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Tuesday 19 November 2002

Mardi 19 novembre 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 November 2002

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The House met at 1845.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Administrator of Ontario has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): The following are the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 60, An Act to give victims a greater role at parole hearings, to hold offenders accountable for their actions, to provide for inmate grooming standards, and to make other amendments to the Ministry of Correctional Services Act / Projet de loi 60, Loi visant à accroître le rôle des victimes aux audiences de libération conditionnelle et à responsabiliser les délinquants à l'égard de leurs actes, prévoyant des normes relatives à la toilette des détenus et apportant d'autres modifications à la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels;

Bill 131, An Act to facilitate the making, recognition and variation of interjurisdictional support orders / Projet de loi 131, Loi visant à faciliter le prononcé, la reconnaissance et la modification des ordonnances alimentaires d'exécution réciproque;

Bill 148, An Act to provide for declarations of death in certain circumstances and to amend the Emergency Plans Act / Projet de loi 148, Loi prévoyant la déclaration de décès dans certaines circonstances et modifiant la Loi sur les mesures d'urgence;

Bill 149, An Act to extend the red light cameras pilot projects to November 20, 2004 or for an indefinite period / Projet de loi 149, Loi visant à proroger jusqu'au 20 novembre 2004 ou indéfiniment les projets pilotes ayant trait aux dispositifs photographiques reliés aux feux rouges;

Bill 187, An Act to protect the rights of agricultural employees / Projet de loi 187, Loi visant à protéger les droits des employés agricoles.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEEPING THE PROMISE FOR A STRONG ECONOMY ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LE RESPECT DE L'ENGAGEMENT D'ASSURER UNE ÉCONOMIE SAINE (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 18, 2002, on the motion for second reading of Bill 198, An Act to implement Budget measures and other initiatives of the Government / Projet de loi 198, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires et d'autres initiatives du gouvernement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to debate Bill 198, An Act to implement Budget measures and other initiatives of the Government, also known as Keeping a Promise for a Strong Economy Act, 2002. Since 1995 the government has worked to advance policies that foster a strong economic environment in which Ontario's communities can thrive. We did this through a number of measures, namely sound economic and fiscal management, reducing taxes, balancing the budget, paying down the debt, reducing red tape and removing barriers to growth.

I am proud to say that Ontario has achieved great economic success since 1995. This has been demonstrated in record economic growth and job creation. Over the last seven years, over 980,000 new jobs have been created, the best job creation record in Canada.

Strong cities, towns and rural communities are vital to achieving continued economic prosperity. Among the many initiatives included in this act is legislation that, if approved, would allow the province to provide opportunity bonds and create tax incentive zones for municipalities facing challenges attracting investment and jobs. These programs were first announced in the 2002 throne speech. At that time the government announced its intention to introduce legislation that would create tax-exempt opportunity bonds to support local infrastructure investments and the implementation of Smart Growth strategies.

In the 2002 Ontario budget the government reaffirmed its intention to move ahead with developing opportunity bonds and tax incentive zones. At the same time, the government also announced it would consult with stakeholders on the design and implementation of opportunity bonds and tax incentive zones. Both these initiatives complement the Smart Growth agenda of helping municipalities with their infrastructure needs and becoming more attractive to investment and as a good place to live.

For the members who are not familiar with them, I would like to take a few minutes to describe these programs. Opportunity bonds would be a tool to raise lower-cost financing that would assist Ontario municipalities that need to make significant improvements to their infrastructure over the coming years. Opportunity bonds would allow municipalities to finance long-term capital projects with long-term financing, therefore providing some stability to municipal financing. Municipalities would also have access to lower-cost financing to fund their infrastructure needs. The bonds would also benefit investors in that they would offer investors an income tax exemption on the interest earned on the bonds, as well as an attractive rate of return with a large degree of safety. Opportunity bonds would provide Ontarians with an opportunity to invest in the quality of life in their communities, thereby making an investment for themselves and their families.

This act would allow the province to put in place a program that would allow a municipality to invest prudently in improving and maintaining their infrastructure. Opportunity bonds are a form of debt financing that is widely used in the United States by state, city and county governments, as well as other public bodies, to raise money for capital infrastructure projects such as schools, highways, hospitals, water and sewer improvements, and so on.

1850

The government of this province sees this program as an opportunity to enable municipalities to access long-term debt at substantially lower interest rates regardless of their size or location in this province. The government also believes that a partnership between all levels of government and local communities is important in designing a financing tool that would allow municipalities to efficiently finance their projects to build healthy and prosperous communities.

We also encourage the federal government to support municipalities in renewing and expanding their infrastructure by joining Ontario as a partner in providing a tax exemption for opportunity bonds.

More and better infrastructure would serve to make a community more attractive as a destination for investment in job creation. We believe the benefits provided in opportunity bonds would be attractive to both investors and municipalities.

The government further showed its support of the opportunity bonds program when Premier Eves announced, at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference in August, that the province would create the Ontario Municipal Economic Infrastructure Financing Authority. This financing authority is a new body that will control a pool of capital that municipalities will be able to access. The authority would be endowed with $1 billion in initial capital funding, along with $120 million through the Ontario Clean Water Agency that will be available for financing municipal sewage and water infrastructure. Supporting this act will also facilitate the creation of the Ontario Municipal Economic Infrastructure Financing Authority, once again demonstrating that the province supports the success of municipalities.

As the government plans for the future, it is also moving forward with creating tax incentive zones for communities experiencing challenges in attracting investment in jobs. Establishing tax incentive zones in Ontario is another important initiative that would stimulate investment in Ontario communities. By declaring a community a tax incentive zone, businesses would be encouraged to invest, locate or expand there to help support business and economic growth.

A number of other jurisdictions have these programs.

When we're talking about tax incentive zones, I can recall, a number of years ago, having spent nine years as mayor of the town of Petrolia and six years on council, that on many occasions we were approached by different business and commercial entities with regard to starting a new plant or a new facility. Being close to the American border, we were always in competition with the state of Michigan, the state of Ohio and, to a lesser extent, the state of Indiana. All of these states had tax incentive zones. It made it very difficult for a community in Ontario, especially a rural community that is undergoing tremendous demographic changes, whereby the young people are leaving the community and businesses are disappearing or they're not growing. It made it very difficult for a community to offer incentives in order to compete with jurisdictions across the border.

I know there is some disenchantment and some disagreement among some of the members on the other side of the House with regard to tax incentive zones, but I think they can be a tremendous tool for small, rural and northern communities in order to attract investment, to maintain the local economic activity and to create jobs and opportunities for young people so we can maintain them in small and northern communities. It is a challenge. Consequently, as a government, we have to make sure that we provide the tools that are necessary to make sure that our municipalities will be competitive, not only today but in the future.

The United States and Britain have tax incentive zones to assist their communities in achieving economic growth. They have realized, as a government, that there is merit to this type of zone. I feel strongly that it has been long overdue that we should have this type of economic activity and incentive in the province of Ontario. In the United States, 41 state governments, including New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Ohio, have established tax incentive programs to encourage business investment and job creation in targeted communities. In

Canada, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador have tax incentive programs to encourage private sector investment and job creation.

The government is committed to working with municipalities to develop its own made-in-Ontario approach that incorporates the best practices from programs in other jurisdictions. I had the opportunity about five or six weeks ago to lead the consultation process with opportunity bonds and tax incentive zones in the community of Timmins. There were representations from the private sector, and certainly businesses and industries in the area were very well represented. The municipalities were extremely well represented. There were representations from all the municipalities in northeastern Ontario. We had a very interesting discussion.

As we know, there will be six tax incentive pilot projects across the province. There is no doubt that the challenges facing northeastern Ontario are somewhat different than the challenges facing northwestern Ontario or southwestern Ontario or eastern Ontario. Each area of the province has its own demographic, has its own problems, has its own challenges. Therefore, it is imperative that the government, as it has done, consult with different community leaders and business leaders across the province to ensure that we design pilot projects that will cater to the needs of the people who live in those areas, because I do not believe that one pilot project or one solution will fit all of the province of Ontario. The province is too varied, the economic activities in the province are way too diversified, and consequently we need different solutions for different areas of the province.

The government is also committed to working with municipalities to develop its own made-in-Ontario approach that incorporates the best practices from programs in other jurisdictions. The tax incentive zone program is based on a foundation of five principles:

(1) Opportunity: the belief that all Ontarians should have the opportunity to succeed regardless of where they live.

(2) Innovation: a commitment to support entrepreneurship and new ideas that build on local strengths and success.

(3) Partnerships for growth: a commitment to strong community-based partnerships involving all levels of government, business and community residents and organizations to achieve renewal and growth through locally developed economic development solutions.

The next one is commitment to the future of Ontario's communities, giving young people the opportunity to live, work, raise a family and give back to the communities where they grew up.

The last one is enhanced competitiveness, a long-term strategy to improve the ability of local economies to compete for jobs and investment in the global economy.

1900

I must add that all of these pilot programs should be sustainable, not only in the short term but in the long term, because too many times we see grants, loans and money provided by different levels of government to programs that are not sustainable in the long term. I think the taxpayers of Ontario have had enough experience over the past number of years with these types of programs that they expect more from their governments today. I think it's the responsible thing to do. Whatever programs we undertake must be sustainable.

To develop the program, the government has been consulting with community and business leaders since early September on how to design and implement a program that works for communities experiencing challenges in attracting investment and jobs. We recognize that many communities have been actively pursuing economic development opportunities and would welcome the opportunity to use tax incentive programs to further their efforts.

In August, Premier Eves also announced at AMO that, in addition to the consultations, this program would initially be developed, as I pointed out, through six pilot projects. The experience gained from the pilots, along with the advice received through the consultations with business and community leaders, will allow the government to design a tax incentive zone program that best supports the economic development and job creation needs of communities across the province.

The Ministry of Finance invited all interested municipalities to submit expressions of interest in hosting a pilot project. The positive response the government has had to tax incentive zones is exemplified by the great number of responses we have received to the pilot projects through the expressions of interest.

Opportunity bonds and tax incentive zones are tools that, if approved by this Legislature, would support the implementation of the government's Smart Growth strategies to build strong, vibrant and prosperous communities across the province. These programs demonstrate the government's innovative efforts to build communities across Ontario by encouraging public and private partners to invest in municipal infrastructure investment.

Healthy and growing communities are vital to achieving economic prosperity. We recognize this, and with this act we are investing in the ability of our communities to contribute to our economic growth and quality of life.

On this bill, I would also like to refer to a couple of items, if I have time. I know I don't have an awful lot of time left. Part I of the bill, and I know it's a fairly large bill, deals with the Assessment Act. Some people say the bill is very complicated. I think if we take the time to go through and even if we scan it fairly quickly, this amendment to the act—currently subsection 31(1) of the Assessment Act requires the clerk of a municipality to add to the collector's roll any land that has been omitted in whole or in part from the roll in the circumstances described in that subsection.

Amendments permit the minister to prescribe exceptions to this requirement. The amendments are made effective as of January 1, 2002. References through the act to "residential/farm property class" are changed to "residential property class" and references to "farmlands property class" are changed to "farm property class."

That seems to be awfully complicated, but I had the opportunity to do some revisions and consultations with stakeholders across the province on property assessment. In the report, this is one of the recommendations that we made, because there was some confusion by people living on farms with regard to the way their properties were described. We listened to what the stakeholders were saying, we catered to their concern and we tried to solve the problem. Consequently, when you get your new assessment form, which most people will probably be receiving in the next couple of weeks, it will be clear as to when a farm is a farm, and a residence on a piece of farmland is a residence. There will be a clear distinction so that people will not be confused.

There's also another part in the bill, and if I have time—I know I'm really running out of time. In part 16 in the same report, we recommended that—under the old act, municipalities could charge 25% of the residential rate for agricultural land. The amendment to this act will give municipalities the flexibility to charge less than 25% of the residential rate for farmland. I'm out of time but I urge—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions or comments?

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I'm pleased to be able to make some comments on the speech that we just heard in the Legislature tonight. In this bill there are a couple of things that are of very keen interest to me. One that the member had talked about are these tax incentive zones that are being discussed, and I know the government is having a consultation across the north. The problem the government is going to be looking into is that right now they've got municipalities competing against themselves all across rural and northern Ontario.

I certainly propose, as one of the six prototypes, that maybe they take a look at a riding such as mine, which is very representative of rural northeastern Ontario. I think you have to take large areas or zones, like the incentive talks about, although a lot of us are very curious as to what tax incentives there might be there. We in northern Ontario have distinct disadvantages compared to other parts of the province. I see the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka is here, and even though his area is included as northern Ontario, a lot of us represent areas quite north and away from the major markets in North America and have a lot of disadvantages. So we'd be very curious to see what sort of tax incentives were there, and also how they would be applied.

For instance, are they only going to be applied to new industries starting to set up in one of these zones, or will it apply to all existing businesses? That would be a big headache for the government. When you do establish these zones and try these prototypes across the province, I think you'd better look at, in order to be fair, making sure that everybody who is doing business there has the same competitive advantage. I would certainly say that there are parts of rural Ontario right across this province, especially parts in the north that I represent, that need any advantage we can get to try to keep jobs in our areas.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I wanted to follow up on the comments from the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane, because he's absolutely right and comment to the points put on the table tonight here in the House on these tax incentive zones. I think it needs to be explained to people just exactly what this initiative is all about.

My read of it, very briefly, in quick fashion, is that this government is still further driving taxes down for corporations and businesses, but in this instance not doing it themselves but allowing municipalities to do it; you know, not telling people—I'm sure municipalities understand and will soon find that in fact what it means is a reduced tax base for them to continue to provide the infrastructure, which is probably their best bet in terms of providing advantage to industry that might want to come and set up. So I counsel caution on this.

I was at an Algoma District Municipal Association meeting that you were at just a short while ago in Wawa, where I counselled the members there to look at this very carefully, because it will indeed reduce the already meagre tax base that exists to cover the downloaded costs of providing municipal services. It's very complicated in that we're not sure how that will work out in terms of the already existing businesses. Will they get the same incentives? Will they get the same tax reductions as the new businesses coming in? It will create all kinds of difficulties.

I would suggest to the government that if they really wanted to help northern Ontario, which is the area I'm concerned about most because our economy has shrunk big time over the tenure of this government, they'd return some of the vehicles that were already in existence when they got the government that they wiped out, like the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, like the northern Ontario heritage fund.

1910

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I want to congratulate Mr Beaubien, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, who has actually been a one-man commission for the past three years-plus with regard to property tax assessment across the province of Ontario. I think he should be congratulated, because at least four of his proposals, four of his initiatives, are contained in this bill tonight. He talked about some, with the tax incentive zones and the farm assessment clarification as two examples. I want to congratulate the member for the job that he's done with regard to property tax assessment across the province of Ontario.

Other members have certain problems that they uncover with property tax assessment in their own ridings. This member has been very eager and quick to traverse the province to go and meet with people to find out what their concerns are, where there's a quirk and a problem with the property tax assessment. He came down to Niagara-on-the-Lake, for an example, with the problem we were having with property tax assessment with regard to bed and breakfasts. I know he's been down to St Catharines, where we have a problem with commercial assessment in the city core. So he's been very active throughout the province.

He has filed one very comprehensive report and is about to file another. I know, as I said at the outset, there are four items in this bill that come from the member's one-man commission on property tax assessment. So he needs to be congratulated for that. I thank him on behalf of the people of Ontario and the people in my riding.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Beaubien: I would like to thank the members from Timiskaming-Cochrane, Sault Ste Marie and Niagara Falls for their comments.

With regard to the comments the member from Sault Ste Marie made, I know that this issue is probably quite sensitive and certainly close to his heart, because I know that his community has suffered through downsizing of many industries.

When he talks about not giving the opportunities to municipalities to give tax credit, I don't know what the final model is going to look like within these six pilot projects. But in the research I have done across the United States and some of the provinces in Canada on tax incentive zones, it's basically a locally driven initiative. So the community decides what type of industry or commercial entity it would like to have locate within their boundaries, and they're the ones who decide the levels of initiatives that they want offered.

Mr Martin: You make it sound so easy.

Mr Beaubien: If the member from Sault Ste Marie has difficulties with regard to having sound, sustainable commercial and industrial entities, I wonder how his constituents in Sault Ste Marie feel when he comments that big, bad Stelco, which has an awful lot of money from all the taxpayers of the province of Ontario, not only on one occasion but more than one occasion—I don't have any problem with that, in order to maintain a viable northern economy. But I fail to see where his rationale is with regard to, say, big, bad Stelco; big, bad St Mary's pulp and paper; big, bad Dubreuil Lumber—

Mr Martin: Algoma Steel.

Mr Beaubien: I don't know what they call it now. But they are the people who create economic activity.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I am very pleased to join this debate this evening. Just to follow up the last discussion on tax incentive zones, yes, there are some municipalities that will take advantage of this. But it could also be interpreted by some as really being sort of a race—

Mr Beaubien: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: When I mentioned the comments from the member from Sault Ste Marie, I think I did say "Stelco." It should be Algoma Steel.

The Acting Speaker: You're asking to correct your own record. Good.

Mr Gerretsen: Well, thank you very much. You know, that's one of the very first times in this House in the last seven years that I've actually seen a government member get up and say that he was wrong about something. This government is not known for admitting that it's wrong about anything. So I appreciate that from the member from Lambton.

My comment with respect to tax incentive zones is, yes, I know some municipalities want it, but I think it's also something that may be somewhat dangerous to get involved in, because basically, when you get right down to it, money is being taken out of the municipal tax base in one way or another. We all know the tremendous strains that municipalities are under right now when it comes to providing services and finances that are required for those services.

I'm certainly one person who believes in giving municipalities the power to get involved in pilot projects of this nature. I happen to believe that most municipalities elect councils that the people of that area obviously want, or else they wouldn't have elected them, and that those individuals are just as smart or just as dumb as the people that we elect to this level. I don't think that because you are elected to a so-called higher level of government, whether it be the provincial or federal level, it makes you any smarter a person in trying to figure out all these various rules and regulations and concepts that are out there.

I know it's something that most municipalities have been asking for, for a long period of time, but I would just warn municipalities to be careful with it, because if it becomes a race between municipalities to attract a certain industry, to give up certain tax incentives, which come out of that local municipal tax base, then I don't think anybody wins in the long run. I think we've got to be very careful with the way that's being handled.

I think that the people of Ontario have to understand that we are once again dealing with a massive bill here which implements the budget that was announced back in June. It's a 146-page bill that deals with dozens upon dozens of acts and changes to acts etc, but there are two or three fundamental principles contained in the bill that I think the people of Ontario should be aware of.

The first thing is that it does away with or temporarily sets aside is the so-called Taxpayer Protection Act. Remember, that was the big act that was passed by this government that was never going to allow deficit budgeting again. I mean, they were so sincere about it, and I'm sure a lot of the people of Ontario thought, "You know, this is a good thing." Well, here we are—and is it year one or year two?—that the government has deemed it necessary to basically set that law aside and say, "Yes, we intended that two years ago or last year, and we're not going to be able to live up to it at this given time," when for most people the general economy has not been that bad. It's not as if we're involved in a tremendous economic downturn, like we were, for example, in the early 1990s.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Except in northern Ontario.

Mr Gerretsen: So the question is, if we're doing it under these kind of circumstances, and as my seatmate has said, "except for northern Ontario"—and I realize that there have always been significant problems in northern Ontario with respect to the economy. But certainly for Ontario as a whole, we are not involved in a tremendous economic downturn. Some people may not be doing as well in the stock market or pension plans and things like that. I realize that, but generally speaking, the economy is still moving along quite well. And yet we're setting aside this act, which was sort of the hallmark of this government's commitment to the people.

1920

The other issue, of course, deals with the tax cuts they announced earlier with respect to income tax, and the corporate taxes as well. Let me be absolutely sure about this, Speaker: we were against those tax cuts right from the beginning. We have always said it is much more important for us to build a competitive society here in Ontario that can compete with people across the world. It is necessary to invest in education so that our young people can have the best possible skills when they go into the work world, to have the best health care program available, because we know our health care program, when you compare it with what is available even with many American companies, is so much cheaper to the workforce in the long run. It is important to invest in the people of Ontario. That's where the money should have been put in the first place. So I for one don't mind the fact that they are not going to live up to their promises of the tax cuts that they made both in the income tax area and the corporate tax area. But let me also make absolutely certain to the people of Ontario that they have broken their promises to them once again. There's absolutely no question about that.

There are all sorts of issues I could take with respect to different aspects of this bill. There are just two of them I want to highlight, and I'm glad to see the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is in the House this evening.

I would like to speak for just a moment about a press release that was issued today by the Ontario Nurses' Association. It states, and I'm quoting from the press release, "Government Misleads Public on Senior Care." That's what this press release states. You may recall that earlier this month or late last month, a major announcement was made that we're going to be making an investment of money for more nurses and more personal care workers in our long-term-care homes. We all know that right now we rank absolutely last in a study of 10 comparable jurisdictions in the amount of nursing care that we are able to provide mainly to our seniors in nursing homes, but there are also other vulnerable people who aren't seniors as yet.

The government felt it had to do something as a result of the 55,000 postcards they received whereby people were basically saying, "It's not good enough that seniors only get one bath a week. It's not good enough that they only get an average of four minutes of help to get up in the morning and get down to breakfast. More needs to be done." So the first thing the government tried to do was to get it from the seniors themselves by imposing a 15% increase, which in most cases meant an increase of something like $230 per month for people who are in their high 80s or early 90s, people who are living totally on fixed incomes, and they simply couldn't afford it. There was a major public outcry. So the government, to its credit, went partway back and said, OK, it was going to be 15% over three years.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: Well, this deals with this budget bill, because this should have been in the budget.

Anyway, the government made an announcement and said they were going to put more money in, and they did put some more money in—I'll give them credit—as a result of the tremendous outpouring of cries from people saying, "We're not treating our seniors in our senior citizens' homes and homes for the aged properly and correctly, the way they should be treated."

What's happened to this money? According to the minister at the time, 2,400 nurses and personal care workers were going to be hired as a result of this input. But the Ontario Nurses' Association put together a list of about 15 to 20 homes for the aged and nursing homes that weren't able to hire any more staff because basically the money was used to fund deficits, and this is particularly in the case of municipal homes and charitable homes. These organizations were running a deficit. I know what the ministry will say: "Well, that money should have been used to hire more staff." The problem is that these homes couldn't, because they were running a deficit already. They couldn't do it with the lack of funding that they had received from the government to start with.

I could give you all sorts of examples here. At the Sun Parlour Home in the county of Essex, the increase in the nursing and personal care per diem rate will be applied to reduce the projected shortfall for the balance of the year. At Glen Stor Dun Lodge, the increase of funds for the nursing and personal care envelope will not be used to increase staff but to basically fund a deficit as well. At Hastings Centennial Manor, the new funding will be used to partially offset the current operating deficit for nursing and personal care. Finlandia Hoivakoti—I hope I said that correctly; I visited that home here in Toronto, as a matter of fact.

Mr Bartolucci: Sudbury.

Mr Gerretsen: Is that in Sudbury? There's a similar home on Eglinton Avenue here in Toronto that I visited about two months ago. The increased funding is being used to reduce the deficit. At Rainycrest, funding is being used to cover their budget shortfall. At the Don Mills home for the aged, half the funding is being used to cover the current deficit. And I could go on and on and on.

Obviously, somebody in the ministry is going to blame these homes and is going to say that money should have been used to hire new support workers etc. I think the homes did the right thing. If they were running a deficit and being fiscally responsible, they used that money for the deficit.

The point is simply that even with this influx of new money, we are still last in 10 jurisdictions. The 10 jurisdictions that were studied, to give people some idea, were two other provinces in Canada, some US states and some countries in Europe, all of which have a population base of roughly 10 million to 11 million people, except for the other two Canadian provinces, which of course is our population base in Ontario. All of those situations that were studied in the government-funded study, the Pricewaterhouse study, clearly indicated that we in Canada, we in Ontario, spend less for nursing care on average per resident in one of these homes than anywhere else.

I think the government, rather than coming up with these schemes of income tax cuts and corporate tax cuts, which it has had to delay in any event, should have taken some of that money in its past tax cuts and put it into high-quality personal and nursing care for seniors who are basically not able to look after themselves.

I just wanted to bring that forward, because that press release was just issued today. The Ontario Nurses' Association is having a major conference downtown, and they felt that strongly about it. There are no more personal care workers and nurses hired by these homes. They're mainly using it in order to buy more supplies or deal with their deficit situations.

There is another section in the bill that is very interesting—it's already been referred to in the House a number of times; there have been questions about it during question period—and that deals with the Pension Benefits Act. It's the Conrad Black clause. I know this can all be very confusing to the people out there, but basically what it means—I'll just read you the section: "An employer ... as may be prescribed may apply under this section to the superintendent," and that's the superintendent of pension plans or the superintendent of finance, I'm not quite sure what his title is, "for the superintendent's consent to the payment of surplus to the employer ... out of a continuing pension plan or a pension plan being wound up in whole or in part."

What that basically means is that there are amendments in this bill that allow one party to a pension contract—namely, the employer—to apply to the superintendent to have any surplus in that pension fund returned or given to the employer when the plan is being wound up. The employees are saying, "Look, that isn't just the employer's money, it's our money as well. In effect, whatever has happened to that plan by way of increases in size etc is a deferred wage to us." It is a benefit that should be coming to them.

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It's the same argument the OMERS people have. I'm sure, Mr Speaker, that you and I have heard from many retired firefighters and police officers and other municipal workers who were somewhat miffed at the fact that as the result of an arrangement between the OMERS board and the municipalities and the government, in effect a holiday was given whereby no one had to contribute to this plan for a certain period of time because the OMERS pension fund had done so well as an investment fund over the years. The argument by the retired individuals is, "Look, it was our contributions over the years that basically caused this plan to do so well. It was our money that was invested and did extremely well," in the stock market or wherever the investments were over the years, "and we should be getting the benefit." We've heard that argument from many retired individuals.

I know there are some people within OMERS, particularly the employees who have just started working for, let's say, a municipality, who haven't made any contributions at all for two or three years and were immediately, in effect, given a benefit. It was also a major benefit to the employers, namely, the municipalities, because they didn't have to put in their half of the pension contribution either, so that was a big, big benefit to the municipalities as well.

This Conrad Black clause is something similar; it works exactly the same way. The employer in this case is basically saying, "If there's a surplus in the pension plan, it should be coming to us, and I can make the application as a result of the changes in section 79.1 under this act, if it's passed," and I don't think that's fair. It's my understanding that since 1988 up until the end of this year, agreements have always been reached between the employees and the employers as to how excess funds in pension plans when they were wound up should be handled between the employees and the employer. That is being done away with, if this law were to pass, by one stroke of the pen. That's not fair to the employees and there has to be another way to deal with it.

I know the Minister of Finance has said in this House during question period, "Oh, but that's not what it's saying at all." All I can tell you is that we've had individuals who are very knowledgeable in these areas look at this and we've received dozens of e-mails and letters from individuals who are extremely concerned about that. I would say that this is a matter that affects enough people out there that it really should almost be a stand-alone piece of legislation. It should not be contained in a massive omnibus bill like this.

There are a number of other things that we could talk about. I'll give Mike Harris credit for one thing. I hate doing that, but I'll give him credit for one thing. To the general public he was perceived as at least keeping his word on some of the major issues that he brought forward. I don't happen to agree with that, but that's the perception that was left out there. I don't believe, for example, that when he said he wasn't going to close a hospital and then he closed a whole series of hospitals through his hospital restructuring commission, that he kept his word. Or when he said, "Well, if we do close hospitals," once he made that statement, "we're going to take the money we're going to save from the closing of hospitals and put that money toward community care." And that hasn't happened either; it just hasn't happened.

I would still challenge the Minister of Health to come up with a figure as to how much money the government has actually saved as a result of all the hospital beds that have closed since 1995. Let's get a figure for a year for that and let's see if that quantity of money, whatever it is—whether it's $100 million, $200 million, $300 million, $500 million or $600 million or maybe into the billion dollars—has actually gone into the community care access system, because that was the promise that was made by the Premier, by the Minister of Health, and by Duncan Sinclair, the health services restructuring commissioner, who basically said that if you're going to restructure, that's what you have to do. Now that it's done, or a lot of it has been done, we don't talk about it any more. Yet we know there are many people who need the community care access services out there—home care etc—who are now being denied those services because that money didn't flow into that. But at least the perception out there was that he kept his word. Well, we know now that he didn't, and this bill probably says it better than any other bill: the main piece of legislation, that all the government members were so excited about, that the taxpayers were going to be forever protected from deficits, has in effect been breeched and broken by this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I want to compliment the member from Kingston and the Islands on his remarks. He gave a good, thorough analysis of a number of the areas that are of concern to us in the NDP caucus and I think should be of concern to all Ontarians.

In particular, I hope people understand that the effect of Bill 198 is to put the lie to one of the major planks that this government has run on, and that is that if you cut taxes governments win because the economic activity that ensues generates more tax revenue than the income tax or corporate tax that has been forgone. Member after member has stood in his place and pointed to the revenue figure over these last seven years and said, "See, that proves it. We cut taxes, and the revenue number is up. We cut taxes again, and revenue numbers are up. Therefore, whenever you cut taxes, revenue goes up because it stimulates the economy and creates jobs, blah blah blah," and if the cameras could show there are members of the government back benches nodding up and down just as the Kool-Aid was supposed to affect them.

What happens now is—we've been saying to this government all along that the only reason your revenues are up at a time when you're cutting all those taxes is because of the economic boom in the United States—now that we are in a downturn and revenues are expected to decrease and there is less economic activity, if your theory was true, you should be doubling the tax cuts, not deferring them. But the fact that you're deferring them is proof that you can't cut taxes as a way to sure-fire prosperity. That's just a sure-fire way to make the rich richer.

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I appreciate having an opportunity to comment upon this important bill and indeed to enter into this debate. I think none of us should ever forget that we have the privilege of sitting in this Legislative Assembly. I know I take that very seriously. I know most of the members on both sides of this chamber do so. We have a trust that has been placed in us to do the right thing. Sometimes that isn't easy. Sometimes there are difficult decisions to be made. There's only one taxpayer. I guess that's become trite for some to say, but the truth of the matter is there is only one taxpayer. They have only one set of pockets; there is only so much money to go around.

We, as a government, have taken a very different approach. We have said to the people of this great province that we are going to make those tough but necessary decisions. We are going to ensure that their hard-earned tax dollars stay with them except where absolutely necessary, except when government needs the money to do what governments should do to provide for individuals, to provide for communities where communities are not in a position to provide for themselves. This bill does just that. This is the government; the Ernie Eves government is the government that has cut taxes, not once, not twice, not three times, not four times, indeed, almost 200 times, 199 times, so that individuals across this province can keep their hard-earned money.

We believe that the incentives we have brought forward here, the further measures that we have tabled, continue that tradition. We believe that this bill represents an appropriate balance. It includes tax incentives in appropriate situations but, by and large, leaves the taxpayers to do what they do best, and what they do best is know how to spend their hard-earned money. We in this chamber don't have all the answers. The Liberals and the New Democrats often think they do; they don't.

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Mr Bartolucci: I think the member from Kingston and the Islands has articulated clearly what this side of the House really believes, and that's that with this bill, Bill 198, there has been a betrayal on the part of the government to even its corporate friends in this instance. It's a matter of trust that the government has failed miserably.

You see, the people of northern Ontario have known this for a long time. You can't trust this particular government to act in the best interests of the majority of the population. The people in northern Ontario have certainly seen it with hospital restructuring. We continue to wait for real money to complete projects across northern Ontario. We know that the municipal downloading experience has been a disaster for those municipalities in northern Ontario. The hydro Humpty Dumpty act that this government just went through last week has devastating effects on most municipalities in Ontario. I think of my own municipality of Sudbury where the cost of this experiment will exceed $5 million plus the rebate costs. That's a significant amount of money when you consider that the city of greater Sudbury was shortchanged by $10 million with the municipal downloading.

Of course, there's the matter of trust when it comes to the four-laning of Highway 69. People of northeastern Ontario—Timmins, Kirkland Lake, Sudbury, Sault Ste Marie, Elliot Lake, Manitoulin Island—clearly understand that this government is not committed to that four-laning. We look at the issues of Union Gas. There we have two appeals before cabinet, and this Premier is doing nothing. In fact the people of northeastern Ontario believe that the multi-personality Premier that we have in place must decide which face we are seeing.

Mr Martin: I want to commend the member for Kingston and the Islands. He always speaks passionately on behalf of his community, relates the issues of this place to there, as we all should. I want to say that people in northern Ontario were hoping that, at least this time around, there might be something in this budget bill that would be helpful to them, given that we have experienced seven-plus years of recession and negative economic activity up there. I suggest that the rest of the province should be looking at that, because what happens at the fringes generally, slowly but surely, invades the rest of the body. We could be looking at some rather challenging and interesting times ahead. For example, I have a report here that I received back in the spring of this year in May, that said since March 2001 more than 14,700 jobs have been lost from the northeastern Ontario labour force, a decrease of almost 6%, according to Human Resources Development Canada. March was the eighth consecutive month of job losses in the area. A total of about 3,400 of those jobs were full-time positions. That's what your government has to answer for. That's what your government is responsible for, not this other gobbledegook that we hear coming from the other side all the time.

The northern Ontario economy has been hit by a one-two economic punch since 1995. First the resource sector of the economy was put into recession. Then, second, the public sector underwent a major retraction. The result? While the rest of the economy has boomed with the US economy, increasing by an average of 5% per year, the sectors most important to the northern economy have undergone a recession, a recession largely created by this government, a recession that this government sooner or later will have to answer for, hopefully at this coming election.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kingston and the Islands in response.

Mr Gerretsen: I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton West, the Attorney General from Willowdale, the members from Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie for their comments.

To the Attorney General I would only say that he stated something about 199 tax cuts. Well, according to our count, there have been 894 user fees either introduced by this government or caused to be introduced by other levels of government because of their gross underfunding. So if this is just a numbers game, you are losing about five to one with all the user fees that have been introduced all over the province over the last number of years.

It's interesting that he talked about tax incentives. Let there be no mistake about it: these tax incentives are paid for by the municipalities. In other words, as a result of these tax incentives that they may use in order to induce businesses to locate within their areas, they are going to lose tax dollars so they will have to be made up by municipalities in other ways. The incentive is there for the municipalities if they want to use it, but it's not as if it's through the largesse of this government.

Finally, yes, I believe government is a matter of trust, but it's a matter of trust and doing the right thing for all the people out there. It is my fervent belief that the people who need protection most by government are not the well-off in our society, but the vulnerable, the poor and the senior population. They're the ones who we should be looking out for. I think time will show and the people of Ontario know that those people have fared very poorly under this government. They've broken the trust of the more vulnerable in our society.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate. I've only got 20 minutes. I'd love to do a lot more on the whole issue of taxes and the white flag that's being run up as a result of those tax cuts being deferred and what that means in terms of the propaganda the government has been putting forward—spewing forward, if you will—for the last seven years. Time just doesn't permit, other than on some responses.

I want to tackle one of the biggest growing issues that has been identified in this bill. I think this House, in question period and now in the debate on Bill 198, is really only beginning to scratch the surface of what's at stake here. It's complex. I'm the first one to admit that pension issues are not easy to understand. I'm neither an actuary nor a lawyer, so I fess up to the fact that this stuff is hard to digest, comprehend and turn into language the average working person can understand. When that happens, my sense of this is that the opposition has every right to be raising serious alarm bells, as we've been doing.

I want to say a couple of things before I get into the details of it. Number one, it's been put across the floor from the government that, "Well, you know, we had consultations with the labour movement and people who represent workers and their pensions." The fact of the matter is that, yes, there were meetings that took place, but the basis of the consultation papers upon which the consultation took place is different from what we find in the bill now that it has been tabled. For all intents and purposes, you have not consulted on what it is you have proposed, so any argument that you don't need to go out to committee doesn't hold water, given, again, the fact that what was talked about in your pre-bill presentation discussions and what exists in the bill are completely different. If you're going to start monkeying around with people's pensions, you've got an obligation to give those people an opportunity to have their say in how the law ought to be written as it affects pensions.

Let me also put on the record very clearly why the issue of surpluses is more than the employer putting in more money than they need or there being more money today than the actuaries say is needed to make the fund fully vested and there's enough money to pay out the obligations. When the government brought in the legislation in 1987, there was a lot of discussion about what happens with the surpluses as well as about what we do about the need to provide some inflation protection for future retirees. How do we build that into the legislation? There was some talk of mandating inflation protection through indexing and there were other vehicles that were looked at. Ultimately, what was decided and was explicitly expressed by this Legislature was that the surplus would be deemed to be a proxy for any kind of mandating.

Further, there's a recognition—since pension funds are invested in markets; whether it's bonds, stocks or other investment vehicles, they go into the markets—we know from today, as opposed to if we had had this debate two years ago, that putting money into the market doesn't guarantee anything other than letting go of the dice. One of the reasons that the Supreme Court and this Legislature held that those surpluses need to be put toward future inflation protection is that you need the dollar investment highs to compensate for the lows. So this is not just about whether or not, on the day that a calculation is made by an actuary, there's enough money, whether the employer is fully paid up or not. It's much more than that.

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There are two major issues at stake here. One is what happens when there is a pension surplus. Right now, there's a court ruling, in what's called the Monsanto case—it's been raised here earlier. That case found in favour of the employees; it's now before the Ontario Court of Appeal. We in the NDP caucus believe that the reason this bill is in here now, rather than waiting for the Court of Appeal, is that they're trying to get out in front of that court case to set the law so that no matter what happens in the appeal, the employer's argument is the one that prevails.

Let's understand. There are, I'm reading, over 200 cases potentially affecting upwards of hundreds of thousands of people who are affected by other cases that have been held back, waiting in abeyance, until the outcome of the Monsanto case. This bill has the effect of saying to every one of those cases that's waiting, "It doesn't matter what the Court of Appeal finds; you will be governed by Bill 198."

You know what else it says? Bill 198 takes away the right that people currently have to take the whole issue to court. Bill 198 would deny citizens the right to appeal a pension decision that goes against them, that they now have under law.

Having just gone through the hydro fiasco, is there anybody in the province of Ontario who believes that this government is stepping in ahead of the court case to protect workers? Come on. Nobody's going to buy that. And not only that, this law goes back 14 years—14 years it goes back.

People are scared. You've got to be starting to get the letters. I know I'm getting lots of letters from people in McMaster University, the hospital system. All those who are governed by the pension laws are frightened about what you're going to do. They saw what you did to hydro and they know that anything is possible. So I bet this thing is rammed through here like greased lightning before people get a chance to really mount up the kind of political head of steam that happened with hydro.

Now, what's happening again, as I understand it—and if I've got a piece of this wrong, by all means, in the two-minute responses, I fully expect government members to set me right. Absolutely. But as I understand the bill and the law and the changes, currently, where there's a pension windup, the surpluses are deemed to be the right of the employees, except under two exceptional exceptions. Exceptional exceptions? There I go again. What the government's proposing with Bill 198 is how those exceptions are determined. Right now, the process and the documents that have to be looked at, the criteria and the documents, are set out by the Supreme Court of Canada, which made a property law ruling in this regard. Between the Supreme Court of Canada and the existing Ontario legislation around pensions, that's how you determine whether or not an employer is entitled to get their hands on the money, free and clear with no questions. It's those exceptions that are being changed.

The current law, as prescribed by the Supreme Court of our country, requires "consideration of all relevant documents and the application of relevant trust law practices." The new law will say "prescribed criteria" and prescribed documents—not all, just the ones that are prescribed. And how do we know which ones are prescribed in the bill? You see, that's one of the problems, because it's not in the bill. That's determined by regulation. Regulations are set by cabinet, and cabinet meetings are secret, held behind closed doors.

It's a Tory government. Who do you think has got the most access and influence with the Tory government? Let's see: employers with millions and millions of dollars, a lot of which they're willing to share for political campaigns, and friends of the government with whom they travel in the same circles, go to the same places, do the same things, or the Ontario Federation of Labour? Gee, I wonder. Who's going to have the greater influence on what the final regulations say?

But not just that. Just because they're brought in after this bill is passed doesn't mean they can't be changed. They might not even be as horrible as we think they might be in the beginning. But over time, when this is no longer a front-burner issue, when this legislation is long forgotten and we're caught up in something else down the road, very quietly the minister brings to cabinet a recommendation for a regulation change, and suddenly that whole world turns upside down. That's what's going on with this bill.

The second piece of it is when there's a partial windup. As I understand it, that more directly relates to the Monsanto case, the partial windup. Right now, the law says—you've got lawyers over there, so if I'm wrong, correct me—that where a full windup of a pension would give employees X benefit, you can't do a partial windup and do the calculation based solely on that little bit. You have to do the whole calculation for what the full windup would entail, which means you'd then identify the surpluses that are there.

This bill would change that. Listen, this is what the commission sends out right now to employers who ask for permission to sign off on a windup where the employer hasn't identified the benefits going to the employees. They get a form letter that says in part that former members and other persons affected by the partial windup "shall have rights and benefits that are not less than the rights and benefits they would have on a full windup of the pension plan on the effective date of the partial windup." Again, I know this is not easy stuff to grasp, nor is it interesting for people who aren't facing pensions. But for anybody who is thinking about their future, especially when we take a look at what's going on with the stock market right now, this is dynamite.

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They further go on to say, "It is the commission's position that the rights and benefits referred to in subsection 70(6) include any entitlement to surplus that would exist assuming that a full windup of the plan occurred on the date of the partial windup." It is not acceptable to identify partial windup assets as those equal only to the partial windup liabilities.

It's my understanding that in the Monsanto case, the laws as expressed currently were upheld by the courts. The employer is taking that decision to the Ontario Court of Appeal. Bill 198 is meant to get in there and become the law before that court case. How do we know that? Because you deny anybody else the right to challenge decisions made by your superintendent. That is also interesting, because it means the final decision-maker is a bureaucrat, not the laws and rules expressed by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Now, why would a government do that? Why would a government come along and pass a bill that takes away people's rights to go to court and also makes a final decision and changes pension laws before an appeal court has had a chance to hear the appeal? Well, come on. Obviously there's an expectation, at least a reasonable expectation, that the employees might win at the appeal court, and we can't have that. My goodness, we can't have employees running around winning court cases against their employers, not in Ernie Eves's Ontario. So what do you do? You use the power you have to change the law. That's what's going on.

When the government stands up and talks about, "Things can only be decided by two thirds votes" and "this democratic vote" and "that democratic vote," don't get caught up in that. That's not where this argument is. This argument is in that, relatively speaking, narrow part of the law that says when an employer is entitled—entitled—to take the surplus. If you can change that one little piece of the law, nothing else matters, because you never get to a vote, you never get to putting it to the people who are members of the plan or those who are currently retired. In terms of all this stuff the government members talk about, you never get there if the law makes it clear that the employer is entitled to reach in and take the money. That's what's going on: it's the definition of when the employer, by law, has clear access to those surpluses. That is the issue, as least as I can determine it so far.

Rather than using the experience in 1987, both in the application of the law and the process outlined by the Supreme Court of Canada, we're now going to have the processes, criteria and documents relevant to the decision about whether or not an employer can just take the money decided by a regulation passed in secret by the cabinet, which can also be changed a year from now, six months from now, 10 years from now. It's all reported in the Gazette after the fact. If there's a big enough hullabaloo going on around here, we know stuff can just slide right through, and by the time anybody catches on, my friend, it is long-time history.

Think about it. The law goes back 15 years. The law will deny employees a chance to take their grievance to court, which they now have. It will now be determined by cabinet decision, cabinet decree, about when it is indeed lawful for employers to just reach in and take that money.

People are scared. They have every right to be scared. Actually, with the number of baby boomers—not that I'm comparing age groups—looking at or planning or terrified by the prospect of their retirement, to do this kind of thing in favour of corporations really is disgusting. I mean, some of you must be sickened at the prospect that you're going to give your precious vote to a law that makes it easier for employers to take money out of employee pension plans. You should be, because once again you're going to hurt people.

We warned you on hydro. You had two years' warning that taking care of your corporate friends was going to hurt Ontarians. You ignored that, and look what happened. We're saying to you now—we're raising the alarm—that you are going to allow employers to reach in, without any protection for the public, and take funds out of a pension plan. That's wrong. The bill is bad and it deserves to lose. Every one of you should vote against this.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I'd like to take the moment I have to explain a couple of the issues upon which the previous speaker centred many of his comments.

There is much that circulates around on this particular issue with regard to the pension surplus reforms dealing with part XXV of the bill. One of the myths that has circulated is simply that the government has not consulted on the surplus reforms in Bill 198, and this is simply not true. There was a consultation paper in July 2001, and over the course of several months we received 78 submissions from pensioners, members, unions and employers. After the announcement in the June 17 budget papers, in August 2002, ministry staff held further discussions with representative groups of, again, pensioners, members, unions and employers.

There has been much made of the notion, the myth, if you like, that the legislation will allow employers to raid pension plans. In fact, there could be nothing further to this. Nothing in this legislation affects the earned pension benefits of plan members and retirees. Any surplus withdrawal must be approved by the pension regulator, as has been the case for many years. The employer continues to be responsible for keeping pension plans solvent.

This proposed legislation provides for negotiated surplus-sharing agreements between employers, members and retirees in most cases, which again has been the practice for many years.

I think there needs to be clarity in our discussion.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I want to commend my colleague from Hamilton West for quite properly pointing out one of the most offensive sections in this bill, and that is the right of employers to take surpluses out of pensions that should rightfully belong to the members of that pension plan. Historically, at least since 1988, there has been an opportunity to share or divide the proceeds of that. He is correct in pointing out that the government, in addition to abandoning its tax cuts, which we applaud the government for—but the most offensive parts of Bill 198 are those sections he used his time to refer to.

I have heard from people right across the province about this section. The government has tried to convey the phony sense that they've consulted. They have not consulted. They consulted behind closed doors with their corporate friends to give them this reward. If they are intent on consulting, then take up our offer to send this bill to public hearings later this week when you time-allocate it, rather than effectively closing off debate on it.

The member from Hamilton West is absolutely right: this is a gift at the expense of working people. It's a gift to the corporate side that the government has buried among a lot of other very offensive pieces in this Bill 198, that in our view will negatively impact on all parts of society. But most offensive in this bill—and the discussion that the member from Hamilton West provided us with educated me as to the implications of it; certain aspects of it I didn't fully comprehend. I urge the government to heed his warning and do the right thing and not proceed with this attempt to allow employers to take surpluses out of pension funds.

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Mr Martin: Again, I am happy to rise tonight to comment on the speech given by the member from Hamilton West, who always comes in here with a very well thought out and good analysis and presentation of bills before us. We've heard over the last few days some debate back and forth between the leader of the official opposition and our party on this issue. But tonight we heard a more detailed description of just exactly what is going on where pensions are concerned and this bill. It would behoove anybody who wants to understand this more clearly to take a look at Hansard and refer to this speech that we were given here tonight.

This government has a serious case of wanting to tip the scales continually in favour of their friends and benefactors, to the point where they've now taken to putting things into legislation that even allow us that place of last resort, where we could all bring issues—there is a tipping of the scales concerned to the courts. This government builds in, time and time again here in this place, provisions in legislation that supersede taking things to court, go above and beyond the ability of court to decide or to intervene or intercede in these kinds, and that's a very serious concern. It should be a very serious concern to everybody in Ontario, and particularly where it concerns a person's income and ability to look after oneself in one's senior years and if it affects one's pension.

This government knows no bounds, no end, when it comes to delivering on promises to their corporate friends. But they're certainly very well versed in what it takes to hammer those people that it sees as—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions or comments?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): We've heard a lot of comment about the effect of this bill on pension plans. The Minister of Finance has been fairly clear in saying that what this bill does is permit an employer who is entitled to a withdrawal to make a withdrawal with the approval of the regulatory authority. That's what she has said the bill says. I notice that none of the opposition critics have produced any letter from a lawyer or an actuary that says that's not what the bill says. We've heard a lot of rhetoric, but we've heard no substance to these criticisms.

The actual fact of the matter is that I question in my mind whether they have any substance to back up the rhetoric. I think in fact they do not. I think the Minister of Finance has made a quite clear statement as to what this bill says, and if the opposition has some reason to think that she is wrong in her interpretation of the bill, they have to give us credible evidence that's the case. Until they do, I don't think they can think anyone is going to take their criticisms very seriously.

I was also interested in noticing that there was no talk about the general financial policy of the government over the past seven years, of which this, of course, is an integral part. The actual fact of the matter is we have had an outstanding success in financial management over the past seven years. An $11-billion deficit has been turned into three consecutive budgetary surpluses. We've gone from very irresponsible financial management to some of the best financial management this province has ever had in its history. I think we can see the results of that in the one million new jobs net that have been created since 1995. I think the people of this province have very great confidence in the budgetary policies of this government because those policies have been such a benefit to them.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Christopherson: I want to thank my colleagues from York North, Windsor-St Clair, Sault Ste Marie and London West for taking the time to respond. To my friend from York North, it didn't take very long. I told you in my remarks the government was going to pop up and say, "We consulted," and they did that. Of course, the realty is, and I said it before, what they consulted on when they talked to people and what is now in the bill are entirely different. You de facto did not have consultation on Bill 198; you had a nice discussion with some people.

I thank my colleague for Windsor-St Clair for his kind remarks; the same with my colleague Tony Martin. The member from London West—fascinating. Now, he is a lawyer and I wish I had jotted it down the second he said it, but I think you referenced your finance minister saying that all this does is clearly make the case of when employers are entitled to withdraw money from the funds. And that's the whole point. What I'm arguing—and believe me, there'll be all kinds of lawyers who are prepared to come forward and give all the substantive lawyerly comments and phrases you want as long as you give the people a chance to have something to say in public hearings. If you do that, I guarantee you will get all of the legal submissions that you could ever possibly want. Just give us that right.

The member knows that I can't very well make up the sort of arguments I did. I would invite him to take a look at the Supreme Court of Canada ruling, Schmidt v Air Products. It was that court case that made the determination of what the law is right now as it is applied in this province. You want to change what our Supreme Court of Canada said about pension rights and put in what your cabinet says. I want to go with the Supreme Court of Canada over your cabinet 10 times out of 10.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in the debate this evening on Bill 198, the Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act, 2002. I'm happy to be able to participate in this debate this evening, since it reaffirms the province's commitment to guaranteeing the exceptional quality of life that people in this province are enjoying. Certainly, since 1995 the government has worked hard to return this province to prosperity. You only have to think back to those days prior to 1995 and remember how tough it was when we were running some fantastic $11-billion deficits and had significant unemployment to remember now how successful we have been.

We've become successful by reducing taxes to create jobs, and it's worth noting that just recently we passed the one million new-job barrier—one million new jobs in the province.

Interjections.

Mr Miller: Yes, I see members opposite commenting on that. That is very, very significant and I'm very proud of the government, and I think all those people who have those jobs are pretty happy as well. Certainly removing barriers to growth has been a big part of the reason we've been able to create those jobs, as is balancing the budget and paying down the debt and investing in infrastructure for the future.

The government knows that communities are facing pressing fiscal challenges. We understand that appropriate funding is necessary to help municipalities build new sewers and roads. That's why we announced opportunity bonds as a lower-cost financing tool that would be available to assist Ontario municipalities needing to make significant improvements in their infrastructure over the coming years. I was pleased to participate in a consultation to do with opportunity bonds and tax incentive zones that occurred in my riding in Parry Sound just a couple of weeks ago. We certainly had some great representation with many municipal politicians. Of course, there are 26 municipalities in the Parry Sound side of the riding. Many of the municipalities were represented, as well as quite a few business leaders. They were very excited about the tax incentive zones and the opportunity bonds that are being made possible through this legislation.

That's why we proposed to introduce legislation providing a provincial tax exemption to investors in opportunity bonds, so that you won't pay provincial income tax if you invest in an opportunity bond. Certainly from that consultation in Parry Sound there was a strong voice wanting the federal government to also provide a tax exemption for the federal tax on investments in opportunity bonds, because that would greatly enhance the investment opportunity and the returns on an investment in opportunity bonds and encourage more people to invest in them, and that would provide more money for the municipalities.

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In addition, to support opportunity bonds and help defray the entry costs into the bond market, Premier Eves announced at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference in August the creation of the Ontario Municipal Economic Infrastructure Financing Authority, or OMEIFA. This new body will control pooled resources that will allow municipalities to borrow at interest rates that are 50% below market rates. That is certainly very significant and very important for municipalities. OMEIFA will be started with a $1-billion initial investment, capital funding, along with $120 million through the Ontario Clean Water Agency. This is provincial money being invested into this new organization which will be dedicated to financing municipal sewage and water infrastructure as well as other municipal projects. This initial capital infusion would be used to subsidize 50% of the interest costs of any funds borrowed by municipalities through the new financing authority.

The act we're debating here today also enshrines OMEIFA in legislation, thus ensuring that it will be able to operate efficiently as it goes forward and provides much-needed financing for municipalities through the issuing of opportunity bonds. To create an effective financing body, the Ontario Financing Authority, OFA, which is the province's borrowing agency and manages its debt and cash flow, is developing the organizational structure for OMEIFA. The province will also put together a team that will provide advice on the design and details regarding OMEIFA's implementation. Team members will be selected to represent both the interests of the province and the municipalities.

In creating this new authority, the province continues to fulfill its commitment to municipalities to provide them with financing tools to meet their infrastructure needs. Recent raises in debt ratings of Ontario municipalities by Moody's Investors Service confirms that we are on the right track. On September 26, 2002, Moody's Investors Service cited OMEIFA as one of the reasons for raising the city of Toronto's debt rating to AA1 from AA2, stating, "A provincial commitment to provide financial support to transit projects will provide new funding to the city, helping to offset pressures.... Furthermore, the creation of a new provincial agency, the Ontario Municipal Economic Infrastructure Financing Authority, and the provision of provincially subsidized lending through this body will provide additional benefits to the province's municipal sector."

For the same reason, on October 28 Moody's also raised the debt rating for the city of North Bay two notches, from BAA1 to A2, stating, "The upgrade reflects the recent provincial announcement regarding financial support for municipal infrastructure projects." I am sure the member from Nipissing, who is here with us this evening, will be happy to know that the city of North Bay's rating has been improved.

This act, if approved, will allow the province to put in place the measures that will continue to lead the province on the road to prosperity. On this road, we will continue investing in the infrastructure on which our quality of life depends—highways, transit, universities and colleges, hospitals, water systems, and community facilities—through SuperBuild, the Ontario organization that invests in all the infrastructure projects in the province on behalf of the province. SuperBuild was created to make these investments and is playing an important role by coordinating capital investments in Ontario and promoting new projects that build for the future.

SuperBuild Corp's role is also to identify needed investments and develop new partnerships to ensure that taxpayer dollars go further. To build working partnerships, SuperBuild taps into the management experience and creativity found in the private sector and encourages pooling of these resources with public sector expertise and needs. Investments are extensive. SuperBuild has committed to investing at least $20 billion of public and private investments in infrastructure over five years. This is the largest infrastructure building program of its kind in the history of the province.

SuperBuild investments cross all sectors of the economy: renewing and building new hospitals, improving highways, expanding sports and recreational facilities, upgrades to water and waste water infrastructure, colleges and universities and more.

I had the opportunity to be at the original announcement in the Port Carling arena for a SuperBuild sports-cultural tourism partnership announcement. Then, just a month or so ago, I was there for the grand opening. The minister who administers that program, Tim Hudak, is here with us this evening as well. I was very pleased to be there at the opening. That was a small investment, relative to the grand scheme of things, but certainly appreciated in the village of Port Carling, where the arena received some major upgrades: new change rooms, new lighting, handicap-accessible ramps into the arena and handicap-accessible washrooms—very worthwhile investments. You certainly see on the local level how important these SuperBuild investments are to the people when you are able to be as lucky as I was to be there for the announcement and the grand opening.

Our infrastructure investment means that the people of Ontario will have the services they need, where and when they need them. These investments will ensure that our communities have the foundations to promote new growth and new jobs.

Other SuperBuild investments in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka include the Muskoka wharf project, a significant investment for the province of Ontario. It's an important project for the whole riding, as Gravenhurst is established as the Gateway to the North with the Muskoka wharf project. There is significant private money invested in that project, about $20 million, as Gravenhurst rebuilds the waterfront. There's also the Rosseau waterfront project, another recently approved SuperBuild project, which is going to revitalize the village of Rosseau, another beautiful village in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. I encourage anybody here to come and visit sometime when they get an opportunity to come the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, a haven for tourism, I might add.

This act, Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act (Budget Measures), 2002, advances our commitment to growth and prosperity in Ontario. The act, if passed, will continue to make important but long-overdue investments in our infrastructure to meet the needs of a population that is changing with new growth and technology. Through SuperBuild and its partners, the province will stimulate local economies, improve the quality of life in our communities and create construction-related jobs in every area of the province.

To date, SuperBuild and its partners have committed to invest over $13 billion in more than 3,300 projects. In the 2002 budget, the Minister of Finance announced an allocation of $2.7 billion for infrastructure investments. These important investments include $1 billion for highways. Certainly I see significant investment in Highway 69. I hear the member from Sudbury, just about every day, talking about Highway 69. Meanwhile, the government continues to invest record amounts of money on Highway 69. There is unbelievable construction in the Parry Sound area as work continuously goes on. It was happening just about night and day all last winter.

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): What about Highway 11?

Mr Miller: And also on Highway 11, the member for Nipissing points out. He recently opened a new section at Trout Creek, the new Trout Creek bypass, seven kilometres there, and I was just north of Huntsville opening a new 13-kilometre section between Melissa and Emsdale—significant improvements. There are now just 47 kilometres on Highway 11 between Toronto and North Bay left to be completed in the next eight years. I know some people think eight years is a long time, but it's really quite an aggressive timetable, with about $35 million a year being invested on Highway 11 alone. It's really quite an aggressive timetable when you look at all that's involved in acquiring property and all the design work that goes into building a new highway. We are committed to finishing that as off, as the member for Nipissing points out.

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The minister also announced $342 million to build or expand hospitals and other health care infrastructure in communities across Ontario. Of course there will be a new hospital in Parry Sound, an over-$60-million project. The request for tenders has gone out and the full construction is going to be starting in the spring. There are long-term-care facilities being built all around my riding and all around the province as the 20,000 new beds are being created around the province.

Mr McDonald: A $200-million hospital in Nipissing.

Mr Miller: A $200-million hospital in Nipissing, the member for Nipissing points out; $143 million for the renewal and construction of courts and jails; $135 million for projects to improve and modernize cultural and tourism facilities.

Construction will begin this year on a number of major highway projects in the GTA to address gridlock and improve safety. I think that's very important. Safety is certainly important, and addressing gridlock is important to the economy of this province and also to the environment. Cars stuck in traffic jams are very significant, even when there's a reduction in speed on the highways from 80 to 60 kilometres an hour. I understand the pollution level just about doubles with a reduction of speed, so when a car is not moving, of course its pollution level is significant.

We've also moved forward with upgrades to our major highways, and this includes improvements on Highways 7, 400, 401, 427 and the QEW. As part of Ontario's Smart Growth strategy, the province is also preparing Ontario's transportation network to support economic and population growth expected over the next 15 years. There will be a new highway connecting with Highway 427 north of Highway 7. We will extend the 404, establishing a Bradford bypass, and Highway 407 east to Highway 35. I think it's very important that we're making these investments, because for many years there haven't been the investments necessary in Ontario's highways.

As a northern member and as the PA to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, I'm happy to say that we have not left out the north. I'm very proud of the investments we've been making in the north. To help boost efficiency in transportation and the economy of the north, we are continuing with major highway projects in the north this year, including highway rehabilitation and safety projects and major expansion in four-lane projects on Highways 11, 17 and 69. I know the minister was recently up making announcements to do with highway safety improvements on 69 south of Sudbury and also on Highway 17. This year we're investing a record, I believe, $250 million in northern highways. There have been significant improvements in northern highways in the last number of years.

We also support municipal road infrastructure, including investments through the connecting links program, the Ontario small town and rural development program—OSTAR—and millennium partnerships initiatives. I had the pleasure of going to Manitoulin Island to take part in a connecting links program announcement earlier in the year.

The government has been listening to Ontarians and making key infrastructure investments in people's priorities. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will increase capital investment in hospitals and the health care system to a total of $342 million. Hospitals and other health care providers will be able to continue to modernize, upgrade and expand their infrastructure and services across the province.

As you can see, these investments are very diverse in nature. But despite our large investments, significant infrastructure needs remain, leading us to increasingly look at public-private partnerships. To be successful, we will need to find new, creative means of financing and managing our infrastructure. That's why we are looking at new ways of investing capital to develop and maintain the infrastructure that would promote economic development.

We, like many other levels of government, are turning to public-private partnerships to provide public infrastructure and related services. What makes public-private partnerships in infrastructure development work is that all partners are entitled to the rewards associated with such partnerships, but at the same time they agree to share potential risks.

The Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act, 2002, supports communities and the government's role with public-private partnerships to improve infrastructure and services for the people of Ontario. For example, two hospitals are now undergoing public-private pilot projects, or P3 projects as they're called, to assist the government and the hospitals to understand how to best apply partnership models that have been successful in other jurisdictions.

As part of the evaluation and approval process, the hospitals and the province will ensure that the partnerships deliver better value for money than the traditional government top-down approach. Our key objective is to use private sector expertise to design, build and maintain the new facilities efficiently, quickly and within budget.

There are many examples of partnerships in Ontario, including the Art Gallery of Hamilton, with a contribution of $2.5 million from Dofasco; the Canadian Opera House, with $20 million from Four Seasons; Variety Village, to which McDonald's and the Royal Bank each offered to contribute $1 million; and, as I previously mentioned, Muskoka wharf, where there's $20 million being invested privately in an exciting new tourism waterfront development.

P3s, or public-private partnerships, have been involved in services from a water treatment plant in Goderich to the replacement of the Rossland Road grade separation in Whitby to the relocation of the University of Waterloo School of Architecture. We are grateful to have such P3 success stories as examples of how these partners brought their expertise to meet defined public need and shared the risk and rewards to the benefit of taxpayers.

We encourage partnerships in all areas, but in particular we call on a demonstration of federal support for municipalities through the provision of tax exemptions to investors in opportunity bonds and a capital injection in OMEIFA by the federal government. As I previously mentioned, that point was raised at the tax consultations in Parry Sound, which I attended.

By supporting the initiatives in this important act, we demonstrate that we are indeed committed to putting the right fundamentals in place for continued growth and prosperity.

I think the government is on the right track, and this bill is helping to keep the government on the right track.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): It was very interesting listening to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka in a number of areas. I could go on about a lot of them, but I'd like to focus on one thing he was talking about, which was the funding the government is putting into highways in the province. He made specific reference to the north, and I thought it was interesting, from the perspective of a member from northwestern Ontario, that he made reference to no highway work in northwestern Ontario. The reason for that is because the fact is that northwestern Ontario, in terms of the northern highway budget, gets far less than its fair share. We consistently get less than 25% of the budget.

There are a number of extraordinarily important projects that must move forward on the rehabilitation side. I think of the Highway 584 project between Geraldton and Nakina, an extraordinarily dangerous piece of road that has had increased use because of the Nakina Forest Products development. It's a road that now is truly dangerous, and it should be an absolute priority—no funding for that this year.

But there are some larger projects that we think are really important as well. The member made no reference to them, because clearly we're not getting support for them at this point; that is, the four-laning also between Thunder Bay and Nipigon. We've seen the traffic increase dramatically, we've seen the volume of transports increase dramatically and we've seen many accidents and some fatalities in those areas, and also, may I say, toward Vermilion Bay in northwestern Ontario toward Manitoba.

It's disturbing to once again have to alert the House that our part of the province is being ignored. It was significant, for example, that when the Minister of Northern Development and Mines came to the northwest to announce highway improvements, he went to Hudson, Ontario. There was some rehabilitation work around there. He didn't even come near the Thunder Bay area to make those announcements, and we understood why. Because there was nothing to announce in all the Thunder Bay district. This is of very great concern to all of us: to the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, to the chambers of commerce and to the constituents who have to drive those roads.

Mr Christopherson: Interesting comments from the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. I'm not sure he made any reference at all to the pension changes—forgive me, I was distracted for part of his remarks—but if he did, I'm willing to bet there wasn't a whole lot said, and likely there wasn't anything said.

We're not going to let go of this issue. You're just not going to do this to people who are relying on pensions to be there for their retirement years without one hell of a fight. That's the reality of this. They've told me—the closest they came was the member for London West, who tried to say we didn't give enough substantive arguments, we didn't have lawyers, documents and everything.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Oh, hang on. You had your chance and you didn't say anything of any note.

The fact of the matter is that the proof is right there in the bill. There are 30 separate parts to this bill. Most of them relate in some way to budget bills or things that are impacted by the budget. I refer to things like the Assessment Act, the Business Corporations Act, Commodity Futures Act, Community Small Business Investment Funds Act—the sorts of things you would expect to see in a bill that flows from a budget.

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What you don't expect to see is part 25, the Pension Benefits Act. But what does the explanatory note say about this? "Amendments to the Pension Benefits Act relate to the payment of surplus out of pension plans, the authority of employers to take contribution holidays and the authority of the superintendent to permit refunds to be made to employers in specified circumstances." My remarks are about how that small little thing called "specified circumstances" is being ripped open to make it nice and easy to get in there with big paws and take out huge chunks of money. That's what's going on.

Mr McDonald: It's my pleasure to join the debate. I listened very closely to the hard-working member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. He was dealing with SuperBuild issues and issues that are close to the heart in northern Ontario. We're referred to as the two northern guys on this side of the House, and I just want to tell the residents of northern Ontario that we're standing up and fighting for you.

I find it very interesting, the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North and the honourable member for Sudbury speaking to Highway 69 in the House every day. I congratulate them for sticking up for their area. But I must say, and this is before their time, that when the official opposition was in power, they averaged $5 million a year on northern highways, and they're blaming us for the highway not being four-laned today. It's interesting that we're averaging $30 million to $35 million a year. So this government does have the best interests of northern Ontario at heart. It's investing six times what your party invested in northern Ontario. So when you stand up and say how bad we are, maybe you should look in the mirror.

I was very pleased to be part of the announcement of our $200-million hospital in North Bay, the $11-million hospital in Mattawa and the four-laning of Highway 11; I think there's about 47 kilometres. This government is doing a lot for northern Ontario. I would just ask the members across, where were they when your party was in power and you did nothing for northern Ontario?

Mr Duncan: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka. I just want to remind him that he didn't talk about what the main points of Bill 198 are.

First of all, this legislation delays the government's planned cuts to personal income taxes and corporate income taxes, and the private school tax credit. Bravo. You couldn't afford these anyway. This is a retreat from the very fundamentals of your own policy, which we in the official opposition said would happen. Now it's happening.

And what is the guise for this? I have to quote here. The government says it's delaying the cuts due to a "short-term fiscal problem," and is planning to sell $1.8 billion in assets. What do those assets include? Hydro One: a fire sale of this province's electricity grid, the crown jewel of our public infrastructure. You're going to sell it at fire sale rates because of your bungling of the entire hydro file. You're going to give it away in an attempt to raise cash to meet a commitment this government made which it cannot keep. You were warned you could not keep this commitment, and now you must back down on the centrepiece of Mike Harris's political career, the Taxpayer Protection Act. This shows that act for what it was: phony. The first time they get into any difficulty, they just amend it out of existence. It was all talk. You're backtracking, flip-flopping, double flipping on this, just like you did on hydro. I'd like to hear the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka talk about those issues.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Miller: I'd like to thank the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North for his comments. He made some comments to do with northern highways. I'd just like to reiterate that we are making record investments. The member for Nipissing also talked about investments in northern highways. He said $30 million to $35 million a year. That's just for Highway 11, member for Nipissing. I understand he is interested in that. The actual investment is about $250 million a year, a record investment. So you don't want to go anywhere near comparing your record to current spending on northern highways, because this government has been making a very significant investment.

The member for Hamilton West talked about pension surplus reforms. He's scaremongering, in my books. It's really about ensuring the long-term financial viability of these pension funds. If I had time, I'd go through many different points on that, but I don't have time in the next two minutes. What we're talking about in terms of the pension surplus reforms is ensuring there is money there for the future for all those people who are going to be depending on it, and I think that's the responsible thing to be doing.

The member for Windsor-St Clair talked about tax cuts. That's very interesting, the Liberal Party that voted against every tax cut that has occurred in the last seven years—

Interjection.

Mr Miller: You did, yes, and those resulted in an extra $15 billion that we've used now to invest in hospitals and highways, in lots of good things people want in this province that came about because we provided those tax cuts so that the people of this province could use their hard-earned money to invest and spend wisely, as only those who work hard for the money know how to do. So I don't think the member for Windsor-St Clair should be talking about tax cuts.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I welcome an opportunity to contribute to this debate on Bill 198.

The first thing that strikes me is that once again this government has fulfilled its commitment to find the most creative possible names for its acts, names that in fact camouflage the real intent of the acts. Bill 198 has been given the title, I believe, of Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy. I think Bill 198 would be more appropriately named something like the Breaking Promises Because of a Desperate Need for Economic and Fiscal Band-Aids Act, because that would more truly represent the contents of this omnibus bill.

I want to address a few of the ways in which this government, in its desperate search for Band-Aids, has reached out to alter what from the very beginning was a disastrous fiscal and economic policy.

First of all, there's the fact that they are going to delay their $2.2-billion corporate tax cut, a corporate tax cut that we have said all along this government cannot afford, this province cannot afford, and in fact this province doesn't need, even in the interests of the competition the government gives as its reason for bringing it forward. We don't need it for competitive purposes. As my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt has said over and over again, we are already 25% below the American jurisdictions. How far below them do we have to be to consider ourselves competitive? We don't need it for competition's sake, and we certainly cannot afford it.

As my colleague from Windsor-St Clair has just said, the government is delaying this corporate tax cut for a year because they have a short-term fiscal problem. I don't think it's just a small problem and I don't think it's very short-term.

We know that one thing the government thought they could do was solve this short-term fiscal problem with a quick fire sale of Hydro One, as my colleague has just noted. They've had to backtrack a little bit on how they were going to get some quick cash from selling off our electricity transmission system, probably the most vital cog in ensuring reliable and affordable electricity to homes and businesses in this province. The keystone of our economic growth is electricity that is reliable and affordable. The transmission system is the key to that, and this government was prepared to sell off the whole thing, Mike Harris's parting contribution to the province of Ontario.

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Ernie Eves was quite prepared to go along with that. As I recall, he was quite prepared to go along with it right up until I think it was the day before he was facing a very angry electorate in the riding for which he was seeking to become the new member. The day before the by-election he announced that he wasn't going to sell Hydro One after all, that it was off the table. It kind of calmed the voters in that new riding long enough to get Mr Eves a seat in the House. Once Mr Eves got a seat in the House, suddenly the sale of Hydro One was back on the table. But it wasn't quite a complete and total flip-flop because—

Mr Duncan: He changed his mind again?

Mrs McLeod: He changed his mind again, but not quite totally—49%. I didn't understand how this government could possibly rationalize in the name of a one-time-only cash infusion—I know they desperately need it—selling off this most important public asset. I have no idea why they think selling off 49% does anything for the economy, for the long-term fiscal health of this province or for the people who need access to electricity in a way that is reliable and affordable, how selling off 49% possibly serves that purpose. It is there purely and simply because the government is desperate for cash.

So much of what this government does in a desperate reaction to try to fix up the messes it has made, the crises it has created—and over and over again we see crises this government has created. The long-term consequences of what they do to fix the messes they created are truly disastrous for this province.

This is the same government that last May 1, Mr Eves being relatively newly elected, having retreated somewhat from Mr Harris's rush to sell off Hydro One—although, as we've seen, he came back to it again—Mr Eves decided he would just continue and rush right along into deregulation. What did we have over the course of the summer? We had electricity retailers, like Direct Energy which knocked on my door one Saturday morning and wanted me to sign a fixed contract for electricity for six cents a kilowatt hour, signing up thousands of Ontarians who were justifiably worried about what was going to happen to the price of electricity and who were prepared to sign, with Direct Energy and others, a six cents per kilowatt hour contract.

The government realized that even six cents per kilowatt hour was leading to very significant increases in hydro bills for people across the province, so they decided last week that they would come out and cap rates at 4.3 cents, and now, I guess, one of our short-term and longer-term fiscal problems is going to be where we find the money to subsidize the difference between those six-cent, fixed-term contracts that this government was so anxious to see people sign—in fact the government's agency, the IMO, which regulates electricity, was encouraging people no less than three weeks ago to sign those fixed contracts at six cents a kilowatt hour because they thought that was the best deal they could get.

This government was out encouraging these fixed contracts. It decided it was going to cost a little bit too much so they decided to put this freeze on and now we're going to be subsidizing the private retailers that were so anxious to get out into the field.

It doesn't end there, and I'm just talking about the fiscal messes, the long-term economic consequences of the messes this government has created within the last couple of weeks. The government is now saying they're also going to have to subsidize the private sector to come in and build some new electricity, because they're not going to do it at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, and they know we need some more generation, more electricity. So they're going to subsidize the private producers.

Once upon a time in this province we talked about something called power at cost. We saw electricity as being a public good. We thought it was important that we be able to ensure that people were paying what was necessary to ensure they had the electricity, but not exorbitant costs. I don't know any longer what power at cost truly is because this same government, this Harris-Eves government that absolutely abandoned its—was it a five-month electricity policy?

Mr Duncan: Five months.

Mrs McLeod: Abandoned it after five months, having created absolute chaos. This government that has now brought in price caps is the same Harris-Eves government that brought in price fixes in order to win an election in 1995. Mike Harris and Ernie Eves ran on a platform of no increases in hydro rates—freeze hydro rates.

The Minister of Energy said one true thing somewhere in the last four, five or six weeks of debate in this House about electricity. He said Ontarians haven't been paying the full cost of electricity. The reason that is a true thing is because his government froze the rates for six years. They froze the rates for six years, so in fact we're paying the costs of the electricity we were consuming.

But then the answer to all the problems in electricity was going to be to sell off all our generation to the private sector, because in their market-sector-economy minds, private sector competition is what will bring the price down. But to sell off our public assets, they had to make sure they weren't going to be too expensive to the private sector. That's a different kind of fire sale. So they just said, "The taxpayer will absorb the indebtedness of the assets that Hydro, Ontario Power Generation is about to sell." So in addition to the increased rates we're seeing as a result of the government's deregulation, we are also seeing the debt charge added to our hydro bills. This government rolled all of these costs on to the backs of hydro users all at once. They realized it was not sustainable, they changed their policy, and now we will fact the fiscal and economic consequences of that.

That's just one of the reasons why we can't afford a $2.2-billion tax cut. I have had some involvement in health issues in the last little while, and I certainly want to address the fact that this government can't afford to put $2.2 billion into a corporate tax cut that we don't need for competition when our vital health services are being absolutely strangled for lack of funding. Just this week, I say to the Minister of Health, who has joined us in the House, as he well knows, the hospitals of Ontario have said to him, "We are insolvent, on the verge of bankruptcy. We're in debt. We have deficits. We can't afford to keep running with the funding we're getting"—hospitals of this province insolvent. That's just one health issue.

Home care rationed: there aren't waiting lists in home care. I do want to acknowledge that. The waiting list for home care disappeared when this government decided to replace those CCAC directors and board members who were complaining about the fact that they didn't have enough money to provide adequate numbers of hours of home care. So the waiting list disappeared and so did the ability to get even the rationed number of hours of home care to people who needed that supports.

Or we could talk about long-term care. What was the title of this bill again? Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy? Ontario, which brags about having a strong economy, has the lowest number of nursing hours per capita in our long-term-care homes of any province, in fact of most jurisdictions that have been surveyed, whether in the United States or in Europe, let alone in Canada. For shame, in a province that supposedly has a strong economy as we speak.

Mental health: the stories yesterday about the fact that a government that said it wasn't going to close psychiatric beds simply isn't funding the hospitals to keep the beds open, to hire the staff, to keep those beds open, so we have more people with psychiatric illness inappropriately in our jails then we've ever had before.

Physician shortages: about a year ago we were worried about the fact that there were 109 communities in the province of Ontario that didn't have enough family doctors, that were underserviced for family doctors. It's 122 now. It just keeps getting worse and worse and worse. The government keeps talking about what it's going to do, keeps announcing plans, but doesn't get any new people out there. It doesn't actually get people out into the field to make sure Ontarians can have a family doctor.

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The list goes on and on. My colleague the member for St Catharines this afternoon raised again in the Legislature the issue of Visudyne. We worked so hard to get this government to recognize the fact they need to put some dollars toward the prevention of blindness in people with wet form macular degeneration. Finally the government said "We hear. We're going to act on it"—only you have to have a 50% vision loss, you have to be half blind, before you actually get the support. In the province of Ontario, under the Harris-Eves government, we don't have a strong enough economy left to actually be able to keep people from going blind in this province.

I could go on and on and on about health care, but I do want to get into the fact that one of the other things touched on in this bill is that they're going to delay the private school tax credit.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Peterborough, the minister, I'm warning you. Any more interventions, and you're gone.

Mrs McLeod: I'd be happy to give the minister a late show, Mr Speaker.

The private school tax credit is being delayed, not cancelled, even though Mr. Eves has called it ludicrous. That was before he became Premier, I guess. Things change once you assume the responsibilities of office, I gather.

The private school tax credit is being delayed. This is one which should be cancelled. It should be cancelled, not just because we cannot afford the $500 million that they're going to put into the private schools at the expense of public school education. This private school tax credit should be cancelled because it is being put in place, when the government brings it forward, at the very time when private schools are being flooded with people coming in, with children being transferred out of the public system to the private system—not because of their religious preferences. This has nothing to do with religious choices. This has to do with people flooding into private schools, away from the public education system, because they don't want their children in crowded classrooms, they don't want their children in classrooms that don't have enough textbooks, they don't want children with special needs in classrooms where they're not getting the support they need.

Those are the issues that need to be addressed, issues of underfunding of public education, crowded classrooms, no textbooks, no special ed, not enough support for extracurricular activities that are so important a part of a full education. Those are the issues this government should address, not putting $500 million into a tax cut.

This is an omnibus bill. I'm inclined to spend most of my time on the issues that I care rather a lot about, which are health care and education in particular, but there are some things I want to note about the fact that it's an omnibus bill. There's so much here that could be addressed.

Tax incentive zones: I find this one really ironic. I know there are some, in my experience, large and fairly well-to-do municipalities that have pushed for tax incentive zones in the past. The way this is presented in this bill is that this is an offering from the government, an offering from the government to municipalities that don't have a strong economic base to allow them to offer some tax incentives, that by offering lower-tax incentives, maybe they can induce businesses to come to their community to build a stronger economy in their community. After all, this bill is about strong economies.

The reason I find this so ironic is because this is the same government that has downloaded cost after cost after cost on to those same municipalities. I just finished writing a letter to the Minister of Health which I hope he'll respond to, because it relates to a letter that was written to him in May of this year, some five months ago, from the Rainy River district services area board about the cost of ambulances. This is an area board, with small municipalities, just the kind of municipalities that I guess are supposed to be helped by this tax incentive. Well, they're small municipalities that also have to provide ambulance service in unorganized townships. Mr Speaker, you know about unorganized townships. It appears the Ministry of Health doesn't. They're not providing the funding that they're supposed to provide to allow the Rainy River district services area board to pay the ambulance cost to serve the unorganized territories. I hope the Minister of Health will finally respond to a letter that was written to him five months ago and resolve that particular dilemma.

But the dilemmas of the municipalities go on and on: downloaded costs not just for ambulances but for social housing; I've discovered it has also downloaded costs for second-stage housing for women who are the victims of violence; downloaded costs for water infrastructure. And don't recite to me all the things that SuperBuild is going to do to help municipalities with the water infrastructure when in fact we've got a bill that says they're going to have to recover the full cost of that by charging people more for it.

This government has made life almost impossible for municipalities, and now they come and offer them a gift out of the goodness of their hearts. They offer them the gift of being able to allow for lower property taxes in order to build their economic base. It reminds me a little bit of the gift they were going to offer municipalities in another omnibus bill, the very first bill, I think Bill 26, the bully bill. One of the things that was in that original bully bill was a head tax. They were going to let municipalities charge a head tax to solve their economic woes. I suspect the municipalities might welcome that now, with all the downloading that has gone in the past few years since the bully bill was presented.

I have a real problem with omnibus bills. I'm not going to be able to deal with my problems in the last two and a half minutes I have. There is just so much in this bill. It should not be presented as one, large omnibus bill. I'm beginning to think this government only knows about omnibus bills. It's not just that we can't deal with everything in the course of the debate of the evening, of the day. It's because the omnibus bills—the parts we miss, the parts we couldn't debate, the parts that the public wasn't aware of—come back to haunt us. One example from that first omnibus Bill 26, a little clause in there that said that the manager of OHIP was given the authority to withhold payments from physicians for services that had been rendered in their office. Well, that little clause wasn't acted on for a while, but now we are seeing it used in a way which can only be described as a very arbitrary and very deliberate attempt to grab cash from physicians who have in fact provided services, like the family doctor, the more senior family doctor in Brantford who was told he had to repay government because he was making too many house calls, because he was making more than the average number of house calls. This man actually believed in house calls. It's pretty easy to make more than the average number of house calls. I suspect if you make two house calls a week you are over the average number of house calls. But this government somehow thought that they could let the manager of OHIP just go and get money back to solve their short-term fiscal problems, I guess, by setting these arbitrary measures in place, result of one earlier omnibus bill.

I think there are many results that we are going to see over a continuing basis from this omnibus bill. My colleagues have addressed the pension issue. That alone should be the subject of an individual debate. I've heard questions in this House over the last two days. I've heard the Minister of Finance say, "No, this is not going to affect pensions," but my understanding of it is that the Conrad Black clause in this bill, as it has come to be known, is certainly going to affect what might be the pensions of people, if employees were given a fair shot to share some of those surpluses—one more issue that won't get adequately debated.

I wish I had time to get into the subject of P3s, private hospitals—the only justification? You don't show the funding on the books—just one of the tricks that the government is going to use to hide what is in fact not just a short-term fiscal problem that can't be solved with one-time cash fire sales, but long-term fiscal problems which they are going to use the next budget to bury in every way possible, just as they are using the omnibus bill to bury the consequences of the measures they've presented tonight.

Mr Christopherson: I knew the member couldn't sit down without having raised the issue of the pensions. I want to compliment the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan for all of her remarks, but I want to come back to that pension issue. The government so far, especially one of the government members heckling earlier, was talking about the fact that there's no substance to this, that it's opposition rhetoric. Let me tell you, I have a letter from Mr David Hitchcock who is a professor of philosophy, McMaster University in my riding. He says, in part: "I am concerned that Bill 198 permits surplus withdrawals without regard to any 'pension plan document, statute or rule of law' and leaves approval of surplus withdrawals to the superintendent of pensions."

In fact, the criteria for the superintendent's approval are to be set out in a regulation that your government has yet to make public. Now, in case somebody who's a professor of philosophy isn't quite, you know, where you are in terms of opinions that matter, how about a professor of economics from McMaster University. He says, "Our university pension plan has been the subject of much litigation over pension surpluses and ultimately we able to reach an agreement with the university under the law as it stood prior to Bill 198. This litigation would have continued for years were it not for the legislation which encouraged agreements between employers and employees." That's Mr Andrew Muller, a professor of economics, McMaster University.

Now, let's turn to the bill. The bill makes it clear that what was once the order of the Supreme Court of Canada, which required consideration of all relevant documents and the application of relevant trust law principles—that's what the Supreme Court said. What do you say? You say, in part 25, Payments to Employers, 67.2 (4), "An employer may apply to the Superintendent for payment of an amount described ... and the application must include such information and documents as may be prescribed," by the government."

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Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I really wanted to stand up and just make a couple of comments. I listened very carefully to the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, and I'm absolutely disgusted with some of the comments that were made when she would have the audacity to suggest that our government is letting people go blind. If you don't think I know a little bit about that subject, my family and my wife have that disease, so don't ever suggest in this House that we are letting people go blind, because you know that treatment can only be done at certain times; it can only be done when one or two of the situations of the disease are at the right time to do it.

The other thing that really interested me was that, well, we're deciding that we're not going to continue with the tax cuts and we're deciding that we're not going to do something else. I want to ask them over there if they've ever decided this year to buy a car and all of a sudden decided, "I don't really have the money. I may have to defer it to next year, or I may have to defer it for six months." I would say either one of you over there would have done that within the last five years. That's what you call good management. That's what you call being in business. You folks spent money like the usual folks that sail the seas, with no thought of making sure you were doing it the right way. Yet you will stand in this House and make the comments that you do. Facts make no suggestion they should be right. Some of the words that you say, I'm disgusted—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions or comments?

Mr Duncan: This is not about a six-month delay. This is about a government that sold its very soul. You were warned about it. You were warned every step of the way.

Let me address a few other issues, because what you say—and my colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan is absolutely right—is this is a short-term fiscal problem and you're going to sell $1.8 billion in assets, including Hydro One. The Minister of Education said during the leadership that your hydro policy was wrong. The now Minister of the Environment said during the leadership that your tax cuts were wrong and shouldn't go forward. Let's talk about health care accountability because that has been totally lacking.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: My comments on this issue were that I had heard—

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Duncan: My colleague is absolutely right.

I listened very carefully, not to anyone on this side of the House, not to a federal cabinet official, but to a former Premier saying that provinces need to be held to account on health care spending, because this government has taken money that should have been properly spent on health care and given it to tax cuts. Now they're delaying that. That's not me. That's Roy Romanow.

I look forward to the day that governments like this will be truly held to account on health care spending. I look forward to a government whose priorities won't be tax cuts for corporations but will be for Visudyne for patients before they lose half their sight as my colleague has cited here. I look forward to a day when parents are not fleeing the public system in record numbers and want to keep their kids in public schools because there are adequate teachers, there are adequate textbooks and they're not starved for funds while we reach out and give yet more handouts to our corporate buddies in a climate where we're already competitive. My colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan—I'm proud of her and proud of her record and her service to this Legislature.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): Mr Speaker, I apologize for coming late into the conversation but hearing the member from Windsor make comments about the distribution of monies from the provincial government that we've received from the federal government, I think we should reference the study done by the Ontario Hospital Association with respect to equalization indicating, I think all of us understand, that there are only two "have" provinces left in this country, Alberta and Ontario.

Ontario is making a significant contribution. If you look at the Ontario Hospital Association study, well over $200 billion a year comes out of taxpayers in Ontario to support programs in every other province of this country. I think Ontario citizens are great Canadians. We support this country and we support keeping this country as a united country. But we have close to 100 federal Liberal members in Parliament representing Ontario. Ontario is being shortchanged through this confederation by the Liberal government in Ottawa. We are not getting our fair share.

I think if you look at this picture—this is an objective study done by the Ontario Hospital Association—if we look at what monies are coming back to this province to support health care, to support education, to support all the important programs that Ontarians care about, we are not getting our fair share from Ottawa. If this member really cared about his province, he would be standing up on his two feet this evening, and on other days, other weeks, other months, and calling on his federal colleagues to recognize the real interests, the real concerns of this province and make sure we are treated fairly by the federal government of Canada, the federal Liberal government of Canada.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the contributions of all the members to my comments in this debate. Let me just say there are a few points I'd like to take up. I'm going to resist the temptation to pick up on the age-old battle of what proportion of funding for health care is coming from the federal government versus the provincial government, particularly when I'm doing battle with a government that I think at one point wanted to move strictly to tax points so that they could have complete flexibility to manage their health care budget. Now they simply ignore the tax points because they want to see it in cold, hard cash, which they still won't be accountable for, as we have seen in a number of areas, like the child care transfers and the millennium scholarships transfers, which this government simply swallowed up.

I particularly want to come back to a couple of things the member from Peterborough said—deferring the cost of a car. My goodness, if there's any government that has mastered the deferral of long-term costs to future taxpayers, it is this government. The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka talked with pride about P3s, private-public partnerships, the new jargon. "Private-public partnership" basically means a way of getting the private sector to put the capital funding in so that the government doesn't have to put it in, and they then pay for it over a long period of time, like a mortgage or a car payment.

When it comes to hospitals, the only advantage that anybody has been able to find for P3s is the fact that it is off-book and doesn't look like government debt, because this government is not prepared to openly acknowledge what the costs are of the promises they're making to the people of Ontario, like private MRIs, like private CTs. Where communities have been earning the capital costs for those, now the minister wants to put them in private clinics, where he will pay for the capital costs through long-term operating.

I have lost my time to respond with facts on the issue of Visudyne. This government defends its policy by saying the federal government has guidelines for the use of Visudyne. There are no guidelines from the federal government that justify this government's policy of saying you have to lose 50% of your vision—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate? I would remind members now that the time for speeches is 10 minutes.

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Mrs Munro: The legislation in the Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act (Budget Measures), 2002, which pertains to consumer protection, is about important and positive changes that will benefit every investor and taxpayer in Ontario. Ontarians have told us that they are concerned about the security of their investments. They are worried about the recent uncertainty in the financial markets of the United States and are wondering if the major accounting scandals that have rocked the economy in that country could happen here.

Our government shares their concerns and we are prepared to act. While we already have a number of tougher investor protection rules than our neighbours in the US, we think we can do more to protect investors here in Ontario. We are committed to protecting consumers and protecting the integrity of Ontario's markets. This is an era in which trust is important, an era in which corporations and governments alike must ensure transparency and accountability regarding their actions. We do need a balanced, made-in-Ontario approach, an approach that protects our consumers and investors and maintains the competitive position of our businesses and markets.

Effective capital markets are important to our businesses in Ontario. Effective markets provide our businesses with capital on competitive terms so that they can grow and create new jobs. Ontario must continue to be competitive. We must ensure we are taking steps so that our province is attractive to business, that we continue to promote growth and prosperity.

Ontario has already taken some important steps. For example, for a long time public companies in Canada have been required to tell their investors about material changes right away. Furthermore, we have been taking steps in recent years to protect Ontario investors, building on our strong record of investor protection balanced with a competitive market. In 1997, the Ontario Securities Commission was reorganized and put on a self-funding basis, allowing it to add needed staff in key areas such as enforcement. In 2000, the Ontario Securities Commission implemented a comprehensive program for reviewing continuous disclosure statements provided by issuers. Its target is to review issuers with Ontario head offices once every four years. In fact, in August of this year the OSC announced additional resources for this program so that by the end of this year, 2002, the OSC will have completed its review of the disclosure of all Ontario-based companies ranked in the top 100 Toronto Stock Exchange companies. Also in 2000, the RCMP and OSC Joint Securities Intelligence Unit was formed to investigate securities fraud. These measures have given us a strong regulator with the tools needed to do the job and the ability to respond to changes in a rapidly moving marketplace.

Still, we are prepared to do more. The Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act contains the reforms we need to protect Ontario investors and maintain a competitive marketplace. Our context is unique. In

Ontario, much of our future prosperity will depend on the growth of small- and medium-sized businesses. We have to ensure that new measures, as they are implemented, are sensitive to the needs of our small- and medium-sized public companies.

I believe we can implement tougher measures to protect consumers and that our measures will be sensitive to the Canadian economy. When the people of Ontario put their hard-earned money into a mutual fund or stock or any other kind of investment, they're doing so to build a better future for themselves and their families. We believe they deserve to know that the government has set and enforced high standards so that they can make informed choices and invest with confidence.

Our government has always believed that taxpayers' dollars should be spent responsibly and with accountability, and we believe that corporations should operate on the same principle. We are being advised that we need tougher penalties in place for securities infractions and that we need to set high standards for public companies in order to protect public confidence while maintaining the competitiveness of our economy. We want to reform the Ontario Securities Act to achieve three objectives: (1) to ensure efficient, effective and fair capital markets; (2) to ensure the public receives timely, accurate information about their investments; and, finally, to ensure that we do not add unnecessary red tape, so that Ontario remains attractive for investment and our businesses remain competitive.

The Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act (Budget Measures), 2002, proposes legislative changes to further protect Ontario investors and consumers. If approved, the measures for investor protection are:

(1) Establish new powers for the OSC to impose fines of up to $1 million for securities violations and order that the offenders give up the amounts they obtain from those violations;

(2) Increase the maximum court fines and prison terms for securities offences that would be among the toughest penalties in Canada. The maximum court fines for general offences would increase from $1 million to $5 million, and maximum prison terms would increase from two years to five years less a day.

(3) Provide greater clarification for offences such as securities fraud and market manipulation, and for making misleading or untrue statements.

We will also be introducing broader rights for investors to sue if companies make misleading or untrue statements or fail to give full and timely information.

I believe these are significant steps forward. By increasing maximum penalties and providing a clearer definition of offences, businesses will have a clearer idea of what is expected of them. The system will be fairer to businesses and it will be more transparent.

There are other proposed measures, as well, to ensure we have strong consumer protection. For example, we are proposing to provide the OSC with new powers to review the information that public companies provide to investors. The OSC will also get new rule-making powers to hold CEOs and CFOs accountable for the accuracy of their financial statements. We are also proposing reforms to Ontario's public accounting regulation to ensure tough standards that are internationally respected and reflect the high expectations of the business community, investors and our trading partners.

We have already taken a number of actions to reform the way government does business. We've brought in business planning, the public disclosure of salaries, agency reform and new conflict-of-interest rules for public servants and agency appointees. We are also taking steps to improve accountability in the government in protecting taxpayers' dollars, including a six-month review of government agencies and other public sector entities, to strengthen their governance and accountability. The review would also improve disclosure and reporting obligations. It would, for example, increase the quality and frequency of reporting or give the power to inspect the books. It would include enforcement with teeth to ensure compliance.

This is an ongoing process. We will continue to review these proposals with the experts to ensure that the reforms are effective. We will ensure the reforms work for Ontario. Obviously, there will be a need for ongoing consultations. These reforms will have a significant impact. We have to be certain they are implemented properly. For example, the new rule-making powers proposed for the OSC respond to laws in the US that already apply to Canadian companies listed on American exchanges. It makes sense that there be similar requirements for these companies in Canada. At the same time, we have to be sensitive to the issues faced by companies that aren't currently subject to these rules. This is one example of the need for further consultation.

There is also a need to consult on other matters. For example, we must continue to discuss some of the other proposals in the interim report of the committee conducting the five-year review of Ontario's securities laws. Some of those recommendations are far-reaching. We must take a serious look at these issues and determine if they are the best solution for Canadian markets. The government will do that, and we will respond quickly to the five-year review committee's final report. We will continue to be open to considering other investor protection measures. We will also continue to discuss the idea of moving towards national securities regulation.

Certainly, there are concerns with the current system, but the important point here is that this represents a commitment by the government to monitor to ensure that there is security around the investment and investors operating in this country and in this province. So we will continue to ensure that regulation meets the needs of both the investor and the companies making their investments here.

The Acting Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Whitby-Ajax	**Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim** (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Willowdale	**Young, Hon / L'hon David** (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
York South-Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
York West / -Ouest	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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