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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 17 June 2002

Lundi 17 juin 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 17 June 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 17 juin 2002

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

ESTIMATES

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I have a message from the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March 2003 and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): It is with great sadness that I rise in the Legislature following another tragedy, the third since the House resumed, when yet another Ontario woman—a mother, a daughter and a sister—was murdered by a former partner.

As is too often the case, the vicious and senseless attack also took the lives of the child and parents of Shannon Cruse. When such tragedies are repeated, one cannot help but ask, are we doing enough to educate our young women and men?

As an educator, I believe that if we are to prevent relationship abuse, we need to support programs in schools that raise awareness and provide both our daughters and sons with the skills they need to recognize the danger signs.

The record shows that this government is failing to support the very agencies that provide such outreach services. Shelters that provide refuge to women fleeing abuse have had their funding reduced. The Provincial Auditor's report confirmed that overcrowded shelters are being forced to turn away desperate women and children, and serious challenges remain in ensuring rural women are provided with the services and protection they need.

The second anniversary of the murder of Gillian Hadley approaches. As this government continues to review the Hadley recommendations—review and review and review—women in communities throughout our province continue to fear for their lives and the lives of their children.

Premier, the message is simple: implement the Hadley recommendations. And in the budget this afternoon,

women across this province are urging you to take into account the needs of underfunded shelters and restoration of funding to second-stage housing.

PATRICK DUNNE

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I rise today to honour Patrick Dunne, who has announced his retirement as director of education from the London District Catholic School Board effective the end of August—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I apologize. We'll let the member start over. Members, come to order, please.

I'm sorry. We'll allow the member to start over. I apologize for the disruption.

Mr Wood: I rise today to honour Patrick Dunne, who has announced his retirement as director of education from the London District Catholic School Board effective the end of August 2002. He has held this position since 1994 and will be honoured at a retirement party in London on June 18.

Mr Dunne joined what was then the London-Middlesex Catholic School Board 17 years ago from Bruce-Grey, where he was superintendent of operations. With teaching experience in Ireland, he served as a teacher in Canada and as a principal and supervisory officer in Bruce-Grey, holding portfolios dealing with special education and curriculum.

He has a long and impressive list of achievements. He oversaw the amalgamation of the school board, and through his leadership developed a sense of trust among his teachers. By making the tough decisions that were necessary, Mr Dunne turned the financial situation from a deficit board into a board that has a financial surplus. He leaves as his legacy an enormously impressive program of new facilities already built and many other new and renovated facilities on the drawing board.

Pat Dunne is a very strong voice for Catholic education in London and across the province. He exemplifies the mission statement of the London District Catholic School Board: "To serve the Catholic student of London district in a community that nurtures a living faith and provides a quality Catholic education that enables the individual to become a contributing member of the Church and society."

I know that all members of the House will join with me in wishing Pat an old Irish blessing: "May the road rise to meet you, may the wind be always at your back,

and may you be in heaven half an hour before the devil knows you're dead."

CONSTITUENCY CONSULTATION

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): They said it wouldn't work. They said we were crazy to even risk it. They said people would have so many axes to grind that the whole thing would simply dissolve into a shouting match. And you know what? They were all wrong.

It was wonderful: over 60 people giving up a beautiful spring Saturday to spend six hours talking about the things that matter to them and their community. We called it the ADFA constituent assembly, and I commend the process to all members of this legislative body. For my part, I couldn't be more pleased: pleased because a commitment to hearing and listening to the grassroots and then acting on what they tell you helps produce good government. It's also a vital part of my role to assist members of my constituency to talk with each other about shared concerns. I am deeply grateful to those who participated and look forward to continuing this process in the fall.

Based on a survey of interest taken ahead of time, we addressed health, education, environment, amalgamation of course, transportation and other topics. We took pages and pages of notes, all of which have been posted on my Web site, www.tedmcmeekin.com. Like their MPP, these notes are a bit rough and raw in places, but if you want the opportunity to get away from the scripted notes and silly spin often characterizing this place, then check them out, for they are the everyday talking points of real people.

CITY SUMMITS

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I rise today to talk about urban visions. We've been seeing an awful lot in all of the papers, and probably everywhere except this Legislature, about urban visions.

This week Toronto is going to have an opportunity to present three such groups. They will be meeting to talk about all the problems that beset our cities: everything from garbage to gridlock; everything from housing to homelessness; everything from city charters to tenants; everything from culture and heritage to dynamic downtowns. These events are going to take place in Toronto, the capital of Ontario, and they will be here for the public, I hope, to get involved in, to talk about what you need in your cities.

1340

Heritage Toronto will be holding the first event this Wednesday, from 7 o'clock to 10 o'clock, at the University of Toronto's school of architecture, 230 College Street. The second event is open for all of the public at the former Metro Hall at 55 John Street. It's called the People's Summit and it's being run by the Toronto Civic Action Network. The third one, which is by invitation

only, is the City Summit, which is taking place on June 25 and 26. It is, as I said, by invitation only. It's being held by the city of Toronto, the United Way and the Toronto Board of Trade.

It is an opportunity for people to come together to talk about what our cities really need. They don't need where we've been; they need to know where they're going. They need the opportunity to survive. They need the opportunity to grow and to prosper.

I would hope that all members will pay some attention to what comes out of these city summits over the next week.

BEACOCK FAMILY REUNION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House to mention a very important occasion in the lives of a family in the riding of Durham. This summer the Beacock family will celebrate their 75th reunion in Blackstock.

It was in 1831 that Abraham and Harriet Beacock came to Canada from England. They settled briefly in Cavan township before wisely moving to a farm in Cartwright township, located a half mile south and west of Blackstock. The village was then known as Williamsburg.

The descendants of William and Harriet Beacock have made an outstanding contribution to our province. Some were farmers in my riding and others excelled in other walks of life. For over a century, they have been returning home for their reunion.

On July 13, upwards of 150 are expected to attend the celebration at the Blackstock rec centre. They'll be coming from communities across Ontario as well as from Texas, Arkansas and Ohio. The day will include self-guided tours of the original Beacock homestead, games for the children, a potluck lunch and a barbecue in the evening. After the barbecue, they will be entertained by members of the family who would like to perform. It will be a day of renewing acquaintances and reminiscing.

This is but one example of family gatherings taking place this summer in my riding of Durham. I am proud to say that wherever you come from, whether for a few years or over many generations, we all share the simple pleasures of getting together with grandparents, parents, siblings and our extended families. It's one of the things that makes my riding an excellent place to live, work and raise your family.

With the few moments remaining, I would like to introduce Ms Donna Paquette, who is a grade 5 teacher at St Joseph's French immersion centre in Bowmanville. She is here to see the budget today.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): How is it possible that the government's own liquor monopoly, the LCBO, doesn't have to recycle, yet it is spending hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on

building these palatial Martha Stewart-type stores that smack of opulence and waste?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): What have you got against Martha Stewart?

Mr Colle: She's your friend, Minister Stockwell.

I ask Mr Stockwell, with \$905 million in profit last year, how can they not have any money to invest in the 3Rs? Sadly, it's the cash-strapped local municipalities and their overtaxed property ratepayers who are forced to pick up the tab and collect tons of LCBO bottles that fill the blue boxes across the province.

Our own provincial government has the gall to collect \$40 million as an environmental levy from the LCBO, yet it only gives \$5 million of that \$40 million toward recycling. No wonder that in the government's latest so-called recycling bill, the Waste Diversion Act, Bill 90, it continues to exempt the LCBO from any recycling responsibility.

What a double standard. Shame on the LCBO and its partner the provincial government that downloads the costs of recycling and so forth on to the rest of us while the provincial government and its liquor monopoly answer to no one. This government says, "Don't even question the LCBO," as it spends millions and millions on these Martha Stewart-type stores that we're paying for, and they won't even recycle when the rest of us have to recycle. Shame on you, Minister Stockwell.

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I rise to follow up on an issue I spoke to on May 30. At that time, I spoke of the improvements made since 1995 in providing quality health care to dialysis patients in my riding of Scarborough Centre. Today, I again wish to speak about health care delivery in my riding.

Before 1995, my constituents waited impatiently for an MRI to be locally situated at Scarborough General. That was then, when the NDP and the Liberals misruled Ontario for 10 long, lost years. Today, my constituents enjoy the convenience of an MRI located close to home.

Indeed, the Progressive Conservative government has increased MRI machines across the province. When we came to office there were only 12 MRIs in all of Ontario. That was then. Today there are 42. Moreover, the recent speech from the throne made it clear the government will not stand still, as did previous governments. No, the Ernie Eves government plans to add more MRIs and will immediately increase their OHIP-funded hours of operation by 90%. This means that Ontarians will have the best access to MRI diagnosis in all of Canada.

We learn a lot by looking at the past and comparing it to the present. The Ernie Eves government is clearly doing far more to address the health care needs of Ontario's citizens and my constituents in Scarborough Centre than did both the Liberals and the NDP.

4-H MOVEMENT

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): On Saturday, June 8, I had the privilege of attending the opening of the Lennox and Addington 4-H office in Napanee. It is the first county 4-H office to be opened in the province of Ontario.

Lennox and Addington has a long and proud agricultural history, and farming continues to be a significant contributor to our local economy. The 4-H Club has been active in the community for many years, and the Lennox and Addington club has demonstrated the importance of this program by opening the first office in the province.

Currently the club has 160 members and offers the opportunity to participate in almost 30 areas of interest. It continues to offer the more traditional livestock clubs as well as those that involve sports, homemaking and recreation.

Of course, such a venture is made possible only with the generosity and goodwill of volunteers and local businesses. Parents and former 4-Hers are largely responsible for the leadership that is required for such an endeavour. They volunteer countless hours to share their talents and time so that club members can develop in the areas represented by the 4-Hs: head, heart, health and hands.

Business sponsors for this new venture include Brian Munroe, who has made space in his plaza available; Gray's IDA; L&A Milk committee; Canadian Waste Management; Hay Bay Genetics; Country Traditions; M&M Meats; Colour Your World; Picturesque; Gord Bongard; Lyle and Susan Cook; and Sandra Topping.

I am proud to offer my sincere congratulations to all of these members of the Lennox and Addington 4-H Club for opening the first 4-H office in my riding.

NORTH BAY HERITAGE FESTIVAL AND AIR SHOW

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): It is with great pleasure that I rise today to invite everyone to the North Bay Heritage Festival and Grant Forest Products International Air Show over the August civic weekend.

The festival is important to the Nipissing region, not only because it promotes northern Ontario but because it creates a \$5-million to \$7-million economic impact to the entire region. This is one of northern Ontario's largest festivals, with a budget exceeding \$1 million. It is also unique because it is volunteer-driven. I'd like to congratulate John Lechlitner, the management committee and over 800 volunteers who make this event possible.

For the entire weekend, admission is only \$20 and kids under 10 are free. You will get to see major recording artists such as David Usher, Honeymoon Suite, REO Speedwagon, Lonestar, Serial Joe, Natalie McMaster and more. There are also lots of events for children, such as the petting zoo, Kid's Country, the Country Open and the Conklin midway. The feature attraction is world-renowned author and performer Robert Munsch.

The Grant Forest Products International Air Show features the Canadian Snowbirds, the Elvies of the Sky, the SkyHawks parachute team, as well as various Canadian and US military aircraft. Additional activities include Pepsi beach volleyball, the Naval Gun Run and the National Strongman Competition.

For further information on the festival you can go to www.heritagefestival.ca or call us at (705) 474-0400.

1350

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On Monday, June 10, the member for Niagara Centre, Mr Kormos, raised a point of privilege concerning statements made to the press by the Premier and to the press in this House regarding the Minister of Energy relating to executive compensation.

The member contended that apparent contradictions between statements on this subject by the Premier and the minister and other apparent contradictions between statements made by the minister on different occasions left room for one to draw the conclusion that the minister had exhibited a lack of forthrightness when addressing the House. As a result, the member invited me to find the minister to be, *prima facie*, in contempt of the Legislature.

The Minister of Energy also briefly addressed the point of privilege and discounted the validity of the member's contentions.

I have reviewed the material supplied by the member for Niagara Centre, together with the relevant authorities and precedents. As the member for Niagara Centre pointed out, Erskine May on page 111 of the 22nd edition, under "Misconduct of Members or Officers," states: "The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as contempt." This citation, however, goes on further than the member quoted to provide reference to one of the most famous such cases in parliamentary history, that of British Cabinet Minister John Dennis Profumo, who knowingly avowed one thing to the House of Commons which was later proved conclusively, and admitted by Profumo, to be untrue. An essential component of this case is that Profumo deliberately set out in a prepared statement to purposely mislead the House and then did so.

The threshold for finding a *prima facie* case of contempt against a member of the Legislature on the basis of deliberately misleading the House is therefore set quite high and is very uncommon. It must involve a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable member would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake.

On this point, I would ask all members to be extremely vigilant about their statements made in this

House. Despite the cut and thrust and the understandable emotion of question period and debates, those statements are held up to the highest possible scrutiny by all observers of this place and, as their statements represent the personal integrity of each member, they must withstand inspection.

I want to address the member for Niagara Centre's citation regarding Speaker Milliken's ruling in the House of Commons regarding statements made by then-Minister of National Defence Art Eggleton. I'm reluctant to accord applicability of that ruling to this case.

Firstly, in that case Mr Eggleton concurred that contradictory statements had been made and that clarification of the reasons for this in a suitable forum was required. Secondly, I see no precedential value to Speaker Milliken's ruling—within the ambit of parliamentary privilege—since, if the ruling is carefully read, it becomes apparent that a *prima facie* case of privilege was not explicitly found. Rather, Speaker Milliken seems to have stopped himself short in that regard and chose instead a novel approach, finding ultimately—without mentioning privilege—that the matter deserved consideration by a committee and inviting a motion to give effect to this result.

I would generally be hesitant to appropriate for myself such an original, informal approach since the precedents, traditions and customs of this House around questions of privilege reveal a more definitive tendency. In my view, there are no shades of grey when it comes to parliamentary privilege, and I would not like to promote such a view by delivering a ruling that failed to address, squarely and solely on its procedural merits, the question raised.

In the case at hand raised by the member for Niagara Centre, I can only find that I am left with what amounts to a genuine disagreement between two honourable members. As a result, I am unable to find that a *prima facie* case of contempt has been made out.

Finally, I want to thank the member for Niagara Centre for the respect and careful choice of words he exhibited when he addressed this matter last week.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to thank you for your consideration of this matter.

The Speaker: I thank the member.

VISITORS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the west gallery today we have Sylvie and Stephan Namisniak, who are visiting us today to discuss and look at the architecture of this building and also the workings of democracy. Steve is an award-winning architect from my riding who continues to design practical and very beautiful buildings. He's also one of 15 people in Canada who are on a North American committee that is reviewing and consistently upgrading architecture. He still teaches architecture. I'd like to welcome them to the House this afternoon and thank them for being here today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): While we're introducing honoured guests, in the Speaker's gallery we have a former colleague of ours, Mr Leo Jordan, who was the member for Lanark-Renfrew, joining us here today.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The fine gentleman sitting beside Leo is Stanley Brunton, who was reeve of Beckwith township for about the past 30 years and is one of the most successful politicians ever in Lanark country, notwithstanding the excellent representation that Leo Jordan gave to this area.

It's good to see you here, Stan.

The Speaker: We welcome our honoured guests.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1397399 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2002

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr8, An Act to revive 1397399 Ontario Inc.

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

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

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to suspend the proceedings of the House today following routine proceedings until 4 pm, at which time the Minister of Finance will present the budget.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, June, 17, Tuesday, June 18, Wednesday, June 19, and Thursday, June 20, 2002, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1357 to 1402.

The Speaker: Will the members kindly take their seats, please?

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

Ayes

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Agostino, Dominic | Galt, Doug | Newman, Dan |
| Arnott, Ted | Gill, Raminder | O'Toole, John |
| Baird, John R. | Gravelle, Michael | Ouellette, Jerry J. |
| Barrett, Toby | Hardeman, Ernie | Parsons, Ernie |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Hastings, John | Peters, Steve |
| Beaubien, Marcel | Hodgson, Chris | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Bountrogianni, Marie | Hoy, Pat | Ramsay, David |
| Boyer, Claudette | Hudak, Tim | Runciman, Robert W. |
| Bradley, James J. | Johns, Helen | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Caplan, David | Johnson, Bert | Sampson, Rob |
| Christopherson, David | Kells, Morley | Sergio, Mario |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Klees, Frank | Smitherman, George |
| Clark, Brad | Kwinter, Monte | Spina, Joseph |
| Clement, Tony | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Coburn, Brian | Levac, David | Stockwell, Chris |
| Colle, Mike | Martiniuk, Gerry | Tascona, Joseph N. |
| Crozier, Bruce | Mazzilli, Frank | Tsubouchi, David H. |
| Cunningham, Dianne | McDonald, AL | Turnbull, David |
| Curling, Alvin | McLeod, Lyn | Wettlaufer, Wayne |
| DeFaria, Carl | McMeekin, Ted | Wilson, Jim |
| Di Cocco, Caroline | Miller, Norm | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Dombrowsky, Leona | Molinari, Tina R. | Wood, Bob |
| Elliott, Brenda | Munro, Julia | Young, David |
| Flaherty, Jim | Mushinski, Marilyn | |

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

Nays

| | | |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Bisson, Gilles | Kormos, Peter | Martin, Tony |
| Churley, Marilyn | Marchese, Rosario | Prue, Michael |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 71; the nays are 6.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I declare the motion carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question to the Minister of Energy, Minister of the Environment and government House leader, in his capacity today as the Minister of the Environment.

Last week, Premier Eves blamed public servants for the fact that your ministry did not inform the public of problems of incomplete testing and lack of timely reporting of drinking water tests by MDS Laboratories for some 19 days. Minister, you've had a weekend to reconsider, to investigate and to reflect. Do you still contend that, despite the tragedy of Walkerton, for 19 days not a single employee of the Ministry of the Environment phoned your office or the Premier's office, prepared an issue report or an incident report, or in some way brought to your attention that serious problems were

being encountered with the improper handling of water testing by MDS Laboratories?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): Yes.

Mr Bradley: Again, Mr Minister, with the tragedy of Walkerton, where seven people died and thousands became seriously ill, still etched deeply in the minds of the most senior levels of your government, and with sensitivity to water contamination issues at an all-time high, how is it that no one in the Ministry of the Environment, according to the Premier or to you, saw fit to provide an issue report of this kind, which is complete information on an issue of that kind, to you, your political staff, the Premier or his political staff on such a contentious matter as improper water testing by a private laboratory for some 19 days? Are you absolutely certain, beyond any doubt, that you or your staffs were not alerted to this serious situation by the Ministry of the Environment staff?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes.

Mr Bradley: In February of this year, Fine Analysis Laboratories of Hamilton was charged with, among other things, the improper handling of drinking water tests. The investigation of this situation actually had begun several months earlier, back in the year 2001. As a result of these revelations, the Liberal member for Hamilton East, Mr Agostino, wrote a letter in February of this year to Environment Minister Elizabeth Witmer demanding that an audit of all private labs testing drinking water be undertaken, and I publicly called for this action to be taken as well.

I know that ministers were perhaps distracted by the Conservative leadership contest at that time, but could the minister tell the people of Ontario why such an investigation of all private labs testing drinking water was not initiated after this warning signal in February of this year, this warning signal being the discovery after several months of investigation that Fine Analysis Laboratories was in fact improperly handling drinking water tests, among other tests?

Hon Mr Stockwell: They are audited on a regular basis. They are audited by two agencies, which take great lengths to go about auditing and accrediting labs. So they in fact were audited.

With respect to the ministry being involved, the Walkerton report, part two, came out May 23, which gave us recommendations and the authority to move forward with respect to investigating.

Let me just say that obviously you have no information that would indicate there is any example where the ministry staff would have told my staff. You have no evidence, nothing to prove this, no fact. You're just insinuating, or a conspiracy has built up in your mind over the weekend to try and implicate my office with respect to the knowledge. It can only, I suppose, be done to try to muddy my name and sully my reputation. When I stand in this House, Mr Speaker, and I answer the questions, I answer them honestly, and I can tell this House categorically that at no time during that intervening period of

time did my office get notified until the Tuesday that I spoke of. So I think it's beneath these honourable members in this House to suggest otherwise. If there is any fact, any credence, anything you have to prove otherwise, I suggest you table it, and, if not, I think we should stop doing that to each other.

1410

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy and government House leader. Minister, it was reported this morning that Tory spin doctor Paul Rhodes was paid a quarter of a million dollars at taxpayers' expense to give spinning advice on the Walkerton tragedy.

When we first brought this up in the House two years ago, then-Minister of the Environment Dan Newman said, on September 27, 2000, "I indicated that there has been a contract for a three-month period within the Ministry of the Environment... Rhodes Consulting is being paid \$50,000." Minister, can you explain how a three-month, \$50,000 contract turns into almost a quarter million—\$240,000? Tell this House why working families should be on the hook for this kind of taxpayers' money.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): Obviously, I think all would consider the Walkerton situation to be an emergency situation, an emerging issue that required immediate action on behalf of the ministers involved in the environment during that period of time. Under those terms and conditions, Mr Paul Rhodes was retained. We retained him because we needed expert advice, and he provided that expert advice.

The minister at the time, Mr Newman, provided an accurate answer about the \$50,000 contract for the period, which was extended. The contract wasn't renewed at the end of April simply because the process had been completed and the Walkerton two report was supposed to be submitted by Justice O'Connor just a few short weeks later. So the answers you got in the House were absolutely accurate. The work being done by Mr Rhodes was of an emergency nature to deal with the situation in Walkerton and to help rectify, hopefully, the situation we found ourselves in with the tragedy in Walkerton.

Mrs Pupatello: Minister, what we do know on this side of the House is that your Tory friends are always rewarded, except that it's at taxpayers' expense. Paul Rhodes wasn't just working on that Walkerton file to make the Premier at the time look good when he was preparing for his hearing; he was also the senior adviser on Elizabeth Witmer's leadership campaign. While he was doing this, he was contracted with the Minister of the Environment, and it was extended. Who was that Minister of the Environment at that point? Elizabeth Witmer.

Minister, this is the second example of ministers abusing taxpayers' dollars and taking advantage of those

dollars to pay for their own leadership bids. I expect an answer from this Minister of Environment. Do you not think it's time to stand up and ask that leadership candidate to pay back the money to the taxpayers spent on the adviser to her leadership campaign?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I know Mr Rhodes was working for the Ministry of the Environment at the time, providing good, sage advice to the minister and to the ministry with respect to the Walkerton issue.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I wish I could say the same for Mr Smitherman with respect to the homeless people in Princess Margaret Hospital, but I can't do that.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): You cost the taxpayers \$1 million.

Hon Mr Stockwell: There he goes again, half-cocked. He wants to sit in here but not help the homeless in his riding.

I know the minister involved. I know her to be a very honourable individual, someone who works diligently and hard for the taxpayers. I reject every challenge you make. I reject every accusation you make. I don't know a more integral, important, accepting, honest individual in this House than Elizabeth Witmer. I don't believe you.

Mrs Papatello: Minister, the conflict of interest with Paul Rhodes doesn't just end there. In addition to the \$240,000 at taxpayers' expense, he was also on contract to MDS Laboratories, the private testing lab now at the centre of controversy because you and your ministry couldn't ensure they were doing their job. Instead of hiring water inspectors, you hire an excuse-maker who has a huge conflict of interest, on contract to both MDS labs and the Minister of the Environment. Is it not obvious to you? It seems to be obvious to the rest of us in this House, except those sitting on that side of the House. I say to the minister, it would be nice to know that once in a while someone is looking out for the best interests of taxpayers and the families of Ontario.

Minister, what do you have to say in light of the fact that there was a conflict of interest, both with the contract being held at the same time, by the same person, and the fact that this individual was assisting in a leadership campaign?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Who's looking out for the hard-working families and the taxpayers of the province of Ontario? The Conservative government of Ontario is looking after the taxpayers of Ontario. This is a government that has had a record number of balanced budgets, over 800,000 new jobs, hundreds of thousands of people off welfare and tax reductions to make us more competitive.

It's insulting that you sit across this floor and suggest that people should be looking out for taxpayers. When your administration had a kick at the can, you ran up deficits and taxes. When they had a kick at the can, they ran up deficits, debt and taxes. Who looks after the taxpayers in this province? We look after the taxpayers in this province, and they are endorsing this with two

majority governments and, without any doubt in my mind, three majority governments very shortly.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Deputy Premier. The plot thickens regarding your government's responsibility for the botched water testing in this province once again. You've spent the last week promising to investigate the problem with MDS labs while at the same time tarnishing the outcome by pointing fingers and blaming everyone else but yourselves.

If that wasn't bad enough, now we find out that Paul Rhodes—remember Paul Rhodes?—was working at the same time for the Ministry of the Environment, putting spin on the Walkerton tragedy, working for MDS labs, which was testing Walkerton's water, and also working for a Tory leadership candidate: you, Minister, who were then the Minister of the Environment. Don't you think there's something wrong here?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'd be pleased to refer the question to the very capable Minister of Environment and Energy.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): I will add, with respect to the relationship you're trying to align between the Ministry of the Environment and MDS, that Mr Rhodes declared that conflict and removed himself from any discussions, any debate, any conversations or decisions with respect to MDS and the Ministry of the Environment.

It clearly has been a situation where he in fact has come forward at each time when this was available and put it on the table. He wasn't working in concert with anybody with respect to the conflict. He's been very clear. He told people. He wrote letters to ensure that this was in fact the case.

I don't think you can tie a conflict there. He was very upfront and aboveboard with respect to working for MDS, while he was working for the Ministry of the Environment at the same time.

Ms Churley: Deputy Premier, the Ministry of the Environment was paying Paul Rhodes up to \$17,000 a month—wouldn't we all like a salary like that?—almost \$240,000 altogether to spin the tragedy in Walkerton, while at the same time he was advising you on your leadership bid.

Minister, something is rotten here and the people of Ontario deserve to find out what it is. I say to you, as I said on Thursday, that an internal investigation into what happened at the Ministry of the Environment and MDS labs is not good enough. More so now, your government is clearly implicated in this and cannot be trusted to get to the bottom of what happened here. Will you promise today, particularly given this new information, to put all this information on the table through a thorough, independent investigation?

Hon Mr Stockwell: The member walks through a litany of conspiracy theories in her mind and says, "Will

you lay this on the table?" It is on the table. It has been very public. With respect to the situation last week and MDS labs and the communities, we were very public about that. We put everything on the table as soon as we could. We wanted to get the medical officer of health on the table early so he could talk to the other medical officers of health. We offered up a briefing for the opposition critics to get that information on the table. The public information that you see about Paul Rhodes's salary is very public, and he declared the conflicts when they were there.

The situation doesn't have any hidden agenda here. There is no information missing. It has been very public. We've been very clear, forthright and sincere in responding to the question and putting the public information out there. So there's no need for that. Ask your questions. You're getting the answers. If you can't find any questions to implicate or incriminate the government, it's because there is nothing implicating or incriminating the government, because we're doing everything in full public light.

1420

Ms Churley: How in the world are we supposed to trust you and know that at this time, given all the information we have to date? You let 67 communities know at least 19 days, according to you, after your own ministry knew what was going on. How could this happen after Walkerton? You have closed down all the public labs for testing water in this province, and now no one is responsible for maintaining safe and clean drinking water in this province. All the testing is done now by private labs. The standards are set by the Standards Council of Canada. Accreditation is done by the labs themselves. None of this is working or this wouldn't have happened again. Yet what do you do? You spend close to a quarter of a million dollars on a PR consultant—a spin doctor. Will you put your own feeble and ineffective responses to this growing crisis, Minister, under the microscope by calling for a full, independent investigation?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think the crisis is in your mind, with great respect to the member opposite. You're suggesting to us that somehow this crisis occurred. The medical officer of health said the chances of any public health issues were near zilch. We put forward this information to give people information. It was you, the opposition, who ratcheted it up to a public crisis issue. It was never a public crisis. It was only a situation where we had to get this information out so we could have the public feel comfortable in knowing their water is being tested, and tested properly.

You keep making this private sector argument. Understand that Walkerton was a public utility with public employees. You're the government that withdrew funding to pay for water testing. You withdrew it and told municipalities, "Go find yourself a better deal." Two short years later, half of them were out in private labs finding a better deal. How you extricate yourself from the decision-making process is breathtaking. You've decided

you never lived before 1995, and most people in the province would have preferred you hadn't.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario retained Lang Research to conduct its third annual school-based survey. This research shows, among many other things, a 7% drop in music teachers in the year 2001-02. Several scientific reports conducted all over the world to study the links between music and learning have shown that the study of music enhances math and science skills, and as well contributes positively to a child's social development. Students who study music also tend to have lower drop-out rates. Given this, Minister, how could you, as a former teacher, permit such a loss of music teachers in the system?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'd be happy to respond to the member from the third party, who I understand made an interesting presentation on Saturday. In regard to the issue you have raised, I think you are well aware of the fact that this year, in response to the messages we heard from the people of Ontario and the educational community, since Premier Eves took over we have already invested an additional \$350 million in the boards of education in Ontario. We also increased the amount of flexible funding available per pupil from \$100 to \$200. I would just remind you that it is up to each board to make decisions as to how they would allocate their money.

Mr Marchese: It's an interesting response you give again to this kind of question, Minister. We have seen program reductions in special education of 31%. We have seen library reductions of 30%, ESL reductions of 15%, design and technology reductions of 7% and music reductions of 11%. We have fewer caretakers, fewer education assistants, fewer psychologists and less busing than ever before.

Here's my question to you, Minister: which programs, according to you, should boards cut some more in order to have more music teachers and more music programs in their boards? Which ones?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'd be interested—I'm not sure whose data you're using.

Mr Marchese: Which data are you using, Minister?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'd like to know what data you're using. You're using all sorts of figures, and I guess I can pull all sorts of figures out of a hat or out of the air, or I can talk about real numbers. It's very difficult to respond to you when you're using some facts. I don't know what you're basing your information on.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, I have a document here which outlines the position

that each province took during negotiations on the softwood lumber tariffs. According to this document, Ontario made a number of proposals. Apparently, one of those proposals was that “future section 26 sustainable forestry licences would be awarded by competitive bidding.”

I know you're aware that one of the conditions of holding a sustainable forestry licence is a commitment that is made by the company to regeneration of any area that's harvested. I know too that you're aware that in return for that commitment to regeneration, one of the benefits the company receives is a commitment of long-term tenure, typically up to 20 years, in order that they can realize some benefit from that commitment to regeneration.

Minister, I want you to tell me first of all, does Ontario support the competitive bidding process for forestry licences and, if so, how long would the tenure be in those bids and what commitments would have to be made to forest regeneration?

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member opposite for my first question from the opposition. The softwood forest industry is of strong concern to all the province. It represents a lot of jobs in the north.

For these licences, yes, we agree there should be a competitive bid. You've asked for a long-term tenure, a commitment for each of the contracts. Those contracts come up at various times throughout the entire year and I can't tell you exactly that every one will be 20 years. There are various proposals that come forward, and we look at them to say whether they're 10 or 12 years, to see what cut plans are available on each of those sites.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, I have to tell you I asked my question to seek information and I'm alarmed by the lack of apparent recognition of the importance of long-term tenure. I would ask you to turn at some point and tell us what's going to happen under a competitive bidding process to the long-term tenure that's essential for forest regeneration.

I do, however, want to draw your attention to another of the proposals that caused me even more alarm when I read it, and that was that Ontario appears ready to affirm that there is no requirement for the tenure holder to process wood. I want to understand what's meant by that proposal. I assume it means that somebody other than the licence holder can process wood but there's still a requirement to do the processing here in Ontario. But I'm concerned about the open-endedness of this and I'm looking for assurance. I know, again, you know that the natural resources of this province—our mining industries, our forest industries—have created jobs and created wealth on the basis that we're not just hewers of wood and drawers of water; we require processing to be done here.

Minister, there's concern across northern Ontario about what a competitive process will do to smaller operators. My question for you today is whether or not you are prepared to let large companies export unprocessed lumber, because if you are prepared to do that,

we risk losing literally hundreds and hundreds of jobs. Will you tell us how you are going to guarantee the protection of forestry jobs across northern Ontario, and will you start by giving us an assurance that there will be no export of unprocessed lumber?

Hon Mr Ouellette: Thank you very much. The question was regarding the tenure of the wood on those sites. If you look at the sites, there are cut plans available for all the fibre that's in those particular areas. Those particular producers may not use the fibre that is in those cut plans and it becomes available for other users of the product, where one person has a cut site and cuts aspen or birch yet doesn't necessarily need the conifer within that area, so they would make it available to other producers as well and they transfer back and forth.

There are positions that have come forward regarding exporting of lumber in the province of Ontario, and we do get into trade agreements with other jurisdictions so that they'll get some of our fibre to make sure that we can get some of theirs back that we can process in Ontario. But remaining in Ontario is a key priority for the Ministry of Natural Resources.

ONTARIO NEW HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services and it relates to the Ontario New Home Warranty Program. Over the last number of months, I have had a growing number of my constituents and I've heard from other members in this Legislature as well who are receiving complaints from new home purchasers of shoddy and often serious structural defects in the construction of their homes. Many of these people become even more frustrated when they appeal to the Ontario New Home Warranty Program, which is there to protect the consumer. But unfortunately it seems that consumer protection is often not there.

I've convened public meetings with representatives of ONHWP, with representatives of the industry, and I brought it to the attention of the former minister. Unfortunately, the problems persist, and although specific issues are dealt with, I'm asking the minister today, what is he doing to ensure that the consumer protection mandate is delivered by this program?

1430

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I appreciate the question from the member for Oak Ridges, who certainly has worked very hard, especially on this particular issue, convening round tables in his riding and writing to the former minister, and likely myself in the future.

He asks a good question. We want to assure the member and members of this chamber that consumer protection forms the bricks and mortar of my ministry with respect to the Ontario New Home Warranty Program. We want to make sure that people buying a new home—young families, for example—have a right to be confi-

dent that they'll get a good-quality home when they make that kind of investment. Two recent studies of this program had generally positive reviews relative to it—in fact, about 90% of the complaints have been resolved between the buyer and the builder before being formally mediated.

Of course, we always have to do better. The member makes some good points on how we can do so. One example is a builder-rating service where people can find out how a builder they're considering purchasing from rates. They can call ONHWP directly at 1-800-668-0124 or at the Web site of www.newhome.on.ca to see how they rate.

Mr Klees: Minister, one of the complaints I continue to hear is that the ONHWP favours the builder, that often, even if ONHWP confirms that a particular defect is warrantable and orders repairs, the builder doesn't respond or responds in an unfavourable way. The complaint is that the program simply doesn't have enough teeth to deal with the issue. What specific changes, then, Minister, are you proposing or will you insist on, so that this program actually does protect the consumer rather than favour the builder in the process?

Hon Mr Hudak: Again, a very good point and well said. We want to make sure the warranty program is going to focus on the problem builders to make sure they make the repairs necessary, and in a timely fashion. There is a new program that is coming out of the warranty program called Project Simplify. It's an initiative to establish very clear and firm time frames for builders to resolve these outstanding warranty defects. It's going to focus on the small number of problem builders to make sure they will live up to the warranty obligations that the member asks. If the builder doesn't live up to those obligations, they'll face a number of penalties that ONHWP is currently working on to make sure we can assure homeowners they're going to have a good-quality home when they're making a purchase. By targeting these troublemakers, we hope to make a difference and help resolve some of the issues the member brings forward in the Legislature today.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, I've written to your government a number of times regarding the crumbling conditions of many of our schools in the city of Hamilton. You sounded encouraging on Thursday in media comments that you made to look at the issue, then unfortunately on Friday your ministry officials told the board of education that there's no money coming for emergency funding to repair some of the schools that are really in a serious, serious crisis when it comes to repairs.

We have Hillsdale school in my riding. Two of the rooms are closed and a third one may be closed right now as a result of the rain. They have 10 buckets set up in the classrooms, they've had to move computers out of rooms and have had to shut down electrical panels. This is a

school in Ontario in the year 2002, not some Third World country. We should not have these conditions here.

Under your watch, Minister, this is continuing to happen. I'm going to ask you clearly: why did your ministry say no to the Hamilton board of education on Friday for emergency repairs to this school and others that are in such a state of crisis that the kids cannot be in the classroom during the day?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): Again, we have a situation where some of the information that is being presented is not quite as it is being presented.

But let me say first and foremost, our government is very concerned about the state of accommodation in the province of Ontario and that's why we have made significant investment in new schools in order to ensure that high-quality school facilities are available for all students. We believe that students should be educated in a clean, safe and comfortable environment. We are providing this year, 2002-03, funding for nine boards to address the issue of schools that are too costly to repair. Eight facilities are going to be rebuilt. This is a very significant investment.

I can speak to the Hillsdale situation. I indicated to you that I was concerned about the situation as you described it to me. I did ask ministry staff to meet with the board. I understand the board is going to be repairing that school once the children go for summer recess, and I understand—

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

Mr Agostino: The reality is that particular roof is \$250,000. The board has made it clear. They have said, "If we have to fix that roof, then it's going to be another roof, another boiler, a set of windows in other schools. It can't be done."

The reality is, they need more money, Minister. The board has identified to you \$13 million in urgent repairs. These are things like boilers, roofs, windows that have been broken and are boarded up; they haven't been fixed. These are not luxury items. These are the most essential services to have a basic, safe learning environment for kids. So the \$250,000 that's going to fix one roof is only a small part of that. They need \$13 million today, simply for urgent repairs.

It's not just Hamilton. Halton faces the same situation. The Halton board has identified needs that they have: broken windows that can't be fixed, roofs and boilers. Again, Minister, as much as you talk about what you've done across the province, the reality is, as of last week, there were kids in schools in my riding sitting in classrooms who, when it was raining, had to be moved out, and buckets replaced their desks in that classroom.

I ask you again today: will you commit to ensure that the Hamilton board of education will receive the \$13 million that it has identified to you in emergency, essential, urgent repairs that are needed to help our crumbling schools? Unfortunately, low-income kids in poor neighbourhoods are bearing the brunt of your cuts. Will you commit to—

The Speaker: The member's time is up. Minister?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, there's a lot of rhetoric there. We take very seriously the issue of providing safe accommodation for schools. Ministry staff have dealt with the staff of the Hamilton board. There are two classrooms that are affected. The repairs are going to be undertaken this summer.

With respect to the broader question you asked about what we do about schools in the province that are in need of repair, as the member full well knows, we are developing at the present time a strategy to address this issue. We've also asked Dr Rozanski to take a look at this issue as to making sure we can provide the appropriate level of funding. We are very concerned, and we've already announced just recently that we will be constructing eight new schools for schools that were simply too prohibitive to repair. We care about the kids, and we care about providing them with safe, comfortable accommodation.

KIDS' FISHING DAY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources, his second question today. On Saturday, June 8, I had the pleasure of being part of the second annual Kids' Fishing Day. Minister, I want to commend you for the effort you put in in organizing this event at Heber Downs Conservation Area. The event gives great opportunity for children and young families who may not often get the chance to participate in the outdoors way of life—fishing and just the general experience.

Minister, I was impressed with almost 700 people who had that experience at that event that you arranged. In my mind, it was a great success, judging by how many kids and their families were able to pick up a fishing rod, fish for a while, take a guided nature tour or simply have a hot dog and a drink. I thank you on their behalf.

I noticed that many outdoor organizations contributed their time and funds to make this year's Kids' Fishing Day, organizations like the Durham police services, Eastview Boys and Girls Club, Union Rod and Gun Club, Orono Fish and Gun Club from my area, and Shimano, of course.

Minister, could you please elaborate—

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

1440

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member for Durham not only for the question but for actually participating in the event, because it was a great success.

On the 8th we were able to provide kids from around the region the opportunity to take part in many outdoor activities, which included fishing. Some other activities included the MNR dog demonstration; a nature trail hike where the kids had an opportunity to experience a lot of the trees, fauna, the bird sounds etc; and we also had Ducks Unlimited out, which ran a station to do duck identification and pond identification.

It was a co-operative effort that would not have been possible without our valuable volunteers and the support of organizations. There were over 100 volunteers on that particular day. Among the organizations that were already mentioned, I would like to thank the Pickering Rod and Gun Club for the lunch facilities, the Oshawa Community Health Centre, the parental department of the regional municipality of Durham, along with Simcoe Hall Settlement House, CLOCA, and of course the sponsoring agency, the Central Ontario Big Game Association.

For all those anglers out there, there are still lots of fish left in the pond.

Mr O'Toole: I know it was a catch-and-release day, so naturally there are a lot left.

I can certainly tell you that I enjoyed the day myself, but I'm not given to too much fishing outside of this place. I commend you for taking on such a very worthwhile initiative of working with children and giving them an appreciation and an understanding of outdoor activities and the recreational opportunities not just in Durham but indeed across this great province.

I understand that your ministry is involved in providing programs for youth in a number of areas. Perhaps you can tell the House today, those who are still listening, some of the important programs that your ministry puts on for the province of Ontario.

Hon Mr Ouellette: We've launched several excellent initiatives for youth across the province that not only provide work opportunities but also get youth acquainted with the great outdoors.

My ministry has six employment programs that I encourage young people to take advantage of. In 2001 there were thousands of jobs created for youth in Ontario. We have offered programs for young people for more than 55 years. Our longest-running program is the Ontario Ranger program. Along with this, there are the Ontario Stewardship Rangers, the internship programs, the co-op programs, the summer experience programs and the Ontario-Quebec exchange program.

These opportunities provide youth with on-the-job training, learning prospects, work skills, experience in natural resource management and a chance to work on our community-based resource projects, all the while helping to keep our natural ecosystems healthy.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is investing in Ontario's youth. They are the future of the province. I'm very proud that we can spearhead these initiatives for the youth of today and I look forward to continuing these for the youth of tomorrow.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Health. Sault Ste Marie is in a medical crisis and it is getting worse. We only have two and a half full-time anesthesiologists, when we need seven. Surgeries are being cancelled. As more family doctors retire or leave the city, we're going to lose surgical assist-

ants. According to Dr Willett, interim medical director for the surgical program in the Soo, this will mean the cancellation of emergency surgery. If you don't take immediate action, the lives of the people in Sault Ste Marie could be at risk.

Minister, will you commit today to making the real changes necessary to get the doctors we need in Sault Ste Marie?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I certainly can advise this chamber that we have been in constant contact with hospital and civic officials in Sault Ste Marie, dealing with their particular needs and aspirations in this area.

As the honourable member may be aware, we have a number of programs, a number of inducements to practise in underserved areas: we remove caps; we pay for tuition; we top up salaries. Of course, the new northern medical school will be of great benefit to Sault Ste Marie, as it will to various communities throughout the north. These are programs that are ongoing.

I can assure the honourable member that the needs and wishes of residents of the Soo, including patients in the Sault Ste Marie area, are on our minds.

Mr Martin: The patients of Sault Ste Marie may be on your mind, and you indeed may be having contact with officials up there, but not only is nothing changing; the situation is getting worse.

Current government incentives cannot attract locums to cover the four and a half anaesthesiologists we need. Our community is already short 10 family doctors. It will be 10 years before we receive any doctors from the northern medical school, and we need doctors now. Communities across Ontario are facing doctor shortages. Sault Ste Marie's shortage is critical. What is clearly needed is a graduated scale of needs assessment and doctor incentives. Your one-size-fits-all solution just isn't working. Will you commit today to implementing a graduated scale of assessment, particularly for my community?

Hon Mr Clement: I am trying to work with the honourable member, but let me quote something that might be of interest to him. Here's the quote: "I was part of a political consensus that proved to be wrong. We all realize now that there were some mistakes made." Who said that? Bob Rae said it about doctor shortages, because it was the NDP government that came along and cut the number of medical spaces by 30%, and Bob Rae now admits he was wrong. When will you admit you were wrong? That's what we want to know on this side of the House.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. The Ontario Provincial Police needs five updated OPP communication centres. So far, three of them have been in place for some time, all of them in Conservative ridings. In northwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario, officers and citizens continue to be served by 25-year-old to 30-year-

old technology. That speaks volumes about your government's lack of commitment to safety.

You have an almost-new closed OPP building in the Quinte area. Both the OPP and Bell Sympatico have recommended it as the ideal site. It's on a major highway and it's already paid for. The rent is zero dollars per year for a building you already own. You tried three years ago to put one in Lanark county. You weren't successful and you're trying it again. You're obsessed with Lanark county. This is a sterling example of perseverance.

The rent, if it is built in Lanark county, will be \$250,000 a year or more. When you were Solicitor General, you pledged you would adhere to best business practices and best efficiency for the OPP. You will never buy something as cheap as something you already own. Minister Turnbull verbally committed to a public process for—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I know it's good, but I'm afraid the member's time is up. Minister?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): First of all, I do like Lanark county.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: As my colleagues say, we like Lanark county. Nothing has changed in terms of our perspective. We still believe in best business practices. That's what we will adhere to.

Mr Parsons: This selection process has just a whiff of what used to be called "pork-barrelling." You have an existing building that meets all the criteria. Your Perth ad is clearly tailored to one area and maybe one person within five kilometres of Perth or Smiths Falls who is located on and has access to county road 43. Call centres can go anywhere, but it appears they can only go anywhere if it's a Conservative riding. Limiting your search to one location is bad finances and bad for public safety and security.

Your friends have done well since 1995. It is now time for the people of Ontario to do well. I challenge you to make public the OPP report and I ask you to guarantee that the local decision will be in the best interests of the public, not in the best interests of your party.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I suppose the word out on the streets federally about consultants is exciting the member over there. I presume we're not going to use you as the consultant. What we will do, though, is we will adhere to best business practices. We've said that consistently throughout. That will be what the decision's based on: best business practices. That is not in any way ambiguous.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for my friend the Minister of Transportation and it's about improving public safety at intersections by effectively enforcing the law and putting a stop to those who would imperil the safety of pedestrians and other motorists by running red lights.

Through the red light camera pilot project, the government enables six municipalities in Ontario to operate red light cameras at intersections, snap a picture of the offending vehicle's licence plate and lay charges based on that evidence. I understand there are also stepped-up police enforcement sites as part of this pilot study.

This pilot project has been up and running in Waterloo region since November 2000. I would ask the minister if he could update this House on the effectiveness of this important pilot project across the province.

1450

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the member for his interest as he's very much interested in highway safety matters.

Dealing with red light running requires a multi-faceted approach that includes public awareness, enforcement and tough penalties for breaking the law. Our government has done some of those things since we arrived here in 1995. Number one, in 1997 we raised the fines for red light running. In 2000, we proclaimed legislation to enable municipalities to operate red light cameras for a two-year period.

This pilot project requires municipalities to conduct increased police enforcement at other intersections as well as where the red light cameras are located. We are working with municipalities to have a report on the effectiveness of this, and we hope that report will be complete in the not-too-far distant future.

Mr Arnott: I want to thank the minister for that answer and inform him that the regional council of Waterloo region, their staff and police are to be credited for their good work as partners in this pilot project. They've advised me the project is scheduled to terminate in November 2002. Without hesitation I support their resolution requesting that the government extend the project for another two years.

I've also received word from the Canadian Automobile Association. I received a letter from Anne Becker, their president and CEO for midwestern Ontario, asking me to support the two-year extension, which I do.

My supplementary question to the minister is: will the government extend the red light camera pilot project for two more years?

Hon Mr Sterling: The red light project was contained in legislation and therefore will require an amendment in this Legislature prior to November of 2002 in order for this project to continue on. I've talked to several of the municipalities and stakeholders who are interested in this, including the Canadian Automobile Association, which, as you know, is always concerned with automobile safety.

Five of the six municipalities that are presently undertaking this project have requested an extension. I am looking very favourably toward doing this but I want to continue my consultations. I would expect that the opposition and the government benches, if in fact those consultations are successful, would support a piece of legislation here in this House and would pass it with due haste.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, the Greater Essex County District School Board has passed a budget that avoids a deficit this year. In order to do this, however, deep cuts had to be made. The board is taking nearly \$1 million from its \$2-million reserve fund to avoid a deficit. The board is spending \$4.5 million less on special education than it should be. This is cause for alarm.

Minister, you've systematically underfunded the education system, leaving school boards across the province, but most acutely boards in the Essex-Windsor area, between the proverbial rock and a hard place. School boards don't have the money to carry out their mandates to provide a quality learning experience to students under all circumstances and of all abilities, and our kids are suffering.

Minister, will you admit that your draconian anti-deficit legislation has allowed special education to be shortchanged?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I appreciate the concern the member opposite has displayed for the students in his riding, but I think the member also needs to recognize we have been very responsive to the concerns we have heard in the province of Ontario.

I would remind you again that, in the very first weeks of the new administration under Premier Eves, we have made available, I have announced, an additional \$440 million to go to school boards for funding for textbooks, for early math and for early literacy. We've also, ahead of time, indicated we're going to review the funding formula. We've asked Dr Rozanski to do that review. So we have listened to the concerns we have heard, we have addressed them and we will continue to make sure the students in this province continue to receive the services and support they need.

Mr Crozier: Minister, if I'm going to believe you or the Essex county school board, I'm afraid I'm coming down on this one with the Essex county school board. This isn't simply a numbers game; this is a safety issue. Staff and students are being put at risk because schools are not given the necessary tools to cope with the kids' behavioural disorders and developmental disabilities. These children are not getting the assistance and supervision they require, because the board only has \$30.4 million to spend on special education when it needs \$35 million.

Funding for children with the most critical needs has been frozen at 1998 levels despite inflation and increased enrolment. Thirty more staff are needed to help address the problem, but they can only afford five. Clearly this is a resource allocation problem. Minister, will you commit today to special education and guarantee that no Ontario child who needs it will go without?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have made a very strong commitment to special education. In fact, it was highlighted in the throne speech that was delivered a few short weeks ago. If you remember, prior to 1998 there

was grave inequality as far as delivery of services and assessment across the province were concerned. Our government vowed to end that. We vowed to make sure that no matter where you lived, which school board you attended, which school you attended, there would be equal access, and the new funding does give equal access.

I'm also pleased to say that we have increased funding for special needs by 17% since 1998. We have kept our promise to protect funding for vulnerable children. This year we allocated \$1.37 billion, the highest number that has ever been set aside in the history of this province, for children with special needs. We are providing funding. But I would agree with you: there is always more that needs to be done.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the associate minister responsible for rural affairs. I recently attended the 2002 eastern Ontario trails conference in Belleville, where I had the pleasure of participating in the announcement that the Eves government is investing some \$275,000 to help increase multi-use trail activity and tourism in eastern Ontario. This is one project that was approved in the \$200-million rural economic development program, which is a key component of our government's Ontario small town and rural development initiative, better known as OSTAR-RED.

Minister, I know my constituents are very interested in the Ernie Eves government's initiative. Could you please bring my constituents up to date on what has been accomplished?

Hon Brian Coburn (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the hard-working member from Northumberland for the question. As you know, rural Ontario has strong economies that are based on vibrant communities and healthy social and environmental climates, and we want to build on those strengths. That's why our government has committed \$200 million over five years under the rural economic development program. It's a cost-sharing initiative designed to address barriers to economic growth. These barriers to economic growth are designated by the folks right in those communities, the people who face them on a day-to-day basis.

Our goal at the end of the day is to have a diversified climate, long-term jobs, increased investment, strong partnerships and alliances, and new products and new markets for investment in rural Ontario. We will reach these goals by working with our partners in rural Ontario, making sure they have the tools and resources in place to identify new opportunities and to take advantage of those economic opportunities.

It's still early in the program, but already we've—

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

1500

Mr Galt: Minister, OSTAR and OSTAR-RED have indeed been very successful for infrastructure and rural

economic development. That was as a result of the Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves, back in the 2000 budget, who came through with the \$600 million for this, that was based on the interim report of the Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal, which I had the fortune to chair and submit back in April 2000.

Minister, people from my riding are very interested in what types of ideas they should be putting forward. Could you also explain the type of projects that have already been approved and how they will benefit rural Ontario?

Hon Mr Coburn: That's certainly the beauty of this particular program. There's lots of room for creative ideas. Just to give you a few examples, some of the ideas are: establish Internet terminals at major tourism destinations to help market local or regional tourism attractions or accommodations for visitors; explore new technologies and processes for non-traditional uses of agricultural commodities and waste products; and feasibility studies for business attractions and retention projects. This program is designed to be flexible, because we know that one size does not fit all in rural Ontario. We recognize that there are unique features in each of our communities, and this is a program that is designed to recognize that as well.

I just recently had the privilege of announcing the dynamic new program called "A business-to-business road map for prosperity: toward a high-tech future in eastern Ontario." This will provide an opportunity for about 400 companies to take advantage of new initiatives and the linkages network.

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, the lead minister in northern Ontario. As you know—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: Glad to be of assistance.

As you know, Ontario softwood producers are now paying a tax equal to 22%, in some cases, of the value of their shipments to the United States market. Tembec operations, in my riding alone, has seen some 50 jobs lost since December due to reorganization that they're having to undergo because of adjustment to this tax. There are at least 150 more jobs that are at stake in regard to how they're going to reorganize to be able to offset this particular tax.

My question is a very simple one, Minister: as our lead minister, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, what is your plan in order to be able to avert a lot of these job losses that we're going to see in the softwood lumber industry in northern Ontario?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): The honourable member may know, as was widely publicized in the northern press, both newspaper and radio last week, that I and the honourable Minister of Natural Resources have co-signed a letter, joining the people of northern Ontario and calling upon

the federal government to redouble its efforts to solve this softwood lumber dispute. It's a huge penalty that Ontarians in the north are paying as a result of a trade dispute between our two countries. It's unfortunate; it's cyclical; it's historical; it has happened many times over the last 40 years that this tax, and that's what it is by any other name—it's a tax imposed by the Americans, has been imposed on us here in Ontario and, indeed, in other parts of Canada. It's an unfortunate dispute that needs a permanent solution. This government has called upon the federal government to work together and all provinces to work to solve this irritant between our countries which is serving none of our citizens very well, on either side of the border.

Mr Bisson: I feel a lot better now that the letter's gone out. Anyway, we welcome it because it is a serious initiative.

Minister, my specific question to you was: what are you going to do in order to be able to offset the job losses that we're seeing as companies adjust to paying this tax? For example, one of the issues in northeastern Ontario is what's happening with roundwood. There are a number of areas of northeastern Ontario where roundwood is not being sent to Ontario plants and instead is being sent over to the province of Quebec. In fact, one such plant is the plant in Kirkland Lake that was actually scheduled to go down, but now, because of the efforts of the IWA, myself and others at Tembec, we've managed to be able to turn that around—to source wood that would normally go to Quebec into that plant to keep it open.

So my question to you is simply this: will you, Minister, commit to making sure that no roundwood in the province of Ontario is going to be processed outside of this province, so those jobs can be kept for the people of northern Ontario?

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member knows that the government is making efforts on every front to keep jobs in Ontario, where jobs and the economy, cabinet, and everything we do is to protect jobs and hundreds of thousands of new jobs. In spite of an out-migration of people in the north, the number of jobs in the north under this government has increased significantly. We'll keep that record and we'll keep building on that record.

There are 101 Liberal MPs, out of 103, in this province, who do nothing. This should be the number one issue between our two countries. Mr Chrétien goes down to the United States and cozies up to President Bush, we joined them in warfare, we lost four of our soldiers as a result of war, and yet we cannot—because the federal government will not put enough resources, talent and force on the United States—resolve this issue between our two countries.

It needs to be resolved. We've done our part. It's time the federal Liberals did their part with the Americans.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Transportation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We'll just take a minute and wait. There he is.

The member for Chatham-Kent Essex.

Mr Hoy: You know that my private member's bill, Bill 112, passed second reading. This is a bill to protect children while on school buses.

There are 810,000 children who ride our school buses daily on 16,000 buses. The problem with the current law in identifying people who pass a school bus illegally in this province is that the school bus driver must identify the offending driver by face. My bill would allow for vehicle liability.

I was interested in your response on red light cameras earlier today. The government currently uses vehicle liability for parking violations, red light cameras and collecting tolls on Highway 407. You use it to collect money.

Will you give an undertaking in the House today that you will request of the government House leader that Bill 112 go to the justice and social policy committee, as referred by this House, and that it return immediately to this House for third reading?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Transportation): I think the justice committee should have some hearings to hear from the public to determine whether or not this bill should go ahead.

The honourable member opposite actually asked for the bill to go there. He could have referred it to the committee of the whole House and therefore perhaps would have had a speedier passage of the bill.

The concern I have is that several groups have stated their opposition to this bill. I wanted to give them the opportunity to come before the committee and state that opposition. Then members of this Legislature will hear both sides of the debate, and we can make an informed decision.

I think the bill has some merit. That's why I want the public to have their opportunity to put their positions forward before we decide to go ahead with it.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): On a point of order, Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 37(a), I wish to advise you of my dissatisfaction with the response of the Minister of Education to my question on the loss of music teachers in our elementary schools.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That's fine. Could the member please file the appropriate paperwork with the table?

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have letters in the form of a petition which reads as follows:

"I'm a parent at Shaughnessy public school. I'm very concerned about the drastic impact of funding cuts to the Toronto school system. The current provincial funding formula does not meet the real needs of students in the Toronto District School Board. If the government does not make substantial changes to the funding formula, my school will lose programs and services and my child's education will suffer.

"The government has the opportunity to address the inadequacy of the provincial funding formula. Urgent action is required. We strongly ask that you: (1) immediately review the funding formula; (2) maintain current funding levels 2001-02 until the review is complete; (3) give serious consideration to the need-to-succeed budget; (4) put our children first by providing the level of funding for the public education system that our children deserve and need.

"Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter."

It is signed by 118 parents at Shaughnessy Public School. I want to thank Julie Hogg, vice-chair of the school council, for forwarding this. I hope we will have an adequate answer from the minister to the legitimate concerns of these parents.

1510

HIGHWAY 522

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I have a petition here to the Parliament of Ontario:

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

"We, the taxpayers, members of the communities and the people who have to travel along Highway 522 in the district of Parry Sound want to bring to your attention the poor condition of Highway 522."

I'm pleased to sign this on their behalf.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

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

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I affix my signature; I am in complete agreement.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition signed by literally thousands of people from northeastern Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas people with disabilities who rely on the Ontario disability support program payments are facing rising costs, and

"Whereas people unable to work because of serious disabilities have had no increase in support since 1995, and

"Whereas with loss of rent controls their rents have skyrocketed, placing huge financial strains on many ODSP recipients,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to bring fairness to the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997, by amending it to provide for regulations requiring annual cost-of-living adjustments to income support programs," as were suggested in Mr Tony Martin's bill.

I affix my signature to that petition.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 46 people:

"Whereas children are being exposed to sexually explicit materials in many commercial establishments;

"Whereas many municipalities do not have bylaws in place to protect minors and those that do vary from place to place and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

"Whereas uniform standards are needed in Ontario that would make it illegal to sell, rent, loan or display sexually explicit materials to minors;

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

“To pass Bill 95, Protection of Minors from Sexually Explicit Goods and Services Act, 2000, as soon as possible.”

WATER QUALITY

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

“Whereas Ontario’s families need to know that their water is safe;

“Whereas Ernie Eves is not protecting the drinking water of Ontario families;

“Whereas Ernie Eves recklessly cut the Ministry of the Environment budget by over 40% and laid off one third of the staff;

“Whereas Ernie Eves’s cuts to the Ministry of Environment continue to put our drinking water at risk, despite the tragic deaths at Walkerton;

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party have outlined an emergency safe water drinking plan that includes hiring an additional 100 environment inspectors, drinking water experts and enforcement officers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that Ontario’s drinking water is safe for our families and to immediately implement Dalton McGuinty’s safe water action plan.”

I concur with this and I will affix my signature to it.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have yet again more petitions on the Ontarians with disabilities program, this time from the residents of 217 Pine Street North, with whom I met on Friday. It reads as follows:

“Whereas people with disabilities who rely on the Ontario disability support program payments are facing rising costs, and

“Whereas people unable to work because of serious disabilities have had no increase in support since 1995, and

“Whereas with loss of rent controls their rents have skyrocketed, placing huge financial strains on many ODSP recipients,

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to bring fairness to the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997, by amending it to provide for regulations requiring annual cost-of-living adjustments to income support programs.”

The residents of 217 Pine North asked me to bring that petition on their behalf here today.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 61 people:

“Whereas children are being exposed to sexually explicit materials in many commercial establishments;

“Whereas many municipalities do not have bylaws in place to protect minors and those that do vary from place to place and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

“Whereas uniform standards are needed in Ontario that would make it illegal to sell, rent, loan or display sexually explicit materials to minors;

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

“To pass Bill 95, Protection of Minors from Sexually Explicit Goods and Services Act, 2000, as soon as possible.”

SERVICES DE SANTÉ POUR ENFANTS

CHILDREN’S HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Une autre fois je viens à la rescousse de l’hôpital pour enfants, au nom des commettants et commettantes d’Ottawa-Vanier :

« Attendu que le gouvernement conservateur planifie la fermeture du service de chirurgie cardiaque à l’Hôpital pour enfants de l’est de l’Ontario ;

“Whereas the government plans to centralize all cardiac services for children in Toronto;

« Attendu que la chirurgie cardiaque à l’HEEO est un service essentiel pour les enfants de l’est de l’Ontario et pour tous les enfants francophones de toute la province ;

“Whereas the lives of children may be at risk if forced to travel to Toronto for cardiac care;

« Attendu que les enfants et leur famille se verront imposer des dépenses et des soucis inutiles s’ils doivent se rendre à Toronto pour obtenir des services cardiaques ;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the government halt immediately its decision to close cardiac surgery services at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa.”

I do sign this petition.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I’ve got a petition here which reads:

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas animal abusers are not currently subject to any provincial penalties;

“Whereas it is currently impossible for a judge to ban puppy and kitten mill operators from owning animals for the rest of their lives;

“Whereas Ontario SPCA investigators need to act on instances of cruelty to animals in a more timely fashion, thereby lessening the animals’ suffering;

“Whereas it is currently not an offence to train an animal to fight another animal;

“Whereas Ontario’s animals are not adequately protected by the current law;

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

“To pass the amendments to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act developed by a

governmental working group (which included the Ontario SPCA) and submitted to the office of the Solicitor General of Ontario in June of 2001, so that the above conditions, among others, will be properly addressed.”

I will affix my signature and give it to Jordan to give to the desk.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 47 people:

“Whereas children are being exposed to sexually explicit materials in many commercial establishments;

“Whereas many municipalities do not have bylaws in place to protect minors and those that do vary from place to place and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

“Whereas uniform standards are needed in Ontario that would make it illegal to sell, rent, loan or display sexually explicit materials to minors;

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

“To pass Bill 95, Protection of Minors from Sexually Explicit Goods and Services Act, 2000, as soon as possible.”

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a petition entitled “Fair Increases Now.” It’s especially germane, given that today, June 17, is the fourth anniversary of the misnamed Tenant Protection Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the number of tenants receiving above-guideline rent increase is growing exponentially; and

“Whereas many of these increases are for increases in utility costs, many of which have gone down since; and

“Whereas tenants should not have to pay for improvements forever, even when the costs have been realized by these rent increases; and

“Whereas the” so-called “Tenant Protection Act does not give a tenant relief due to the costs being realized or a drop in utility costs; and

“Whereas tenants should not be receiving rent increases where there are” outstanding “work orders issued for the building;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to immediately pass MPP David Caplan’s Bill 134 entitled the Fair Rent Increases Act at the earliest possible opportunity so that tenants can get relief from above-guideline” rent “increases once the bills have been paid.”

I wholeheartedly endorse the petition and I have affixed my signature to it.

1520

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition that has been signed by 64 people.

“Whereas children are being exposed to sexually explicit materials in many commercial establishments;

“Whereas many municipalities do not have bylaws in place to protect minors and those that do vary from place to place and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

“Whereas uniform standards are needed in Ontario that would make it illegal to sell, rent, loan or display sexually explicit materials to minors;

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

“To pass Bill 95, Protection of Minors from Sexually Explicit Goods and Services Act, 2000, as soon as possible.”

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas animal abusers are not currently subject to any provincial penalties;

“Whereas it is currently impossible for a judge to ban puppy and kitten mill operators from owning animals for the rest of their lives; and

“Whereas Ontario SPCA investigators need to act on instances of cruelty to animals in a more timely fashion, thereby lessening the animals’ suffering;

“Whereas it is currently not an offence to train an animal to fight another animal; and

“Whereas Ontario’s animals are not adequately protected by the current law;

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

“To pass the amendments to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act developed by a governmental working group (which included the Ontario SPCA) and submitted to the office of the Solicitor General of Ontario in June of 2001, so that the” current “above conditions, among others, will be properly addressed.”

I affix my signature. I am in complete agreement.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have yet another petition, this time from the community of Kapuskasing in regard to ODSP benefits. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas people with disabilities who rely on the Ontario disability support program payments are facing rising costs, and

“Whereas people unable to work because of serious disabilities have had no increase in support since 1995, and

“Whereas with loss of rent controls their rents have skyrocketed, placing huge financial strains on many ODSP recipients,

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to bring fairness to the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997, by amending it to provide for regulations requiring annual cost-of-living adjustments to income support” payments.

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd also like you to check if there's quorum here in the Legislature at this point.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Will the table check, please?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker: Call in the members.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker: Further petitions?

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 32 people.

“Whereas children are being exposed to sexually explicit materials in many commercial establishments;

“Whereas many municipalities do not have bylaws in place to protect minors and those that do vary from place to place and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

“Whereas uniform standards are needed in Ontario that would make it illegal to sell, rent, loan or display sexually explicit materials to minors;

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

“To pass Bill 95, Protection of Minors from Sexually Explicit Goods and Services Act, 2000, as soon as possible.”

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Pursuant to the agreement of the House earlier today, these proceedings are suspended until 4 pm. At 3:55 pm I will cause the bells to ring to summon members to the House.

The House recessed from 1525 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2002 ONTARIO BUDGET

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by Mr Eves, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): With the indulgence of the House, the pages will now deliver the budget. Have all members received their copies?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I am pleased to table today Ontario's fourth consecutive balanced budget. This government is keeping its promise of growth and prosperity for Ontario.

On February 14, 1967, the first Ontario Treasurer to come from Exeter, the Honourable Charles Mac-

Naughton, described the challenge facing all provincial Treasurers. In preparing a budget he said, “We tread the slender tightrope between the reasonable expectations of our people for government services and a constant awareness of the burdens on the taxpayer.”

Thirty-five years later, the second Treasurer to come from Exeter has developed a keen appreciation in the last few weeks for the meaning of those words.

While much has changed since 1967, the essential task of preparing a budget remains the same. A keen sense of balance is still required between meeting today's needs and investing for tomorrow's challenges.

Budgets are also about values and choices. As I learned growing up in Exeter, values come from families and communities—from the people who live those values with quiet strength and perseverance—values such as setting personal goals, and working hard to achieve them; pursuing education as the key to opportunity; respecting the rights of others while accepting our own responsibilities; valuing and protecting our natural heritage and environment; standing up for what is right; answering the call of your community through public service, volunteerism and personal commitment; and sharing the fruits of your own success with those who need help.

These are the values that built this province, that made it strong. They are the same values that motivated our government when we promised to return Ontario to prosperity in 1995. While our predecessors preferred to carve up a shrinking pie into ever-smaller pieces, the Common Sense Revolution chose to make the pie bigger. We placed this province on the path to increased growth.

The people of Ontario know that prosperity is a virtuous circle: that a growing economy provides more and better jobs, more disposable income and more revenue to invest in our future, in turn renewing economic growth and creating even more prosperity.

This government has kept its promises by cutting taxes to create jobs, by removing barriers to growth, by balancing the budget and paying down debt, by helping people off welfare and into jobs, by strengthening our universally accessible health care system, by making significant infrastructure investments for the future and, most importantly, by setting higher standards in education to equip our students with the knowledge and skills they need for success in the global economy. Mr Speaker, the evidence is clear: because we put the right fundamentals in place, our plan for prosperity is working.

The numbers that chart our progress are impressive, but the real improvements are in people's everyday lives: the young family buying their first home, the recent graduate getting a great job, businesses expanding and creating new jobs at home and finding success in foreign markets, the opportunities that people have today that didn't exist in 1995.

This was the vision of the Common Sense Revolution, that Ontario could become the best place to live, work and raise a family. And while we've accomplished much, there is clearly more to do. That's why we're sticking with the fundamentals of our plan, and this budget is

about how we intend to do that, based on what the people of Ontario told us needs to be done.

While the Minister of Finance takes ultimate responsibility for the budget, it is truly the work of many capable hands.

I want to thank Premier Ernie Eves for his clear vision and leadership. We owe much of today's prosperity to the bold and courageous steps he took as finance minister to restore confidence and growth in this province.

I am also indebted to my caucus colleagues, especially my immediate predecessor, Minister Jim Flaherty; to the Chair of Management Board, David Tsubouchi; to my parliamentary assistants Marcel Beaubien and Ted Chudleigh; and to the many members of the Legislature who have offered advice the past few weeks.

1610

As I've learned in the last 64 days, the Ministry of Finance is staffed by highly capable and professional people. They are led most effectively by my Deputy Minister, Bob Christie. He and his hard-working staff have been most helpful to a new minister and I am deeply grateful for their advice.

I would like to thank my personal staff, whose long hours of dedication are ably led by my chief of staff, Scott Andison.

Finally, I want to thank my husband, Derek Nelson, for his patience, his understanding and, most importantly, for his support.

First I'd like to deal with the fiscal challenge that we face this year.

Because Ontario's economy is open and trade-oriented, the global economy of 2001 is our starting point.

During the past year, our largest trading partner, the United States, experienced a sharp economic slowdown. US real economic growth slowed from 4% in 2000 to 1% in 2001.

Key building blocks of our economy—most notably the automobile and telecommunication equipment sectors—were hard hit by the sharp reduction in the demand in world markets and by the terrorist attacks in the United States. Exports fell more last year than in the recession year of 1991.

The result was that after four consecutive years of annual real growth exceeding 5%, Ontario's economy grew by just 1% in 2001.

In last year's budget, growth was forecast to slow, and we provided a fiscal plan that responded to this situation.

After September 11, we took further action to restore consumer confidence by accelerating tax cuts. Coupled with prudent management and the use of our \$1-billion reserve, we balanced the budget last year, for the third year in a row.

We were also able to make an additional \$127-million payment on Ontario's accumulated debt. This brings our total debt repayment to \$4.2 billion, almost 85% of the target that we set for ourselves to reduce the mortgage left by past governments.

Ontario's economy is rebounding sharply, but our revenues this year are still reflecting last year's slowdown.

The fall in exports and the competitive pressures that led to lower prices caused corporate profits in Ontario to fall nearly 13% in 2001, with little expectation of an upturn this year.

Lower economic growth last year and continued weak stock markets mean that our largest tax source, the personal income tax, is forecast to decline slightly in 2002-03.

There is another important factor in Ontario's fiscal challenge: some specific federal policies.

First, Ontario and all provinces are being shortchanged because the Canada health and social transfer, the CHST, has failed to keep up with rapidly rising health care costs, the expansion of post-secondary education and the need to protect the most vulnerable people in our society.

Second, continued federal overtaxing of Ontario workers and employers through excessive employment insurance premiums heavily burdens Ontario's growth and, in effect, penalizes this province for having a strong economy.

What this means is that while Ottawa continues to collect more taxpayers' money than it requires to meet its obligations, the provinces continue to struggle with the growing costs of the programs that mean the most to our people: health care and education.

This is not a healthy situation for Canada. Ontario is the largest driver of national economic growth. We recognize and accept our responsibility to make significant contributions to equalization payments to help other provinces. But if our growth is slowed by federal policies and decisions, the impacts are felt across the country.

The cumulative impact of all of these factors presented us with a challenge: to develop a balanced fiscal plan in the face of little revenue growth and growing program needs. In the face of this challenge, we know that the sound path we have established over the past seven years is still the right one to follow. This government will continue to make choices that encourage prosperity.

Our government has pursued an aggressive tax cut plan for one very simple reason: tax cuts work. We will continue with tax cuts because we want to take even more steps to promote prosperity in this province. Over the coming months, I will be seeking advice with a view to announcing in next year's budget a new multi-year tax reduction plan, including the next step toward eliminating the capital tax and Ontario's income tax surtax.

In the meantime, because of our short-term fiscal situation, I will introduce legislation to delay, for one year only, the current planned reductions in personal and corporate income tax and the next step of the equity in education tax credit.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Sorry for the interruption, Minister. Order. There is a tradition of allowing the Minister of Finance to give the speech. Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

We will also delay by one year planned reductions in education property tax rates.

Because nearly half of new jobs are created by small business, we will continue the tax cuts for small businesses as currently scheduled. Also, to help people remain in the workforce, I propose to remove another 50,000 modest-income people from the income tax rolls through enrichment of the Ontario tax reduction program.

This means 745,000 Ontarians will not pay any provincial income tax whatsoever. Yet these same Ontarians will continue to pay an estimated \$375 million a year in federal income tax. We believe taking modest-income Ontarians off the tax rolls is the right thing to do. We encourage the federal government to follow our lead.

Tobacco taxation is an important part of our efforts to discourage young people from smoking and to provide more resources for health care. I propose to increase tobacco tax by \$5 per carton, in partnership with the federal government and concurrent with actions by the governments of Quebec and New Brunswick. I also propose to amend the structure of tobacco taxation by exempting tobacco products under the Retail Sales Tax Act and recovering those revenues through an equivalent increase in rates under the Tobacco Tax Act. This will help reduce tax evasion.

1620

Prudence and frugality in its own operations are important contributions that government can make to prosperity.

That's why we've pursued tight fiscal discipline, balanced budgets and debt reduction to provide more resources to priority areas.

We have focused on the most efficient and effective delivery of government programs and services. The result has been that, excluding health care and education, real program spending per person is down close to 30% since 1995-96.

We will continue those efforts because we cannot afford to put our hard-won fiscal discipline at risk.

Effective this year, our business planning process incorporates zero-based budgeting principles. Every ministry is now required to review all of its program spending over a four-year cycle to determine program effectiveness, efficiency and value for money.

We're taking this process further. Minister Tsubouchi has established a parliamentary assistants' committee on program evaluation, chaired by Julia Munro, member for York North. Through its government-wide review, this committee will identify resources for redirection into priority areas.

We will also begin this year to depreciate assets in the same way that a business does, as recommended by the Ontario Financial Review Commission, the Provincial Auditor and my colleague Rob Sampson, the member for Mississauga Centre. This will enable us to determine the true cost of delivering government services and improve our resource allocation.

I also propose to amend legislation to convert legislative spending authority and appropriation control to the

accrual basis of accounting effective next fiscal year. This means that ministry estimates will be accounted for on the same basis as the budget—

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Ecker: —as recommended by the Ontario Financial Review Commission, the Provincial Auditor, and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Speaker, in the next year we will begin to provide more stability and certainty for our public sector partners by moving toward a multi-year approach to budgeting and funding.

We will also look for better ways to incorporate information on results so that users, decision-makers and taxpayers can hold the government and its partners accountable for delivering on their goals and objectives.

Finally, we will table next year's budget before the start of the fiscal year to assist public sector organizations to plan and manage more effectively.

These initiatives may not be the stuff of headlines, but they are the hallmark of a government with a profound respect for transparency and taxpayers' dollars.

Another step is to ensure that government's services and benefits from public assets are provided effectively, efficiently, fairly, safely and in a way that is transparent and accountable to taxpayers.

In some cases, these objectives can only be accomplished through government ownership and direct operation of public assets.

But around the world, there is growing recognition that providing benefits to people no longer requires government to be the sole provider of modern services. In many cases, the government's role is to provide strong controls to protect the public interest.

In the 1900s, the public need in Ontario was electrical power at cost, all across the province. This vision of Sir Adam Beck and successive generations transformed Ontario into the industrial colossus that it is today.

But what started out as power at cost became power at any cost. And the real cost was masked by an approach that priced power below cost.

Now our generation has been handed the bill, a staggering debt of \$38 billion.

Measures to pay for these past costs are being implemented. For example, the debt retirement charge is paying down residual stranded debt in a prudent way over time.

We've also taken steps to meet the needs of a growing economy for reliable power at an affordable price.

The open electricity market promotes competition and consumer choice. The old Ontario Hydro has been separated into distinct generation and transmission companies. A new regulatory body, the Independent Electricity Market Operator, and a strengthened Ontario Energy Board oversee the market.

Hydro One remains part of this plan. As a result of consultation, control of Hydro One will remain in public hands while the government seeks the best way to bring in much-needed private sector discipline and new investment to upgrade our electricity distribution and transmis-

sion infrastructure. Public sector regulation will continue to ensure that ratepayers are protected.

Further steps will be taken. Through SuperBuild, we will continue to review other assets of the government, with a view to improving service and increasing returns. This government's continued commitment to responsible management of our public assets will yield substantial dividends for taxpayers.

Since 1995, this government has invested in those priorities that respond to people's needs and encourage growth, jobs and prosperity.

In this budget, we are choosing to make major investments in health care, in education and in a clean and safe environment: \$1.7 billion more in health care operating spending, over \$500 million more for schools and post-secondary education, a half-billion-dollar commitment to clean and safe drinking water and \$2.7 billion more for SuperBuild's priority infrastructure capital investments.

Overall program spending, excluding expenditures on health, education and the environment, will decline by 2%.

Let me provide some further details. First, on health care:

Universally accessible health care is central to Ontario's quality of life and a key part of why people want to live and work in Ontario.

Since 1995, we have worked relentlessly to build a modern, integrated health care system that can provide accessible, high-quality health care services for all Ontarians. Now, new investments are part of this. In 1995-96, health care operating spending was \$17.6 billion. This year, it is \$25.5 billion, a 7% increase over last year. This includes a 7% increase for hospitals. These increased investments are making a real difference, from increased access to diagnostic services to improved emergency rooms to more long-term-care beds.

These investments will also improve cancer care. Today, I'm pleased to announce increased funding of \$50 million over three years to improve the Ontario Cancer Research Network, doubling the number of patients who can benefit from this research. In addition, we will provide \$40 million for new therapies and treatment techniques and \$30 million to modernize and upgrade cancer radiation equipment.

My colleague Tony Clement, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, will provide details of further improvements to priority programs, hospitals, long-term-care facilities and nursing and medical programs.

We also face major challenges for new capital for hospitals and other facilities. So today I'm announcing an additional \$342 million for health capital, an increase of almost 70% over last year.

While we recognize the need for more capital investment, we also recognize the need to improve how it is invested, where it is invested and the timeliness of those investments. I'm therefore announcing that the government will commission a health capital planning review to recommend ways to streamline our health capital plan-

ning process, measure outcomes based on performance and clarify accountabilities.

1630

We will continue investing in health care, but new money alone will not solve the challenges that face us. If we want to strengthen the system, improve its quality and maintain the principles of the Canada Health Act, as we do, then we must continue to innovate, to renovate and to reform how we deliver services and invest in health care alternatives that work. As Premier Eves said in his 2000 budget, "The amount of money that government spends is not the only measure of good health care. Sustaining the quality of care that Ontarians deserve requires restructuring and reforming our health care system to keep up with new technology and meet the challenges of a growing and aging population."

This challenge is not unique to Ontario. It is shared by all provinces. New treatments, new drugs, new technologies, an aging population, increased expectations and pressure for consumer choice are all increasing costs beyond the ability of provinces to pay, are fuelling demands for reform. These are challenges that no province can meet alone. The federal government, the provinces and service providers must all be part of the solution.

Across Canada, health care spending continues to rise at over 5% per year. Meanwhile, the federal government's contribution is less than it was in 1994-95, when total cash transfers were equal to just 18% of health, education and other social spending. Last year those cash transfers totalled only 14% of spending in these areas. For Ontario this is a shortfall of \$2 billion in federal support for health care this year. We hope that the Romanow commission's report contributes to a stronger future for health care. But regardless of its findings, we already know that health care has to be a shared national priority—for resources and for reforms that will improve the quality of health care outcomes.

Ontarians, indeed all Canadians, express their nationalism through their belief in a universally accessible health care system. Our government shares this basic faith and its citizens' values. We remain willing to work with the federal government, other provinces and our health partners to implement the needed reforms that will secure this vision.

A quality education and lifelong learning are the most fundamental building blocks of future prosperity. Excellence in education is the key to ensuring that every young person in Ontario has equal access to opportunity. Parents, employers and post-secondary institutions all told us that public education had to improve and that Ontario needed to do better. Since 1995, our government has been putting in place a comprehensive plan to improve student learning and achievement.

The key elements include a new and more rigorous curriculum from kindergarten to the end of high school that sets higher standards for our students; province-wide tests that now report regularly on how well students are meeting these standards; improvement strategies that respond to test results, such as the early reading strategy

to raise reading skills for our students in the earlier grades, and the requirement that elementary schools now set improvement targets for higher achievement in early reading; comprehensive standards for teachers' ongoing professional development, performance appraisal in the classroom and an entry-to-the-profession test for all beginning teachers, to ensure that all our teachers have the most up-to-date skills and knowledge. This plan is working and student achievement is improving in both national and international tests.

It is essential that we build on these successes, that we continue to invest in student achievement, that the public education system become more accountable for results.

This spring, Premier Eves announced an additional \$65 million for textbooks and technology-based learning materials. We also provided \$25 million to expand the highly successful early reading strategy from grade 3 to grade 6 and to introduce an early math strategy from junior kindergarten to grade 3.

To keep this focus on school improvement and higher student achievement, I am announcing several new initiatives today.

To further support improved student learning, I am pleased to announce the creation of the student achievement fund. This \$20-million fund will begin by providing \$5,000 to every elementary school principal whose school meets or exceeds its student literacy goals in grade 3. The principal, in consultation with the school council, will be able to invest in their local initiatives that further improve student learning in that school.

Ontario has many excellent and dedicated teachers. While we have set higher standards for teacher performance appraisal in the classroom and professional development, we also know that investment in teacher training improves student learning. In the coming year we will provide \$10 million in funding to develop further professional learning resources for teachers and principals.

We will also invest \$5 million to extend the early math strategy from grade 3 to grade 6 and to improve the teaching skills of elementary schoolteachers in this important area.

Every day, 800,000 Ontario children ride school buses to school, so it is essential that our bus system be safe and efficient. Today I am pleased to announce that an additional \$20 million is being committed to assist with student transportation costs. This will support further development of a new approach to student transportation to ensure that school boards work together to provide safe, effective transportation for their students.

I'm also pleased to announce that we're taking action to upgrade and renew our school facilities, starting with the most pressing needs. First, \$17 million will be invested over two years to help school boards identify the most important renewal needs. Second, we will provide an ongoing increase of \$25 million in school renewal funding, a 10% increase, to enable boards to make the needed repairs and renovations. Finally, we will invest \$10 million this year to upgrade provincial schools for children with disabilities.

The initiatives in education I've announced today mean we are investing 117 million new dollars for our schools. This is in addition to the almost \$350 million in student-focused funding for the coming school year that was announced by my colleague the Minister of Education, Elizabeth Witmer.

1640

On November 3, 2000, Premier Mike Harris launched Ontario's Promise, the partnership for children and youth.

It is based on Ontario's long tradition of volunteer spirit and community service. It supports our children by mobilizing private and public sector organizations to work together to keep five promises to our young people: a healthy start, an adult who cares, safe places to learn and grow, the tools to succeed and a chance to make a difference.

To date, over \$39 million has been committed by the various partners. The Ontario government will continue to support this initiative as Mr Harris, who is now chair of the Ontario's Promise board, works to expand this important program.

Because we live and compete in a global, knowledge-based economy, post-secondary education is central to future prosperity. It plays a critical role in improving Ontario's natural advantage: our highly skilled workforce and the diversity of our population with its contacts all over the world.

To expand and improve post-secondary education, we have invested in new buildings and labs, research, capital and advanced-skills initiatives.

In anticipation of increasing post-secondary participation and the arrival of the double cohort of secondary school graduates at our institutions in 2003, we invested more than \$1 billion to create over 73,000 new student spaces through SuperBuild.

This is the largest infusion of capital dollars since the Robarts and Davis governments created Ontario's modern post-secondary education system. Universities and colleges have committed to making another 36,000 spaces available through operating improvements.

As part of our plan to expand post-secondary capacity, we announced last year the establishment of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Durham region. This new institution will provide innovative and responsive training to allow students to earn a degree, diploma or other credential depending on their program of choice. The budget bill I am tabling today will provide for the legislative framework to be in place for the 2002-03 school year.

Last year, we made a multi-year operating grant commitment to support the expected increase in post-secondary enrolment. But revised projections show a greater than anticipated enrolment over the double-cohort period, so we are increasing our previous multi-year funding commitment to colleges and universities by \$75 million, raising it to \$368 million by 2003-04.

I'm announcing that SuperBuild will work with my colleague Minister Dianne Cunningham and the Ministry

of Training, Colleges and Universities to invite a new round of post-secondary SuperBuild proposals for even more spaces to meet the enrolment increase. We are committed to continuing our partnership with our post-secondary institutions to ensure there will be a place for every willing and qualified Ontario student.

The 25 colleges of applied arts and technology graduate skilled workers from campuses in more than 100 communities. They play a pivotal role in teaching the technical skills for hundreds of occupations.

To help colleges deliver on their role, we are establishing the college equipment and renewal fund. Over the next five years, the fund will provide \$50 million to colleges to support the acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment and learning resources.

We also recognize that northern and rural colleges and universities face financial challenges due to economies of scale and geography. To provide fairness and equity, we will provide \$10 million annually in additional operating funds to northern colleges and those serving rural communities and an additional \$6 million annually to northern universities.

Lack of financial resources should not limit the opportunity to gain a post-secondary education. Through consultations we will design a second phase of the Ontario student opportunity trust fund to assist 400,000 students to attend colleges and universities over the next decade.

The government has modernized our apprenticeship system and increased funding by nearly 50%.

In 1996, the federal government agreed to devolve primary responsibility for training to the provinces, along with nearly \$2 billion from employment insurance funds to pay for employment programs. Six years later, Ontario is the only province where the federal government has refused to sign an agreement. We continue to urge them to sign the labour market development agreement to allow Ontarians to access almost \$600 million in apprenticeship and skills training funds. With or without an agreement, however, Ontario must continue to improve our training and apprenticeship system. We will therefore be making further investments to provide training and apprenticeships for 6,000 to 8,000 additional individuals.

We are committed to ensuring Ontario has the safest, cleanest drinking water, and we will invest whatever resources are required to accomplish this important goal.

Following the tragic events at Walkerton, the government took immediate steps to improve water safety. These included \$18 million for Operation Clean Water to implement tough new regulations for water system operations. Justice Dennis O'Connor's two reports provide a clear road map to finish the job. That's why we've accepted his recommendations and remain fully committed to their implementation. We will be providing additional funding to more than double the number of inspectors to inspect our municipal water systems.

The events of the past week indicate the importance of constant vigilance to ensure that Ontario's water is safe and clean. Should further steps be required, we will take them to ensure our water is safe.

Justice O'Connor estimated that the one-time cost to the province, municipalities and individuals of implementing his recommendations would be up to \$280 million, with ongoing costs of about \$50 million.

I'm pleased to announce that the government will itself commit to an investment of over half a billion dollars in the next two years on clean, safe drinking water for the people of Ontario. This year, we will provide \$245 million, including investments to: help municipalities upgrade their water systems to meet our tough new standards and make improvements to their waste water systems; establish the \$50-million clean water legacy trust and the clean water centre of excellence in Walkerton to provide access to the best scientific knowledge, research and technology and training in the management and monitoring of safe drinking water. These investments will help us begin implementation of O'Connor's part two recommendations, to conduct groundwater studies to support the development of source water protection plans and purchase new environmental and water monitoring equipment for the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

Researchers are on the verge of developing an automated water testing system to enable the immediate detection of biological contamination and the immediate notification of those responsible for maintaining water systems. The province will work with municipalities, researchers and individuals to develop and utilize this innovative technology for the safety and benefit of Ontarians.

1650

I would like to thank Marilyn Churley, the member for Toronto-Danforth, for her proposed legislation to improve the province's drinking water quality. My colleague Chris Stockwell, Minister of Environment and Energy, will work with her to ensure passage of a Safe Drinking Water Act for Ontario, strengthened by Justice O'Connor's recommendations.

He also supports Bill 155, the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act, as the underpinning of a sound legislative approach to ensure safe water. In proceeding with this bill, we recognize, as does Justice O'Connor, that there may be exceptional circumstances where some municipalities may require assistance to keep water rates affordable for users.

In his part two report, Justice O'Connor recognizes that everyone will have to contribute their fair share to the cost of ensuring a safe, clean water supply, and he estimates that his recommendations could cost up to \$19 per household per year.

He also emphasized the importance of watershed planning and management. We agree, and have already taken the first step, through the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, to protect 100% of the moraine's important water resources and significant natural features.

We have endowed the Oak Ridges moraine legacy trust with an initial \$15 million. With support from other governments and the private and non-profit sectors, the trust will fund such activities as securing land, research,

public education and support for the establishment of a continuous Oak Ridges moraine trail.

From the creation of provincial parks to the Niagara Escarpment to Ontario's Living Legacy, Progressive Conservative governments have a long and impressive history of securing our natural heritage and protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

The government is also committed to clean air. I want to thank the select committee on alternative fuels and energy, chaired by my colleague Dr Doug Galt, member for Northumberland, for the many thoughtful and creative recommendations contained in its report.

Consistent with one of the report's recommendations, the Premier recently proposed that biodiesel fuel be exempt from fuel tax in Ontario, an important support for our agriculture industry as well. In addition, I propose to extend the sales tax rebate for hybrid-electric automobiles to cover sport utility vehicles and light trucks equipped with this technology.

Prosperity requires investing in the infrastructure on which our economy and quality of life depend: highways, transit, universities, colleges, hospitals, water systems, community facilities. That's why we created SuperBuild. With our public and private partners, we will invest at least \$20 billion over five years. With the \$2.7 billion allocated in this budget for infrastructure investments, the government and our partners are well on track to meet that target by 2004.

We also recognize that to become more productive and competitive, Ontario must become more innovative. Our goal is to be one of North America's top-performing jurisdictions for research and innovation.

Since 1997, the research and development challenge fund has committed nearly all of its half a billion dollars to fund research projects province-wide.

To promote research excellence and partnership between industry and our research community, I am today announcing a \$250-million expansion over five years to allow the fund to call for a new round of research proposals this fall.

We will also provide a \$300-million enhancement to the Ontario Innovation Trust to help Ontario's universities, community colleges, hospitals and research institutions develop the infrastructure needed for scientific research and technology development. This will bring the government's investment in Ontario's research infrastructure to well over \$1 billion.

The challenge fund and the innovation trust work together to promote research excellence and increase research capacity in Ontario. Including this announcement, the government will have committed a total of \$1.8 billion to innovation through these two programs.

Just last week, we saw how they work together. The government announced a joint investment of more than \$11.5 million from these programs to the Perimeter Institute and the University of Waterloo for projects to support world-class institutes for theoretical physics and quantum computing. In this budget, I am committing an

additional \$5 million per year for three years to support the Perimeter Institute's important work, starting in 2004-05. This will bring our total commitment to over \$25 million.

In the 2000 budget, we made a \$30-million annual commitment to the Ontario research performance fund. This fund is the only ongoing program in Canada solely dedicated to covering the overhead costs of research. We will strengthen our commitment to research by increasing this fund by \$2 million per year and challenge the federal government to provide ongoing and adequate support to cover overhead costs of their sponsored research.

Ontario needs to realize greater social and economic benefits from its R&D investments and the scientific output of its universities, colleges and research hospitals. More successful commercialization requires improved connections between publicly funded research and the marketplace and entrepreneurs who produce products and services that can compete globally.

Today I am announcing a \$161-million renewal for five years of the Ontario centres of excellence program to help our small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms access expertise and commercialize inventions from publicly funded institutions.

Strong linkages between academic research and entrepreneurial firms are essential in the biotechnology sector. More than half of the research and development challenge fund's investments have promoted industry-academic research partnerships in the life sciences. But we need to do more, and we are.

On June 7, Premier Eves announced a \$51-million strategy that will help make Ontario a North American leader in biotechnology by attracting scientists and new investments. It includes a \$20-million investment in the medical and related sciences discovery district in downtown Toronto, which could result in total public and private investment of up to \$300 million.

The strategy also includes a \$30-million biotechnology cluster innovation program to provide grants to develop regional innovation plans and support the development of commercialization centres, research parks and innovation networks in regions across Ontario. The government will also provide seed funding for a bioprocessing institute, which will help make Ontario a leader in the development and manufacture of therapeutic proteins, the basis for promising new medicines. Further details of these initiatives will be announced by my colleague Jim Flaherty, the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation.

1700

Businesses need access to capital to invest in new products and services and in job creation. Investors need financial markets where their money is safe.

I would like to thank Purdy Crawford and the other members of the five-year review committee for their recently published draft report on the Ontario Securities Act. The report points out that the Canadian securities industry faces 13 sets of rules administered by 13 differ-

ent regulators. This places a burden on business and investors operating in different regions of the country and weakens our economic performance. I intend to work with my colleagues across the country to promote the benefits of moving toward national securities regulation.

When we were elected in 1995, Ontarians were facing double-digit increases in auto insurance rates, the result of the flawed policies of previous governments. As a result of our auto insurance reforms in 1996, rates fell for a number of years. However, the market has changed. Both here and across North America, rising health care and vehicle repair costs are contributing to higher rates.

We will address pressures on the system and also consider longer-term solutions to ensure that automobile insurance remains available and affordable to Ontarians. I have asked my parliamentary assistant, Ted Chudleigh, and Rob Sampson, the original author of our 1996 reform package, to complete the consultation that began last year and to return to the government as soon as possible with an action plan.

Mr Speaker, strong cities, towns and rural communities are vital to achieving economic prosperity. We recognize this and have invested in the ability of our communities to contribute to our economic growth and our quality of life.

We have implemented comprehensive and far-reaching reforms to the property tax system, and my colleague, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Chris Hodgson, has introduced the first Municipal Act in Ontario in over a century, to ensure that the legal and financial powers of municipalities will support their modern responsibilities. Under his leadership, we have launched an ambitious partnership initiative, Smart Growth, to promote and manage growth in ways that sustain a strong economy, build strong communities and promote a clean and healthy environment.

We value the contribution that strong cities make to the continuing prosperity of Ontario and Canada, as urban regions across North America compete with one another for global investment and jobs.

We are willing to join the emerging dialogue about a new deal for cities, if it's the right one. We recognize that there are calls for new revenue sources for cities, but there are also calls for greater accountability and reforms to governance. At all levels of government, taxpayers need strong assurances that their money will be spent wisely.

Furthermore, a new deal for cities requires, as a precondition, a new deal between the federal government and Ontario to restore the balance between revenue and funding responsibilities for all levels of government in Canada.

We will continue to work in partnership with municipalities, guided by Smart Growth principles, to ensure our communities have the infrastructure they need to sustain their contribution to our economic prosperity, and we welcome the federal government's participation in this partnership.

In the current fiscal year, we will provide \$520 million for municipal infrastructure, including investments in clean water, public transit and recreational and cultural facilities.

Our municipalities are accountable to their citizens to invest prudently in maintaining and improving their infrastructure. Where municipalities choose to borrow funds to support their investments in infrastructure, we want to ensure that their borrowing costs are as low as possible. We will consult with municipalities on how to lower their financing costs, including through the introduction of tax-free Opportunity Bonds.

This government's plan must allow Ontario's smaller and more remote communities to take advantage of the economic growth seen in larger urban centres. We will therefore consult with the private sector and communities about the conditions that are necessary to support sound business investments. We will draw on their experience and advice to develop legislation that would establish tax-incentive zones in Ontario to do this.

Strong communities need strong leadership. We will fund the Ontario Centre for Municipal Best Practices, a partnership between our government and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

Agriculture is one of Ontario's major industries. But it's also a way of life in rural communities across the province. The future of our family farms and the sustainability of our agri-food industry are challenges that affect us all. The industry is faced with many important issues, including global trade, new technologies and environmental concerns.

Ontario is working with the industry through the Premier's round table discussions. In addition, my colleague Helen Johns, the Minister of Agriculture and Food, is representing Ontario in the discussions leading to a new agricultural policy framework with our provincial and federal counterparts. Ontario is committed to negotiating the best possible deal to meet the needs of our farmers today and for the future.

My colleague Brian Coburn, the associate minister responsible for rural affairs, has emphasized to me the importance of a fair property tax for farmers. I am pleased to announce my intention to bring forward changes recommended by Minister Coburn and my parliamentary assistant, Marcel Beaubien, respecting the property tax treatment of farmland. I look forward to receiving Mr Beaubien's final report on the property tax assessment process in the coming weeks with the goal of improving property tax fairness in other sectors in this province.

Deficits eat away our future growth and undermine public- and private-sector confidence. That is why I am tabling the fourth balanced budget in a row and why I am committed to tabling a balanced budget for 2003-04.

As we look ahead, it is clear that Ontario continues to be Canada's engine of prosperity. Virtually all of the economic indicators are improving.

As a result, private-sector forecasters expect real economic growth to exceed 3% this year and to be more than 4% next year. As it did over the 1996-2000 period, Ontario's dynamic economy will once again register growth exceeding that of the G7 nations over the next two years.

The challenges we successfully faced over the past year would have been much worse without the earlier growth in jobs and prosperity resulting from our plan, and without the stimulus to consumers and investors that we provided through tax cuts.

Some will argue that there is little we can do to influence the global economic forces that buffet our province. But we disagree. The plan we laid out in 1995 has helped Ontario weather this challenging economic storm. All we have to do is remember the last recession of the early 1990s. Ontario was the first into the hole, we went down the deepest, and we were the last out—with an \$11-billion deficit.

Coming out of this downturn, our citizens are benefiting from \$11 billion a year in tax relief, our prudent fiscal management has kept our budget balanced, and our resources are focused on the priorities of Ontarians—health care, education and a clean and safe environment.

Our government has put in place the right fundamentals for growth and prosperity, as we promised we would. The skills, the creativity, the courage and the hard work of Ontarians will do the rest.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the minister have a bill?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Speaker, I would request that the House revert to introduction of bills.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

KEEPING THE PROMISE FOR GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT (2002 BUDGET), 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LE RESPECT DE L'ENGAGEMENT D'ASSURER LA CROISSANCE ET LA PROSPÉRITÉ (BUDGET DE 2002)

Mrs Ecker moved first reading of the following bill:

An Act to implement the measures contained in the 2002 Ontario Budget and to implement other initiatives of the Government of Ontario / Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le budget de l'Ontario de 2002 ainsi que d'autres initiatives du gouvernement de l'Ontario.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The minister for a short statement?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): No, that's fine.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Mr Stockwell has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1714.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

| Constituency Circonscription | Member/Party Député(e) / Parti | Constituency Circonscription | Member/Party Député(e) / Parti |
|--|--|---|---|
| Algoma-Manitoulin | Brown, Michael A. (L) | Guelph-Wellington | Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC) Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance |
| Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot | McMeekin, Ted (L) | | |
| Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford | Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) | Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant | Barrett, Toby (PC) |
| Beaches-East York | Prue, Michael (ND) | Haliburton-Victoria-Brock | Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale | Gill, Raminder (PC) | | Chudleigh, Ted (PC) |
| Brampton Centre / -Centre | Spina, Joseph (PC) | Halton | Agostino, Dominic (L) |
| Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga | Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée | Hamilton East / -Est | Bountrogianni, Marie (L) |
| Brant | Levac, Dave (L) | Hamilton Mountain | Christopherson, David (ND) |
| Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound | Murdoch, Bill (PC) | Hamilton West / -Ouest | Dombrowsky, Leona (L) |
| Burlington | Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs | Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington | |
| Cambridge | Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) | Huron-Bruce | Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation |
| Chatham-Kent Essex | Hoy, Pat (L) | | Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Davenport | Ruprecht, Tony (L) | Kenora-Rainy River | Gerretsen, John (L) |
| Don Valley East / -Est | Caplan, David (L) | | Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC) |
| Don Valley West / -Ouest | Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles | Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation |
| Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey | Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales | Kitchener Centre / -Centre | Beaubien, Marcel (PC) |
| Durham | O'Toole, John R. (PC) | Kitchener-Waterloo | Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports |
| Eglinton-Lawrence | Colle, Mike (L) | | Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique |
| Elgin-Middlesex-London | Peters, Steve (L) | Lambton-Kent-Middlesex | |
| Erie-Lincoln | Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises | Lanark-Carleton | Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| Essex | Crozier, Bruce (L) | Leeds-Grenville | Wood, Bob (PC) |
| Etobicoke Centre / -Centre | Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie, leader parlementaire du gouvernement | | Mazzilli, Frank (PC) |
| Etobicoke North / -Nord | Hastings, John (PC) | London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord | Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture |
| Etobicoke-Lakeshore | Kells, Morley (PC) | London West / -Ouest | |
| Glengarry-Prescott-Russell | Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L) | London-Fanshawe | |
| | | Markham | |

| Constituency Circonscription | Member/Party Député(e) / Parti | Constituency Circonscription | Member/Party Député(e) / Parti |
|--|--|--|--|
| Mississauga Centre / -Centre Mississauga East / -Est | Sampson, Rob (PC) DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl (PC) Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées | Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest | Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Associate Minister of Health and Long- Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée |
| Mississauga South / -Sud Mississauga West / -Ouest Nepean-Carleton | Marland, Margaret (PC) Snobelen, John (PC) Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Associate Minister of Francophone Affairs, chief government whip, deputy House leader / ministre associé des Affaires francophones, whip en chef du gouvernement, leader parlementaire adjoint | Scarborough-Agincourt Scarborough-Rouge River Simcoe North / -Nord Simcoe-Grey | Phillips, Gerry (L) Curling, Alvin (L) Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines |
| Niagara Centre / -Centre Niagara Falls Nickel Belt Nipissing Northumberland Oak Ridges Oakville | Kormos, Peter (ND) Maves, Bart (PC) Martel, Shelley (ND) McDonald, AL (PC) Galt, Doug (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président | St Catharines St Paul's Stoney Creek | Bradley, James J. (L) Bryant, Michael (L) Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail Cleary, John C. (L) |
| Oshawa | Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles | Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh Sudbury Thornhill | Bartolucci, Rick (L) Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement McLeod, Lyn (L) Gravelle, Michael (L) |
| Ottawa Centre / -Centre Ottawa-Orléans | Patten, Richard (L) Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement | Thunder Bay-Atikokan Thunder Bay- Superior North / -Nord Timiskaming-Cochrane Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James | Ramsay, David (L) Bisson, Gilles (ND) Smitherman, George (L) |
| Ottawa South / -Sud | McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition | Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale Toronto-Danforth Trinity-Spadina | Churley, Marilyn (ND) Marchese, Rosario (ND) Sorbara, Greg (L) Arnott, Ted (PC) |
| Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean | Guzzo, Garry J. (PC) | Vaughan-King-Aurora Waterloo-Wellington Whitby-Ajax | Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation |
| Ottawa-Vanier Oxford Parkdale-High Park Parry Sound-Muskoka Perth-Middlesex Peterborough Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge | Boyer, Claudette (Ind) Hardeman, Ernie (PC) Kennedy, Gerard (L) Miller, Norm (PC) Johnson, Bert (PC) Stewart, R. Gary (PC) Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances | Willowdale | Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones |
| Prince Edward-Hastings Renfrew-Nipissing- Pembroke Sarnia-Lambton Sault Ste Marie Scarborough Centre / -Centre Scarborough East / -Est | Parsons, Ernie (L) Conway, Sean G. (L) Di Cocco, Caroline (L) Martin, Tony (ND) Mushinski, Marilyn (PC) Gilchrist, Steve (PC) | Windsor West / -Ouest Windsor-St Clair York Centre / -Centre York North / -Nord York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston York West / -Ouest | Pupatello, Sandra (L) Duncan, Dwight (L) Kwinter, Monte (L) Munro, Julia (PC) Cordiano, Joseph (L) Sergio, Mario (L) |

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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