto insurance issues, most of it was a mishmash punctuated by the social contract and other dilemmas that they just didn't seem to be able to grapple with.

When I look at the throne speech, it is about new horizons and opportunities. I think the member for Northumberland probably summarized it the best that I've heard today, because I was actually here.

The one issue I want on the record is that the Premier—as spoken by the Lieutenant Governor, Mr Bartleman—said, "First, it will ensure an efficient supply of energy that is competitive for the people of Ontario and in the international marketplace.

"Second, it will ensure that the necessary capital is provided to rebuild and modernize the transmission and distribution of power in Ontario.

"Third, it will bring market discipline to Hydro One—the province's transmission company—and prevent any possibility of the recurrence of staggering debts"—which we've talked about—"such as the current \$38-billion debt, while eliminating it" at the same time.

"And fourth, it will achieve these goals while protecting consumers."

I can say here in the House, as this debate—and in all fairness, the debate has really started with the NDP. The Liberals have been on both sides of the picket fence on this one. They really haven't got a policy. I do respect Howard Hampton's issue on this. He's the only guy that has championed it. The Liberals are false imitators—

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

The member for Niagara Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Ruprecht: Excuse me, Mr Speaker. We have one more round.

The Acting Speaker: No.

Mr Kormos: I recall the early 1990s: a deep, deep recession, revenues collapsing, a recession felt across North America and beyond. The New Democrats kept hospitals open. New Democrats kept schools open. New Democrats maintained social housing. New Democrats maintained secondary housing for abused women and other victims. During a time of an economic crisis that was felt beyond this continent, New Democrats maintained those fundamental services that kept people healthy and safe.

Let me speak to one more community in this province to whom this government's throne speech said nothing. This government's throne speech said nothing to the victims of Cornwall—children who have been abused, tormented and betrayed. This throne speech says nothing to the constant, persistent and legitimate call by the member for Ottawa West-Nepean for a thorough inquiry into what, in effect, is being said to be the prospect of a conspiracy that would protect abusers in Cornwall, a conspiracy that would have and did obstruct justice and perpetuate the injustice on so many young people.

This government's throne speech said nothing to those children. It said nothing to the member for Ottawa West-Nepean, who has championed those children's cause throughout his career here at Queen's Park. This government has little to be proud of in this throne speech.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): Mr Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Brampton Centre. It will come as no surprise to the House that I by and large agree with the throne speech, because it fits in with my vision of the province. I'd like to share with the House what my vision of the province is so that they can see why I express the support I do for the speech.

One key to the future of this province surely is job creation. We have, of course, had the largest number of jobs ever created in a seven-year period over the past seven years, some 850,000 net new jobs. That, of course, contrasts quite vividly with the net loss of some 10,000 jobs in the five years preceding that. That job creation I think has been achieved by effective job creation policies. I would define those as being lower taxes, because we've known for at least the last 40 years that lower taxes create jobs, and developing some of the best regulatory policies in the world. A large amount of credit for the accomplishment of that in Ontario has been the work of the Red Tape Commission, which people sometimes think is to get rid of regulations, when their actual mission is to make sure that we have the most effective and efficient regulations possible. We compare quite favourably in that area with any jurisdiction in the world.

Job creation also involves building better infrastructure. We of course committed some years ago to invest some \$20 billion in infrastructure through the SuperBuild fund and many of those monies have already been invested and we've seen the results of that. Taking that approach as a whole has resulted in a major turnaround in the economic condition of this province. Of course, in order to get the social services and community safety that we want, we must have the resources to pay for them. If we are not able to see the kind of economic turnaround that we have seen, we would not be able to consider improvements in some of these other areas.

Before moving on to health care and education, I can't fail to mention that we had a serious failure of social policy for at least the 10 years preceding 1995, in that our social assistance policies were not working. Every year, good years and bad, the social assistance rolls went up. Finally, when we changed to polices that offered a hand

up rather than a handout, we found over the past seven years some 500,000 people have been able to move from the dependency of social assistance to independence. That is a success story that I think everyone in this province can be very proud of.

I'd like to also, before I totally leave the question of economic growth, refer to what I think the public really wants out of its government, be it municipal, provincial or federal. What they want is more and better service at a lower cost and they're quite justified in that expectation. They can look at other entities in the community that are doing just that. I think the real question, in the first part of the 21st century at least, that voters are going to ask is, who is best able to achieve that expectation?

I'd like to briefly touch on my thoughts on a few areas that I think are key to the future of the province. One is of course health care. We know there are problems in the system. I think Ontarians by and large also recognize we have one of the best health care systems in the world. They're very proud of that, and justifiably so. On the other hand, they do recognize that there are problems. I'd like to suggest where I think the solutions to some of these problems could be found.

1710

We have not had what I would consider to be a really effective system of funding hospitals. We are now moving to what is in essence a population-based system of funding hospitals. I think that's a step forward. But I think ultimately what we should do is move to a system where hospitals are actually paid for the services and procedures that they provide, so if they do extra work they get paid for it; if for whatever reason they're doing less work, they receive less money. That would get us out of some of the problems of micromanagement of the system and all the frustrations that this can involve. I also think that we are quite right in looking at primary care reform, but achieving that requires us to move at a faster pace than we're moving at now. We know what a significant number of the answers are; we don't know what some of the answers are, so we've got to try what we think will work and see if it really does work. But I do think we have to proceed at a considerably faster pace than we are now if we're going to achieve the results that people want. Part of that, by the way, involves regulatory reform. We have to see if how we govern the various health care professions is really what's needed for the 21st century or whether some changes are needed.

We also have to look at how we fund the community care access centres. We have put hundreds of millions of dollars of new money into community care, and that has been the right thing to do because medical science tells us that is how health care can most effectively be delivered in so many cases, where it had to be delivered in the hospital 20 years ago. So I think the progress we've seen over the past seven years has been very, very substantial and it has all been in the right direction. It's also true that we have to take a look in the CCACs to see whether or not the system could be improved. That goes to the question of how we finance the CCACs. In the way

that we have to change our funding formula to the hospitals, we have to do the same thing with respect to our community care access centres. I think we have to take a look at the possibility of funding them on a fee-for-service basis as well, in the same way as we fund, for example, our children's aid societies now. I think that will get us out of some of the micromanagement we've seen in the past and some of the problems that entails. It will also provide better service for the people of the province. When I propose this sort of thing, of course, you also have to have auditing to make sure the services that are being provided are only those that are needed and are within the criteria.

I'd like to talk very briefly about the education system. The fundamentals of the reforms we've made have been right, but I do think that now is the time to look at ways of giving the individual school boards more authority to manage their own systems while at the same time holding them accountable for the results they achieve. I think if we did that, we would see some significant improvements in the service they're able to provide to the people they serve. That means as well that we have to lift some of the restrictions we now impose on the school boards. We can't on the one hand ask them to engage in more effective management and then not permit them to do any more effective management.

I'd like to refer very briefly to the question of teacher recertification and testing. I've spoken in the House earlier on that and I do think we have to take a look at whether or not the recertification program is a good one and make quite major changes in it if we conclude that it's not. We also have to look at whether or not the form of teacher testing is the most effective possible—I think it perhaps is not at the moment—and take a look at some forms of testing that would be more effective.

I'd like to talk very briefly as well about community safety. We have had a 28% drop in reported crime in Ontario from 1995 to 1999. That is a major step forward for the government of Ontario and for the people of Ontario. We now have to look at how we are going to achieve an equal and greater cut again in reported crime. I think the answer to that lies in three areas. One is effective early intervention. We're well started on that with the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program. Better enforcement—I think our enforcement policies are very good right now but we do have to make sure that our police forces have available to them the latest thinking in order to achieve the most effective enforcement. We also have to take a look at whether or not our corrections system is avoiding reoffence, ie, doing what's most likely to avoid people reoffending. I think if we do that, we can look forward to some very, very positive results in terms of reduction in reported crime.

In 1995, the people of Ontario voted for real change for the better and they got it. I think we can look at our province today and see it as one of the best places in the world in which to live, work and raise a family, and the future is only brighter if we do it properly.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I'm pleased and honoured to follow the member from London South, because he always has a very enlightened perspective on things. I'm pleased to speak following him.

I just wanted to start by remembering that the title of the speech from the throne, or the theme, was "A New Era for Ontario." In fact, I would modify it somewhat to say that it is a continued new era for Ontario, for I think it started in 1995 with the election of Mike Harris and the Common Sense Revolution. I was very pleased to be part of that and honoured to be part of that team and pleased with the accomplishments that we were able to achieve during that period. Because you see, Ontario today, as is in the throne speech, is a different place than it was a few short years and indeed a few short months ago. The actions of this government were the right actions for the right time.

I'd like to share with the people of the Legislature and the public who are not watching the Y&R—and I'm pleased that the people were watching the Y&R and not the member for Welland-Thorold. In any case, we want to stress the success of 1995 to 2002 in Ontario and how we really got here. "Successive generations of industrious and innovative Ontarians have built a multifaceted, high-tech, manufacturing and exporting powerhouse that generates incredible wealth." That's right out of the throne speech. I want to use that to severely contrast the successes of this province, specifically the city of Brampton, the region of Peel and the city of Mississauga, to the constant whining that we're always hearing from Toronto and the constant whining that we're hearing from Ottawa that the province isn't doing enough. Do you know what? Get off your backsides and do it. The city of Brampton does it; the city of Mississauga does it. Let me just share with you some of the facts that have gone on.

Brampton's population grew by 21% from 1996 to 2001. On March 12, Canada's chief statistician released the findings of the first census survey conducted in June 2001. The population of Brampton in the spring of 2001 was 325,428 people. The number of persons per private dwelling was 3.3; that is to say, on average 3.3 live in each of Brampton's 98,753 private dwelling units, on a land area of 267 square kilometres.

Brampton was ranked as the 14th most populated city in Canada. Our 2002 population estimate is 352,000, and at this level we have surpassed the cities of London and Laval, Quebec. Surrey, BC, has a similar growth pattern and also continues to lead. The rank of Canada's 15 largest cities are in this order: Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, Ottawa, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Mississauga, Vancouver, Hamilton, Halifax, Surrey, Laval, London, and Brampton at 14.

1720

It never fails to astound me why these larger cities have these problems and can't seem to be able to cope with what's going on. We have done a super job with our mayor and our council. The community has come together, the investment community is there, the work community is there and the industry base is there to make

Brampton work. Brampton businesses have not only survived but flourished during last fall's general economic slowdown, especially in the areas of new job creation and business relocations and start-ups.

In 2001, the city of Brampton issued more than \$1 billion worth of building permits. Overall, the city of Brampton finished as the eighth most active development market in Canada, and that is from Statistics Canada. It's not a concocted figure; it is from Statistics Canada.

In 2001, the city welcomed major companies locating here. Why? Because we're just terrific. Coca-Cola Bottling Co: a \$150-million investment, the largest single investment Coca-Cola has made in North America in modern times and the largest single investment in Canada. Loomis Courier Service, Maritime-Ontario Freight Lines, Yusen Air and Sea Service: in January, the city released figures that show an 18% increase in new jobs in Brampton over 2000. The city's annual year-end business development report showed a total of 221 new businesses created in the city, with a resulting 4,500 new jobs. That compares with an increase of 3,800 new jobs created in 2000.

Do you want to know where to go, folks, where things work? Come to Brampton. Small business flourishes. Inquiries related to starting and growing small business by local entrepreneurs at the Small Business Enterprise Centre climbed by 15% between 1999 and 2001. More than 80% of all new Brampton businesses have fewer than 10 employees, a figure that mirrors the national average.

When you're looking at this kind of economic activity, unquestionably you take the opportunities that are presented to you within the economic environment created by the upper bodies of government like the province, and in some cases the federal government, where there were a few; but particularly the opportunity to invest, grow and deliver a strong economic environment for your community, this is where it works.

Last year's annual economic report showed that on a year-over-year basis, 2000 to 2001, residential construction rose 3%; housing resale activity, 19.6%; average home prices, a 4.9% increase; the industrial vacancy rate dropped 31.3%; the unemployment rate, 17%; and activity unemployment insurance claims were up by 69%.

New companies that are coming this year—we're not done yet, folks: Nestlé Canada, Culligan, Hostess Frito-Lay and Best Buy are all opening office and industrial facilities in Brampton in 2002. This province is eager to move forward. This province has diverse neighbourhoods, diverse industry and diverse opportunities, and this throne speech reflects a continuation of the direction that we have been on. The downturn in the fall of this past year has been easily compensated by an upturn. We didn't even slow down in housing resales in Brampton. We weathered through it. I was amazed when I talked to my real estate agents and my automobile sales friends about how things were going in Brampton. Do you know what? Everybody was complaining that they didn't have time to take a winter vacation.

Ontario works well. The city of Brampton works well. This throne speech will bring us to the future successfully.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Ruprecht: I listened with great care to my friend across the aisle, the member from Brampton Centre, especially when he said that this throne speech is the right action for the right time. Let me submit that he didn't even know the transmission grid was for sale, was up for grabs. It was nowhere to be found in the Common Sense Revolution. Was it in there? Did you know? Did any of you know it was up for grabs? You didn't know and now you're telling us, "Oh, yes, it's the right action for the right time."

How can this be the right action for the right time when we have a revolution brewing, right across Ontario, against the very sale of Hydro One and the transmission grid? Do you want me to read all the towns and cities that have produced resolution after resolution telling the Premier and your government to stop the sale of Hydro One and the transmission lines, and on top of that, of course, not just the transmission lines but also the very transmission corridor upon which these lines are settled? I find it of great interest when the member says, "Oh, yes, this throne speech is the right action for the right time."

Let me just simply indicate here that we have at least 25 cities and towns across Ontario that are saying, with their own voices and resolutions, to stop. I would simply submit that the language against the sale of our transmission grids and land should be a lot stronger. We should follow the Americans and what their criticism has been. They simply say the following—and we should agree with it—"Deregulation has been a licence to profiteer and steal from workers, pension-holders and shareholders." That's the language we should be using here.

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

Ms Churley: It appears as though I'm not actually going to have time to speak later today; maybe I'll get an opportunity another day.

I did want to address some of the issues in this study done by the United Way. It's called A Decade of Decline: Poverty and Income Inequality in the City of Toronto in the 1990s. I find it sad actually to listen to some of the members from the Tory side get up and bash Toronto and Ottawa while at the same time they brag about their own municipality. I believe it is the job of all of us here to care about what is happening to people all over the province.

If you look at this report—and I urge the members to do so—what this tells us is that there are now 11,300 more seniors living in poverty than in 1995 when they came into government. That's a 40% increase in numbers. For kids, our children, our future, poverty increased by about 14,310 in the city of Toronto. These are real numbers, but these are not just numbers, they're real people. We have a crisis on our hands and the members sit over there and continue to ignore the reality of what's

happening to people within this city and across the province. It is incumbent upon all of us to look at this and talk about what we are going to do to fix it.

I also want to remind all the members in this House that the people of Ontario are not just talking about their opposition to the sell-off of the hydro transmission lines and the land, but are also in opposition to the sell-off of the generation of our power as well.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): It's interesting to listen to some of the comments from members opposite, particularly with respect to the Hydro One issue. From the ones I've listened to today and read in Hansard, not once do we see an acknowledgement—whether you keep this in a public monopoly or you opt for some other format—from the critics of the massive amount of capital investment that's going to be required by this facility, both generation and transmission, over the next number of years. Not once do we hear that it will be a requirement. You're going to have to have monies for this kind of thing, and if you keep it in the public sector as a monopoly you're going to have to get that money from the ratepayers and from the consolidated revenue, those combinations. We don't see any acknowledgement as to the number of billions that'll be required. Oh no, they're totally quiet on that. We just hear the rhetoric that it's got to be kept in the public domain.

1730

They'd have a lot more credibility, especially the member for Davenport, if they would acknowledge that you do have to put money back into the hydros, and particularly the Hydro One purchases that have been made of the retail utilities.

A lot of those retail utilities—
Interjection.

Mr Hastings:—including the city of Toronto, for the member for Kingston and the Islands, if he's interested—require considerable investment—hundreds of millions of dollars, in contrast to the suburban hydros in the old configuration. No, let's not talk about that reality. Let's just keep it at the rhetoric level. Well, I'm going to bring it down to a more practical level.

The same could be said regarding the homeless. We don't even have an inventory of the number of spaces we need for the homeless in this city.

Mr Bradley: I was looking forward to the member's comments on the circumstances facing the people of Port Colborne, who have had to face nickel contamination and contamination from other metals for a number of years on the property which is adjacent to the Inco operation in Port Colborne.

The member has been the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs at one time—I think I'm correct in saying that—and he may be aware that the people there have experienced some real hardship. These are the people living immediately adjacent to the Port Colborne operation.

I had a chance to meet with them. I've met a number of times with the mayor of Port Colborne and others associated with this and I had a chance to engage in a

dialogue with these individuals at a public meeting. Certainly they are dissatisfied at this point in time with two things: the offer that has been made by Inco to undertake a cleanup of the area, and second, they are unhappy with the order which has been placed on Inco by the Ministry of the Environment because they believe that the provisions of that order are insufficient to meet their needs. In other words, the levels that they're dealing with are not levels that people find acceptable.

I might say that there was an example in both the Niagara neighbourhood of Toronto and south Riverdale where I can recall, as minister of the day, going beyond what some of the so-called experts were saying were the levels to which we should clean up. I believe that the government should look beyond the levels that have been contemplated in the order which affects the people of Port Colborne. I think they would have liked a better process, with the Ministry of the Environment front and centre in dealing with their problems. I believe that they're looking for further assistance in terms of staff assistance, time, effort and energy from the Ministry of the Environment in this regard.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Brampton Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Spina: On behalf of my colleague the member for London West, I'm pleased to respond to the comments made by the other members.

With respect to the issue on hydro, we were informed of what was happening last fall in caucus. Furthermore, I will say that Brampton Hydro was sold and bought by Hydro One. It's amazing that the whole process went through flawlessly. The city has now capitalized on the opportunity to use those funds for other elements in infrastructure in the community. The rates have dropped and continue to drop.

How many letters did I get about the potential sale of Hydro? I can tell you: six. Six letters are what I've received regarding the potential sale of Hydro. And you know what?

Interjection.

Mr Spina: Well, it wasn't cold this winter? Come on. Furnaces run all winter long.

Do you know why we only got six letters? Because they didn't have a member crying and fearmongering all over the community, in the local newspaper, scaring the heck out of everybody that prices were going to fall through. You know what? The prices are falling, not the sky, and I credit Dan Newman for making that comment.

Now to the other member from Toronto: we don't ignore the reality; we address it. That's what economic success allows you to do: deal with the issues of the homeless. Peel social services has the most successful Ontario Works program in this entire province. I personally was very proud to open the facilities in Brampton, with the region of Peel, to address the needs of the homeless.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I will be sharing my time with the member from Kingston and the Islands and the member from Windsor-St Clair.

It is a pleasure on behalf of the people of Don Valley East to speak about the throne speech that we heard here May 9, 2002, after a very lengthy delay in getting back to the House and dealing with the people's business.

A throne speech indicates where a government has been and where they want to go. Today, I want to talk about some of the elements contained within the throne speech and some of the elements that were left out of the throne speech.

First and foremost—and I haven't heard any government members talk about this—I want to quote directly from the throne speech. It says, "Ontarians have said they do not want classrooms and hospitals to be battlegrounds. Your government has heard that message." Well, for the last seven years, members on this side of the House have been saying precisely that, that it's the legacy of Ernie Eves and his cuts to education and health care—at Mike Harris's urging, of course—that have made our hospitals and schools battlegrounds. Now all of a sudden, about a year toward an election, the government of Ernie Eves is saying, "We're not going to do that any more." Well, why did you do it in the first place? I was really very shocked and dismayed not to see any member of the government mention that in any of the comments they've made in relation to the throne speech. Ontarians do not want classrooms and hospitals to be battlegrounds.

Other elements that are contained in the throne speech: "Your government remains committed to choice ... in Ontario's education system." What does that mean? It means half a billion dollars of Ontario taxpayer-funded programs will now be going to private schools. Ontario is now committed to funding half a billion dollars toward private schools. That is shocking. It is absolutely an abdication of responsibility. We should be investing in public education and what's happening in the classrooms all around Ontario, not in private schools for a select few.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Shame, shame.

Mr Caplan: I know the member from Thornhill is ashamed that the government is committed to what they call choice in Ontario's education system by putting money into private schools.

Other elements of this throne speech: "Your government recognizes the private sector's contribution in our publicly funded system....Your government is committed to finding new ways to foster innovation, based on partnerships with the private sector." What does that mean? Two-tier health care. We've got two-tier Tony Clement, as our health minister, and now two-tier Ernie Eves committed to two-tier health care in the Vision for Ontario; an expanded private sector role in the provision and delivery of health care services. It couldn't be any plainer than that.

I must tell you, the people of Don Valley East have said very clearly that they want public education, they

want public health care, not the kind of code and the kind of vision that are outlined in the throne speech.

A couple of other things that are contained in the throne speech: one is something called tax-exempt bonds, a way for municipalities to raise capital dollars to fund the infrastructure they so badly need. I thought Ernie Eves had told us all of these years that debt and public debt, whether it's federal, provincial or municipal, was a bad thing. But in the throne speech, this major initiative of the Eves government is municipalities, your cities and towns, which is simply further tax increases, incurring huge amounts of debt at the government's request; again, a very serious and a very silly, if I could put it in those terms, way to approach public financing of much-needed infrastructure like roads, water, sewer, and all of those things that we depend on in our daily lives.

1740

A couple of things that weren't included in the throne speech—seniors: not one mention, not one word, about the plight of seniors in Ontario today. We had the privilege of having about a dozen seniors from Leisureworld in Don Valley East here at the Legislature today. They were shocked to hear the Minister of Health talk about the generosity of the government as it relates to seniors in long-term-care facilities and the kinds of care they get. Their experience, as they were telling us here in the House and afterwards to the media, is not what the minister indicated. In fact, it's very clear from the throne speech document that seniors are not a priority; they are for Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus. We think that seniors who have built this country deserve the respect and dignity to be able to live in their communities in a way that is incumbent upon us to provide.

Another area not covered: housing. There are several references in here about making partnerships with the federal government when it comes to health care or training, yet I know the federal government has put \$250 million on the table. The Ontario government does not want to put up one nickel. They don't want to put up any money to solve the housing problem, which is ironic, because the day before the throne speech, May 8, Ernie Eves said he wanted to alleviate the problem of homelessness. If permanent housing isn't the solution, I don't know what is. But the fact that it's not in the throne speech tells you what the priorities are or aren't of the Eves government.

Of course, many have talked about Hydro. I can tell you that I have had public meetings; I have petitions. The last speaker said he's only received six calls. Multiply that by over 100 in Don Valley East.

This throne speech is no panacea. It's not going to help the people of Ontario. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party have a vision for working families in Ontario. I tell you, as sure as I'm standing here, when push comes to shove, when we have an election, the people of Ontario are going to have a much better plan to vote for.

I'm going to turn the floor over to my colleague.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the government's speech from the throne on behalf of the people of Windsor-St Clair who sent me here.

I want to address in the brief time available to me four issues: the sale of Hydro One; health care commitments and undertakings in the throne speech; education; and what I perceive to be in this throne speech the lack of any real plan by this government on a whole variety of issues.

First of all, the people in my community have expressed to me through calls and e-mails and letters their very strong opposition to the sale of Hydro One, a position that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party have been consistent in from the beginning. We do not believe it's in the province's interests, nor do I, to sell Hydro One. Hydro One is the nerve centre of our province. It is our power grid. It takes power from where it's generated to our retail suppliers in communities and it makes money.

We on the opposition side have watched with some fascination as the government has moved from one position to another to another to another with no clear definition of where they want to be at the end of the day. It appears as though they're in a slow retreat almost on some days, and then on other days it appears as though they still haven't learned the lessons.

Unlike the New Democrats, we believe there's a place for competition in the generation of power. We don't want to go back to the bad old days of Bob Rae and the stranded debt. We believe that a managed competition model within power generation is in the best long-term interests of this province in terms of ensuring secure, reliable, affordable electricity into the future.

The speech from the throne made several references to health care, among them diagnostic imaging and new treatments. They talked, we felt, in code language—code language for two-tier health care. In my community in Windsor, a number of people worked together for many years to buy new MRI machines, but of course it wasn't until this throne speech some four years later that the government announced new funding for the actual operation of those MRIs. We had the bizarre situation of the machine being available but it not being funded to its full capacity.

Long-term care and home care in my community: whether you live in Riverside, Forest Glade, Tecumseh or St Clair Beach, there are greater numbers of people than ever living at home. Just last week we had a forum in Windsor and I was intrigued by the comments of Carol Derbyshire, the executive director of Hospice and the chair of Windsor Regional Hospital, who indicated that we've cut the number of hospital beds from 1,200 to just over 688 with no corresponding increase in the amount of funding to provide services in-home for seniors—a complete failure on the part of this government.

I have heard from constituents in my riding. I had a famous incident where a blind older gentleman, 81 years old, had his home care cut and he accidentally set fire to his apartment because he had to prepare his own meals. It

wasn't until my intervention that his home care—at least a portion of it—was restored.

In education, this government maintains its position that it has half a billion dollars for private schools through the education tax credit, for schools that the Premier now acknowledges will not be constrained by the curriculum of Ontario, for lack of a better word, will not be subject to the same kinds of rigorous scrutiny that our public schools are.

It's interesting that just this week outside my office I had a group of eloquent, impassioned young students from Herman secondary school protesting—not the government, because they're not political. They weren't put there by anyone. They just came because their textbooks are inadequate, their teaching resources are inadequate. They are not getting the education they believe they're entitled to. The minister from Huron county laughs, but these children took up—

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): So does Jim Bradley.

Mr Duncan: —a petition that had over 1,000 signatures in two days. They protested at my office. They're not partisan; they weren't put there by the federations. They were put there by their own frustration with an education system that's not serving them fairly or adequately.

The minister opposite can laugh all she wants, but these people are coming up here to bring their own message, and there were young people across this province who took similar action. I met with those students Friday afternoon. They'd been out three days, and a number of those students have been suspended for taking the action they did. I must say, and I said this to the director of education in Windsor, Mary Jean Gallagher, who'll be familiar to many members, "Mary Jean, you should be proud to have those young people in your system. They were articulate, intelligent and frustrated and they expressed their point of view in what I felt to be a most constructive and positive manner." This petition has over 1,000 signatures which they gathered in two days. I've presented it on two occasions. I will continue to present it throughout the course of this sitting.

I want to conclude by saying that we've now been sitting almost two weeks. We've not had one bill introduced by this government—

Interjections.

Mr Duncan: I'm sorry, except the first bill, the traditional bill. We have not had any kind of plan from this government with respect to Hydro One. All we know is we're going to get the legislation and then this summer they're going to announce their plans with respect to Hydro long after the Legislature's adjourned.

Mr Caplan: They want a blank cheque.

Mr Duncan: They want a blank cheque. Well, they're not going to get it. They're going to get a fight. We're going to fight this speech from the throne. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals present the only credible alternative to this government, and we'll be

prepared to form a government in a year's time when Ontario's residents throw this gang out once and for all.

1750

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I too just want to add a few brief comments about the throne speech. Particularly in my new capacity as critic for long-term care, I was very, very disappointed that there was not one mention about seniors or long-term care in the entire throne speech.

I really believe we owe it to our seniors in this province—people who have given so much of themselves so that we could enjoy the kind of province we have today—to give them the highest possible standards we can in their nursing homes. As you know, Speaker, there are over 60,000 Ontarians currently in nursing homes and homes for the aged. Many of these people need a lot more care than they're currently getting.

I think it's interesting, from a question and answer that occurred in the House today, that from an independent study commissioned and paid for by the ministry—let's just read what some of the results of that study were a year ago. The long-term-care residents, and the staff and associations involved in making sure the lifestyle these people have is the best possible in the province of Ontario, have been wondering for the last year when the government is going to move on this study. This was the study that was conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers. It concluded that long-term-care residents in Ontario received the least amount of nursing and therapy services, behind all of the jurisdictions that were studied.

What kind of jurisdictions were studied? In Canada, they looked at Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In Europe, they looked at some of the northern European countries: Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands. In the States, they looked at four or five different states. We were the lowest in the amount of nursing care and therapy services delivered to our seniors.

It goes on to say that residents in our senior citizens' accommodations received the least amount of registered nursing care and the least amount of nursing and personal care of any of those jurisdictions. They received less than two hours of support from program staff, well below the other jurisdictions.

At least two thirds of the people we now have in our senior citizens' homes require some sort of help. They've got motion problems. They are older. They are sicker. They are frailer than they've ever been before. Many of these people are in their late 80s and early 90s. They need our help, the help that this society and this government can give them. Yet, what has happened to them? Absolutely nothing. There has been no contribution from

this government that should have eased their burden to some extent.

You may recall yesterday an issue was raised here that many of the seniors in these homes only get one bath per week. The Minister for Long-Term Care thoroughly denied that yesterday.

It's interesting. Today, when we interviewed the seniors who came here to listen to question period, I believe out of the 10 interviewed by our staff afterwards, nine admitted that all they're entitled to and all they're getting is just one bath or shower per week.

I say to this government if that's all we can afford to do for the people who have contributed so much to our province, then I think that is shame on all of us. I would urge the government to move on the request the seniors have made and do something about it. We'll be waiting to see when the budget comes down two or three weeks from now what's actually in there for them.

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: I hear all the ministers on the other side complaining and yelling and screaming, but they darn well know I've touched a sore nerve. They know what I'm talking about is precisely the issue.

When a person in a nursing home in Mississippi can get twice the amount of hours of nursing care that we provide to people here in Ontario, I say shame on us and shame on this government. Shame on the government.

There is an awful lot missing in this throne speech. When a government that wants to set a so-called new direction doesn't mention seniors or long-term care and the kind of care they need in their throne speech, not even once, it is a sad state of affairs that we have in this province.

That's why we had over 50,000 people sign cards for themselves and for their family members. Here they are: 50,000 cards were delivered to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care today, signed by people saying, "We want better services for our parents, for our grandparents." What do these cards say? These weren't put together by some political party; these are from the people themselves. They say that the average senior in our homes gets four minutes a day of assistance for getting up, washing, dressing and getting to the dining room. They get 10 minutes for assistance with eating and they get one bath a week. I'm saying to you—and I hope the members of the government will agree and put pressure on the government, put pressure on the cabinet—to make sure there is more funding for these seniors in the next budget.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 am tomorrow, Thursday, May 23, in the year 2002.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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