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**Official Report  
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**Journal  
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**Monday 5 May 2003**

**Lundi 5 mai 2003**

Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 May 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 1845.*

ROYAL ASSENT  
SANCTION ROYALE

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 1, An Act to protect jobs, promote economic growth and to address the challenge of SARS in Ontario /  
Projet de loi 1, Loi visant à protéger les emplois, à promouvoir la croissance économique et à relever le défi posé par le SRAS en Ontario.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 5, 2003, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** The floor is open for debate.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down Mr Hampton's lead till Wednesday. This will just be our first 20-minute spot.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it agreed that the leader of the third party will have his response to the speech from the throne tomorrow; is that correct?

**Mr Bisson:** Wednesday.

**The Acting Speaker:** Wednesday. Is it agreed? Agreed. You have that agreement and you may proceed.

**Mr Bisson:** Thank you very much to the members of the House.

As you know, we came back here after a 138-day hiatus. You remember we were here in December, we were dealing with the business before the House on behalf of Ontarians. When the House rose, if we remember correctly, the government sort of indicated back in December that they were going to come back this spring and they were going to come with a very loaded agenda,

all kinds of initiatives and all kinds of issues to deal with so that the province of Ontario can overcome this difficulty we're having as of late.

We all know—it's unfortunate—that Ontario has been caught up in a bit of a recession. We see what has happened with SARS. That's no fault of the government. That's one of those things that happens; I'm prepared to say that. It has had a huge economic impact on the city of Toronto, and it has had a bit of an impact across the province as well. But particularly for us in northern Ontario, the high Canadian dollar is something most people didn't see coming. As a result, many of the mines and mills of northern Ontario that I can speak of—and I imagine it's the same thing in southwestern Ontario and other parts of the province where we rely on exports to the United States—are being really affected in a negative way. When you're talking about an eight-cent jump back from last December to today, it has quite an impact.

Talking to companies in northern Ontario like Tembec and others, they're saying that if you couple that on top of the softwood lumber issue in regard to the tariff that the Americans have imposed on Canadian softwood lumber, tie on to that an already weak market when it comes to lumber because the United States economy is not moving as well as it should and an increase in the Canadian dollar, it's making things tough.

I was expecting that we would be coming back this spring earlier rather than later. I thought originally we were coming back sometime in March—what was it?

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** March 17.

**Mr Bisson:** It was March 17 that we were supposedly coming back, but on the way to March 17 Ernie Eves, I don't know, decided to do something different. He said, "It's far more important for us as Conservatives and as a government to take a step back, to refocus the agenda of the Conservative government and come back this spring with a more focused agenda when it comes to how we deal with the matters of Ontario in this Legislature, so we can deal with the socio-economic issues that we have to deal with in this great province of ours through this Legislature."

I was expecting that the government was going to have a throne speech that was chock full of new initiatives. I was really looking forward to—not looking forward. I was a bit afraid, quite frankly, because we've seen what the Tories have done over the last eight years and I have some problem with a lot of it, as you well know, along with a majority of Ontarians. But I was expecting far more and I was quite surprised, when the

throne speech was given, that there wasn't more in the way of detail when it came to the kinds of things the government wanted to do. They made some references in the throne speech about, "We're going to do more for health care. We're going to do more for education. We're going to do more for everybody," but it was very short on any kind of detail. So I thought, well, we're going to find out this week, because the government last Thursday, I expected, was going to come into the House and ministers of the crown were going to stand up and read bills that would be debated in this Legislature, and we'd come back this Monday and we would have more bills introduced in the Legislature that deal with the severe economic issues and all of the socio-economic issues that we need to deal with in the province of Ontario.

But look at the order paper. The order paper has almost nothing in it. I am—oh, sorry, Mr Prue. I went and dropped his glasses.

**1850**

**Mr Prue:** Don't step on those.

**Mr Bisson:** I can't step on them. Give them; I might need them.

When you look at the order paper, it's quite interesting. If you go to where it says "Government business" under the order paper, take a look. There's nothing there. We basically have a special debate on SARS that the government has tabled. We know there's going to be a budget debate, and I'll come back to that a little bit later. Now Mr Klees has introduced a transportation bill which is by and large a housekeeping bill that they brought into the House.

**Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour):** You passed the SARS bill.

**Mr Bisson:** We passed SARS fast. We said, "Listen, this is a bill that we can support. This is a bill that's important to the people of Ontario." We agreed with the government. We give them credit for what they did, which was right. We said, "We support it all the way. It's not a problem." I have no problem as a New Democrat supporting issues that make some sense and where you do a good job. I've always taken that position. But I'm really surprised that we don't see much more in the way of what the government wants to do this spring. So I have to think to myself that it's one of two things: the government doesn't know, which I have to believe is not the case, or they've got another little plan cooking, and the other little plan is called an election. I think the government is getting themselves—

**Hon Mr Clark:** Oh, go on.

**Mr Bisson:** Why? Are you afraid of going into an election? I can't believe that, Brad, a tough guy like you.

**Hon Mr Clark:** Another NDP conspiracy.

**Mr Bisson:** Oh, come on. I've got to believe a big, tough guy—Brad, if you and I met somebody on a corner somewhere at dark, with the size of us two guys, they'd be afraid. I can't believe you're afraid. I can't believe it.

Anyway, I just have to say that I have to believe the other option is that the government is holding back the specifics of what they didn't talk about in the throne

speech to kind of roll them out. You say to yourself, "Why are they wanting to roll them out?" And you say to yourself, "Well, they're rolling them out for a very simple reason: they're setting up the possibility to call an election this spring."

I say to the government across the way, please go for it. Our committee rooms are set. We've called 60% of our polls. We've got lots of sign locations. In fact, we have a volunteers party again this Friday. We have lots of volunteers. We have money. We're doing a good job. We're ready. We're ready to go in Timmins-James Bay. So I'm hoping you call this spring, because as I travel around my riding and around the province—and as a critic you go to different events around the province—people are saying, "So, are they going to call an election? Do we finally get a chance to vote those guys out?" I say, "Well, you know, I can't believe they're going to call, because they're 19 points back. It's kind of hard to call an election when you're 19 points back." Why do I know that? Because I remember 1995; I remember it well. I don't remember how many points, but it was something reminiscent of that.

**Mr Prue:** I remember 1990 too.

**Mr Bisson:** I remember 1990. That's another story. Whoa, that was a wonderful year, yes. We were way back. We were like 30 points back, and we won the government. That was something else.

Anyway, the point is that I have a bit of a hard time believing the government is going to call when they're 19 points back. I think what it is is this: I think they've done some polling, lots of polling. They've looked at the Liberal numbers and they are seeing what we're basically seeing, which is the great big parking lot called the Liberal Party of Ontario, a big parking lot. It's so, so soft on the edges that even though they're showing that they may be at 50% or 51%, whatever it is, the true numbers, if it came down to E-Day—in our language we call it E-Day; it's election day in layman's language—they're going to probably lose about 10% to 15% of that. So I have a funny feeling they're looking at the same numbers we're looking at, and that great big parking lot called the Liberal Party of Ontario is not going to hold at 51%.

But I'm glad for the Liberals, because they really are feeling good these days. They wake up in the morning and they eye the Whitney Block and they eye the Macdonald Block. They're checking out the seats, what a minister would have. They want to go in and look at the rug to see if the rug's in good shape. They're really feeling good these days. That's good; I like that. Keep it up. Be nice and cocky; I love it. This is good.

I remember 1990, when they were over 50 points ahead when they called an election. They were almost 60 points if I'm—who remembers 1990? Was it 60 points?

**Hon Mr Clark:** Sixty.

**Mr Bisson:** It was around 60 points. David Peterson called an election at 60 points in the polls, and Bob Rae won a majority government. Then, I remember 1995, Lyn McLeod was about 56% or 55% when the election was called and Mike Harris came out of third place—rem-

iniscient of what might happen in this election—and led all the way up to the polls in 1995 and won a huge majority government.

I remember in 1999—how far back were you then?

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** Eighteen points.

**Mr Bisson:** Was it 18?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bisson:** Really? Well, you're not going to make up those 18 points; we are. How's that? We're not going to let you guys keep up those points. That Liberal parking lot, we all know what it is.

I'll tell you what the issue is going to be in this election. I think a lot of people in this province—and we're starting to hit on it now—are starting to recognize what happens in a society like ours when somebody doesn't believe in government. It's really easy to get up in the morning and say, "I don't want to pay taxes. I think I pay too much, and government is in my way." It's an easy debate, until a loved one gets sick and he or she has to go to the hospital, or you have a child in the primary or secondary school system who's not getting the type of services they need, for example special-needs education, for what is needed to try to compete with other kids; or you're driving on a highway somewhere in northern Ontario and they're not plowing the roads any more the way they used to because they've privatized the roads. All kinds of examples—the list goes on and on: Walkerton and all kinds of things.

The thing is that people are starting to recognize—as much as we like to pick at government and as much we like to, sometimes, say, "Government is not a good thing and it's in our way and get it out of the way"—we start to recognize today just what happens when a government tries to undo government. People are recognizing that if we're going to live in a civil society that provides a basic infrastructure for people so that we can live in civility and with a basic standard of living, a big part of that is government. We need government to put in place labour laws that say that when people go to work in the morning, they've got a chance at making a good living, knowing that the employer can't retaliate against them for whatever reason; that there are good health and safety laws; that we've got a good health care system, if we get sick, that responds to the needs of people; that when our kids go to school in the morning, they've got a chance of getting the best education in the world so they can compete against other kids from other jurisdictions around the world, because, like it or like it not, it's become a much more global environment.

Therefore, I think people are starting to recognize that we need to have, quite frankly, a government that provides those basic infrastructures that we need for the province of Ontario in order to make us the type of province that we are.

I think that's going to be one of the key issues in this upcoming election. That's why, in our particular campaign—I've brought a leaflet with me because I wanted to show it to you, hot off the presses. See, it has

Howard's picture on it—my leader, Howard Hampton—and it says Public Power. You can go to the Web site—anybody out there who's watching—it's public-power.ca—

**Hon Mr Clark:** Is this a paid political announcement?

**Mr Bisson:** Well, you guys have paid political announcements by the bushelful. I listen to those paid political advertisements—and you know what's funny? I digress, but I heard the Liberals get up today and say, "If we're elected government, we're going to do away with all that advertising." Who believes that? I remember David Peterson was a master of advertising. I don't believe you guys are going to do away with it. The only reason you're mad is because you can't do it. That's really what it comes down to.

I just say to people, "Be somewhat careful about that." Is there reform needed when it comes to how we spend money in the province of Ontario when it comes to advertising and other so-called perks that political parties can have? I think there needs to be.

We need to talk about electoral reform; we need to talk about spending limits when it comes to elections; we need to talk about what's appropriate and what's not appropriate for opposition parties or governments, quite frankly, to be doing when it comes to how we spend the public's money.

That's why in our particular platform we have a number of issues that we come through on the Public Power theme. While we're talking Public Power, we're not just talking electricity—and I'll talk about that a little while later—but we're talking about the power of the public, saying to the people, "Your vote is your say. It's your opportunity" in this upcoming election, "either this spring or this fall—whenever you do call it—to go to the ballot box and decide, 'Which direction do I want to take in the province of Ontario? Do I want to take the position that the Tories are taking?'"—and I understand where the Tories are going. I can disagree with you on the policy things but I know where you're coming from. You have a particular bent; you don't believe in government the way that I do. You believe in a more market-oriented-type style of running a government, which I believe is not—you know, health care is not a business. Education is not a business; it's a service. It's about providing that basic infrastructure that I talked about earlier. But I understand where you're coming from, and at least I understand it. Is it following the way of the Tories, or is it—as people would say now with the Liberals—going their way, which is, "Today I'm like Ernie Eves and tomorrow I'm like Howard Hampton, and who am I talking to tomorrow?"

**1900**

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** Never.

**Mr Bisson:** Well, I hear the Liberals saying, "Never." My God, you know, I heard the Liberals complain that the Tories stole ideas from the Liberals and I've just got to say to myself, « Quel culot. » Liberals complaining about stealing ideas? Whoa, man. These guys should

wear a badge of honour. They're Robin Hoods of political history, I'll tell you. They have stolen more ideas from both the left and the right and then somehow or other managed to walk that fence without falling and hurting themselves. I never could figure that one out.

But in this particular election I think that it will come down to that. I think as people look at what the political parties are saying and what they are offering to the public, people will look at the NDP, they will look at the Public Power campaign and they will say, "Yes, we understand where the New Democrats are coming from." I think, as they look at Dalton McGuinty and the platform of the Liberals, that they are going to drop. I don't believe for a second that those 51 points are going to hold; I really believe they are going to drop.

What is it that we are talking about in Public Power? We are talking about a number of things. We're saying to people in the province of Ontario, "Your vote is your say. It's your opportunity in this election to decide what direction you want to take as Ontario citizens when it comes to how Ontario is governed." We believe, for example—we have it in our Public Power campaign—that the minimum wage should be increased. We believe that the minimum wage has been at \$6.85 an hour far too long. We have advocated for a number of years now, since the Tories took power, that we need to increase the minimum wage. Why? Well, the Liberals all of a sudden were opposed and then they were for, but that's another story. The thing is that we believe that hard-working people, far too many of them, are at minimum wage. The service industry and people who work in restaurants etc at minimum wage are having a very difficult time. We think that when you look at the level of the minimum wage in the United States, the least we can do in Canada and in Ontario is to provide a minimum wage at least comparable to what the Americans have. That would bring the minimum wage up to \$7—\$8 an hour; excuse me. Seven dollars would be 15 cents. Get it right: \$8. Get that straight. And then after that, having some sort of mechanism so that minimum wage is able to keep pace with inflation I think is also important.

We believe for example, and I commend the government—one good thing in the throne speech—that people on ODSP should get an increase. That's something my colleague Tony Martin has been pushing for a number of years now, that people on all kinds of disability pensions and people on social assistance are really hard done by when it comes to the amount of money they get every month. I'm glad to see that the tour Tony did when he travelled this province over the last two years, asking people to sign petitions and send in cards etc in order to increase both the ODSP and the social assistance benefits, at least did some good. The government is prepared to increase the ODSP, but that is one of the things we talked about in ours.

We talk about tuition. We say that tuitions in this province have skyrocketed under the Tory governments. We believe there should be an immediate 10% rollback in tuition. We have children in the school system. I think,

Mr Bartolucci, you do as well, in the university or college system, I would think. Yea?

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** They're all finished. I have one that is finished and the other one is in her third year.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** Just putting away money at this point. You're doing all right. Those of us who are fortunate enough to have children in post-secondary education understand just how expensive that is.

We say it's really important that we provide good daycare for the people of Ontario. We want a model that is a bit of a hybrid between what Quebec and British Columbia have done when it comes to a universal, public daycare system at \$10 a day so that people who need daycare are able to get it at \$10 a day, no matter what their income might be. It should be a universal right.

We believe there should be a reform to the pension system. This is something that is very important: people should have the ability in this modern economy, where we say, "You worked for 10 employers in your lifetime, where before you'd get one job at one employer, you'd work there 30 years and you'd get a pension"—most people out there can't work for one employer for 30 years because those jobs don't exist the way they used to. We believe that you have to go the way of making pensions portable so that workers are able to transfer their pensions from one employer to the other. We believe that people should be vested on day one, upon entering employment, so that they start collecting pension benefits from the first day they start to work, and we believe the pension should be indexed. We say that is such an important thing. I look at the workers in the paper mills in my riding who have a good pension: people at Spruce Falls, people who work at the Smooth Rock Falls Tembec mill are retiring on good pensions, and that is a good thing for those communities.

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** What about our pensions?

**Mr Bisson:** We don't have pensions. I'm never voting Conservative again. Cancelled my pension, you did.

**Mr Murdoch:** You voted with us, though, you dummy.

**Mr Bisson:** Oh, I did. Oh, my Lord, I should have had a V-8. Anyway, we believe that's the case.

Last, but not least, we believe that hydro has to remain under public control. We have to undo much of the damage that the Tories have done to hydro.

I just want to give a couple of quick examples. I've got a particular business in my riding that, in February, 2002, had a \$1,389 energy bill. When you add the GST that they had to pay on to it, the total bill was \$1,500. This year, just in energy charges, their bill is \$2,298. Add the user fees on top of that—cost of delivery to you, retirement of the public debt and all those other things that are on the hydro bill. The government says they capped the bill. Oh, really. When you add all that up, it's \$2,200 plus \$1,500 for a total of \$3,800. There are hard-working business people in my riding that are seeing that

their hydro bills have doubled since the market's been open. We believe that we need to have a utility company in this province that is publicly run, that is there to deliver power at cost and is there in order to make sure that small business people in this province, consumers at home or large industries such as Kidd Creek and others across this province, are able to rely on safe, cheap, affordable hydro so that they are able to run their plants.

I have another case with a Mr Bergeron, who has gotten a hydro bill—I couldn't believe his. I've got 30 seconds left. He went from a bill of \$240 last year for February to \$672. This is a senior on a pension. I say this is a really, really bad thing. The government says that it wants to do something for seniors? Put hydro back into public control and undo the damage you've done to hydro. For Mr Bergeron, that's almost a tripling of his hydro bill, something he can ill afford to deal with.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for this opportunity. I wish I could do it all over again. I move unanimous consent that I do another 20 minutes.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'll take that as a rhetorical motion and declare that the floor is now open for up to two minutes for questions or comments.

**Hon Mr Clark:** I want to thank the member for Timmins-James Bay for his comments. As he was speaking—and I was listening very closely to him because he was raising some interesting things—he talked about the Liberal lead in the polls. It goes all the way back to 1975. They've been ahead every single election in the polls back to 1975 and have blown it. It's always been hollow. One of the things that they forget—they pounce on the polling numbers, but they forget that there's a large undecided factor still. You and I know that it still exists. People haven't seen all the platforms yet; they can't judge.

But I have been watching the platforms. I've been watching the Liberal platform. I was amazed, and this is interesting: they've actually included in their platform now free votes. The Liberals are going to include free votes. This might come as a bit of a surprise. They might have wanted to do it this past four years, when we actually did free votes on this side of the House. I remember the member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Hamilton East voting against amalgamation.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Clark:** Oh, they're getting loud now. They supported amalgamation, but the members for Hamilton Mountain and Hamilton East voted against it because the Leader of the Opposition told them to do that. That's what happened. Ian Urquhart wrote a great column about it—fascinating. They voted against back-to-work legislation for the elementary panel in Hamilton. Their constituents wanted the kids back in school, but the members for Hamilton Mountain and Hamilton East voted against their constituents, voted against the community and voted with the Liberal Party. So much for free votes.

Let's not forget the Safe Schools Act. What person in this Legislature wouldn't be about safe schools? Yet they

voted against it. Then, lo and behold, an election comes and now they're talking about safe schools. Talk about spirited movement of ideas from one platform to another. I think they should be looking in the mirror when they make accusations about documentation being moved from one party to another.

I am awaiting this election campaign. It's going to be fascinating.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I'm delighted to have an opportunity to make some comments with regard to the remarks that have been made this evening by the member from Timmins-James Bay.

I cannot help but be very amused that, on an evening when we are to be debating the content of the throne speech, there has been, in my opinion, a significant amount of time devoted to the Liberal democratic charter. I think it's a document that's very worthy of some attention and some debate.

There was reference made to our position with regard to the use of government dollars for advertising, and the suggestion that this is just what the Liberals are going to say to get elected. If the member would pay very close attention to what my leader says, what we are going to do when we are government is to introduce legislation that will ensure that any spending of government money on advertising will come under the scrutiny of the Integrity Commissioner. It's simply not going to be the case where we can say we will do something and then decide to change our mind later on. In fact, we're going to introduce legislation and it will be the Integrity Commissioner who will be the arbiter as to whether or not we are following through on our promise.

**1910**

We talk about electoral reform and free votes in the House, and that is something we are committed to.

I also heard the member make reference to the promise that we will reduce spending limits; in other words, the amount of money political parties will be able to raise and the amount of money they will be able to spend during an election campaign. This is what we have heard from the people of Ontario that they believe is needed to ensure the electoral process is as fair, balanced and democratic as possible. My leader, Dalton McGuinty, has had the courage to put it in writing and say this is what we will do when we are government—the sooner, the better.

**Mr Prue:** We have a rowdy group here tonight.

It is, as always, a pleasure to be back in this House. I have to tell you that when March 17 came and went and we did not come back, there was probably no one more disappointed than me, being a rookie—only Mr McDonald on the other side has been here a shorter time than I—and perhaps many thousands of people who love to tune this in in the evening. There were at least two very disappointed people who would have liked to spend a lot more time here.

Then we came and we watched what can only be described as a disastrous budget that took place somewhere in Brampton. What can I say? The newspapers panned it;

the editorial comments, 51 out of 52 daily newspapers, were absolutely negative. The *Globe and Mail*, Canada's long-established newspaper, ran 17 editorials in a row against what was happening by the members on that side of the House. The whole thing came down to that they wanted to discuss this with the people, that they wanted to send out questionnaires. I don't know how many they sent out—certainly a lot of them, and about 10,000 came back. I don't know where those 10,000 live, but I want to tell you there weren't very many from Beaches-East York. In fact, I don't know of a single soul, although there may have been someone, who contacted my office and told me that they were going to participate in the throne speech.

And what did we see in that throne speech? Quite frankly, it is an absolute disappointment to those of us who have had a chance to read it. In fact, there is nothing in there about daycare; there is nothing in there about transferable pensions; there's nothing in there about holding on to Hydro; there is nothing in there about disabilities, save and except that they're going to do some small improvements; there's nothing in there about selling assets as was contained in the budget; there is nothing in there for housing and for all of those people in Ontario who are desperate; there is nothing in there for cities. I think it was a throne speech devoid of content.

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex):** I wanted to rise and thank the member for Timmins-James Bay for all of the comments that he has put here on the record. I should, I guess, say that I don't agree with them all, but I am glad he makes them. By the way, I'll be speaking a little later, so you may want to think of this as a commercial for "Hear Bert speak later on."

My comment to the member for Timmins-James Bay is that although Ontario has a lot of needs and wants right now, he should read the throne speech again. He'll find that, unlike the start of his speech, where he was talking about the long layoff, he must know that he forgot about the layoff in 1995. As a matter of fact, it reminds me: I sent one of my staff down to the library to get me the budget for 1995, because I had somebody who asked, "Bert, do you really think the budget speech should have been outside of the House?" I said, "By all means. I think it's a bold, innovative idea and I'm glad we're doing it. I'd like to reflect on it and I may not agree with doing it again, but I think that it was a good idea." Lo and behold, the staff member I sent down for the 1995 budget came back, and I said, "Where is it?" She said, "We can't find it." I guess my complaint, if you like, right now with the member for Timmins-James Bay—I know you'll take it to your caucus and your buddies over in the Liberal seats. Get me a copy of their 1995 budget, please.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Timmins-James Bay now has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr Bisson:** He says they're my buddies. Oh, God, it's tough to take. I want to choose my friends, Bert. Let me choose them myself. No, they're all honourable members. We have a bit of fun in here sometimes.

I say to my good friend Mr Johnson, you wanted me to read the throne speech. I'm not an insomniac. If I were, I would read it. It would put me to sleep pretty quick. It was hard enough to follow through the day of the actual throne speech.

Both the Deputy Speaker and Mr Prue from Beaches-East York raised the issue of the budget, a very important point. I thought it was rather interesting that a government member, even after that fiasco happened, would get up and say, "That wasn't a bad idea. It was innovative." You know what? The thing that people look for in good politicians is when you admit that you're wrong.

Admit on that one you were wrong. You took a calculated risk that politically it would be a good thing for you to do the budget outside, at the Magna plant. It turned out, as I expected, that the public didn't like it. They thought it was an affront to democracy, not only to this chamber but to the people of Ontario who vote for us. Admit you were wrong. Move past it. It was an error. Don't do it again.

My good friends of the Liberal caucus, it's so much fun being with you. One day I come into the Legislature and I listen to one thing that's said, and then I hear a completely different discussion a couple of days later inside this House about the leadership of Dalton McGuinty. I remember in 1994 Mr Dalton McGuinty, who now purports to be the friend of teachers, introduced a bill in this House that would have taken away their right to strike. So here he is, complaining about the Tories rumoured to be introducing such legislation and how bad a thing it is. But I've got the bill in my constituency office. I've got it ready for the campaign; it's in my briefing book. Any time somebody raises that, I want to raise the Dalton McGuinty private member's bill, which does exactly what the Tories said they would do when it comes to banning strikes by teachers. So I'm not taking any lesson from the Liberals.

**The Acting Speaker:** The floor is now open for further debate. The Chair will recognize the member for Kitchener Centre.

*Applause.*

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I appreciate that applause from my colleagues. You can stop now.

It's really interesting. I heard the Leader of the Opposition speaking this afternoon and I immediately prepared notes. I have enough to go for three hours tonight but the Clerk's table told me I only have 20 minutes.

I do want to point out, to start with, that Ian Urquhart on March 31 in the *Toronto Star* wrote, and I'm going to quote a couple of lines: "Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty has promised that, if he becomes Premier"—which won't happen, by the way—"his government will spend more on health, education, the environment, cities, police, culture, agriculture, skills training and the north.

"How much more?" Well, Ian says, "About \$7.4 billion a year, according to the Liberals' ... calculations."

He says, "Let's accept for a moment that the Liberals' figure is correct." The Liberal leader "is often asked this question and he has a quick and ready answer" how he



would pay for it all. "He would roll back the \$2.2-billion corporate tax cuts contained in the 2001 budget."

Well, guess what? That was then, only a month and a half ago, and lo and behold, today, with a quick stroke of the pen, Dalton McGuinty in his speech increased that figure to \$3.2 billion. Now, that's Liberal math. Then he says that McGuinty would "cancel income and property tax cuts from the same budget that have not yet been implemented." He would "repeal the private school tax credit and reduce spending on consultants and government advertising," a total of \$4.75 billion. Whoops. There's a shortfall here. There's a shortfall of \$3.5 billion, and that's using the Liberals' own low figure of \$7.4 billion a year in their spending plans.

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"He is also counting on"—get this—"an additional \$3.3 billion from Ottawa in transfers for health and skills training." Well, guess what? That's already been provided for in the budget this year. You can't spend it again, and Ian Urquhart mentioned that.

Now, he also says—

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** He's on to them.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** He is. There's no doubt, I say to the member from Durham. There's no doubt about it.

He says all of his revenue figures are for the fourth and final year of a government mandate. That's allowing for all the projections, so that would be the maximum figure of these tax credits at that time, not next year or the year after, which would be considerably lower.

I do want to say—

**The Acting Speaker:** Will the member take his seat, please. The member for Sarnia-Lambton, on a point of order.

**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe the debate tonight is on the throne speech. I have been listening carefully. I believe that the member is not staying on topic, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. I would just point out that it is a throne speech debate and, much like budget debates and supply, there's a greater latitude provided on these. I will watch carefully if the member gets too far afield, although I have to say to you, when we're dealing with a throne speech, there really isn't too much, at the end of the day, that one couldn't argue is encompassed. With that, I will return the floor to the member for Kitchener Centre.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Speaker, would it be possible that I have a minute of my time back? No, it's not possible? I would suggest to you, Speaker, that the member opposite from Sarnia-Lambton has probably been drinking too much Port Huron water, because in four years, she should have known that there is a fair degree of latitude when we're dealing with throne speech debates.

Everything I've been talking about is leading up to what Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal leader, said this afternoon. Not only that, but I want to go a little step further here. I'm now going to quote from Carol Goar of the Toronto Star, also from March 31. She said that the Liberals came around to the view last week, relating to

private facilities and OHIP—"The Liberals came around to that view more recently. Last week, McGuinty declared his opposition to private clinics. Until then, he had said that such facilities were acceptable," and then all he said was, "provided no one could buy his or her way to the front of the line." Of course, he repeated that line today, in his response to the throne speech. I want to say that that is exactly the position this government has taken, that any private facilities would have to bill OHIP—it would not be paid for by the patient—and nobody could queue-jump. That is the position that our government has taken. So you talk about stealing ideas. That party over there is stealing our ideas. You haven't had an original idea in your life.

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture):** Dalton still wants to close hospitals.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes. Dalton still wants to close hospitals; that's right. I say to the Chair of Management Board, your hospital will be gone, under a Liberal government.

He also said he is going to close all private clinics. What is the most successful private clinic in Canada, maybe in all of North America, today, outside of the Mayo Clinic? That would be the Shouldice Clinic. Dalton McGuinty gets the power? Closed. No more Shouldice.

**Hon Mr Clark:** Say it isn't so.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I can't say it isn't so. He said he's going to close them. He said it right here. This is the Instant Hansard from this afternoon and Dalton McGuinty said that this afternoon.

He said his plan is to keep taxes down; he said that this afternoon. How, I say to you, are you going to keep taxes down with what he has said today? He's going to increase spending by \$13 billion but he is not going to cut any taxes. We showed in the last eight years that we could cut taxes by \$16.1 billion and produce more revenue. Guess what: \$16.1 billion more revenue. But they said they're not going to cut taxes. In fact, they're going to reverse some of the taxes that we've already said we're going to put in, ie, the seniors' property tax credit.

I've got news for you, ladies and gentlemen. The seniors in my riding think this is the most fantastic idea. They've been telling me for eight years that they want this. The Liberals are opposing it. I think they're nuts, personally. I absolutely think that they've lost it.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** What does CARP say?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Actually—it's over 50 now—they are in favour of it. It was in the most recent magazine. Do you not read it? I know why you don't read it: because you're not over 50. Well, I am. Do you know something? The seniors in my riding come in and talk to me—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Thank you. I'm getting close to 60—too close. But I say, this is what they want.

**Mr O'Toole:** You'll soon be eligible.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes, I will, as a matter of fact.

Anyway, they talk about this "\$3.2-billion tax cut" that the government has promised large corporations.

We've also promised tax cuts to small corporations. Small corporations are responsible for more than 60% of the job growth in Ontario in the last five years and they're going to get a tax cut so that they can invest more money and create more jobs. That is what this whole tax cut idea is all about—creating jobs.

I know that the NDP is going to have trouble with it and certainly the Liberals aren't going to have a whole lot better idea about it, but here's what it is. We have created an environment in which private industry has created over 1.1 million jobs since 1995.

*Applause.*

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes, that does deserve applause. Government didn't create those 1.1 million jobs. Government didn't create them. It is up to government to create the environment or the climate by which private industry can provide those jobs.

The member for St Catharines came in and he said yes. There you go.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** No, I said "jobettes."

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes, well, those are starters.

I have to laugh when the Liberals say that they're going to balance their budget.

**Mr Bradley:** What did your executive assistant say is what I want to know.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** My executive assistant is fired. I really find this tough to take. I'm afraid there are people at home doing what somebody who just handed me this note said. The score is Ottawa 2, Philadelphia nothing. Those who are watching the legislative channel tonight, I can assure you that we will give you updates on a regular basis.

**Mr Bradley:** They have you on the split screen.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes, they have this on the split screen. We do have fun in this place.

I was going through Dalton McGuinty's speech again and he says here, "... it just doesn't make any sense, not today, to invite highly skilled and educated people from distant parts of the world to come and move to Ontario and to bring their families here." I'm not trying to take him out of context. He's talking about skills. I want him to know that I agree with him to a point, to a very limited point; that is, in Ontario, unlike Quebec, we do not control our immigration. I also think that we should be attracting more and more of those highly skilled and highly educated people from other countries.

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In my community, my riding of Kitchener Centre, we have a very large number of these highly skilled and highly educated immigrants who have come to Kitchener in the course of the last five to eight years. In fact, we are the fourth largest in terms of number of immigrants in the last five years of any community in Canada. We trail only Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver, and sometimes we trail Montreal because Ottawa and Montreal shift back and forth as to the numbers of immigrants they receive. They are responsible in large part for the tremendous economic growth enjoyed by Kitchener Centre, and

Kitchener Centre, in case any of you don't realize—I hope you do, because I've told you often enough—is one of the most important economic regions of this entire country.

**Mr O'Toole:** Next to Oshawa.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** No, even ahead of Oshawa.

I think it's really important to point out that, yes, we do believe that we have to do more for skills. In fact, that was in the throne speech. It was in the budget. We have talked about skills over and over, over the last few years.

I worked personally on a report for the Honourable Dianne Cunningham with John Tibbits, who is the president of Conestoga College in Kitchener. I worked with him on the applied degrees program. It was through his great effort that we got the applied degrees. I then worked with him to a very great extent to get the colleges of increased technology and advanced learning. I worked with him on that. We brought them in and Conestoga College was one of the beneficiaries, as its students will ultimately be the chief beneficiaries. That's what this was all about. We believe that the increased skills are very important for the economic prosperity of the students, of the province and of the country.

Now suddenly the Liberals are on the bandwagon. Where were they before? Talk about stealing ideas.

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** Back in the trail dust.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes, we would—I say to the Chair of Management Board, yes, they are back in the trail dust.

Dalton McGuinty today said, "I can tell you, those truly successful, highly competitive economies are those where they have established a strong partnership with labour, government and business pulling together."

He also said, tying in with this, that we trail—and I say in big question marks, trail?—a number of the jurisdictions in the United States. I've got news for you people. We lead and have led for at least five years every jurisdiction in the G7 in GDP. How the heck do the Liberals come off—I tell you guys, you've got to get new writers, because you don't do very good research.

They talk about—get this. The Liberals say, "We have also learned that in our smaller schools in rural and northern Ontario, they tend to have a higher school spirit." Well, do you know what? That's since Bill 160. Do you know what, Speaker? Since Bill 160, we have been able to pour more money per student into the education system of the boards in the north. Before that, many of those boards were getting less than \$3,000 or just over \$3,000 per student, compared to Toronto where they were getting \$10,000-plus per student. The boards in the north had 20- and 30-year-old textbooks held together with Scotch tape and elastic, and I'm not telling you anything that isn't already in Hansard from the testimony given by the presenters to Bill 160 in those northern hearings. I was on those hearings that went right around the province. We heard that everywhere except in Ottawa and Toronto. Then the Liberals have the nerve to come along and say, "Oh, there are so many schools that are short textbooks." We have poured more and more money

into education. Look at this. In the budget this year, since—

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** What does Rozanski say?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Oh, you want to talk about Rozanski? Rozanski has said that we are doing everything that he has recommended. He agrees with what we have done in our education policies. Read his report. I know the Liberals can't read.

From 1998-99 to the present, we've increased spending in education by almost 15%. Between now and 2005-06, we'll increase it by another 14%.

The key here: there is some money in the education system that is not going to the students, that is not going to textbooks, that is not going to special ed, that is not going to those areas where we'd like to see it go. But as a result of the agreements the teachers' unions have had with the government for a number of years, \$306 million this year will go to the teachers' pension plan—\$306 million.

**Mr O'Toole:** That's down considerably.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** That is down considerably, yes, but it's \$306 million this year to the teachers' pension plan. That's the same pension plan that bought the Toronto Maple Leafs, that bought the Toronto Raptors. Need I go on?

The Liberal leader also said today that our government has cut health care. I am so fed up with the rhetoric and the hyperbole—and outside of this House I would call it something else, but I know I'm not allowed to accuse him of lying.

Since 1998, the fiscal year 1998-99, in the health care envelope, we've increased funding for hospitals alone from \$6.8 billion a year to \$10.9 billion a year. To that party opposite, which claimed in 1995 that they would keep the health care envelope at \$17.4 billion, we have increased health care funding from \$17.4 billion in 1995 to \$27.7 billion in this fiscal year. That's a \$10-billion increase.

**Interjection:** Is that a cut?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** That doesn't sound like a cut to me.

**Mr O'Toole:** Where do they get this cut thing? I think it's their federal cousins—

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I'm getting to that. I thank you, the member for Durham. The federal government gives us not one cent toward home care, not one cent toward long-term care, not one cent toward pharmaceutical care. They had an agreement, when medicare came into being in this country, that they would fund 50% of all health care costs across this country. This year, in spite of their one-time payment, in spite of that, they are contributing only 17 cents on the dollar; 17% of Ontario's health care is being funded by the federal government. So I say to you people, the Liberals, go talk to your federal cousins in Ottawa.

**The Acting Speaker:** Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

**Mr Bradley:** I am rising to express sympathy with the member for Kitchener Centre, because I was reading the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, and it says a fellow by the

name of Dave Maxwell, Mr Wettlaufer's executive assistant since 1995, "said yesterday he was fired after announcing his decision to try to unseat his boss at a February 25 nomination meeting." Imagine the imperitance of an individual trying to do that.

It says, "Maxwell, the campaign manager who helped Wettlaufer win elections in 1995 and 1999, said he decided to run after watching the MPP's numerous political blunders and 'weak performance' in recent years." That is really dirty, for a person who has actually worked for a person to come out and say that about him.

Then it says that Mr Maxwell "appreciates he's 'committing political suicide' but intends to run even if only to give party members a better appreciation of what has been happening in Wettlaufer's office, and to ask questions."

He goes on to say—

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for St Catharines, take your seat. Chair of Management Board.

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This has nothing to do with the throne speech, absolutely nothing.

**The Acting Speaker:** Well, I allowed a great deal of latitude—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Just a minute, Minister. Hang on. I gave a lot of latitude for your own backbencher when a point of order was raised by a Liberal member. I'm going to give the same latitude now. I will listen carefully. If I think he goes way over the line, then I will rein him in, but for now I'm going to allow the speech to continue.

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**Mr Bradley:** He went on to say, "He's become a government apologist instead of a riding representative. It's not his job as MPP to go to Queen's Park, be told what to do and then ram it down peoples' throats."

All I'm doing is expressing sympathy for a person who—you've hired this person, you've given him an opportunity to work for you for the number of years that you have, and he turns around and turns on the member and tries to accuse you of being a government apologist. Surely anybody who listened to your speech this evening could not define you as being a government apologist.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further questions or comments.

**Mr Prue:** Everybody seems to be quoting newspapers today, so I think I cannot be any different. I listened about Ian Urquhart's column attacking the Liberals. I've listened about Carol Goar's column attacking I guess again the Liberals. I've listened to the K-W Record attacking the Conservatives. But I want to tell you, although I seldom read the little paper that grew in Toronto, I really did like the May 2 editorial in the Toronto Sun. I would like to read this for those watching TV and for the members opposite, because I think it says it all. It's called "Selective Cuts Make No Sense."

"In the 1999 election, the Ontario Tories promised 'We'll cut the provincial portion of residential property taxes by 20%, phased in over our next term.'

"It's right there on page 11 of their 'Blueprint' election document, the successor to their 1995 Common Sense Revolution.

"They promised this would provide 'relief to every homeowner and renter in Ontario' since they'd require apartment owners to pass along the savings to tenants through lower rents.

"Of course, that was then and this is now."

Then I'll skip down, because I've only got a minute left. It says:

"The Tories argue seniors have paid into the education system all their lives and, especially since they no longer have children in the system, deserve a special break. Fine. Many younger taxpayers have no kids in the system, either, and use far less health care than seniors. Using Tory logic, where's their special tax break?

"The Tories have made a bad idea even worse by not setting a cap on the value of a property to which this tax break applies. While the average senior will get \$475, those with homes valued at, say, \$5 million, will get about \$20,000. At least the Tories should cap the value of a home to which the break applies at around \$300,000.

"But that would simply be mitigating the damage caused by one targeted tax by targeting it even more. Instead, we believe the Tories should do what they said they would do in 1999. As we recall, that was one of the principles of the CSR."

**Mr O'Toole:** I'm pleased to respond to the member from Kitchener Centre, who has quite emotionally put his comments on the record. I note today he listened to Dalton McGuinty. He didn't hear much, but he certainly was here to listen. Of course, there wasn't much being said.

When it comes down to talking about the throne speech, I know I had four constituents here that day. Respectfully, they were invited not essentially by me; they were invited because they are important persons who are retired Legion members and persons who have served our country. They were invited by, I guess, the Premier's office; I'm not really sure. But I should put on the record that in my riding they are highly respected people: Jean Blair, Madge Cadan, Don Kerr and Bev Oda. All of these people made comments—not to me directly, but I'm able to take them out of the press.

Don Kerr said that he was pleased to learn of Ontario's support for the Juno Beach memorial to all World War II veterans. He also was very supportive of the recognition of health care workers who had served courageously in the SARS emergency.

Bev Oda said she feels the throne speech successfully focused on taking care of today while building for tomorrow. Our initiatives for seniors were among the things she considered to be the most important. She also noted that our proposal for free tuition for doctors and nurses who agreed to work in underserved areas would go on to help our community in the riding of Durham.

The feedback I hear from my constituents, as I hear from Mr Wettlaufer today, is that the throne speech had a

lot of initiatives, but I was impressed with just three simple things that people should listen to:

Seniors now will have the choice, for their own future, of when to retire. That's empowerment.

Increased payments for persons on disability: we heard that in the pre-budget consultations. Our minister and Premier have acted.

Also, just for our children, the threat of an impaired driver—drunk driving.

There are three examples of what this throne speech delivered to the people of Ontario.

**Ms Di Cocco:** I would suggest that the member from Kitchener Centre read what's called Closing the Prosperity Gap. It's from the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress. The reason I suggest that it may be useful for him to read it is because it talks about the prosperity gap that's growing in Ontario. "This trend is worrisome. If we continue on the same path, we are likely to fall further behind."

What this study did, by the way—and I would suggest that it really is good if members read things other than what is put in front of them in a partisan way, because it does help to give an objective perspective on what it is we're talking about—they took 16 peer groups, meaning other jurisdictions of equal size and with about the same GDP. At this point in time, Ontario ranks 14th out of 16 in its peer groups. These are states such as Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, California, Illinois, Virginia, Georgia, Texas, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and then there's Ontario. We're 14 out of 16 they studied, and why is that? It says that, "In carrying out our mandate 'to measure Ontario's productivity, competitiveness, and economic progress compared to other provinces and US states,' the task force has conducted intensive analyses to develop new insights into" explaining the difference in performances.

I would suggest that what they're saying is that our productivity gap is lagging behind these other jurisdictions because the Conservatives don't understand anything except tax cuts.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Kitchener Centre now has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Contrary to listening to the odd individual or the odd group who are going to publish or say something that is different than what any government or any party would advocate at any one given time, I would rather listen to groups like the chambers of commerce, the Ontario Hospital Association, the doctors in my riding who claim that our health care is so much better in my riding now than it was 10 years ago after the debacle that was caused by the Liberals and the NDP. I would rather listen to the people in my riding who say that health care is so much better, where now almost 90% of the people are happy and satisfied with the treatment they get in the hospitals. I would rather say to those people that yes, we are going to maintain that.

We have this great economy in this province, which we didn't have, I will remind the people of Ontario and I will remind the members opposite, when we were elected

in 1995. I will remind you that we had a homegrown recession in this country. It was homegrown largely because of the policies of the two governments prior to 1995 who believed in spending, who believed in higher taxes, who believed in higher deficits. You discouraged investment. You discouraged job creation. There were no jobs. There was no hope. There was no opportunity for young people. My daughter was one of those who graduated from the University of Western Ontario with high marks and couldn't get a full-time job because of the debacle your governments created.

Don't you sit in this House and pontificate and lecture to us. We know what we are doing. We've got a proper platform, we've got a proper plan for the future, and I'll tell you something: we're going to carry it out after the election.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Take a seat, please. When the government benches are done, we'll move on.

They seem to be done. The floor is open for further debate.

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**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** Mr Speaker, I welcome you and all the members back in the House after a long while, back to debate those issues that we and the people of Ontario find of interest. This is the place where I believe we should be debating those.

Before I do that, we are coming from a very difficult period with the war and then the unexpected SARS effect here. Before I go back into the debate tonight, which is the throne speech, I would like to say thank you to all the staff and the physicians at the Humber River Regional Hospital. That is the major hospital in my area in connection with Humber Memorial, which is another branch of the Humber River Regional Hospital and the Northwestern Hospital as well. It's serving an extremely large community. I would like to say that now that the threat of SARS is finally subsiding, following an extremely difficult and alarming period, I want to express my sincere thanks and admiration to all at Humber River Regional Hospital who have been dealing with the pressures brought on by this viral outbreak. The residents of York West, all of Toronto, as well as the greater Toronto area join me in acknowledging your courageous strength, compassion, professionalism and devotion to your patients. Faced with the overwhelming challenge of providing front-line care at a time of uncertainty and under tough circumstances, you put your own health and safety on the line through the long days and nights. Each and every one of you is a real hero, and we owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude. All the people in our community thank you for protecting our health and safety each and every day. We are grateful that you do it with such courage and conviction.

I will be sending this to all the doctors and physicians at the Humber River Regional Hospital, which I believe was absolutely tremendous in providing not only care but in appeasing a lot of the community which at this

particular time was under very difficult stress and distress as well.

Now if I may delve into the debate of the speech from the throne: in doing that, I would like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member from Sarnia-Lambton for whatever middle time we have left.

Let me address briefly the content—

**Hon Mr Clark:** It's 10 minutes.

**Mr Sergio:** Well, 10 minutes. What can you do in 10 minutes? We have had the budget presentation. Unfortunately, it was not in this place here. We have had the throne speech in the last couple of days, and I believe we are going to have an election in Ontario. I wish we knew when the election would be held—I think that not only the members would be preparing themselves but I believe we owe it to the public that indeed they would know when an election is going to be held. This belongs to the decision of the Premier, Mr Eves. Yes, indeed, I think it's fair that we can look at an election. When? We'll wait, but I can tell that an election is coming. The people out there, they can't wait, because they are saying, "When are we going to have an election?" Well, we are waiting; they are waiting.

I think that we are going into an election, and what are we going into an election for? What will the people look for during an election? Exactly the types of things that we are debating here tonight and tomorrow and perhaps next week, unless the Premier decides to say, "That's it. I've had enough. Let's go to the people."

It will be a time when the people will say, "We are going to look at the government, look at their budget, look at the speech from the throne and look at their record, and"—if you will, let me throw in there—"we are going to look at the leadership of the existing government." I think they are all excellent topics at which the public in Ontario should be looking in the next election and decide—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm going to ask the government benches to please come to order, but I will note that there is a member of the official opposition among them helping to make the noise, so please keep it down. I know you want to be respectful.

Sorry for the interruption. Please continue.

**Mr Sergio:** I'm not going to hold the members of the government—I have lost six seconds because of your attention, Mr Speaker.

As I was saying, it is a good time to go to the electorate because they will be basing their vote at election time on the issues that we are indeed debating today: the speech from the throne, the budget, the leadership and the record of this government for the last eight years. I'll tell you, if in other areas of the province the mood of the people is the same as in my area, what I hear on a daily basis, it is time for change. We have had enough of eight years of this government. They continue to bash the people of Ontario, especially the weakest groups.

Therefore, they say, "You know what? I think it's time for change." We couldn't agree more.

We have said to the Premier, we have said to the government, "You have shown in the last number of years an inconsistency of government, an indisposition toward the people, neglecting the most needy groups." They call them special groups, if, for example, you want to say that our seniors in need of assistance are called a special group.

So people are saying, "We have had enough of bashing," from health care to education, to the environment and a number of other issues. They say, "They have gone too far. We need a change."

Who can disagree with the people of Ontario when no longer are the elected members saying, "I can win or I can lose" or what or where and when? The people of Ontario are saying it is time for change, and for good reason.

We had a speech from the throne, we had a budget. What good was it to the people of Ontario when issues announced and re-announced from back in 1995 are still being re-announced today? This is the government that says, "We have kept our promises." I'll tell you, the people of Ontario can't wait to tell the Premier and this government that they did not keep their promises on the major issues, mainly health care, education and the environment.

So indeed, if they would like to call an election, those will be the issues. The people of Ontario will look at the government, at the members on that side and say they should or they shouldn't. But I can tell you that the mood out there is just for change when they say, "Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals were the first ones to announce their policies, and you know what? You guys make sense. You have a good bunch of positive ideas." Only the Liberals and Dalton McGuinty can bring about those changes.

So let's have that change and let's have the Liberals. Let's give Dalton McGuinty an opportunity to give the people of Ontario what they would expect from their own government. It isn't much that they would expect from their government. It is sensible ideas and positive solutions to deal with those issues in this House and out of this House.

So for me to say today I am happy with the content of the budget and the speech from the throne, I would say let's go and ask the people of Ontario.

I thank you for your time, Mr Speaker.

**2000**

**Ms Di Cocco:** The throne speech, as we know, lays out the priorities and direction of where the government wants to go. I have to tell you that it was with a sigh of relief that I, as a democratically elected member of this House, was allowed to come back here to take my seat and listen to this throne speech, something that I was not allowed to do because of the contempt to our parliamentary democracy shown by Premier Eves when he held the budget speech and they read it outside of this Legislature. All of the members in this House are elected

representatives; we are the people's representatives. Our place is here when it comes to the notion of the spending of the people's money, and that's what a budget speech lays out. Unfortunately, I was absolutely shocked that a democratically elected government would actually pull a stunt such as what happened in March.

I encourage all of the people who are watching to take time and read the throne speech carefully, to go through it. The throne speech is, of course, full of accolades of all the wonderful things that have been done and that they plan to do. It sort of lays out this sense of, "We can do no wrong. We've done no wrong. Everything is perfect. Look how wonderful we are." That's basically what the throne speech does in this instant.

There are some reality checks that I would like to bring to this discussion today. When I found out that the throne speech had a consultative process, I sent on behalf of my constituents a couple of proposals, if you want to call it that, to the government prior to the throne speech.

First, and this has to do with our community health care centre in Sarnia, we have 10,000 families in Sarnia that do not have doctors, and 600 seniors who don't have a doctor. So I sent off a letter to Minister Clement, as well as to the Premier, saying that the government has spent millions of dollars asking for input for the throne speech, because all of those pamphlets that are mailed out cost money to print and to send out. They are saying that they wanted input, yet the proposal for a community health centre, a proposal from the Sarnia-Lambton Community Health Centre Steering Committee, signed by over 11,000 Sarnia-Lambton residents, supported by business, by various levels of local governments, by both Conservatives, Liberals and the NDP, and that is critically needed in an area that has a dramatic doctor shortage, has been discontinued and has been scrapped. They were just told a month ago this is a no-go. I don't understand what kind of consultation they're asking for in regard to the throne speech when in fact this proposal to really deal with a serious issue was totally disregarded and dismissed.

There's another area that I would like to give a reality check on, and again it has to do with throne speech consultation. It's about the St Clair Child and Youth Services in our area, and it deals with children's mental health. Children's mental health services were promised \$50 million that was going to go into this area of mental health. They were told it was going to be in the budget, and yet the budget came and went in Brampton: nothing in the budget speech.

I will read something that, again, was written to Premier Eves prior to the throne speech, hoping that it would trigger a little bit of conscience. It says, "For many years, children's mental health services have managed ... real and effective budget reductions through a variety of strategies. These have included attrition of some positions, restructuring the agency (twice) to reduce the number of management positions, and slippage (delaying filling of vacant positions....) Under the government's dictum to 'do more (or the same) with less,' we have

maintained service targets ... although clearly, with fewer staff members, each child, on average, is receiving less service....

“Our provincial association, Children’s Mental Health Ontario, has been lobbying government for the past year or two around a proposal to provide revitalization funding on the order of \$50 million to address the issues identified above.”

These are really critical areas. These are children in my area who are most at risk. It says here that with the support of two successful Ministers of Community, Family and Children’s Services, as well as that of many MPPs from all parties, this proposal was also considered by Management Board of Cabinet, but it was rejected. The reason offered at that board meeting, apparently, was that they couldn’t decide if children’s mental health properly belonged to Ministry of Community, Family and Children’s Services, or if it belonged to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Now I ask you: these people had a hope of getting this \$50 million, and what did they do? They found an excuse. They agreed that it was needed. They agreed that they had to provide this \$50 million. What happened? They found an excuse to delay. It says here that when no mention was made of children’s mental health in the budget, officials suggested that perhaps the matter would be addressed in the throne speech. What it says in the throne speech is that the \$250 million was a re-announcement from the last budget.

I guess what I’m trying to say here is that these are real issues. We can sit here and play all kinds of games about the one-upmanship in our rhetoric, as one sits on either side of the House. But when I see and I watch the actions—not the rhetoric, because the rhetoric is easy, the rhetoric is all about how wonderful everyone is—and I see the real needs that are in my community and in communities across this province, there’s a blind eye. It’s easy to turn a blind eye to children’s mental health, because they don’t vote. It’s a very small number. It’s easy to say, “There’s a doctor shortage; we’ll just have to deal with it,” rather than to take action and responsibility. It’s easy not to take action. This government finds it very easy just to have these wonderful pieces of advertising—millions, hundreds of millions of dollars going into advertisements—when a fraction of that could have helped children’s mental health services.

I don’t understand why any government does not have enough of a social conscience to address those immediate needs. Do you know what? They could do it; they really could do it. They could do it, if they had the political will to address these issues. They have none of that political will. That’s the fundamental difference between the Conservative ideology that goes around with blinkers. In other words, “We all have to fit everything into this box. We all say the same thing because we’re given a piece of paper and we have to spout this party line no matter what.”

I believe that if the members on the other side of the House thought thoroughly about what they were doing

when they went to Magna to present the budget, the honourable members across the way would have protested to the Premier and used their privileges as members to hold the budget speech in the House.

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

**2010**

**Mr Prue:** I listened to the two speakers, but I would like to comment on the speech by the member from Sarnia. With respect to the other speaker, I thought she made points a little bit more in tune with what we’re here to talk about today, and that is the throne speech.

I do echo her sentiments about everything that went wrong with the budget at Magna. I think some of you know I was sitting here in my seat alone and then was joined by two of my colleagues a little later on. The budget should have been here. Perhaps I’m naive, but I was sitting here in the hope that you would change your mind.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Prue:** Pardon? I didn’t have a black suit.

But really when we come down to it, she was talking about some very important things that go around hospitals and go around the health of this province. Quite frankly, reading both the budget and the throne speech, one who believes in public health in Ontario must feel a little tinge of remorse, and an apprehension of where this government is going. They quite boldly talk about privatization, P3s and going out to the highest bidder with our health.

Quite frankly, I think this government has not learned the lessons of other jurisdictions in Canada. They have not learned about the cataract surgery that was privatized in Manitoba and how much money the Manitoba government has saved by taking it back in-house. They have not learned in our own province from the auditor who said what a disaster and how expensive the Sunnybrook experiment was. They have not learned from the United States, especially South Health in Atlanta, Georgia, which is going through huge legal costs. It looks more and more like Enron every day, with costs escalating out of all proportion for the government in that state.

Quite frankly, the government should be looking more at building up our hospitals, our health units and far less—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Further questions? Comments?

**Mr O’Toole:** I couldn’t resist the opportunity to respond to the member for Sarnia-Lambton. It’s always important to consider the viewer. I think perhaps she forgot that she was actually speaking with the people of Ontario.

I want to refresh their memory of one of the wonderful days this spring, at this Legislature on April 30th. I’m just going to read a few lines that really bring a sense of what the Lieutenant Governor, James Bartleman, was saying on behalf of the Premier, and really, quite honestly, on behalf of the thousands of Ontarians that our Premier and our government have consulted with. It was

really through the Premier, through the Lieutenant Governor, that we were speaking directly to the people of Ontario.

These are just a few of the lines that for me were sort of a milestone; a moment in time; a crystallization of the sentiments of the people of Ontario. It's about the promise of Ontario "that inspires our citizens—young and old—to hope, dream and achieve." It's almost poetic, really.

I think it's with that sentiment that I think of my five children and providing hope and opportunity for them. This government, or whatever government happens to be here—it should be us, of course—but I think that's what's most important. Creating that opportunity is where we fundamentally disagree. We often refer here to the lost decade of the NDP. I know it's overworked. But we don't want to go backwards. We've made significant progress. This is no time to turn your back on this government because, steady as it goes, we have demonstrated that we can create the economy which creates the hope and opportunity for our young people.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** There's so much of this bill that needs to be exposed to the public. But I'm going to focus in on one particular area which says, "Your government recognizes that there are some Ontarians who need extra help to cope with disabilities."

For eight years this government has absolutely defied any services to these people, and when a private member's bill put forward by Mr Martin called for an increase during what is traditionally a free vote, the benches were packed over there. Even the minister voted against a cost-of-living increase. I challenge that statement.

"It understands that people with disabilities often have special needs that make it difficult for them to work. That's why it will increase Ontario disability support program payments to better help people with disabilities lead happier, more productive and dignified lives."

Great rhetoric, but when you examine the so-called budget, there is no funding whatsoever provided. In fact, I understand that at the session following the presentation of this info-budget, there was a question about it and the finance minister indicated there was in fact no money being provided for people with disabilities. So this is a teaser; there are no finances behind it.

It says, "Your government will reform support for children with special needs to ensure that parents have a greater say in how their needs are met." For eight years parents have decried the lack of special services for their children. This government has found \$400 million for ads. Does it take an election for them to throw a little bit out? We've had children who started and now have left elementary school without receiving the special services they needed for it.

"Because no child should live in poverty or depend on welfare, your government will provide a special benefit to meet the unique needs of children who require a helping hand." In my community, in the Hastings and

Prince Edward District School Board there are 3,500 children who have to have breakfast every day at school because there is not money at home. Providing some food for them should not be used as an election ploy. Where has this government been for the last eight years for the hungry children in this province? This is what makes people cynical, when they throw out a few crumbs at election time.

**Mr Bisson:** That certainly was an interesting discussion, particularly the comments around health care. I've got to ask you a couple of questions. We know that the Tories have an agenda. Part of their agenda is to privatize the building, construction and ongoing maintenance of hospitals. They call those, in the jargon, P3s. Quite frankly, we in the New Democratic Party of Ontario don't believe that's a good idea. We think all public dollars in the health care system should be going directly into the health care system, both capital and operation. That's why when you look at our platform, which is the Public Power platform—as I said, if you want to see it, it's [publicpower.ca](http://publicpower.ca)—we clearly say in there that we will put an end to the concept of private hospitals.

I listened to your leader. I was in Ottawa about three or four months ago and I remember seeing him on one of the local television stations. He seemed to be in favour—actually, he didn't seem to be in favour, he was in favour of the P3 hospital in Ottawa. But then I saw him a little while later when he was somewhere else and he said he was opposed to P3. I just find it a little bit interesting that when I go to Ottawa I hear Dalton McGuinty saying he's in favour of privatizing the construction and ongoing maintenance of hospitals, albeit run by the public sector, and then when I'm in another community I see he's opposed. It's a little bit confusing when you see the position falling on both sides. Could it be that basically there's one thing said to the local constituents and quite another thing said to constituents in other parts of the province?

In the few seconds I have left—and I know you didn't comment on it—I think one issue we can agree on is the whole concept of what the Tories are doing vis-à-vis the throne speech when it comes to mandatory retirement. I think quite frankly what the Tories are doing when it comes to this whole issue of mandatory retirement is moving from a concept of what we call Freedom 55 to a concept of Freedom 75. If I get an opportunity, I will speak to that a little bit later.

**The Acting Speaker:** Now either, although only one, of the original speakers may take up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr Sergio:** On my behalf and on behalf of the member for Sarnia-Lambton, I would like to thank all the members who participated in the debate. Let me say that the issues that Ontarians find of most interest, perhaps not necessarily in this order, are health, education and the environment. Those are the main issues, other than some issues that may come to the forefront on a daily basis.

Let me say what Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal leader, has been saying every day for the last several years with



respect to health care. We did say that we want to provide health care—affordable, available, accessible, 24/7—seven days a week, 24 hours a day; no two-tier health care. We have not forgotten that people couldn't get an early diagnostic, couldn't get an MRI test for months. We had to have Ontarians go all the way to Buffalo or some other place in the States. We have said that we are going to have a minimum of waiting time, which by the way is in the speech from the throne. Mr McGuinty has been saying that in order to provide good, efficient, quality health care we have to impose some conditions.

Some four years ago, I believe, we came up with the Early Years report for our schools, for our young students—a maximum of 20 students per class. We said that we'd like to see certified teachers teaching our kids. We said that parents should have the choice of schools, and now we see it in their budget. These are some of the details that our leader, Dalton McGuinty, has been saying all along for years, and now the people of Ontario will have the choice to deal with that soon, when we have an election.

2020

**The Acting Speaker:** The floor is now open for further debate.

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** I'm going to do something a little bit unusual in this session here: I possibly am going to talk about the throne speech, which I know is unusual here tonight. I would like to talk about it because I believe its content is what will direct this province and the government for the future. It gives a vision, it gives a direction, and I believe it supports the gains that our government has made in this great province over the last seven and a half years, and we will expand on those gains through the content of the throne speech.

If you look at some of those gains, the gains being things like five balanced budgets, five in a row since the early, early 1900s; more health care spending—and you've heard it from other members here that we've gone from \$17 billion-plus up to \$27 billion in spite of having dollars taken back by the federal government back a number of years ago. So we've done it with the increase in revenues that we have achieved through increased jobs. Again, as we've heard today, we've had over a million jobs created in this province in comparison to the previous government. I think they lost 10,000 jobs during their five years. Again, and we've always said this, there are only two ways of creating the funds, the dollars, so that we can offer the services to the people of Ontario that they want and that they require and that they need and that they demand, and that is, you either raise taxes or you raise revenues. Our government does not believe in raising taxes, but we want to do the same as you would do in any type of business: you create the revenue to make the operation successful, gains being increases in education, things like a new curriculum, increases in special education funding, major increases in trans-

portation—all of the things which will establish a good foundation to lead us into the future.

We have an economy in Ontario, I believe, second to none, and if you look at what's happening in some of the US states and some of the other countries, we are in an absolutely tremendous position. That's because of the fact of the programs and the vision and the policies that we have established over the last seven and a half years. I believe that is due to strong leadership, leadership under the former Premier, Mike Harris, and now under Premier Eves, leadership that I believe was very evident during the past SARS crisis and is indeed to some degree still there. Within hours, I believe within an hour and a half, Premier Eves declared the province to be in a state of health emergency.

The role our Minister of Health took was indeed a leadership role. Tony Clement was Ontario's hero, a person who did his job and did it well. Where was the Liberal leader? Where was the NDP leader? The only time you've heard from them, and that's in the last couple of days—and it always amazes me—is when after the job is pretty well done people come out and decide that they have all the answers. Where were they when we needed answers? Where were they when we needed the co-operation? If you look at what happened in Ottawa, I believe it's a disgrace. You have the leader of this country on vacation. Do they not have phones down there? Do they not have any types of media down there so he could have at least made some comments? You have the Minister of Health in the Canadian government, McLellan, and you don't hear of her at all. So I would suggest that what happened in Ontario was the fact that we have two major leaders, one being the Premier, Ernie Eves, and the other being the Minister of Health, Tony Clement, and I compliment them both for it.

But more importantly are the health care providers who have worked hand in hand with the various officials to try and combat this very, very serious health situation that we were in recently. I wrote a letter about a week and a half ago to our local hospital to say thank you. Instead of criticizing what has gone on, maybe we should just say thank you. I cannot believe that everybody's got the answers after the fact, but when we needed them there, nobody seemed to be around, least of all the two leaders across the way. There is a difference in leadership; some know how to do it, some don't. Again, I compliment Minister Clement and I compliment the Premier very much, and I also compliment all of the health care professionals, who did an admirable job in this situation.

Talking about the throne speech, again, as our policy has been over the last number of years, let's talk to the people and see what they would like to see in the throne speech. It's interesting, I think, that the Liberal leader came out and said that we stole the policy. How can you steal something from nothing? You can't. Do you suggest that all of those 10,000 or 11,000 people came up only with what you suggest might be in your little booklets?

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex):** Five.

**Mr Stewart:** Are there five? Sorry. OK, ??I read the first four and there was nothing in there, so I look forward to the other ones, with the hopes that we may have some type of direction about what might happen.

But I want to compliment the 10,000 or 11,000 people, a couple hundred of whom were from my riding, who came in and suggested what they thought was the way Ontario should look in the future. The unfortunate part of it is that we politicians sometimes look about as far ahead as what our term is, and I would highly suggest that what is in this throne speech gives a direction in the long term for this province, and I compliment those people who gave us the information. They want much the same as they did in the budget. People from every walk of life were involved in this consultation, and I'm proud of our government to have made that happen, and I think the input we got from the people was just absolutely wonderful, to show the direction we should go in the future.

Speaking of the throne speech, there are a number of things in the throne speech that I'm extremely pleased about. One is the increase that will happen to the Ontario disability support program. Some of us on this side of the House have been pushing very hard for that to happen over the last year or so. Unfortunately, those on disability for various reasons do not have the ability to go out and seek employment or get jobs, and I believe that they should be able to lead productive and dignified lives. With the increase in the cost of living these days, I believe these people should be considered to get some type of increase. So I'm very, very pleased with that.

The other one, as has been mentioned today, is allowing seniors to retire at the time of their choosing. It kind of makes me chuckle from time to time; we lay these folks off at 55 or 60 or 65 and then because we know they've got tremendous expertise, we hire them back as consultants for probably twice what they made when they were working for us. They seem to have excellent expertise when they come back as consultants, so why would we not allow them to stay on the job with agreement from both sides, both from them and management and owners of the company? So I'm extremely pleased that we're going to be considering that and looking at it.

#### 2030

The other one that really makes me very pleased and makes me very happy is the fact that we're going to crack down again on drunk drivers. It was interesting that right after this came out, that after two convictions they would lose their licence for life, the lady—and I'm sorry, I don't remember her name, but I believe she's the head of the organization MADD. I didn't realize this, but she came on and talked about her husband and her son, both killed by drunk drivers. I think this type of commitment by our government is something that should be commended.

I would highly suggest to the opposition, who didn't talk about anything in the throne speech, that maybe they should read it so they have a good understanding. Again, one of the members from the third party made the suggestion that there was nothing of substance in the throne

speech. Does that mean that you don't condone the fact that people should lose their licence for life after they've been convicted of drunk driving, or do you condone drunk driving? I don't know. I don't know from your comment, but I would suggest there is major substance in that.

I was talking to a lady a couple of days ago and we were talking about the investment of \$1 billion in the new cancer research centre. I think that is very, very important. Unfortunately, it's a disease that is claiming far too many lives, a disease that is claiming lives no matter what age. If we can invest the kinds of dollars that we should for research into cancer, I think it will make Ontario a better place all around. Certainly, as things like free tuition for current and future medical school students and, again, the same with nurses—you know, it's funny. You hear about the shortage of doctors and if you listen to some people, you'd think it was only in Ontario. No, it is worldwide. We all know it, we all understand it, and we've got to find a way to solve the problem.

I can remember back in about 1991 or 1992, we had a meeting at the library in Peterborough. The MPP of the day suggested there was absolutely no underservice problem in the city or the county of Peterborough—none whatsoever—and yet at that particular time, there were less doctors than there are now. We have a serious problem worldwide. We've got to make sure that we have the support, ie doctors and nurses, if we are going to make sure we continue to have the best quality health care possible.

I get very upset when I hear people—and I heard it tonight from across the way—knocking our health care system. Yes, there are always ways to improve. You can improve anything if you work hard enough at it. But there are a whole lot of health care professionals out there who are bending over backwards to work in somewhat interesting circumstances, but all I hear from some of you folks in this House is how terrible it is. I think that's going against the ability and the dedication of these health care professionals. So on a personal note, I just want to say thank you to them. I think they're doing a tremendous job. Again, I think this throne speech enhances that as well.

Another area, where we are going to allow athletes, musicians, artists and tradespeople to act as expert instructors or volunteers in our schools, is long overdue. It used to happen when I was a little bit younger. We had volunteers, we had people whom we brought in from trades, from other areas who were instructors in our schools. Unfortunately, unions got so involved that they discontinued it, or certainly did not allow that to happen.

It was interesting. I can always remember them saying that Wayne Gretzky could not go into a school and teach anybody how to play hockey. How ridiculous that is. I suggest to you that maybe if we had more people coming into those schools as expert instructors, we would interest more people in the trades.

It was interesting that a couple of weeks ago I had a fairly large meeting with the CAW in Peterborough, and

the representatives there were saying that we should be getting back to offering and introducing kids to trades in elementary school. The problem is, when they get into grade 12 and they say they'd like to be a carpenter or a toolmaker or whatever it might be, they haven't been introduced to it until that time. They go into community college and about a year later think, "What in the name of goodness am I doing here?" Let's get them involved at an early age. Let's make sure that the kids know the opportunities that are there.

A few years ago, if you weren't a doctor or a lawyer or a teacher or a professional, you weren't very much. I think that's wrong because now all of a sudden we don't have carpenters, we don't have tradespeople of many different types, whether machinists or mechanics or toolmakers or bricklayers. You can't get them. I can tell you that they are just as much a profession as any of the others are. So I'm very pleased that that is happening and is in the throne speech.

Again, it's long overdue to allow the tools and resources to ensure that phonics are available in all schools, something that teachers have been talking about for the last number of years.

Again, as I said, encouraging young people to seek rewarding and exciting careers in the skilled trades—I always use a bit of an analogy. If you went in and asked possibly one of the—I don't know what they call them now, but in my day they were guidance counsellors. They're probably different—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Stewart:** I don't know what they are now, but anyway, if you went in and you said, "I'd like to be a truck driver. How can I become a truck driver?" I would suggest to you that most people would not know how. I know a fellow who became a truck driver. He now owns the company, and it's a very large company. So let me assure you that any job, with dedication and work, is a good job.

The final comment I want to make is regarding introducing legislation to provide quality auditors for health, education and municipal services: I believe in that 100%. In fact, if I had my way, we would audit every organization we fund to make sure it is being run well and being run right. Not that you're trying to spy; I'm not accusing anybody of not operating it well, but what it does say is that if we have quality auditors, if we have external auditors, if we maybe just find those extra savings that can make a difference, which may not necessarily be in administration but could go to the people who really need it, whether it's the patient, the mentally retarded child, daycare, whatever it might be—that's what external quality auditors will do.

Again, I believe that this throne speech is a vision and a direction for the future. I am extremely proud to be associated with a government that has this type of vision for the future. We live in a great province and a great country and with this type of vision, with this type of leadership that we have in our Premier Harris as well as

our government caucus, this province will continue to move ahead.

**2040**

**The Acting Speaker:** The floor is now open for questions and comments. The members have up to two minutes.

**Mr Crozier:** I am pleased to reply with a few words to the member from Peterborough. Just at the end of his speech he mentioned Premier Harris. I hope we're not going back that way. You are really going in the other direction.

**Mr Bradley:** A Freudian slip.

**Mr Crozier:** It was a Freudian slip.

There are a couple of things that I agree with the member on. One is that he mentioned the use of and the cost of consultants and the fact that many of the consultants I suspect that the government has hired over the past few years have been in fact former employees of the civil service whom they've let go and then brought back at additional expense. I think the Legislature, and certainly the folks at home, would like to know that this government, when it comes to consultants, has spent \$7,000 an hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. That's how much they spend on consultants. So I agree with the member from Peterborough. I think we should strengthen our civil service and we should have the kind of staff, employees and support groups that can make us aware of the fact that they are better than the consultants that are often hired.

Near the end of his comments, he mentioned how much he supports the auditing of the public sector. Well, if several years ago you had only adopted my colleague John Gerretsen's bill that would have given the Provincial Auditor the authority to do value-for-money audits in what is called the MUSH sector—that is municipalities, universities, schools, and hospitals—where we spend 80% of our money.

**Mr Bisson:** I just really get a kick out of the Tories sometimes. They stand up and they talk about the 10 lost years. Have they forgotten how long they've been in power? I remember when those guys got elected in 1995. They've been there almost a decade and here they are talking about the 10 lost years. I think you guys had better get with the times. You've been there now for two terms, you've been there for exactly eight years and you're basically talking about the 10 lost years of what the Liberals did 15 years ago and what we did eight years ago? You've been the government for eight years; where have you been? If you've got a problem with something, you should have fixed it by now. So don't come in here and talk about the eight lost years.

Then I hear them talk about how Ernie Eves was the only political leader in Ontario to take a position on SARS and to do something. Do we remember when the SARS outbreak was happening, what was going on? My friend here, Michael Prue from Beaches-East York, was out there presenting a 10-point plan about what do on the SARS crisis. My leader, Howard Hampton, was out there a number of times talking about what needed to be done

in order to deal with the SARS crisis. Where was Ernie? He was golfing in Arizona, for God's sake. He was nowhere to be found. Then you come over here and talk to me about, "Oh, Ernie Eves, he showed real leadership." "Fore!" That was the only leadership he was showing. So don't come over here and start talking to me about leadership. Boy, oh boy, we say in French, « Ils ont du culot. » And the other saying we have is, « Front autour de la tête. » That means to say that they've got a forehead all the way around their heads.

Anyway, the other thing he goes on to talk about is apprenticeships, how proud the member from Peterborough is when it comes to apprenticeship training. You guys have basically gutted the apprenticeship training system in Ontario. If you're an apprentice now, you've got to pay to go to trade school, something we never had to do before—I'm a tradesperson; I should know what I talk about—and less and less people are going into the apprenticeship trades program because you haven't been out there trying to promote good apprenticeships. What an interesting comment that was.

**Hon Mr Clark:** I want to comment to the member for Timmins-James Bay. He just mentioned SARS. It was interesting today that we stood in the House and watched the Leader of the Opposition in question period attack the public health profession and the government on SARS.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Clark:** Yeah, he did.

Here's what the world was saying: "When Canadian health authorities quickly instituted the two key strategies for epidemic control—seeking out ill people and ... isolating them—they turned the SARS epidemic in Ontario from an event that might have had 200,000 victims to one" with less "than 320." Now that's what independent people are saying.

Carlos Castillo-Chavez, the chief modeller, said, "Essentially, what the Canadians have really shown is that what could have been a major catastrophe can be controlled by early diagnosis and isolation...."

"As far as I can tell, this is unprecedented," to the member for St Catharines. He's a mathematical epidemiologist at Cornell University, an independent—clearly not a Liberal. He stated, as he was visiting here, "It shows that quick diagnosis and quick intervention work dramatically well, and that delays are very ... costly."

Here's the international community praising the Canadian experience, praising the Ontario government, praising the people who actually made a difference on SARS. And what do we have from the leader of the loyal opposition? He stands up to begin condemning it. He stands up in a pathetic, partisan attempt to boost his own fortunes because the Minister of Health has done an outstanding job. He's the first Minister of Health that I can recall in the history of this province who got a standing ovation from all members in this House, and that is something to be proud of.

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** I want to stand and commend the member for Peterborough for trying to at least stick to the throne speech in his comments. He

veered ever so slightly to try to take a shot at the leader of the official opposition and to criticize the federal Liberals, but we've grown accustomed to that in this House, and we ignore it for what it's worth.

I do want to comment on a few of the things he did say with regard to using expert volunteers in schools. I spent 32 years in the classroom and in schools, and we welcomed volunteers to share their expertise. There is absolutely nothing new in that initiative. Volunteers have always been welcome in the public schools of Ontario to share their expertise, and they did that in conjunction with the fine, dedicated, professional teachers which we found in our classrooms in the 32 years I spent within the schools of Ontario.

He talked about the drunk driving initiative with regard to banning driver's licences permanently. He mentions the letter from MADD. It was a good letter, but it was a letter that was sent in October of 2000 when I introduced a private member's bill. There were all kinds of those letters. I gave them to the transportation minister at the time and I gave them to the Attorney General across the way at the time, and this government did nothing with it. It is terrible to think that the government across the way would play politics with the lives of Ontarians. This throne speech has lots of work to be done to it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Now the member for Peterborough has up to two minutes to respond.

**2050**

**Mr Stewart:** Just a couple of comments. First of all, to the member for Timmins-James Bay: I never talk about the lost 10 years. I was in municipal politics back when the Liberals and NDP were there, and I constantly try and forget those 10 years. I was there, so I don't want to talk about it at all.

It's interesting. The member from Sudbury talked about the comment I made about drunk driving. I would have thought it would have been in your so-called platform if it was that important to you, and it appears it's not, so I assume that—

**Hon Mr Clark:** Just an oversight.

**Mr Stewart:** Oversight or rhetoric. I never talked about a letter. I talked about the lady from MADD coming on television and talking to the people of Ontario about her husband and about her son.

The other thing, of course, when he talked about volunteers—absolutely. There have been volunteers. But one of the comments, if you read—and again, I highly suggest that you guys take this throne speech home and read it. I really implore you to. One is that it's suggesting not only volunteers, but expert instructors. I believe expert instructors is not something that has been allowed over the last number of years. I made reference to Wayne Gretzky and his ability.

I didn't read their fifth little booklet. By golly, I hope there's stuff in there, because there's nothing in the rest. I hope it is there, that I can really see some of the things that I'm hearing today that they're criticizing us for but yet don't seem to do anything about themselves.

On a final note, if you're going to call the kettle black, make sure yours is very shiny.

**The Acting Speaker:** The floor is now open for further debate.

**Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** It's very good to be back in the House today. Let me just say, on behalf of all the residents of Windsor West, it's about time. It's about time we opened the Legislature. It's about time we got an opportunity to talk about the things that this government has not been doing for residents across Ontario, but primarily for the residents of Windsor West.

Let me tell you, my community reacted much the same as the rest of Ontarians when we watched this fake budget process in some plant in Brampton. How innovative the Tories thought they were being when they introduced this thing. Has it been a couple, three weeks now? We already know that, given it was a fake budget, we can't even assume that the contents of that budget will or will not be the same as what eventually comes in this House in the form of a budget. So we don't know, with all of the rhetoric in the answers in question period today, if those numbers are even the numbers in terms of what your so-called investments will be.

I want to talk about this throne speech. I want to talk about what was not in that throne speech. Today in the House I asked the minister a most significant question that impacts on my community, on the auto industry, and on the face of jobs and the future of jobs for the balance of Ontario. The auto sector was not in that throne speech. That is astonishing to me, that what accounts for one in six jobs in this province, the auto sector, was not mentioned. The minister, in her response to that question today, actually just listed and rhymed off all of these other announcements and things that have happened in the auto sector. Do you know what the Ontario government's role in all of those announcements was? Zero. They've had no influence whatsoever on what the auto sector has done on its own in this province.

Finally, we are being called to the table, along with the federal government, to participate and negotiate a settlement and a package to bring a DaimlerChrysler plant to Windsor. Why is it that every time this government has to work in concert with our federal colleagues, we fall down, we can't come to the table together and actually have a deal that is going to benefit our province? With all of the game-playing going on, let me tell you, what I'm expecting Windsor West residents to say is, "We'll put a Liberal government in Ontario so they can actually work with their colleagues in Ottawa and come to a resolution."

There was a significant amount of money that was put on the table in the Windsor area, an announcement by the Prime Minister and the Premier on border infrastructure so desperately needed in the Windsor area. What with post-9/11, with the massive increase in the movement of trucks through the centre of my community and to the border, the just-in-time requirements of our auto sector and what we need to do to improve our border, these two

levels of government made a grand announcement of \$300 million for a solution. Can you believe that since then—and it has been months—we've not been able to get the provincial government to work with the federal government to actually make an announcement in terms of what we are going to do in the next step to actually fixing the problem? We have every dynamic imaginable in this \$300-million project to fix our border and we are embarrassed by the process we've seen here: politics at the local level, the provincial level, the federal level, the proponents, who vies for whose ear and who gets a one-upmanship on the latest plan that is being vetted through the media, and not being done in the best interests of my community.

So I am glad to see that the Minister of Transportation is here and has told me that he is waiting to speak with the mayor of my city personally, so that we can be certain that we're not going to read in the news when the announcement is going to be, that we're going to have the decency of good communication until we know what the status is in terms of this border plan. That's what I expect out of my Ontario government.

And I expected somewhere in this throne speech some reference to a \$150-million investment to make our borders work better. This government knows that any benefits to our economy are largely because of our improved trade position, and that has everything to do with how well our borders work. So it's in our best interests to keep that at the forefront.

The auto sector is obviously next in line. It should have been mentioned. It's not enough to talk about R&D amounts of money that's not even specified just for auto, so that you can send DaimlerChrysler begging for the pot of money that may be there with the rest of the sectors when we have the opportunity for 2,500 permanent, great jobs in my community. We have an expectation that we'll move that negotiation toward an announcement that we will be able to build that plant in my community.

Much of this throne speech dealt with the health system. I could not believe the number of re-announcements in this throne speech. In all of the announcements this government has had over the years in the last eight years, it was like a broken record: "We will have more nurses. We will have more doctors." That's what this said. Do you know what this amounts to? Drivel. After eight years, you have no credibility to talk about how you will bring more nurses to practise in Ontario. You have zero credibility on improving the number of doctors that we have working in this province. Since this government came to power, we have a worse ratio than ever in our province as far as the number of nurses, even those that are working full-time. My leader addressed that today in his response to the throne speech and in question period.

But all of these elements—we "will launch a Premier's council on mental health." Have we not talked about what the mental health sector needs in Ontario? It is time for some action. Then we see more mention of additional MRIs and CTs and building hospitals through the private sector. Have we forgotten to mention in the

throne speech that this is the government that will move on privatization of our health sector? It will take a Dalton McGuinty Liberal government to eliminate those P3s from Ontario, because they will be public hospitals. And private MRIs and private CTs—has anyone addressed the issue of where you are going to find the radiologists who are going to run those private clinics? Will you be draining the public system? Where will you find the technologists?

This is a government that is simply driven by announcements and never goes to the root of the problem to solve it. They have the gall to talk about the medical school. I'd like to see a free-standing medical school in my community. We are southern urban, with the worst ratio of physicians practising in my town. It would be welcome news. Instead, we get some kind of hybrid of a satellite affiliated with the rural medical training something or other, all because you want to make an announcement and make people believe that you actually intend to do something to bolster and improve our health sector. You have no credibility on the health front, and we plan to go to the people as quickly as you will call an election to say that.

You can't be trusted with Ontario's health system, and you are running ads and spending tens of millions of dollars to tell people how wonderful it is. You actually had the gall in this throne speech to talk about how the emergency room waiting times are lessened. That is a bald-faced lie. They are not lessened. If anything, there are fewer staff to keep track. There are other elements that you mentioned in here about increasing home care services. That is a bald-faced lie. There are thousands of people today who don't have—

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**The Acting Speaker:** Please take your seat. I know the member wants to make her point as strongly as possible. I know also she would like to remain within the parliamentary rules. I'm going to ask you to withdraw that, please. As far as I'm concerned, you're too close to the line in terms of your language, so please withdraw.

**Ms Pupatello:** I withdraw.

The throne speech talks about increases to home care. That is an outright error in printing, because that is not the case. We today in Ontario have thousands of people who don't get home care services that used to get them. We have people who wait as long as they ever did in an emergency room and as long as they ever did for hip surgeries and knee surgeries or to get in to see a specialist.

I tell you, Speaker, we have to sit and watch the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario sit in your chair and read the throne speech, and that people could believe, could hope to believe that these things might come true? After eight years in this House, I have heard the line before about nurse practitioners, more nurses, more doctors. None of that has happened. The only solution for us is a Liberal government. We are the only party that will bring this to Ontario because we are the only party that has it as a priority. You have had the luxury of voter support

because of your tax policy, granted. But those days are over. It's time for a change, and the Ontario Liberal Party represent the only party for change.

**The Acting Speaker:** I gather the member for St Catharines is going to use the other 10 minutes.

**Mr Bradley:** Yes. Continuing on, I had to explain to my constituents, who saw me quite often, that the Legislature of Ontario did not sit between December 12, 2002, and April 30, 2003. In fact, the first question period after December 12, 2002, was May 1, 2003. They were in shock and awe, to mention what some defence minister used at one time, at this case.

I'll tell you, they saw the federal House in action. They turned the television set on, they assumed we were in action, and I had to explain to them that Premier Eves and Ministers Sterling, Clark, Klees and Coburn and others—I won't say Tsubouchi because he probably wanted to be here—all these ministers did not want to face the questions to be directed to them by the opposition and the media scrum outside. They simply wanted to advertise around the province, and advertise they did. If you opened your mailbox last month, every second day it seemed another propaganda sheet came from the government.

There wasn't any question at all that it was partisan. Even my Tory friends in my community—some of them were annoyed, and some of them were laughing and saying, "Isn't this something, that they would have the audacity to send out yet another pamphlet that is so partisan?"

It would be different if these people didn't have a war chest like you've never seen, funds gathered from the richest and the most powerful people in the province who attend their fundraisers. So they could afford it. The Minister of Transportation, now Minister of Labour, had a huge—didn't you make \$100,000 at one of your fundraisers? I know it was that much money. I heard public money was showing up there, universities and municipalities and so on making out their cheques to the Conservative Party. I think that is totally inappropriate.

But there they are. You've driven down the highways. The former minister of highways is here. The new minister of highways is here. Everywhere I look on the highways of Ontario, even when there's no construction site, there's a huge sign with Ernie Eves's name on it, "Building Ontario Together" or something of that nature.

That is an abuse of the taxpayer. I'm waiting for the local taxpayers' coalition to protest—because I know Frank Sheehan used to be the head of that—the squandering of public money on government advertising.

Today, in a flight of rhetoric, I think I had it up to \$400 million, but it's at least \$300 million that you people have spent on blatantly partisan, self-serving advertising. Turn on the television set, on comes an ad. Even when you're trying to advertise something that may be fairly legitimate—your new bonds that you've got out—you have to start the ad with "Ontario's never been better than it is now." So this is clearly partisan.

The Chair of Management Board is here. I know in his heart of hearts he is steaming at the fact they're violating even his weak guidelines on advertising by this kind of advertising: radio ads talking about the virtues of the infomercial, the so-called budget of Ontario; the full-page ads that always have to have something at the bottom, "Making health care work for you." Always this either—I was going to say "subliminal"; it's certainly not subliminal now. It is so obvious that you people are squandering taxpayers' dollars in contempt of this Legislature and in contempt for the people of Ontario, an abuse of public office. I said, when they were doing it during a by-election campaign, that that's what you would have called cheating in those days. The by-election is not on, but we know there is an election coming soon.

That's one thing that I think we have a solution for in the opposition, and that is to have all government advertising vetted by an independent office such as the Provincial Auditor. They have that in Britain. They showed, on a program I was watching on CBC, Ontario government ads. The person in Britain who vets them shook his head and laughed. He said, "We would never pass these ads as being non-partisan."

I saw some good messages, I saw some reasonable messages from your government, but most of it is a waste of taxpayers' dollars.

But let's get to a positive solution we've come to in St Catharines. Remember the hospital destruction commission that went around Ontario trying to close—Mike Harris and Ernie Eves sent this around the province to try to close hospitals and force amalgamations and so on. We've had some disagreements over the years between the two main hospitals in St Catharines, the Hotel Dieu Health Sciences Hospital and the general hospital. I'll tell you something. They've come to an agreement. Not the agreement that was going to be imposed by the Harris-Eves hospital destruction commission, but one they came up with for themselves. They said, "Look, let's have the two hospitals across from each other. No use going back to the old hospital buildings, trying to retrofit them." Two new hospital buildings constructed right across from each other, a lot of sharing that would save money, and perhaps the money saved, could make up for the local component to it. I've got to tell you, there was a lot of enthusiasm in the community. It crossed partisan lines, it crossed religious lines. There was a great deal of enthusiasm for it and I commend it to the Minister of Health for his approval. I think it's a solution and a good solution, locally initiated, locally supported and it will be good for the people of St Catharines. It is a far cry from what the hospital destruction commission was going to impose upon our community.

I want to talk about public transportation because I see the former Minister of Transportation here, who represents Stoney Creek. The federal government has indicated that they are ready, willing and able to give money for GO Transit. I say to my friend the member for Niagara Falls, I know the member for Erie-Lincoln and I

will welcome that. We have been advocating it for some period of time. Others have now joined the bandwagon in advocating that we have public transit of the rail kind that's enhanced and that people will be able to travel more easily on the public transit system. I think that it's nice to see. This government totally abandoned it. You will remember this, Mr Speaker. This government completely abandoned public transit. They got out of the business completely. They got shamed into coming back into the system. The opposition raised this daily in the House, the municipalities were beside themselves, and finally the government of Ontario got shamed into coming back into the system.

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** It was shock and awe.

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**Mr Bradley:** Shock and awe once again.

I hope as well, because the Minister of Transportation is here, that there is federal money as well out there that will help in the highway system. You will know, as you go through St Catharines, that there is a need for improvements to the QEW, particularly the egress roads and the access roads. I know the minister has expressed his view about highway safety, and I think an investment in that area—and it would be a progressive investment—would do an awful lot to improve safety and the flow of traffic. It's not that you want to have huge multi-lane highways, but you do want them to be safe.

We want to ensure, as well, that the double cohort is not the nightmare that everybody knows it's going to be. You people rush into this—

**Hon Mr Clark:** That you said it was going to be.

**Mr Bradley:** Now, there isn't anybody out there in Ontario, outside of the minister and the Premier, who believes that the double cohort isn't going to cause a lot of problems for students in this province. We will see that happen a little later on in the year.

I want the member to know that people are annoyed with the natural gas rates increasing willy-nilly, that without you people controlling them, without the Ontario Energy Board controlling them, there's a great concern now about the cost of automobile insurance and other insurance premiums going through the ceiling and costing people a lot of money.

There is also a concern that for once—just for once—the money that the federal government transfers to the provincial government for health care be spent on health care and not on tax cuts for the wealthiest people in this province.

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

**Mr Bisson:** The member from St Catharines—I always love listening to his comments. He's always most informative and most entertaining. But I'm jealous of the member from St Catharines. You've got roads in your riding. You've got roads, you've got highways with pavement on them. I've got the Minister of Transportation here. I've got parts of my riding that don't even

have roads, never mind paved roads. They don't even have roads. So can we borrow some of your highways and take some of those things and bring them up and put them from Moosonee all the way up to Fort Severn? It would really be nice to have a road.

We're going to be opening a diamond mine up in Attawapiskat, and a big part of the cost of being able to operate that mine is transportation because most everything's going to be fly-in. So I get really jealous when I hear you guys down here talking about how you want to four-lane a highway. I'd take a single trail unpaved, all the way up from Moosonee to Attawapiskat, Fort Severn and Peawanuck. People up there would be ecstatic if they could have that. In fact, the only road that we get is a winter one, which basically the only time you can use it is about two months a year by way of freezing it. It's the only road that you can have. In fact, when you drive from Moosonee to Moose Factory in the wintertime, it's an ice bridge. That's the only way you're able to get across.

So I'm very envious, and I say to the Minister of Transportation, if you're looking at a place to build roads, I've got a great spot for you up on the James Bay. Even if you did a link from Cochrane up to Moosonee, there would be a huge economic boom up in that area if you were to do that. And if you want to go a little bit further, there are all kinds of communities like Fort Albany and Kashechewan and Attawapiskat and Peawanuck and Fort Severn. They would really love to have roads because they're spending—did you know it's 85 cents—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** Listen to this. It's 85 cents per kilowatt hour to generate electricity in Peawanuck—85 cents—because they have to basically bring their fuel in for the generators. So imagine the good that we could do if we had a policy that actually put roads up in the James Bay. It would be a way of being able to develop the economy and to give those people a piece of Ontario that we all take for granted.

**Hon Mr Clark:** I'd like to respond to the member from St Catharines. I got a satellite dish about two years ago. Fascinating. Do you know what's interesting about having a satellite dish? You'll appreciate this. The member from St Catharines turns around and says, "Oh, there's all this partisan advertising in Ontario."

**Ms Pupatello:** What are you watching?

**Hon Mr Clark:** I heard the member from Windsor West making some silly comment. I just ignore her.

You know what? British Columbia was advertising about their education programs, about their health programs. Manitoba, Alberta, the federal government, Nova Scotia—right across this country, provinces are advertising all the time, sharing information with their constituents about their programs. And lo and behold, this government is not the first one to do it. Mr Peterson did it so well. I've got wonderful pictures of Jim Bradley in these wonderful full-page ads. They were partisan—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Clark:** Yeah, I know. Wonderful. But we're doing the same as every other government: reaching out to the people.

Before I give up my last 30 seconds here, I want to talk about the Canada-Ontario infrastructure, because they mentioned the federal government a couple of times over there. You know what? I've got a real problem. Here's the issue. You know this, Mr Speaker, that \$45 million has been allocated to the city of Hamilton by the Ontario government; \$31 million of it has already been allocated to specific projects. The feds are at the table for \$14 million. They cancelled their program. They were dealing with the province and the municipality on this, they were dealing with Canada-Ontario infrastructure money and the Liberals pulled the plug. They pulled the environment plug. So here's the city of Hamilton—and I know you're going to appreciate this because you're running for mayor in that community, so you know how important infrastructure is. And we do offer you great luck; I don't think we'll see support from the Liberals. But here's the situation: we have to get the money from the feds for those projects.

**Mr Crozier:** I'd like to reply to some comments made both by the member from Windsor West and the member from St Catharines, but before I do, I grossly underestimated something I said in my previous two minutes. It's not \$7,000 an hour, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year that this government's been spending, it's \$75,000 an hour. I know that we'd like some of those millions to be spent on home care, for example. If you've increased spending on home care, why is it I get calls at my office from needy, frail, elderly, ill people who have had their home care hours arbitrarily cut because, according to the local officials, there's just no money? Why is it that I get those calls? Don't you?

And my colleague from Windsor West mentioned nursing positions. If you're going to provide 12,000 nursing positions by 2005, if it was in the last throne speech or the throne speech before that you were going to fill 12,000 positions, why is it that you've only filled 8,000? And that's after having fired thousands at the cost of millions. Why is that? I just can't seem to understand.

And why is it that after eight years, you have to stand here and promise that there will be health care investments to reduce and eliminate waiting times, increase access to doctors and nurses and strengthen our hospitals, to cure diseases? Why haven't you been doing that for the last eight years? Why did you wait until April 30, 2003, to start doing what you should have been doing the last eight years?

**Mr Prue:** I've listened to both of the speakers from the Liberal Party, who spoke quite eloquently on some of the failings that were in the throne speech. If there was a failing in the throne speech, it definitely had to be around the area of health, whether that be public health and the public health units across this province that struggle, sometimes in very desperate circumstances, having been cut.



One has to see especially what happened in the city of Toronto. And yes, the men and women of the Toronto public health unit, particularly Dr Basrur, did an exceptional job. No one could ever take anything away from them and say that they did not do the job they were expected to do. But the reality is that their numbers are stretched thin. They are stretched thin because this province has not given enough money to the municipalities, joint money that's given with municipalities, or money that is given for special programs. Those programs that they try to do, and continue to do well, suffer immensely whenever something like the West Nile virus, whenever something like SARS, whenever something like an outbreak of tuberculosis or problems that one has in the big city occur. We saw them suffering through all of that, and we have also seen them suffering through all of this in the throne speech, where there was nothing said at all about those who live in our long-term-care facilities, those same people who have just been hit with a 5% increase this year, a 5% increase next year and a 5% increase the year after by this government, people who are frail and elderly, who have very little money. There is nothing in this budget that is going to help them or the situations in which they live or the situations where they don't have enough nurses and doctors and health care providers, and where they have been reduced to about \$4 a day for food. That is one of the major failings that I intend to speak of when it's my turn to speak of this budget and of this throne speech. I commend the Liberal Party for bringing that up.

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**The Acting Speaker:** One of the original two speakers may take up to two minutes to respond to the questions and comments made. And it will be, once you've worked it out, the member for Windsor West.

**Ms Pupatello:** Can we share that time, Speaker?

**The Acting Speaker:** No.

**Ms Pupatello:** OK. The member from St Catharines is very gracious to let me do a wrap-up to this. I just want to close this evening by saying that we were most disappointed with the throne speech. It did not talk about the auto sector. We know how critical the auto sector is to our economy, and it should have been in there. Ontario should be taking a leadership role because we used to, and it worked. Brampton is what it is today because of investments that the Ontario government has made in the auto sector. Windsor is what it is today because governments came together to make the incentives available so companies would be there and stay and grow. That is no longer the order of the day with this Ontario government, and it's high time that we call an election and be rid of them.

There were elements in this throne speech that were nothing but a repeat and a three-peat of throne speeches from the past: announcements of nurses and doctors and nurse practitioners, all of it. We've heard that story before, and they just don't materialize. Today we hear from my colleague from St Catharines of \$75,000 an hour every day, 24 hours a day; the ads on television that are

so partisan that I believe the public, every time they see an ad on television, will think, "There's money down the drain that could have been in our health system."

Our hospitals are so desperate for support, especially after the SARS outbreak in the GTA, the nursing staff that needs relief, that needs to have full-time jobs, not part-time jobs, the doctors that are under such stress because they have huge caseloads; those things should have been alleviated by this government. They had eight years to do it and nothing has happened. It's high time that we call an election. We have a different rumour every week. What I can tell you is we are ready to take our message to the people of Ontario so that we can deliver what the Ontario public needs.

**The Acting Speaker:** All right, the floor is now open for further debate.

**Mr Prue:** I understand I have about six or seven minutes here tonight, so I'm just going to start my speech and I hope to finish it later. And I see they're all leaving now, so they must be afraid of what I'm going to say.

First of all, I would like to start off with a few commendations to the members opposite for the throne speech because there were a few things in the throne speech that are worthy of commending. One of the first things was that they started off the throne speech by talking about the front-line heroes, and all members of this Legislature believe that there were heroes here in Ontario, and especially heroes in Toronto, in what happened around the SARS outbreak. We saw people who worked in the hospital who were working one and two shifts, who were working 16 hours a day to contain SARS. We saw people who put their own health at risk. We saw nurses and doctors who contracted SARS themselves and who were forced to go into isolation. We saw people who isolated their own families. We saw health care professionals at their very best.

We saw as well the board of health of the city of Toronto, the health unit of the city of Toronto take extraordinary measures, measures that we would not have ever thought to be necessary in a city like Toronto, measures that secured the health of everyone who lives in this city, measures that stopped a pandemic from happening, measures that allowed ordinary people to go about their business on the streets and feel secure that their health was in good and safe hands. If there is a true hero in this city, it is probably Dr Basrur. That woman worked extraordinarily hard and continues to work extraordinarily hard to make sure that Toronto and Canada are not a site of long-term SARS infection. In fact, places around the world are starting to commend her and her health staff, Dr Yaffe and others, for what they have done to stop the spread of SARS in Toronto. It could have been the gateway to many more infected communities both here and abroad, but it was not.

I have to say, though, having commended the government for putting that in the throne speech, I was very disappointed by the tepid response from some of the members opposite who gave it polite applause—certainly not nearly as much applause as they gave to their own

member when he walked in late, the honourable health minister, and certainly not as much applause as they gave to the announcement of OPP officers going to Iraq. It would seem quite untoward that those were the major cheering points for the members opposite rather than our hard-fighting men and women here at home.

I went on to look at the mandatory retirement provisions. There are many people who believe that this is a good thing and there are many people who think that it should be lifted. Certainly it is a human rights issue that must be addressed. I commend the members opposite for addressing what is going to be a very strong and a very heated debate here in Ontario, as it has been elsewhere. But we know that it is a human rights issue, and we know that people cannot be discriminated against on the basis of their age, even though there is presently such a provision in the Ontario Human Rights Code. The time has come to lift that, but I would caution the members opposite: even though it is a good idea to discuss that, most seniors are not willing or are not happy with the prospect of working after the age of 65. There used to be a television ad, many years ago, we saw called Freedom 55, where people planned and put their money aside so that when they were 55 they could retire in dignity to do all of the things that they wanted to do in their life: to look after their grandchildren, to pursue their hobbies, to travel the world. People want to do that in retirement. Most people look forward to the age of 65 as a realistic opportunity to do exactly that.

What this is saying, in effect, is that they have the authority of law to work beyond the age of 65. I certainly have no difficulty if that is their desire, but most people would prefer that this government brought in better

legislation when it came to pensions so that their pensions were indexed, so that their pensions were portable. That's really what should have been brought here. That should have been brought here as the centre-piece, after which the freedom to work could be there, so that people could have a realistic choice. Right now, all that is being done is to force people to work after the age of 65 when many of them don't wish to do it but do not have the economic ability to retire when most of us consider that it's quite normal and when people should be pursuing other goals in their lives.

I commend the government for finally waking up to the issue of disabilities. I have sat here in this Legislature for about a year and a half and I have heard many debates around the disabled in this province. I heard my good friend Mr Martin, the member from Sault Ste Marie, stand up with his private member's bill asking something—what I thought was ordinary and just and right, and that is to index the ODSP pensions. I saw the members opposite vote against it, one by one by one. I don't know what is in this legislation, because it just says it's going to be reviewed, but I would hope that you go beyond reviewing and giving a \$5 increment and go all the way to what Mr Martin was suggesting, and that is to index that pension after having raised it nine years' worth, all at once. That is what we are looking forward to.

I think it must be close to 9:30 and I'm going to wrap up now. I will continue when my turn comes again.

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

*The House adjourned at 2130.*

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