



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

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de l'Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 7 May 2003

Mercredi 7 mai 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 May 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 7 mai 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 7

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Yesterday I asked this House for unanimous consent to give second and third reading to Bill 7. Bill 7 is a short, one-page bill. The bill simply includes the customers of Great Lakes Power in the rural rate assistance program that applies to Hydro One customers and a number of other local distribution companies.

This bill would have the immediate effect of bringing the outrageous distribution charges in the Great Lakes Power area in line with other electricity distribution companies. This bill will help the people of Wawa, Dubreuilville, Hawk Junction, Laird, Desbarats, St Joseph Island, Searchmont, Goulais, Havilland Bay, Batchawana, Echo Bay and other communities within the service area. It would make the bills in Bruce Mines the same as the ones in Wharnccliffe, who are customers of Hydro One.

Even though Howard Hampton and the NDP are blocking this bill, the government can move. It can include Great Lakes Power customers in rural rate assistance by regulation. It can address the problems with the rates by regulation. It can move now and it can move swiftly. Next Wednesday, the cabinet should approve regulations addressing these issues. Great Lakes customers should not be discriminated against.

COMMENTS OF LIBERAL MEMBERS

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Today I seek clarification about comments made by Mr McGuinty in my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale on Monday. During his visit to the Pearson Airport taxi and limo compounds, Mr McGuinty told many of my constituents in attendance that he favours compensation for those who have been economically affected by SARS. What I would like to know is, how much is he willing to provide for compensation for all those affected economically by SARS? When pressed by the media about a dollar amount, the Liberal leader did what he does best and avoided giving an answer.

I also find it interesting that Mr McGuinty suddenly took an interest in my scoopers bill only after it passed second reading.

The playing-both-sides strategy of the opposition could be seen later on the same day, when the member for St Paul's criticized Premier Eves for having other government caucus members and candidates at the police funding announcement in Toronto. Is the member for St Paul's aware that his own leader brought his Peel region candidates to his photo op at Pearson in my riding that morning? Is the member also aware that Mr McGuinty held a similar photo op at Peel Regional Police headquarters one month ago?

These Liberal inconsistencies are clear. My scoopers bill is substantive in getting results for my constituents while keeping the public safe. The Premier's police announcement is also substantive and provides results to Ontarians. The members for Ottawa South and St Paul's evidently don't share the substantive and results-oriented policies that define this side of the Legislature.

OLD FORT WILLIAM
HISTORICAL PARK

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On Easter Monday, a devastating flash flood hit Old Fort William Historical Park. The damage is extensive; the repairs will be costly. Nevertheless, the repairs must be made and must be made quickly.

For those who may be unaware, Old Fort William Historical Park is a reconstruction of the fur trading headquarters of the Northwest Fur Trading Co. Fort William was in every sense central to the history of this country. It was the site every year of the Great Rendezvous, when the company partners from Montreal and the wintering partners from the distant northwest came together to do the company business. It was of course the business of the fur trade that provided both the incentive and the resources to open up the country. The great explorers David Thompson, Alexander Mackenzie and Simon Fraser were Northwest Co partners.

Fort William was our country's first great meeting place of east and west. From its earliest days it was a microcosm of the multicultural realities of our nation, with English-speaking, French-speaking and First Nations people all working together. All of these facets of what makes up the Canada of today are reflected in the annual celebration of the Great Rendezvous.

This is to be a particularly important season at Fort William, both economically and historically. It is a double-celebration year, celebrating 30 years since the reconstruction of the fort and, more importantly, celebrating the 200th anniversary of the first Great Rendezvous on this site. It is essential that the fort be restored in time for the special events of this summer to go ahead.

The staff at Old Fort William have been working non-stop to clean up, to save what's salvageable. I trust the government will do its crucial part, that this will be addressed as an emergency situation and that funds for repair will flow as quickly as possible.

NURSING WEEK

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House in recognition of Nursing Week, May 12 to 18, to express my thanks to the hard-working members of the nursing profession. I'm referring to dedicated people like Kim Cearns, a constituent of my riding of Durham and political action officer of the RNAO chapter in Durham-Northumberland. She organized the Take Your MPP to Work Day in Durham. I'm pleased to inform the House that the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, has taken part in this program in the past two years by accompanying RNAO executive members Shirlee Sharkey, Adeline Falk-Rafael and Doris Grinspun on tours.

The dedicated men and women in nursing play a critical role in Ontario's battle against SARS. Throughout this emergency, nurses like those at Lakeridge Health in Durham demonstrated professionalism and compassion. The Ernie Eves government appreciates the sacrifices made by many in the nursing profession during this emergency, which is why we are providing compensation for lost wages because of SARS and quarantine.

We also recognize the crucial role nurses play in the delivery of health care in this province. This is why we are creating 12,000 new nursing positions. These nurses will provide high-quality care in hospitals, long-term-care facilities and doctors' offices. We are funding over 360 nurse practitioner positions to help provide primary care in underserved areas. I am a strong proponent of nurse practitioners and have been lobbying for full funding to be allocated for NPs in Scugog and Clarington in my riding.

In the recent throne speech, we announced our intention to provide free tuition for nursing students in underserved communities throughout the province. Despite investing more money in our health care system than ever before, the Ernie Eves team understands that it's really the dedicated men and women who work in the health care sector who make it all that it is today and all that we need for tomorrow.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Within the last month MPPs on all sides of the House

have received thousands upon thousands of postcards signed by residents and their families of our long-term-care homes. What are they asking for? They say, "Ontario still funds the lowest level of long-term care of any of the 11 other jurisdictions in the government-funded level of service study.

"Ontario residents still get 45 minutes less care daily than residents in Saskatchewan got in 1999. This is simply not enough when: nine out of 10 require help to get dressed and eat; eight out of 10 require help to move around; and six out of 10 suffer from dementia and related disorders."

What has been the government's response? The "government's only commitment is that residents"—not the government but residents—"will pay \$2 more per day in 2003 and another \$2 in 2004."

Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have a plan to make sure that those frail and elderly citizens are looked after in the way they surely need to be looked after. We will build a seniors' strategy that guarantees our seniors will be treated with dignity and respect. We will guarantee that during the first term of our mandate, the level of care that the residents will get will be at least that of the residents in Saskatchewan. We will make sure that our senior citizens are treated with dignity and respect.

1340

MEAT INSPECTORS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This Conservative government's gutting of our public service here in the province of Ontario continues to put increasing numbers of people at risk.

Meat inspectors are vital to food safety here in the province. They're a key part of Ontario's public service and they help our economy to flourish safely and responsibly. Yet we have fewer than 10 full-time meat inspectors in Ontario. Some 120 part-time contract meat inspectors, who have to pay their own travel expenses, who have to absorb their own travel time and rarely make adequate incomes on the basis of their part-time contract consulting meat inspection, constitute the balance. It's no wonder that there's a 32% turnover among these inspectors.

I tell you, that means that more and more inexperienced meat inspectors are being required to do invaluable meat inspection. That means that we are constantly being put at risk. That means that this government exposes us in yet one more fashion to serious public health risk.

This government should respond promptly and restore full-time meat inspectors as part of the public service, as members of the OPSEU bargaining unit, ensure that they are adequately trained, ensure that they are adequately paid, and ensure that the public of Ontario can count on its meat inspectors to ensure their—the public's—safety.

SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to support the efforts of the Grey Bruce Eat and Learn program. Bev Gateman, program coordinator, along with numerous volunteers, ensures that every student who attends one of Hanover's four schools will have the opportunity to eat breakfast before going to class.

Grey Bruce Eat and Learn is a non-profit organization which is solely dedicated to supporting child nutrition programs in Grey and Bruce county schools. Research tells us that kids who eat well perform better in school. Breakfast programs help children get the nutrition they need to succeed.

Grey Bruce Eat and Learn builds on the strengths of community to help develop nutrition programs that are ideally suited to their specific needs. They presently support 55 child school nourishment programs, serving over 50,000 breakfasts, lunches and snacks every school year.

John and Cheryl Grant, owners of Grant's Independent Grocer in Hanover, were featured in the May 2003 issue of Canadian Living magazine. Since 2001, the Grants have donated over \$12,000 worth of food vouchers for the program. The money was generated through numerous fundraisers, including barbecues, golf tournaments and staff events. We are all grateful for their ongoing efforts.

Grey Bruce Eat and Learn doesn't just feed kids; it nourishes communities. I encourage everyone to get involved: students, parents, teachers, local businesses and everyone else who wishes to see our children well-nourished and successful.

I congratulate all the volunteers involved in this program, and the donors who contribute funds to help cover the cost of food.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): This is a government that is out of steam, out of ideas, out for themselves and out for their friends. Their idea of an original idea is to have a budget at an auto parts plant. What insanity. Desperate for policies, what did Ernie Eves and the Tories do? They turned to Dalton McGuinty's plan and said, "Me too."

Ernie Eves saw Rick Bartolucci's bill to crack down on drunk drivers, and what did he say? He said, "Me too."

Ernie Eves looked at Mike Colle's bill on mandatory retirement, and what did he say? "Me too."

He saw Dalton McGuinty's plans for public school choice, for energy conservation, and for a seamless GTA transportation system, and what did Ernie Eves say? He said, "Me too."

The Harris-Eves government has had eight years to bring about these badly needed reforms, but instead they chose deliberately to go in precisely the opposite direc-

tion. Now, after eight years and on the eve of an election, desperately low in the polls, they have to turn to Dalton McGuinty for real ideas and for real change.

There is only one way to bring about change in this province. That is to call an election now, and for the people of Ontario to choose Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals to bring about real change for one and all in this province.

COMMUNITY LIVING MISSISSAUGA

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I am thrilled to advise this House that Community Living Mississauga, a non-profit organization supporting over 1,300 persons with an intellectual disability, has become the first organization of its kind in Mississauga to be awarded the highest level of accreditation from Accreditation Ontario.

Community Living Mississauga is one of just three organizations in Canada and 50 in the world to have received a three-year accreditation. Only organizations that provide superior service and undergo a rigorous, four-day assessment process achieve this award.

The residents of Mississauga are very proud of the outstanding volunteers, staff and supporters of Community Living Mississauga who have made this incredible achievement possible. While no one person is solely responsible for an organization's success, I would like to pay tribute to the dedication and hard work of Bonnie Yagar, the long-serving volunteer president of the board of directors, who has provided visionary leadership.

We also owe our deep gratitude to generous donors like Didi and Iggy Kaneff, who have held the annual Kaneff Charity Golf Tournament for 32 years to raise funds for Community Living Mississauga and Brampton.

I know that all members of this House join me in offering our heartfelt congratulations to the superb team at Community Living Mississauga. We wish you continuing success as you provide the exceptional services that enable persons with an intellectual disability to live life to its fullest—in the community.

VISITORS

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to welcome here today my son Joseph Di Cocco. By the way, he was a great hockey player. With him is Mimmo Comande. I'd like to welcome them to the Legislature. We're all going to be on good behaviour so that we send off a great impression when they leave.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the first report of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN ON SCHOOL BUSES ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003

SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS DANS LES AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES

Mr Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses / Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en vue de protéger les enfants lorsqu'ils sont dans des autobus scolaires.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I've introduced a similar bill in this House six times. It has been supported by tens of thousands of people across Ontario, and particularly by those families who have had children who have died as a result of people passing school buses when the red lights are flashing. We need to pass this bill in order to have a strong deterrent and a conviction mechanism to protect the 810,000 children who ride 16,000 school buses in Ontario.

INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES ACT, 2003

Mr Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr19, An Act respecting the Institute for Christian Studies.

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

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

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SMART TRANSPORTATION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR UN SYSTÈME INTELLIGENT DE TRANSPORT

Mr Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act to enhance public transit and provide for a smart transportation system in Ontario / Projet de

loi 25, Loi visant à rehausser la qualité du transport en commun et prévoir un système intelligent de transport en Ontario.

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

The minister for a short statement?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I'll defer till ministers' statements.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT

LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ

ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Mr Agostino moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to increase the penalties for contraventions of the Act and regulations / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en vue d'augmenter les peines en cas d'infraction aux dispositions de la Loi et des règlements.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): This is the second time I'm going to introduce this bill. On April 28, many of us attended ceremonies remembering those killed or injured in the workplace in Ontario. Too many Ontarians are killed and injured every day simply for the reason of going to work. This bill would make violations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act in Ontario the toughest in North America. It would raise the penalty, if an individual is convicted of a violation, to up to \$100,000 and up to two years in jail. For corporations, the fine would be increased to \$1 million. For directors of these corporations, the fine would increase to \$100,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. This bill would go a long way toward ending the carnage that occurs in the workplace every day across the province of Ontario.

TRAFALGAR MORAINÉ PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA MORAINÉ DE TRAFALGAR

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to protect the Trafalgar Moraine / Projet de loi 27, Loi visant à protéger la moraine de Trafalgar.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): This is the second time I've introduced this bill. This bill would protect the lands in north Oakville known as the Trafalgar moraine from being developed and sold off to developers by the province of Ontario, and would ensure

that these sensitive environmental lands and this watershed are not given up for unbridled sprawl that will not only choke the air in the Oakville area but also eliminate the last stretch of green space in the western GTA.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TRANSPORTATION

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce a bill that, if passed, would advance our government's vision of a balanced and integrated transportation system in the province of Ontario. An Act to enhance public transit and provide for a smart transportation system in Ontario reflects our commitment to a transportation system that is convenient, that reduces travel time and that moves people and goods safely and efficiently. It also reflects our commitment to our Smart Growth objectives of a strong economy, strong communities and a clean and healthy environment.

We all know the importance of good, effective transportation to the continued strength and success of Ontario. Businesses must be able to get their products and services where they have to be, when they have to be there. Consumers count on fast delivery of merchandise they've ordered. Employees need to get to work on time. At the end of the day they also want to get home without delay to spend time with their friends and family. Yet every day, as we know, traffic congestion costs Ontarians many hours in lost time. It costs our economy an estimated \$2 billion, and unless we address this problem now, the unacceptable cost of gridlock will only escalate further in the future.

We as a province have to take action now to deal with this issue. Ontario is growing. New businesses and residents are coming to this province. The prosperity that we have in this province is attracting them; it's a result of the strong economic foundation and high quality of life that we have here.

Right now, the greater Toronto area is experiencing the second-fastest growth rate in North America. Ontario needs to plan for the growth in population in central Ontario by an estimated 3.5 million people over the next 30 years. While our government welcomes this growth, we also understand that it must be effectively managed. The smart transportation bill provides new tools to advance the transportation solutions that Ontarians will require in the years to come.

The proposed legislation recognizes that transit is a key to alleviating congestion. It builds on the advice provided by the Central Ontario Smart Growth Panel. As you're aware, this panel was set up last year under the leadership of Mississauga's Mayor Hazel McCallion. I'd like to commend Mayor McCallion for her efforts.

The panel was asked to advise our government on how best to manage both the economic and population growth that central Ontario will experience in the next 30 years. Following extensive consultation, it made strategic suggestions in key areas, including the development of an integrated transportation network. I'd like to join my colleague, Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister David Young, and all of my colleagues in government in thanking the panel for its hard work and significant contribution.

Last summer our government received an interim report from the panel with recommendations to reduce traffic gridlock in the short term. We responded quickly and announced immediate investments in transit services in Ontario, and today I'm pleased to announce that we're also moving forward quickly on longer-term recommendations from the panel's final report. If passed, the smart transportation bill would tackle congestion and plan for Ontario's future transportation needs in three fundamental areas.

First, it would amend the Ontario Planning and Development Act to allow the government to develop plans for future infrastructure corridors and to protect them from development. This is an important tool in the integration of land use and transportation planning, to support continued growth and to maintain options for the future. These corridors would be used for future highways, transit and utilities as well as municipal services. Our goal in this regard is a modern, safe and efficient transportation system that links Ontario's diverse cities and towns, relieves congestion and helps our regions to prosper further.

Second, the smart transportation bill would allow the creation of provincial agencies to coordinate the delivery of services such as a multi-system transit fare card. Our goal is to enable transit riders to travel quickly across several regions while transferring easily between different modes of transportation.

The bill would provide the legislative framework to help deliver short-term, common sense projects such as bus bypass shoulders, carpool lots and high-occupancy-vehicle lanes.

We must increase the capacity of the existing transportation system to encourage public transit use, alleviate congestion and help preserve and protect the environment for future generations.

1400

The smart transportation bill is one more step in our government's aggressive plan to develop a strong and efficient transportation system for the province of Ontario.

As you're aware, we have taken significant action to date to ensure a balanced and integrated system where both highways and transit play an important role.

So far the federal government has failed, unfortunately, to make a long-term commitment to fund transit. We welcome any federal transit investments, but what is really needed is a long-term transit investment by the federal government. We suggest that they match our

\$3.25 billion over 10 years to make it truly a partnership in commitment to transit investment in this province.

Meanwhile, our government has taken a lead role. We're planning ahead and we're taking the steps required for a system that is safe and efficient.

We're adding new lanes to provincial highways. We're making major improvements to highways and roads in our province.

We're investing in transit buses. We're investing in vehicle renewal, as well as in new GO Transit stations and parking facilities throughout the greater Toronto area.

Several new inter-regional transportation corridors are in the planning stage, each with an eye to multi-modal solutions, including highways, transit and rail.

An efficient, effective and integrated transportation system is absolutely crucial to Ontario's continued economic vitality. Our government understands its importance to Ontario's economic growth, to the creation of new jobs, to the continued prosperity of our towns and cities, and to the quality of life for all Ontarians.

We also know that the congestion we face every day has been up over decades and so it will take time to effectively manage. But manage we will. Our government is committed to addressing both our immediate and longer-term congestion and gridlock challenges.

The smart transportation bill is a key component in our strategy. We will continue to work hard to meet the transportation needs of the Golden Horseshoe area and all of Ontario, both now and in the future.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): It's been eight years in the making that we've had gridlock in this province, and the Harris-Eves government has done absolutely nothing about it. On the verge of an election and here we are today, another day, another election announcement by the Eves government.

But what's especially disappointing about today's announcement is that they're trying to claim real credit about action on gridlock in the greater Toronto area. But the reality is that they've got a half-baked plan, no real plan, and a few ideas that have been lifted from the Dalton McGuinty Growing Strong Communities platform.

I want to take a close look at the announcement that the minister made earlier today. It's an obvious attempt to steal the policies of Dalton McGuinty, announced months ago in our Growing Strong Communities plan. But even the government, even this Eves government, can't get it right. Instead of a seamless smart card system, they're making a commitment to a smart card system that might work starting at Union Station but not within any of the area of the city of Toronto. Where is the TTC as a part of their announcement? They don't understand that 95% of all public transit trips happen within the city of Toronto. Their announcement is hardly a triumph of good planning and the ability of government to deliver real relief from the problems facing our transit system.

Dalton McGuinty has promised the establishment of a greater Toronto transit authority, long desired by GTA

municipalities. But there's nothing on that here, of course. It seems that they're plowing money into a smart card system without a comprehensive plan for both growth and integration of these transit systems. It's very much like putting the cart before the horse. But we're getting used to seeing that from the government.

What I find most surprising is what's not a part of some of these announcements. How about the idea of making transit passes a non-taxable benefit? It's a great idea. It's Dalton McGuinty's idea. So if this government is looking for more ideas, why don't you try to steal that one?

How about a commitment to double the amount of parking for GO Transit stations? It's another great idea. It's Dalton McGuinty's idea. And I wouldn't be surprised to see the government try to lift that one as well.

How about dedicating two cents per litre of the provincial gas tax for transit funding? It's a great idea. You know municipalities want that; Hazel McCallion herself called for that. You know that transit in the GTA is unsustainable unless stable and significant funding from the province is provided. It's another great idea. It's Dalton McGuinty's idea. You can borrow that one as well to fill your empty plan.

Your government has spent eight years gutting public education in the province of Ontario, especially in the GTA. In 1998, then-Finance Minister Ernie Eves cancelled all funding for public transit. Now, amazingly enough, Premier Ernie Eves wants the public to believe that they've changed their minds. But the leopard can't change its spots. I think the people of Ontario know that they can get the real thing. The people of Ontario have a clear choice: they can vote for a pale pink imitation of the Ontario Liberal strong community plan or they can vote for the real deal: they can vote for Dalton McGuinty, a man with the plan, a man with the vision and the willingness to do whatever it takes to battle gridlock and win.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): As a former chair of the Toronto Transit Commission, this idea of a smart card is, I think, about 15 years old. I remember that this was introduced 15 years ago. The Tories were in power even then, and since the Tories came to power all they've done is cut transit operating costs to zero. You give no provincial funding for the operating of transit. You're the only jurisdiction in the world that does that. What good is a smart card if you don't have any buses or service on the road? What good is this card if you can't catch a bus in Oakville, Vaughn or Brampton? You, Mike Harris and Ernie Eves have taken away all of the bus service, so now they're going to stand on the corner for a half-hour waiting with this card for no bus.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is always a pleasure to stand in this House and especially to commend my good friend and former colleague Mayor Hazel—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We'll allow the member to start again, in fairness.

Mr Prue: Thank you very much, Speaker, for bringing some decorum to the House.

It is always a pleasure, of course, to commend my good friend and former colleague Mayor Hazel McCallion, because when Mayor Hazel McCallion speaks, it seems that members opposite start to listen. She has come full circle from a formerly suburban mayor to one who now recognizes the needs of a growing and expanding region. She has made some valuable recommendations which I am pleased that the members opposite are starting to listen to. There are some good recommendations in this report. Before I get to the bad ones, I want to say what the good ones are, because there are, of course, always some good recommendations contained in any bill.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): I'll remember that.

Mr Prue: Yes, always.

What is in there that I think should be commended by members of all parties are the infrastructure corridors. This is a good idea to protect future citizens and future municipalities along the roads to make sure that the roads and railways can be built, and that other infrastructure that needs to be built can be brought to bear, without having to buy them back after they've been given away. It is a good idea for the bypass shoulders to allow buses and other vehicles that are transit-oriented to pass gridlock, as it surely will continue to develop. It is a good idea for the car lots, and I commend the minister for the idea for the car lots that are contained, and also for the HOV lanes, which are used everywhere in the city of Toronto and allow people on the transit and buses to have an opportunity to travel at least as fast as the private cars.

1410

It is the fifth provision with which we have difficulty. That is the provision for the multi-system transit fare card, because it goes around Toronto and not through Toronto, and that is the difficulty. It has been arranged, ignoring that 80% to 90% of the people who use the transit system in the GTA use it in Toronto. We have to question why this has happened. Why has it happened? Has Toronto walked away from the table? If so, why did they walk away from the table? Or were they not invited in the first place? The TTC has most of the transit riders; it has 90% of the vehicles. In fact, in the whole municipality of Peel there are fewer buses on the road than the yellow buses that the TTC has for repairs. There are fewer people being transferred on the bus in Mississauga than on any of the streetcar lines in Toronto. Quite frankly, this city has suffered. It receives virtually no subsidy from the province of Ontario. In all the world it is probably the only city that receives no subsidy, and for sure in North America it is the case.

I would tell you that what has been proposed here is a recipe for disaster. The gridlock, if it occurs, most assuredly will concentrate in the downtown core. We need to make sure the capital dollars are being spent in Toronto, I would say, even before it is spent in the areas outside of Toronto. Although we would welcome Peel,

Durham, York and Halton getting such monies, it cannot come at the expense of the people of the city of Toronto. It cannot come—and I can see this now: the transit authority that you're talking about, they're going to split the money. What is going to happen? Will Toronto get 50-50, when it has 80% to 90% of the transit riders? This is, as I said, a recipe for disaster.

There are other things that can be done and should be done. This government should be looking at a seamless pass throughout all of the GTA, including Toronto. They should be looking at monies that go and are apportioned to the municipalities throughout all of the GTA, especially in Toronto. The GO buses end up here; the GO trains end up here; the subway will end up here. The subway, if it ever extends beyond Steeles Avenue, will start at Union Station. If it ever extends beyond Scarborough Town Centre and beyond Etobicoke it will start at Yonge Street and needs to be included.

Although we welcome the minister taking the initiative at long last, he has left out the most important component. I would hope, before this bill is debated, that Toronto is brought into the picture and that Toronto can be included.

VISITOR

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know that all members in the House would like to recognize my guest in the members' gallery, Mr Bill Furlong, who supported the Trillium Health Centre in a silent auction to have lunch with his member. He is a family person living in my riding, a very successful, dynamic young man of the future. I am very grateful that he supported a great cause and I appreciate his presence in the House today.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 7, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker: We'll let them settle down first.

Interjections.

The Speaker: It's a wonder I can hear any noes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WEST NILE VIRUS

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I have a serious question for the Minister of Health. Minister, I have a string of e-mails that show how poorly you've handled the response to the West Nile virus in Ontario. In August 2001, when the first infected bird was found in Ontario, Dr Lo was assigned to create a test called the ELISA test, which is to detect West Nile. You remember

Dr Lo, because he's the one you fired when you fired the five scientists out of the public lab. According to these e-mails, Dr Lo was told the project was being put on hold in order to deal with something else. As we heard yesterday, the association of public health units acknowledged that there are not sufficient resources in public health to do their job. What Dr Lo said in one of his e-mails was, "Thank you for providing me the opportunity to work on this important public health problem of West Nile." Finally, of course, it never happened.

Can you explain to those affected by West Nile why you would have delayed the development of a test for West Nile as early as the summer of 2001 when you knew it had already arrived in Ontario?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): This is fiction. It is absolute fiction to say that the individuals in question were going to at one point fight West Nile virus, and at another point claim that they were in the forefront against bioterrorism and now that they're in the forefront of the fight against SARS. These people were not involved in research. These people were not medical biologists or microbiologists. They were doing inventory searches and library searches to build up their case. When we have eminent, world-class scientists in our teaching hospitals and in our universities who deserve support and do get our support in research, frankly, I think that's reprehensible.

Ms Pupatello: Let me suggest to the minister that this e-mail is from a medical microbiologist, virology immunodiagnostics, perinatal and vaccine preventable diseases, laboratories branch, Ontario Ministry of Health. This is what she said: "...I just wanted to confirm that we will be putting the project on hold"—that is, the development of ELISA for West Nile. "At this point there is no urgency to get the ELISA set up but hopefully we will be able to resume the project to have it ready in time for next West Nile season," which would have been last season. Last season we had 17 people die from West Nile disease; a thousand other people infected, but 17 actually lost their lives in this province.

What I am suggesting to you, Minister, is that you have shown a complete lack of leadership in the development of safety for the public on this file. You've had the proof and your specialist told you. You knew what to do. Their lack of funding meant they couldn't do their jobs. Today you stand in your place and you suggest for us—you apologize to the people for your lack of leadership—

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

Hon Mr Clement: I reiterate for this House and for the public that the individuals in question were not involved in research, that the individuals in question were not medical scientists or medical microbiologists. We do fund research. We fund research on a whole range of issues. They are called researchers and scientists, in our laboratories, teaching hospitals and universities. That is where our efforts have been.

When it comes to our own laboratories, we are putting the money where it counts, which is making sure we have

the tests in place to deal with the issues of public health that are important to Ontarians. That is our commitment, and we have in fact increased our funding year after year in that regard.

Ms Pupatello: Let me read you yet another e-mail from our medical microbiologist with your Ministry of Health. "We are in the process of setting up ELISA"—this is back in August 2001. "ELISAs can be tricky to set up and someone reminded me that Ching Lo has a lot of experience doing this. Would it be possible to borrow him for the next couple of months while we work through the kinks?"

Your own people knew he was the expert. Your own people knew they were going to use him to develop that test. A month and a half later, he was taken off the file because they had other priorities, even though they knew West Nile would be back the following season. They hoped it could be developed by the next season, but it never was. We went through the entire season last year fighting for results of tests that had to be sent as far away as Winnipeg.

Minister, that is a lack of leadership on your part. That is a lack of use of proper resources to fund public health. I insist that you stand in your place today and admit that you have bungled this badly. We have said so from the beginning. You have not shown the leadership required on the West Nile virus, and we have the proof in our hands to show it.

1420

Hon Mr Clement: Let me put some facts on the table. We currently have 129 staff with science degrees employed in our Ontario public health laboratories. Of these, 23 have post-graduate and graduate degrees, and we still have two who are medical microbiologists. We have them on staff right now. The individuals to whom she is referring were not researchers, were not medical microbiologists. They were not involved in research. They were not involved in the research that she suggests. They are not the people to whom she refers. The people to whom she refers were not involved in the activities that she has mentioned.

So from my perspective, we did invest in the right kind of researchers in the right places and ensure that our laboratories were concentrating on what they do best, which is testing the people of Ontario to ensure that the people of Ontario are safe from a public health perspective. That is our commitment, and it has been our commitment from day one.

ADAMS MINE

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): My question is to the Deputy Premier. A couple of weeks ago, I got wind of your government's scheme to quietly sell over 2,000 acres of crown land to the numbered company that now owns the Adams mine. I learned that you were about to sign the deal at bargain basement prices despite having never publicly marketed the property. After I called Minister Ouellette's office to

complain, he immediately put the sale on ice and promised a 60-day review.

Deputy Premier, today I've learned exactly who is behind the numbered company you wanted sell this land to. I now know who the new owners of the Adams mine land are. It's the Cortelluci group of companies. Minister, why were you planning to sell crown land to the largest donators to the PC Party without any public notice and at below market prices?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): First of all, I think the member needs to understand that there are various and many requests for crown land received on a daily basis and there is consideration given to many of them. I understand that the piece of property that the member is referring to, this particular piece of crown land, has been under review. I would also indicate to you that the minister is not here today, but certainly full details of that review are expected shortly.

Mr Ramsay: Deputy Premier, the Cortelluci group of companies has donated over \$1 million to the Ontario PC Party. In the leadership alone, they gave Ernie Eves \$44,600. In total, the five leadership candidates received over \$185,000, and you yourself received \$40,000 from them.

They now own the Adams mine. This crown land is important, because without it they cannot legally accept garbage at the Adams mine. If you sell them the land, they stand to make hundreds of millions of dollars.

Minister, do you really expect us to believe that it is just coincidence that the largest donator to the Ontario PC Party was involved in a secret deal to buy crown land at \$22 an acre?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think there are a lot of allegations that are being made, and I think it's important that we set the record straight.

According to the information that I have received from the Minister of Natural Resources, Jerry Ouellette, I have been assured that it underwent a full environmental assessment that was approved by the Ministry of the Environment in 1998. I also understand that it was the subject of an independent appraisal by an accredited land appraiser through the ORC.

I would repeat again to you that as far as this particular sale is concerned, I understand that full details of the review are going to be shared shortly by the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr Ramsay: Deputy Premier, I have a letter sent to the Minister of Natural Resources by the vice-chief of the Timiskaming First Nation. He says your sale to the Corteluccis "appears to contravene a number of fundamental principles upon which the sale of crown land is to be disposed of in the province of Ontario." He goes on to say, "The ministry has a legal obligation to consult with affected First Nations over the disposal of crown land."

Despite your ministry's rules and treaty rights, that consultation never happened. You weren't just planning to practically give this land away; you were literally bending over backwards for the PC Party's richest

donors, ignoring your government's own rules and trampling on treaty rights of our First Nations. It was all supposed to be done in secret.

Minister, why shouldn't I believe that the only reason your government tried rushing this deal through was because you wanted to help a friend before calling the election?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's really important that we take a look at all of the facts. As I said at the outset, I understand that the proposed sale of this particular crown land has been reviewed. I would just remind the member opposite that the full details of that review are expected to be released by the minister in the very near future.

HYDRO DEREGULATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, today Alberta Premier Ralph Klein, your government's soulmate, your best political buddy, admitted that hydro deregulation isn't working in Alberta. He has admitted that they need to conduct an independent review because so many people are angry over soaring hydro rates.

You used to point to Alberta all the time; you used to say it was the promised land in terms of deregulation. Now, even Ralph Klein admits it's not working. Will you admit it's not working in Ontario either?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): I have never compared Ontario to Alberta. In fact—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Baird: I never have. I have a tremendous amount of respect for Ralph Klein, for his energy minister Murray Smith and for the government of Alberta.

We did have a chat in my office with my counterpart's office in Alberta, and I think the member's characterization of Mr Klein's comments is unfair and is wrong.

Mr Hampton: I'm only repeating what is reported in the press.

You and your illustrious predecessors, Mr Stockwell and Mr Wilson, used to refer to California as the promised land of deregulation, until the lights went out. Then you referred to Great Britain, until they had to reregulate and bail out some of the private companies—British Energy. Then you referred to Alberta. Now even Ralph says it's not working there.

Minister, when you have to inflict dirty diesel generators on people in Guelph, Kitchener, Burlington, Etobicoke, Toronto, London and Ottawa, it is clearly not working here either. Will you stop your dirty diesel generation scheme and admit none of this is working for Ontario consumers?

Hon Mr Baird: This may come as a great surprise to the leader of the third party: he shouldn't believe everything he reads in the newspaper.

Interjection: He blew his budget on his bus.

Hon Mr Baird: Or don't believe everything you hear coming out of a bus.

The facts on the issue which the member opposite comments on have been distorted, exaggerated, twisted. The facts are this: we can reduce our reliance on high-cost imported power by bringing clean-burning natural gas generators into the province. I think that would be good for the Ontario electricity supply and for people in the province of Ontario.

With respect to diesel generators, which could be used as standby generators only, as the RFP says, in what I would say are emergency circumstances—after all, we'll have 3,300 megawatts of new, clean electricity that we didn't have available last summer.

Let me be quite clear. Let's end his fearmongering and be quite clear. There will not be new diesel generators in any of the cities which he has spoken of.

1430

Mr Hampton: According to the Ontario Minister of Energy, the lights didn't go out in California and Ralph Klein didn't bring forward an independent review of deregulation in Alberta today.

But Minister, you're caught in your own contradictions. You say, and the Premier said yesterday, that you have—well, he said 2,500 megawatts of new power available this summer; now you say 3,300 megawatts of new power available. Minister, if you have this new power available, why do you need to inflict dirty diesel generators on people in Guelph, in London, in Kitchener, in Burlington, in Toronto and in Ottawa? And if you've got all this new, clean power available, why do you have to inflict these dirty diesel generators without even holding an Environmental Assessment Act hearing so that people can find out what it's all about and propose alternatives?

Minister, if you've got the new power, you shouldn't need these dirty diesel generators. If you've got the new hydro, you shouldn't need to force it on people without going through an environmental assessment hearing. Which is it? Which story are you trying to tell people today?

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

Hon Mr Baird: The good news in Ontario is that we have 800 megawatts of new power, that wasn't available last summer, already up on-line at Bruce. We have 500 megawatts of power up on-line in Sarnia. We'll have 1,500 megawatts of new, clean generation coming out of the Bruce for the summer.

We saw just this week that the Canadian nuclear safety agency gave the go-ahead for the first reactor at Pickering to come on-line. That's 3,300 megawatts of new, clean electricity. The member opposite looks like he's almost disappointed.

To address very clearly his point, let the fearmongering end. There's not going to be diesel generators in Guelph, London, Kitchener, Toronto, Ottawa or Burlington. He may want to stand in his place and tell the House why, when he was in government, there were more than 500 new diesel generators that got environmental certificates of approval. Would he do that?

WEST NILE VIRUS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. I want to ask the Minister of Health this question about West Nile.

Minister, you've tried to say—

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to give the leader of the third party unanimous consent for another sup on his first question.

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

The member on the second question?

Mr Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, you've tried to say to people across Ontario that you now take the West Nile virus seriously. But we find that you're only going to provide the public health units, who are already stretched, who are already having difficulty doing their job, with 50% of the money.

Now, we know, Minister, that West Nile affected far more people than you were willing to admit last summer; 17 died and over 400 became sick. Do you still believe that it is adequate protection for the people of Ontario from the West Nile virus to provide public health units with only 50% of the money they need to protect the people of Ontario?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Quite frankly, I think that there will have to be more done, that there will have to be more done across this province. For the health units that have already embarked upon larviciding, that is perfectly according to our seven-point action plan. We expect other medical officers of health to make the same decision to protect the public, and if they don't, we'll make it for them.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you know, and I think the people out there across Ontario know, that if you're going to protect people, it's not sufficient to do what you did last summer. At the end of the summer, after more than 400 were infected and 17 people died, then you came forward with some funding—too little, too late.

The latest research published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal says that West Nile is far more serious than your government was willing to let on, far more serious than was first suspected. But here you are, hard-pressed health units, and you're only going to give them 50% of the money they need to do their job.

Minister, in your view, is that properly and adequately protecting the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: Firstly, the funding was always there, and it is there this year as well, and in fact it has been considerably enhanced.

Secondly, is the honourable member honestly trying to suggest that there is a Canadian Medical Association Journal that is accusing the provincial government of having knowledge, information and belief about West Nile virus in defiance of every leading scientist in the world and that we hid it from the public? If he is suggesting that, I suggest he say it straight out and then we can deal with that kind of allegation. The fact of the matter is

that we are all learning together. We all know how serious the problem is, and quite frankly, your flights of rhetorical flourish are not helpful.

GOVERNMENT ASSETS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Premier Eves plans to sell about \$2 billion worth of essential public assets to balance the books this year. We've seen this movie before. On May 5, 1999, the day the provincial election was called, the 407 was sold and the 407 users have been ripped off ever since. We are afraid that exactly the same thing is going to happen as you sell, once again, \$2 billion worth of assets to balance your books.

I want to know the answer to this question: what exactly are you planning to sell and what assurances can you give the public that they won't be ripped off like the 407 users have been ripped off?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): First of all, the honourable member's assertion is not correct. This government, as it always has, has put out its revenue and expenditure forecast every year. We will continue to meet the commitments we've made to the province of Ontario. For eight years we have been following an economic plan that has produced five balanced budgets, \$5 billion in debt repayment, over a million new jobs in this province and growth that is rivalling our trading partners. That's the plan that is right for Ontario; that is the economic plan we will continue to follow.

Mr Phillips: Listen, you haven't told anybody what you're selling. That's the problem. We got ripped off with the 407 deal, without question. You broke all your promises on that. We want to know what you're selling in this fire sale. The Dominion Bond Rating Service has said they're not even going to include that in their revenue estimates. The chief economist at TD bank said the assets have not been identified.

I want a very clear answer on this. You're expecting us to buy \$2 billion before the next election. The 407 users have been ripped off because of your promises last election. I want to know today how you are going to raise this \$2 billion and, specifically, the guarantees that you're going to protect the people who are using those assets you're selling off. Give me the answer and give the public the answer to those two questions, Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, we've been very clear that every year we review the public assets we manage on behalf on taxpayers. We review them to make sure that taxpayers are getting the best value for them and that they're being managed in the best way possible. We will continue to do that. For example, last year we reviewed Hydro One. It is to remain in public hands as the Premier has made very clear. However, for the Province of Ontario Savings Office, it made much more economic sense for taxpayers, and consumer sense, to divest ourselves and get out of the banking business. Every year we did that; every year will continue to do that.

The honourable member likes to quote the Dominion Bond Rating Service, which actually, if he reads the press release very closely, has some very positive things to say about the strength of the Ontario economy, about the Common Sense Revolution strategy as being the right one for economic growth. On the other hand, maybe he would like to remember the March 18, 1988, DBRS press release talking about the Liberal government's budget where they put it on a rating alert with downward implications.

1440

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, there was great news last week for Ontario students, especially those graduating from secondary schools this spring. On Friday, Ontario universities confirmed for our government that there would be enough spaces to accommodate the double cohort, and I want to congratulate you for great leadership and confidence in our colleges and universities.

Many of my constituents have already received their offers of admission from universities and are looking forward to a high quality educational experience next year. I'm also pleased that many will have the opportunity to study close to home at Ontario's newest university, the Ontario Institute of Technology in my riding of Durham. Ministers Flaherty and Ecker will enjoy that as well.

Can you tell the House how many spaces have been created in Ontario's universities, and what this means for students planning to go on to post-secondary education this September?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): Thank you to my colleague from Durham.

Yes, it is a fact. Last Friday was a day of some celebration for the colleges and the universities, but on that day especially the universities. It is a time that the students are receiving their offers, and the presidents of all of the universities across the province confirmed that there would in fact be 70,000 quality spaces in our universities to accept these young people next September. That of course was our goal, and we have been working together for a number of years.

I was quite pleased to hear Dr Mordechai Rozanski, the chair of the Council of Ontario Universities, say it best: "The government is ensuring that the resources are available to continue to accommodate all willing and qualified students. The province's universities, in turn, are delivering the increased spaces. To do this, given the dramatic increase in numbers, is an extraordinary achievement."

Mr O'Toole: It is indeed an extraordinary achievement, and I want to repeat what you've been saying from

the beginning: every willing and qualified student would have a place. Thank you for that.

Locally, Gary Polonsky, who is the president of Durham College, has been assuring my constituents with a personal guarantee that they would have a place. Many times he's mentioned that it's thanks to the \$24-million expansion fund that our government has provided. It's important to note that the unprecedented expansion of our colleges and universities will yield benefits for years to come with new faculty, new student spaces and student aid put in place, not just for the double cohort but for future generations.

But I am still troubled with the Liberal-like naysayers who are now raising concerns with the incoming classes and the issue of quality. We now have these students and we have the spaces. That's been confirmed. What steps is the government taking to ensure that students—

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

Hon Mrs Cunningham: It's true that our government has funded an unprecedented expansion of our universities and colleges, one that has not been seen since the late 1960s or early 1970s in this province. That's the right thing to do, because young people are choosing post-secondary education right across this country more than ever before, and it will continue on.

The question of quality is one that we are all supportive of, quality which signifies and, I think, labels our colleges and universities as second to none in Canada and in North America. We did create, over and above buildings, research, student aid, increased operating, a quality assurance fund.

Once again, I'd like to quote the Council of Ontario Universities, as they express confidence: "The government's historic SuperBuild program has enabled universities to make significant improvements to the quality of the physical facilities, just as the new quality assurance fund will enable them to hire more professors—"

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up. New question.

DON JAIL

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security. I had the opportunity yesterday to visit the Don Jail. Let me tell you that the conditions are nothing to write home about. Notwithstanding the exemplary job that the administration, particularly the correctional officers, do to make their bad situation a little better, inmates are being given three for one for time served in the Toronto jail. As a result, dangerous people are being let out on to the street after a far shorter period of time. These offenders are spending less time behind bars. That's not tough on crime, Minister.

Correctional officers cannot do their jobs properly when the staffing levels are not up to the required complement. Right now they are 18 COs short at the Don. You have major health and safety complaints

regarding working conditions of your employees. I would ask that you stop blaming the judiciary and the federal government for the conditions of the Don Jail, and fix it.

Minister, will you commit today to building the regional detention centre that Toronto needs to house those inmates?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): The member opposite is keeping the well-entrenched Liberal tradition of putting prisoners' rights ahead of everyone else's rights. If the Liberals had their way, we would see golf courses, riding stables, pool tables and video games, like we saw during the bad old Liberal days of 1985 to 1990. The reality is that this government has committed close to half a billion dollars for infrastructure renewal in our system. We have unprecedented pressures, there's no question about that, but we are addressing them, unlike the Liberal Party, who released an election platform a month ago without one reference to the correctional system.

Mr Levac: I want to make this perfectly clear: this minister made it very clear that he does not care about his correctional officers in his jails. The working conditions are putting your members in jeopardy. They have health and safety issues that you're not resolving. They have been attacked more than in any other place in the province of Ontario. You are not protecting your employees. That's the issue.

You have not corrected the situation at the Don Jail. Since 1996 it's been overcrowded. In the year 2000 and all the way through, you're 40% over capacity, jeopardizing the safety of your correctional officers and the administrative staff.

Stand in your place and say you've got a plan to build that regional detention centre in the area of Toronto that needs it, to keep those employees safe and to keep those prisoners in jail, where they belong.

Hon Mr Runciman: This is a member who talks about law and order and clearly aspires to be a justice minister in a future government. Yesterday his staff called the Don Jail and said that he would like to tour the jail with two staff. He showed up with a reporter from the Toronto Star. As the critic—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Runciman: Mr Speaker, please. As the critic—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Runciman: I think I should have a right to respond to this, Mr Speaker. This is very important.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Come to order, in fairness to the minister. It was your side yelling as well. It was both sides.

Interjection: No.

The Speaker: It was so. Both sides were yelling, and you were chanting, as a matter of fact. So, to be fair, the minister does need to have some quiet. He has it now.

Minister, continue, please.

Hon Mr Runciman: The member should know that for operational reasons of security and privacy, without a security clearance we do not allow reporters to tour our

correctional facilities. This member has abused his privileges as a member by deceiving the correctional staff of the Don Jail. It was a fraud perpetrated on the staff of the correctional system of this province by the member opposite, who says that he believes in law and order, believes in the maintenance of the law, and wants to be a minister of justice in this province. It is beyond belief that he engaged in this kind of activity.

Mr Levac: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: To set the record straight, I was reading from the standing orders under "Rules of Debate, matters out of order in debate:

"23. In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she:

"(h) Makes allegations against another member....

"(j) Charges another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood."

I would ask that the minister withdraw those comments.

The Speaker: There isn't a point of order. New question.

1450

RURAL EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Minister of Education. In my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, over the past four years one high school has been closed by the Grand Erie District School Board and four other high schools have been threatened with closure, the latest being Delhi District Secondary School. The schools that have been targeted are efficient, effective, high-quality schools that just happen to be in small towns. These schools are essentially the hub of the community. The bottom line is that local high schools, in addition to their educational function, are vital to the well-being and survival of the rural communities on so many levels: social, economic and cultural. What is our government doing to deal with issues of rural and small schools, and the special circumstances, like increased costs, that such schools face?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I do appreciate the question. Certainly, the issue of small, remote and northern schools is such that we, as a government, have always recognized that they have very special and unique needs. That's why when we introduced the student-focused funding, we introduced a special grant, the geographic circumstance grant. I'm very pleased to say that that grant has increased since 1998 by more than \$64 million, or 45%, to \$207 million in 2003-04. Moreover, in recognition of the fact that these small schools don't always operate at 100% capacity, we have what's called a top-up fund. This, again, is for schools in remote, rural and northern Ontario. I'm very pleased to say that for this year, 2003-04, it is going to be available to the tune of \$157 million to help these schools in ridings such as Mr Barrett's.

Mr Barrett: The issue of high school closures is obviously a large concern of mine. I will mention a

sincere concern for those MPPs who sit on rural caucus. I can't speak for the Liberals; they don't seem to have a plan for small schools. One of the problems in my riding, and in many others, is that schools threatened with closure are indeed rural, however they are part of an urban school board and in some cases the rural schools do not qualify for rural or remote funding. What is being done to fix this issue?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I recognize the unique needs that individuals such as Mr Barrett have in their ridings, when you do have these small, rural schools within an urban community. In response to Dr Rozanski's recommendations, we are making available \$50 million in order to flow that money to small, rural and northern schools. We have asked Dr Downey, a well-renowned individual, former university president, co-chair of New Brunswick's Commission on Excellence in Education, to take a look at how we can best flow the money to those rural and northern schools in single communities. We recognize there are additional costs; we're going to support those schools. I can tell you that we are already providing a 200% increase in the declining enrolment grant, which is going to help boards this year, and we're going to make sure—

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

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): In the absence of the Minister of Natural Resources, I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. We've had a chance to review the cave-in that your government is scheming with respect to the US softwood lumber barons. Not only will it kill jobs in sawmills in northern and central Ontario, but it will also negatively affect the pulp and paper industry. Pulp and paper mills that are already struggling because your scheme of hydro privatization has substantially increased their costs of power now also face the prospect of having to pay much more for their timber supply. Hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs in forest industry communities are being put at risk by your government.

Minister, before you cave in to the US lumber barons, before you go any further down this road, will you hold public hearings in forest industry communities that will be affected by this cave-in?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): For a government that's created over one million net new jobs, the member's question is nonsensical. Why would we do anything to jeopardize jobs in northern Ontario when our track record for the last eight years—unlike the loss of 10,000 jobs after five years when he was in office. When he was on the cabinet benches representing northern Ontario, after five years there were net 10,000 fewer jobs. We've created 1.1 million more jobs and we're doing nothing on the softwood lumber issue except to protect and enhance jobs in the province of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you know the US lumber baron position. You know that position, when it's gone before international tribunals, has never held up. Yet your government, as we speak, is down in Washington, in a back room, secretly negotiating to give up control over our crown forests. You'd think that you would at least hold public hearings. But it seems the best that people can do—if they want to talk to the Minister of Natural Resources about this, forest industry companies today in Thunder Bay have to pay \$2,000 to the Conservative Party in order to get 15 minutes of the Minister of Natural Resources's time.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): That's a shakedown.

Mr Hampton: It's a shakedown. You refuse to hold public hearings, but if companies that are going to be affected, companies that may have to lay off workers, want to talk to the Minister of Natural Resources today in Thunder Bay, they have to pay \$2,000 for 15 minutes of his time. Is that what you call looking after the jobs and the interests of northern Ontario communities, that you have to pay \$2,000 just to get 15 minutes of the minister's time?

Hon Mr Wilson: For this honourable member there is a conspiracy under every log.

No government has consulted with northerners more than we have, particularly in the last year. My colleague Janet Ecker lead discussions, along with many of our other colleagues and myself, on pre-budget consultations, throne speech consultations. Constantly our members are in the north, constantly we're talking to those companies involved with softwood lumber, forestry and the lumber industry. We are having discussions, but in no way in those discussions are we jeopardizing jobs. Why would we? Your question doesn't make any sense coming from an MPP from northern Ontario. It's just the craziest question I think I've heard you ask yet. How would anyone advocate a loss of jobs when that has not been the track record of this government in the past and it certainly won't be in the future?

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, last year David Tilson stepped aside to give Ernie Eves a safe seat in this Legislature, and at that time Ernie Eves emphatically promised that there would be no patronage appointment for Mr Tilson. He said, "I don't know why everybody assumes that somebody will get something for doing what they consider to be the right thing." Well, Mr Tilson sure got something. Last month our party discovered that Mr Tilson had been secretly appointed to a \$111,000-a-year job at the Ontario Municipal Board. He joins 53 other past Tory candidates in an Eves trough of Tory patronage appointments. Ernie Eves is out for his friends on his way out the door. Minister, why did Ernie Eves break his promise and add Mr Tilson to the Eves trough of Tory patronage?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): Perhaps the member opposite would like to take a look at how the appointments and reappointments have been made by our government since 1995. Of the reappointments, approximately 37% of them were of people initially appointed by the NDP and the Liberals. If we take a look at the former MPPs appointed by Premier Eves, we have Frank Miclash, former Liberal; Len Wood, former NDP; Marion Boyd, former NDP; Ross McClellan, former NDP; Murray Elston, Liberal MPP; Bob Rae, Hydro One, former Premier; Bernard Grandmaître, former Liberal, member of the Assessment Review Board; David Peterson, former Liberal Premier, University of Toronto governing council. How ridiculous. Obviously, you are going to appoint the best person for every job.

1500

Mr Smitherman: Well, madam Deputy Premier, I've got something for you. It's a number, and the number is 53; 53 past Tory MPPs or candidates appointed. Just this morning at the patronage meeting here at the Legislature Linda Franklin received her call to the trough. She was an EA to Ernie Eves and a strategist in his leadership campaign.

But Mr Tilson's case stands out as the worst of Tory patronage. There was no press release on David Tilson's appointment, so your pride notwithstanding, madam minister, was missing. Had his appointment been for just one day longer, Mr Tilson would have been forced to appear before the scrutiny of a legislative committee. But your government instead purposely kept the appointment quiet to disguise the fact that the Premier was breaking his promise.

Deputy Premier, if your government thinks that David Tilson was such a good appointment, why did you keep it so quiet when it happened and why did you make his appointment only for one year so there was no legislative scrutiny?

Hon Mrs Witmer: To be fair, Mr Tilson is eminently qualified to be the vice-chair of the Ontario Municipal Board. He is a lawyer. He has been involved in municipal politics. But, you know, if you want to go further, we have always believed in appointing the best person to each job. Let's go back to your time. Did you ever appoint Liberals? Here's who you appointed when you were in office: Claudette Miller, Liberal candidate, member of the Ontario Municipal Board; Jim Breithaupt, chairman of the Commercial Registration Appeal Tribunal and chairman, Ontario Law Reform Commission; Patti Starr—now, she wasn't an MPP; she was a Liberal fundraiser—she was appointed to Ontario Place board of directors and Metro Toronto Housing Authority; Jane Scott—

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

HYDRO GENERATION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, we've all heard a great deal of concern expressed about the province's electricity supply. People are particularly interested in cleaner sources of energy being used to meet the province's needs. Minister, I wonder if you can tell me what the government is doing to ensure that we have a supply of energy or a supply of electricity from cleaner, alternative sources?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): In this regard I say to my colleague from Scarborough Centre that we need to have more electricity in the province of Ontario, and those of us on this side of the House want that to be clean or green power. We're satisfied that we've done a lot. We're satisfied that we have come a long way, but we believe much more work remains to be done. We're pleased that there will be more than 1,500 megawatts of new electricity coming on the grid from the great riding of Helen Johns in Bruce. We're pleased that the first commercial wind farm in Ontario opened, again, in the great riding of my colleague Helen Johns, the member for Bruce. We're pleased that 500 megawatts of new power from natural gas came on-line in Sarnia. We're pleased that 800 megawatts that wasn't available last summer will be up and running. We're pleased that more non-emission power will come on-line with enhancements at other facilities, that Pickering A got approval for the guaranteed shutdown lifted. That clears the way for 500 megawatts of new power.

We believe we can do a lot more, and we will.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that response, Minister. Clearly, this government is taking steps to promote the construction of new generation projects from clean and alternative sources. In fact, as you know, I have a good friend in Kempenfelt Bay who is a farmer and has invested thousands of dollars of his own money to invest in turbine power.

Minister, I need to know if these incentives are working. I need to know that there will be a new supply from these sources for Ontarians to rely on. I'm wondering if you could assure the people watching today that the incentives will be working.

Hon Mr Baird: We did announce in the great community of Niagara Falls with my colleague Bart Maves a number of incentives for clean generation and green generation. They include a 10-year corporate tax holiday, a 10-year property tax holiday and an immediate 100% corporate income tax write-off, in addition to a capital tax exemption and a retail sales tax rebate because we don't want to tax clean and green power.

My colleague Steve Gilchrist, the Commissioner of Alternative Energy, has been working hard on a renewable portfolio standard. We did also see some \$200 million of water generation in the province, as well as through the budget the Minister of Finance extended that tax treatment to cogeneration.

I would still like to know why Howard Hampton hasn't stood in his place and explained to this House why he and his government signed not one, not two, but 500 diesel-powered generators when he was in office. I wish he would stand in his place and tell the House that.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): The question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, your government makes claims that you're good fiscal managers. How do you explain the fact then that your Cabinet Office costs have more than doubled since 1995, last year you spent \$662 million in consulting fees, and since 1995 you have increased the provincial debt by 23%? That means that each and every day Ontarians pay about \$5 million more in interest because of that increase. You have spent over \$250 million on partisan advertising. You have allowed billions of dollars in corporate taxes to go uncollected. There is at least \$125 million of uncollected fines under the Provincial Offences Act. According to chief economist—

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

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): Actually, I like the first sentence in the member's question much better. She said that we claim to be good fiscal managers. Yes, we do, but it's not just us who says that. That may not be grammatically correct.

Why don't I quote somebody else the Liberals like to quote: DBRS? "The Common Sense Revolution, whose principles were set out in 1995, has allowed the province to strengthen its financial profile markedly while providing substantial tax relief to individuals and corporations."

Or perhaps she would prefer this quote: "Strengthened fiscal discipline and strong economic growth have led to notable improvements in the province's financial flexibility and debt-to-GDP ratio."

Yes, we may claim that, but so do others. The record: five balanced budgets, \$5 billion in debt repayment, over a million new jobs—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

1510

Ms Di Cocco: The minister obviously doesn't want to answer the points I've raised.

Minister, I'd like you to know what the people in my riding have reaped because of your mismanagement. We have doctor shortages; we have school closures; we have inadequate hospital facilities. We do not have enough beds to meet the needs of our community, according to our physicians. We do not have enough nurses and health care professionals to manage the patients. We have 45 severely handicapped people in crisis, nowhere to go, and we have children's mental health programs being cut. Of course, we have our lax environmental rules such that Ontario is the only place on this continent that allows landfilling and incinerating of untreated waste. These are the results of your fiscal mismanagement.

Minister, how do you explain those situations when you have been governing since 1995 during the best economic era in this province?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Let me take another quote she might be interested in about the Liberal government record. When the DBRS came out in 1988, it talked about their “high rate of expenditure through the peak of an economic cycle.” It put their rating alert on a downward implication, gave them a rating alert on a downward implication.

They racked up the debt by 33%. We have paid down the debt by \$5 billion, as we promised. Do you know what? The tax-and-spend Liberals and the tax-and-spend NDP left the voters, left the taxpayers in this province with a legacy of \$1 million more an hour of debt being added to our children’s and our grandchildren’s future. They were part of that. We have—

The Speaker: I’m afraid the minister’s time is up.

TRANSPORTATION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. We have heard today that the opposition parties only care about public transit if it’s in Toronto. But I’m almost certain that our smart transportation plan can’t possibly be ignoring Toronto, can it?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I’m pleased to have an opportunity to clarify some of the misinformation that was thrown about this place earlier today. The fact of the matter is that not only are we not ignoring Toronto—

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The minister used the term “misinformation.” I seek your guidance as to whether or not—it was used in the context of information that was provided on the floor of the House. I wonder if that is a parliamentary term.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I think as he talked he didn’t accuse any member. He said “misinformation”; he didn’t say who. He was talking about it. I appreciate that clarification.

The Minister of Transportation.

Hon Mr Klees: As I was saying, I appreciate the opportunity to clarify that not only are we not ignoring Toronto, but we are very much working with them. In fact, with regard to the smart transportation system and the smart card we were discussing, one of the priorities will be Union Station and other key connections with the TTC to ensure that people who are using transit across the GTA will effectively connect in an efficient, effective and seamless way with the TTC.

Having said that, let me say to the member for Don Valley East that the next time he has a family conference, he may want to speak to a certain federal member and bring them to the table with some \$3.25 billion of transit funding so that the TTC can be supported the way it should be by both levels of government.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that response, Minister. I think you’ve mentioned some great initiatives for transit in Toronto.

There are some members here today, especially across the way, who said that you’ve put the cart before the horse. I know that this is probably a fitting quip for the Liberals, since they have 18th-century vision for transportation, but could you please tell us, in the days of engines and automobiles, what is so important about the fare card that makes it a priority in our transit vision for this century.

Hon Mr Klees: I’m pleased to respond to that question as well. The fact of the matter is that the member who posed this question knows full well that it takes convenience for riders to be encouraged. In fact, the TTC issued a plan that talks about how we encourage people to use the TTC. One way you do it is to make it convenient to use the TTC. With regard to the suggestion that the province doesn’t support the TTC, let me remind honourable members that this government supported the TTC to the tune of \$113 million in 2003; another \$126 million in 2002; we have just transferred \$64 million to the city to reimburse money invested in the TTC for safety improvements; and let’s not forget the \$879 million that this province committed to the Sheppard subway, all under the TTC.

So there is nothing about this government ignoring the TTC. We’re saying let’s work together in the best interests of the commuting public in this province.

The Speaker: Before we do petitions, the member for Burlington has a point of order.

VISITORS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I’m sure that all members of the House would like to know that in the House today are some special guests, not only the page from Burlington, Matthew Fabbicino, but also his mother, Catherine, his father, Luigi, and his beautiful sister, Briana. Please welcome them to the Legislature.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): “Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% ... effective August 1, 2002; and

“Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and ...

“Whereas the increase in the government’s own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and ...

“Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service of Ontario’s long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; ...

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned” 1,250 individuals “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Demand that” the Ernie Eves government reduce the “15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities....”

I’m in full agreement and have affixed my signature hereto.

OHIP SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been sent to me by the Canadian Hearing Society from Kingston and reads as follows:

“Whereas the Harris government’s decision to delist hearing aid evaluation and re-evaluation from OHIP coverage will lead to untreated hearing loss; and

“Whereas these restrictions will cut off access to diagnostic hearing tests, especially in geographic regions of the province already experiencing difficulties due to shortages of specialty physicians; and

“Whereas OHIP will no longer cover the cost of miscellaneous therapeutic procedures, including physical therapy and therapeutic exercise; and

“Whereas services no longer covered by OHIP may include thermal therapy, ultrasound therapy, hydrotherapy, massage therapy, electrotherapy, magnetotherapy, nerve therapy stimulation and biofeedback; and

“Whereas one of the few publicly covered alternatives includes hospital outpatient clinics where waiting lists for such services are up to six months long; and

“Whereas delisting these services will have a detrimental effect on the health of all Ontarians, especially seniors, children, hearing-impaired people and industrial workers; and

“Whereas the government has already delisted \$100 million worth of OHIP services,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately restore OHIP coverage for these delisted services.”

I agree with the petitioners.

1520

GOLF COURSE ASSESSMENT

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a number of signatures on a petition collected this spring at various golf courses across my riding. It’s titled, “Help Keep Green Fees at a Reasonable Price.” People were asking for a review of the method the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, MPAC, has chosen to un-

fairly increase golf course assessments, and it is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) has chosen an assessment process for golf courses not relative to property assessment, that increases golf course property taxes unfairly;

“We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold assessment values at last year’s levels until a fairer method of assessment can be developed and implemented, or a reclassification of golf course properties can be made.”

I have worked with a number of these golf courses. I hereby affix my signature to this petition.

ALUMINUM SMELTER

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This is a petition to clean up the abandoned aluminum smelter in Georgina township.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the abandoned aluminum smelter located on Warden Avenue in the town of Georgina has been deemed to have heavy metals exceeding the Ministry of the Environment guidelines; and

“Whereas the site is adjacent to a wetland that leads into the Maskinonge River feeding into Lake Simcoe;

“The Ministry of the Environment should immediately conduct a full environmental assessment and cleanup of the site.”

This is petitioned by the people who have signed this particular petition to the Legislative Assembly. I affix my signature; I’m in complete agreement.

PROTECTION OF TEMAGAMI

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This petition is from a University of Guelph club, the Guelph Forest Defence collective. There are over 250 signatures on it. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas conservation reserves are a critical part of Ontario’s protected area network; and

“Whereas 97% of Ontarians polled want the Temagami area protected; and

“Whereas the MOE is currently investigating the MNR and its past track record of allowing illegal massive clear-cuts throughout Ontario; and

“Whereas the MNR must hold the needs of the environment and the wishes of the Ontario public before those of industry; and

“Whereas the world’s largest remaining intact red and white pine old-growth forests exist in Temagami and are threatened by logging in block 30 and block 46; and

“Whereas any further damage from logging around these old-growth stands could be irreversible;

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

“(1) A cancellation be placed on any present or planned logging in block 30 and block 46 of the Temagami wilderness;

“(2) The government of Ontario set up well-defined interconnected protection zones around old-growth stands in Temagami;

“(3) The government of Ontario guarantee that those protection zones would be off limits to logging and other industrial operations; and

“(4) The government of Ontario support the community sustainable forestry initiative of the Bear Island First Nations and the town of Temagami.”

I will affix my signature to this petition because I fully support it.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have a petition here. As a matter of fact, I have a petition with a few thousand names collected from students of Toronto, Ontario, with respect to high tuition fees, and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

“Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

“Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and tripled; and

“Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

“Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

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

“Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels, and

“Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998.”

I will present this to the House and I will affix my signature to it.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been sent to me by people who live in Oshawa. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

“Whereas in Ontario the Conservative government deducts the child benefit supplement dollar for dollar from those living on social assistance;

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

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

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

I have signed my name to this petition. I agree with the petitioners entirely.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

“Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

“Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

“Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

“Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last among comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

“Whereas the government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

“Whereas long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

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

“Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels.”

I will affix my signature to this petition because I am in full agreement.

MEDICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): This petition has been sent to us by Dr Jerry Halik, from the Markham-Stouffville health centre. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the OHIP schedule of benefits is often unclear about its definitions of good medical practice, causing problems for patients and their physicians;

“Whereas the medical review committee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons has been aggressively clawing back payments to hard-working, conscientious doctors, thereby exacerbating physician shortages in the province;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to suspend further reviews by the medical review committee pending a negotiated agreement of an unambiguous schedule of benefits with representatives of affected practising physicians.”

I agree with the petitioners and I sign my name to this.

GOLF COURSE ASSESSMENT

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I want to recognize the hard work that my colleague Toby Barrett, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, is doing with regard to helping keep green fees at a reasonable rate on golf courses of the province of Ontario. I have a petition that reads as follows. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

“Whereas the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) has chosen an assessment process for golf courses not relative to property assessment that increases golf course property taxes unfairly,” and I must point out this is an issue the government is dealing with and working on,

“We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold assessment values at last year’s levels until a fairer method of assessment can be developed and implemented, or a reclassification of golf course properties can be made.”

This is signed by hundreds of people.

1530

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I’ve received tens of thousands of signatures in regard to this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

“Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

“Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce since not only is the licence plate number required, but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

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

“That the measures contained in private member’s Bill ... An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Essex, be immediately enacted...”

This bill “imposed liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing;...

“And we ask for the support of all members of the Legislature.”

People have signed this from Aylmer, Ottawa and Nepean, among other areas of the province. I too have signed the petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): “Whereas 70% of Ontario women with children under age 12 are in the paid workforce;

“Whereas high-quality, safe, affordable child care is critical to them and their families;

“Whereas the Early Years Study done for the Conservative government by Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain concluded quality child care enhances early childhood development;

“Whereas this government has cut funding for regulated child care instead of supporting Ontario families by investing in early learning and care;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario government adopt the NDP’s \$10-a-day child care plan and begin implementation by reducing full child care fees to \$10 a day for children aged two to five currently enrolled in regulated child care by providing capital funds to expand existing child care centres and build new ones, by funding pay equity for staff, and by creating new \$10-a-day child care spaces in the province.”

I agree with this petition and I sign my signature to it.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I know it’s highly out of order, but Matthew Fabbicino is a page, as you know, from Burlington. His mom and dad and his sister are in the visitors’ gallery and I’m sure the people of Burlington and Matthew would appreciate us saying hello today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 6, 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We left off when the member for Trinity-Spadina had the floor. Our rules are that we go in rotation. Ordinarily I would look to my right. I think I have a point of order. The chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On Monday, May 5, 2003, there is a Hansard indicating Mr Bisson rising, effectively on a point of order: "Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down Mr Hampton's lead till Wednesday." ... "Wednesday. Is it agreed? Agreed."

I put to you therefore that it is appropriate for the New Democratic Party's one-hour lead to commence. I can indicate to you that Mr Hampton will be sharing that lead with Ms Martel from Nickel Belt.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the consent motion was for Mr Hampton to have his leadoff speech on Wednesday; I agree. But by the rules of the House, rotation goes. If Mr Hampton gets to do his speech right now, then the rotation would be that the NDP would have more speakers than the other parties. That was never agreed to. So when the rotation comes, Mr Hampton can have his leadoff speech on Wednesday.

Mr Kormos: This is rather cute pettifoggery. We have a long-time history here of deferring leadoff speeches. In the context of response to the throne speech, we know that the government has the first day, and upon the completion of their speaking to it, the House is adjourned without any further business being called. The leader of the official opposition then follows the next day. There had been an agreement—and we appreciate the co-operation, of course—for Mr Hampton to have his leadoff deferred to today. It's not out of line with other agreements and similar wording that has been done in years and in Parliaments gone by. Clearly, the agreement was as to Mr Hampton having his response to the throne speech today. It has been indicated that he will share that with Ms Martel. Ms Martel will speak briefly until Mr Hampton gets here. Mr Hampton has been delayed for a few minutes outside because of the scrum that follows question period.

I find it most regrettable that there are members here who would want to exploit the opportunity to deny what was clearly the intent of the agreement, and that was that Hampton have his leadoff today. What does that mean—that if Hampton doesn't get the floor until later today he's not to have his whole period for leadoff?

The Deputy Speaker: As I understand it, there are two questions. One is whether or not there could be a substitution of time. The debater right now would ordinarily be to my right. It seems to me you're asking for a separate question. You're asking for substitution when that opportunity comes. I'm not sure that should come at this point. It would seem to me that should come in the next rotation of your party. Other than that, there may be a different unanimous consent that you're seeking.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Welcome to the House, Mr Hampton. My dilemma is, in the absence of Mr Marchese, I'm looking to my right for a debater.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With due respect, we know there is a protocol that follows the reading of the throne speech. The protocol is that the throne speech is read and the House then adjourns for the day. The first bill of the session is introduced, as occurred last Wednesday. Thursday, of course, is the first day following the throne speech. The government then speaks to the throne speech, as Mr Gill and one of his colleagues did, and I was present during that. The House is then adjourned, notwithstanding that it's not 6 o'clock, to the next day.

On the next day, the leader of the official opposition, or his delegate, takes the floor at the beginning of orders of the day and commences his response. On Monday, there had been unanimous consent sought because Tuesday was an opposition day. So it was impossible for Mr Hampton to speak to the throne speech on Tuesday.

I'll be quite candid with you. Clearly, the motive for seeking the agreement was so that Mr Hampton could, as did Conservative government members and as did Mr McGuinty, address the House during the afternoon session rather than in the darkness, if you will, of the evening session. Unanimous consent was sought to stand down Mr Hampton's lead until Wednesday. Today is Wednesday. There was agreement with respect to that. "Is it agreed? Agreed." Mr Hampton is here to commence his lead. This is the tradition in the House, quite frankly, I suspect, as a convention, and I would ask that the Speaker give effect to the unanimous consent that was agreed to on Monday, May 5, 2003.

1540

The Deputy Speaker: I shan't do that. What I will do is, if you have a request for a point of order that you want to ask the House for unanimous consent for something, please ask it. Other than that, I am going to proceed in debate in rotation according to the custom of the House.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Point of order.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me, if I am taking more points of order on the same subject, then I will take them in rotation.

Mr Bisson: My leader has gone through the details, but I was the one that moved the point of order on Monday night. I was very clear, very explicit. There was an agreement by the Liberals and the Conservatives that

our leader would do his leadoff speech on the throne speech on Wednesday. It reads as follows: "I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down Mr Hampton's lead till Wednesday." I couldn't be any more clear. It was an agreement and it is agreed to on Hansard, so therefore I am waiting for Mr Hampton to do his lead. That's what the agreement was.

I notice there's a little bit of a meeting going on here. Can I suggest maybe we just take a five-minute recess in order to work this out?

The Deputy Speaker: We will wait while the business of the House goes on, as I think it should.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I seek consent to allow Mr Hampton to do his leadoff speech for one hour and for the remaining time of the throne speech debate to be shared between the Liberals and the Conservatives.

I will amend that. I will take the rest of the time and split it by rotation that it would normally have between the three parties. So nobody loses any time on either side of this House.

Mr Kormos: I appreciate the proposition and I want to indicate that we agree in response to the point of order and the proposition made by Mr Stockwell that we will calculate the impact of New Democrats having spoken and adjust it that so that it will reflect what in fact would have been the proper allocation of time, had the leadoff been in order.

The Deputy Speaker: So that things are well understood, Mr Kormos rose on a point of order and asked for unanimous consent for the leadoff. He has also added a whole lot of other things that I'm not even going to contemplate at this time. But on his point of order, on his request for unanimous consent, is there consensus? Agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I am pleased to take part in this throne speech debate, and let me begin by saying that the amendment to the motion be amended by striking out all the words after, "Whereas Ontarians" and substitute the following:

"Have felt the impact of bad Conservative privatization policies where it hurts—in the pocketbook;

"Whereas the Conservatives ignore evidence from around the world that privatization of public necessities—such as water, hydro, health, education—doesn't work and costs more;

"Whereas Ontarians are looking for practical solutions that would:

"Stop hydro privatization and deregulation and ensure clean, reliable public power at cost.

"Extend public home care, create 100 new community health centres and cut long-term-care user fees. Cancel plans for private MRI/CT clinics and privately built hospitals and put funds back into public health care.

"Keep our drinking water public and protect water from source to tap.

"Ensure every student has the opportunity to excel, guaranteed by a dedicated education excellence fund that takes the politics out of education funding. No public funds for private schools.

"Immediately increase the minimum wage to \$8 an hour, prohibit scabs and treat injured workers fairly.

"Freeze rents for two years, build at least 32,000 units of affordable housing and increase shelter allowances.

"Cut tuition by 10% and ensure that no student is denied a quality education or training for financial reasons.

"Lower transit fares, shorten waits and reduce gridlock with a dedicated transportation trust fund.

"Reduce child care fees to \$10 a day for 18-month to five-year-olds in non-profit, regulated child care, and create 20,000 new child care spaces.

"Protect your pension from inflation and let you take it with you from job to job.

"Therefore, this House endorses an agenda of public power."

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Hampton has moved an amendment to the amendment of the throne speech. I'd like to read it if I could have a copy of it.

Mr Hampton has moved—

Mr Kormos: Dispense, please.

The Deputy Speaker: As I was saying before, if there are two of us up, if there are two of us talking, one of us is out of order, and it's not me.

Mr Hampton has moved that the amendment to the motion be amended by striking out the words after "Whereas Ontarians" and substitute the following—

Mr Kormos: Dispense, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Dispense? Agreed. Debate?

Mr Hampton: I believe anyone who watched the Conservative throne speech came away with the impression that this is a government that is either suffering from amnesia itself or wants the citizens of Ontario to suffer from amnesia in respect of the last eight years. This is a government that wants the people of Ontario to forget that it is the government that cut hospital budgets, it is the government that laid off 10,000 nurses and referred to nurses as out-of-date Hula Hoop workers.

This is a government that, according to their own education task force—Dr Rozanski—took \$2 billion out of our elementary and secondary classrooms.

This is a government that substantially cut funding for our public universities and colleges such that Ontario now ranks second to last in Canada in terms of per capita funding for our colleges and universities.

This is a government that wants people to forget that it downloaded the responsibilities and costs of protecting public health, protecting people from the SARS virus or the West Nile virus, or protecting people from drinking water that is not safe and healthy. This is the government that downloaded all of those costs and responsibilities on to municipalities.

1550

Anyone who read the throne speech would have to come away with the overwhelming impression that this is a government that wants to pretend that through one throne speech, somehow magically all of that damage

that has been done by this government over eight years can be reversed like that, with a snap of the fingers.

We like to think of throne speeches as setting a vision or a strategy or a direction for the future. But I challenge anyone: read this throne speech and try to find a vision for Ontario, try to find a direction, try to find anything that is coherent in terms of setting out a framework for Ontario. It is not there; it is simply not there.

I want to use the time that is available to me to set out what New Democrats believe must be the framework for Ontario, the direction ahead. Let me begin with an issue that touches virtually every person, every business, every industry in this province, and that is the fact that all of us need an affordable supply, a reliable supply of electricity, of electrical energy, and we need to have it in such a way that is environmentally responsible.

This is a government that has said that the energy policy for the province should be simply to privatize our hydroelectricity system, turn it over to private corporations and then let them do whatever they want with it, despite the failures in California; despite the now even recognized failures in Alberta, as we found out from the Premier of Alberta today, Ralph Klein; despite the failures in Great Britain; despite the failures in New Zealand; despite the fact that people in Montana and Nevada, in the state elections in the United States in November, voted overwhelmingly to reject deregulation of their hydroelectricity systems. Notwithstanding that, the direction of this government in terms of energy policy is simply, "Let the private sector do it."

Well, that is not good enough, because after eight years of hearing this government say, "Let the private sector do it," the sorry result is this: hydro rates have skyrocketed to the point that the government has had to bring in temporary rate caps, at least for residential customers, to try to hide the financial pain from them. But hydro rates have skyrocketed. For many industries in this province it's resulting in layoffs, it's resulting in curtailed production and, in some cases, companies literally saying, "We may be going out of business."

Environmentally, it has resulted in dirtier and dirtier air. Why? First of all, because the private sector is not building any new supply, therefore the existing coal plants we have in the province have been used more and more at levels approaching 100% operation. In other words, they are running virtually full out. When that is not enough to provide us with all of the hydroelectricity we need, then the government, through its minions, imports hydroelectricity from places like Michigan, Ohio and Indiana where overwhelmingly that hydroelectricity is produced by burning dirty coal. So the experience for people on the environmental side has been breathing dirtier and dirtier air.

Now, most recently, in order to try to cover up the severe failure of the private sector to build new supply, the Minister of Energy comes forward with a strategy to start utilizing dirty diesel generation in residential neighbourhoods in Toronto, Burlington, Kitchener, Guelph, London and Ottawa.

Clearly, this has been a failure. It's been a failure financially, in terms of the skyrocketing hydro bills and in terms of the amount of debt that has mounted because the government is trying to cover up some of the damage; it's been a failure in terms of the refusal of the private sector to build new supply; and it's been a failure in terms of the environmental damage.

I want to say to people all across Ontario that Ontario should learn from the experience in Great Britain, New Zealand, California, Alberta, Nevada and Montana. We must keep our hydroelectricity system in public hands and operate it on a not-for-profit basis, and we must implement a thoroughgoing energy efficiency strategy now in this province.

Finally, we should be adopting some of the measures that have most recently been taken by Hydro-Québec, a not-for-profit publicly owned utility, and by Manitoba Hydro in that province, where both of them have completed geographic analyses of their provinces. They now know where you can generate wind energy most cost-effectively and most efficiently. They are at least eight years ahead of Ontario now in moving to set up sustainable systems of wind turbines to generate clean, renewable electricity in that fashion. We must do this now, and the most cost-effective, most efficient and fairest way to do this is through a publicly owned, not-for-profit hydroelectricity system.

I also want to refer to some of the other measures I believe need to be taken. What we have seen from this government is also a reliance upon or a movement to rely upon the private sector to provide clean, safe drinking water as well. The experiment, though, with privatization of water already has gone very badly in this province, and we need only remember Walkerton.

This is the government that downloaded the responsibility for the provision of safe, clean drinking water almost totally on to municipalities and then eliminated the public labs for the testing of drinking water, put that over to private corporations. We saw very quickly, within a matter of about three years, how negatively that has affected people in Walkerton and potentially could have affected far more people in this province. Several people died, thousands of people were rendered ill, and many of those will be chronically ill for the rest of their lives.

I don't think the people of Ontario need a more severe lesson on how important it is to maintain safe, clean drinking water as a public service which is democratically accountable to the people, which is affordably and reliably provided to the people, yet this government has not heeded those warnings and continues to go down that road of privatization.

I want people across Ontario to understand. New Democrats are committed to public control over safe, clean drinking water, democratic control over it and we're committed to providing the necessary finances to ensure that municipalities and the province together can provide safe, clean drinking water to the people of Ontario.

Then there's the issue of what we see happening in our health care system. The throne speech was, shall we say, enlightening on that issue as well, because when it comes to health care, whether it be hospitals, whether it be the provision of magnetic resonance imaging or CAT scan imaging or whether it be the provision of home care for seniors, the strategy of this government is not to continue to develop the public medicare system. No, the declared strategy of this government is private hospitals, private MRIs, private CAT scans and private, for-profit control and delivery of home care and, more and more, the concentration of long-term care in private, for-profit deliveries as well.

What we know already from the evidence here in Ontario is that the privatization of health care—a piece here, a piece there, all of it being done through the back door—is in fact costing the citizens of Ontario more and delivering less.

1600

Let us take home care for a minute. We have seen home care being taken out of the hands of not-for-profit agencies like the VON and the Red Cross and turned over to, in many cases, American corporations like Olsten—who, by the way, have a terrible record in the United States. They have been charged criminally and civilly for fraud, criminally and civilly for misappropriation of funds, and criminally and civilly for mistreatment of patients.

Notwithstanding the evidence in the United States, this government continues to move away from public, non-profit providers of home care to profit-driven, corporate providers. What has been the result for people? We know that in the last two years some 122 seniors have been cut off the availability, have been cut off in terms of being able to receive proper home care. What happens when seniors who need home care can't get it? We know what happens. If they can't stay in their own home, then they must go into an institution. So the government is literally, by enforcing these kinds of contractions and ensuring that more of the money for home care in fact goes to the profit line and to the executive salaries, then forcing seniors and the disabled into hospitals and into nursing homes, and the health care bill goes up. That has been the experience.

On private hospitals, no less a right-wing journal than the *Economist*, upon reviewing the strategy of the governments of Margaret Thatcher and then John Major to move to privately funded and privately managed hospitals in Great Britain, has said that it's a complete failure. The *Economist*, a major right-wing organ of opinion, has said they are a complete failure. There is no benefit whatsoever in pursuing private development, private ownership or private management of hospitals. Yet we see this government continue in that direction.

We need only look to the United States to see how devastating this is. I think people across Ontario need to look to what is happening in the United States. There are 42 million Americans who have no health insurance—none. There are over 50 million Americans who believe

they have health insurance, but when they read the limitation clauses, the exemption clauses and the exception clauses in the so-called health insurance contract, they discover that they do not have much of anything. Virtually 100 million Americans, who all need health care, all need health insurance, simply don't have it. Yet the United States spends over 50% more than we do on health care. So how can anyone describe a scheme where you spend 50% more, yet a third of your population is essentially left out, as in any way a cost-effective or efficient way of providing health care for your citizens? Yet that is exactly the direction that this government is pursuing.

New Democrats want to be very clear with people across Ontario. We will stop now—not down the road—any move toward private hospitals, whether it be in Brampton or whether it be in Ottawa, or anywhere else in the province. Where we should be investing in health care is through the public medicare system, at the hospital level, at the public health level, at the long-term-care level, at the home care level. It is the most cost-effective way, the most efficient way and the fairest way to provide the health care that all of our citizens need in this province. New Democrats are committed to that.

As I said earlier, the government's own education task force chair, Dr Rozanski, after touring the province, after meeting with boards of education from one end to the other, after consulting even with some of the government backbenchers, after consulting with teachers and parents, after consulting with trustees, simply and in a quite straightforward way said that, not including what it would take to settle collective agreements, the government had underfunded our elementary and secondary schools by \$1.8 billion. When you include the cost of settling collective agreements in the current year, the total, all-in figure is over \$2 billion. That is how much this government has cut from our schools. This is a serious problem. In a world which more and more has become a knowledge economy and a knowledge society, the most important investment we can make for our people is in their education, to ensure that all of our people have the tools, the knowledge, the analytical and communication skills to participate in the economy and in society. Yet this is a government that has cut over \$2 billion.

I know the government has made a lot of announcements about education, and they've said that in the future they will fund education. But I say to people that if a government has spent most of the last eight years in cutting educational funding, do you now really trust that next year, the year after and the year after that they are going to make the investments in education? And I say this to my Liberal colleagues, because they as well are not prepared to put the money in now. The New Democrats want to be very clear: we must implement Rozanski now—not three years from now, not four from now; we must make the investment in our elementary and secondary schools now, and New Democrats are committed to that.

I want to outline how we would do it, because it's very important. First of all we must establish a dedicated education excellence fund. We would immediately put \$2 billion into the education excellence fund. How would we raise that money? That's important. The Conservatives don't want to talk about how they would find the money and the Liberals certainly don't want to talk about how they would do it. First of all, for individuals who have higher incomes, we would immediately implement a 3% increase on incomes over \$100,000 a year. So if an individual has an income of \$110,000 a year, the \$10,000 over the \$100,000 would be subjected to a further 3% income tax. That would generate for us at least \$1.5 billion in new funding, which would go directly into the education excellence fund.

I want people to clearly understand what their choices are here. The Conservatives are saying that if you want your children to receive a better, well-resourced and well-funded education, you should think about sending your children to a private school. Increasingly, we especially see this in the greater Toronto area. Public schools no longer have full-time principals; many of them no longer have sufficient maintenance and custodial staff to keep the schools clean on an ongoing basis; many of them do not have a full-time librarian; and they do not have music, drama and art teachers or full-time physical education teachers. So parents looking for a good program in the arts and in music, a good literacy program or good extracurricular programs in the schools simply can't find them. And they're increasingly being told by this government, "Well, take your child to a private school."

Here's the equation: to take children to a private school would very likely cost at least \$9,000 a year. The New Democrats are saying that the most cost-effective, efficient and fair way to provide education for our children is to reinvest in the public school system. I would rather pay an additional 3% on that \$10,000 of income over \$100,000 than pay \$9,000 or \$10,000 per child to a private school. I think that investment makes sense for all of us across Ontario. The best way, the fairest way, the most cost-effective way to invest in our children's education is for all of us to contribute to the public education system.

1610

This brings me now to the private school tax credit. This is a government that, for years going forward now, wants to take about \$500 million of public money and turn it over to private schools. New Democrats want everyone to understand this clearly: that is wrong. Public money should not be used to finance private education. If I as a parent do not want to use the public swimming pool in my community and I want to build a private swimming pool, that's a private decision. I should pay for it privately. I shouldn't be asking for a tax credit, and heaven knows I should never get a tax credit. If as a private citizen I do not want to use the public transportation system and I want to purchase a private car, that is a private decision. I don't ask for a tax credit and I

should never receive a tax credit. Likewise for education: if you want your children to attend a private school, that is a private decision. Don't come asking for public funding. The New Democrats would restore that money to public schools. That, combined with other additions to the education excellence fund, would allow us to make the \$2-billion reinvestment in our public elementary and secondary schools this year, when it's needed; this year, when we're already seeing the pain of further cuts, further closures and further loss of existing education programs.

I want to talk just for a moment about universities. We have seen college and university tuition fees escalate through the roof, such that we now have thousands, if not ten of thousands, of young people and adults who can no longer afford to access a post-secondary education. Clearly, in a knowledge economy and in a knowledge society this is wrong. The New Democrats are committed to reducing tuition fees by 10% and ensuring that student financial assistance is available to all students in this province who need financial assistance in order to acquire a post-secondary education. It's not enough just to freeze tuition fees. We certainly cannot allow tuition fees to continue to increase. We must cut tuition fees, and New Democrats are committed to doing that by 10% immediately so that education at the post-secondary level once again becomes affordable and available to all of our citizens, not just those who have thick wallets.

I want to speak just for a minute about minimum wage. That is also part of what we believe needs to be the public agenda, the agenda of Public Power. We have seen over the last eight and a half years the Conservative government freeze the minimum wage at \$6.85 an hour. When you factor in inflation, it means that the lowest-paid workers in this province have lost virtually 20% of their income through inflation. This is a government that wants us to believe that the more than 300,000 people who work for minimum wage are all high school students. That's what this government would have us believe: "They're high school students. It's really just pocket money, convenience money." That is a complete myth. The majority of people who work for minimum wage are in fact women: women who are trying to put food on the table, pay the rent and put clothing on the backs of their children; women who in many cases are working not one minimum-wage job but two or three minimum-wage jobs—one during the day, one in the evening and another on the weekends—trying to make ends meet.

We've seen in the United States over the last three years of the 1990s that the federal government increased the US minimum wage by over 40%. What they found, in doing that—and the US minimum wage, when you factor in currency exchange, has been at \$8 an hour or thereabouts for some time. What they did, though, in implementing these changes was a number of studies, and what did they find? Right-wingers like this government would tell you, "Oh, if you increase the minimum wage, it will result in a loss of jobs." They did a number

of studies and found that there was no loss of jobs whatsoever. In fact, they found that by increasing the minimum wage, those lower-paid workers had more disposable income, but those workers in turn very quickly used that income in the local community to purchase, as I said, rent, food, clothing and other necessities. Besides benefiting lower-paid workers, it stimulated a great deal of economic activity for local small businesses. In fact, the people who benefited second were local small businesses because, increasingly, they saw people coming into their stores, their shops and their restaurants with a little more disposable income to make more purchases. That was the overwhelming result as confirmed by studies in the United States.

It stands to reason that someone who works for the minimum wage is not going to take their \$1-an-hour or \$1.50-an-hour increase and go on a vacation in Florida. They can't afford it. They're not going to go out and buy an expensive foreign car. They can't afford it. They're not going to salt the money away into an RRSP or an investment plan somewhere. They can't afford it. They spend almost all of their increase in income in the local community and they do it almost immediately, and that generates a lot more economic activity and benefits small business in the community to a great extent. That's why New Democrats say it is time now, after freezing the minimum wage for eight and a half years, to increase the minimum wage to \$8 an hour.

I say to my Liberal colleagues, who say they would increase it to \$8 an hour by the year 2007, that that would in fact result in a lower minimum wage than we have today, because when you further factor in inflation of about 2%, it substantially reduces people's incomes even more. So freezing it, as the Conservatives would do, is not the answer. Holding off an increase to \$8 an hour until 2007 is not an answer. People who work for the minimum wage need to have it increased to \$8 an hour now. It would benefit them and it would benefit the local economy.

Then we come to the issue of rent. This is also another public agenda that is very important, with this government's crippling of rent controls and with this government's refusal to build or participate in any way in the construction of new affordable housing. We have seen, not just in our major cities like Toronto, Ottawa or Hamilton, but in virtually all urban areas now in the province, a substantial escalation in rents for one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments such that we literally have an affordable housing crisis in not just the large cities but in many smaller cities like Guelph or Peterborough or other cities like that.

This can't continue. If we want people to participate in the economy, if we want them to be available for work, if we want them to be available for training, if we want them to be available for education, then as a starting point, as an absolute necessity as a starting point, people have to have a secure roof over their head. I defy any of the Conservative members to try to organize their life for work, for training, for education or for anything else if

you don't have a roof over your head, if you don't have a permanent address, if you don't have a phone where you can call your employer or call potential employers. But across this province, we are seeing more people who cannot, do not, have affordable housing, or we're seeing all kinds of families that are one paycheque away or one rent bill away from losing the housing they have now, and that is simply not proper. That is not, by anyone's measure, acceptable justice, an acceptable accommodation in our society.

New Democrats are committed to not only ensuring that there is affordable housing and supportive housing for the homeless, but ensuring that we have an ongoing affordable housing strategy for all those people across Ontario who deserve to have government support and government participation in looking after this necessity of life.

I want to outline very clearly that what we need to have is, first, a two-year rent freeze. Rents are already too high. We cannot afford to see them escalate any further. Rents must be frozen for at least a period of two years.

Following that, we need the re-creation of real rent control in this province so that people can be sure that they will not be gouged with excessive increases in the future. Then we need the province, with municipalities and, yes, the Liberals in Ottawa, to recreate a partnership for the construction of affordable housing across this province, not-for-profit housing so that the housing which private developers will not build will in fact be built publicly through a public partnership which looks after this most important necessity.

New Democrats are committed to that. It makes good financial sense.

1620

I want to talk about the issue of child care. If you go out into the city of Toronto or you go to any city, any town, and many rural areas in this province and you talk to younger parents and you ask them, "What is the thing which you worry about or you're concerned about the most?" what they will overwhelmingly tell you is, "The availability of affordable, reliable, safe, regulated child care." This is a government that says, "We want everyone to work. We want everyone to participate in the economy." But if you have young children and you want to participate in the economy, this issue of child care must be looked after.

The province of Quebec, immediately to the east of us, a number of years ago implemented a strategy of providing affordable, reliable, safe, regulated child care for working families in that province. In Quebec, they provide regulated child care for \$5 a day. We recognize in Ontario, given that there have been no investments in child care in this province for the last eight years, we could not do the \$5-a-day child care. But we've done the numbers and we can certainly afford to implement \$10-a-day child care across this province so that parents will know that their children are being properly looked after in a good environment, in a positive environment, where

they are safe and where it is affordable in a regulated regime.

In addition, we are committed to providing 20,000 new child care spaces—20,000 new child care spaces—in the first four years so that those parents who are waiting in line now for child care will finally have access to affordable, reliable, regulated child care.

There are a number of other issues I want to deal with. I want to mention pensions. We see from the throne speech that the government thinks the answer to people's retirement, the answer to people having secure incomes as they wish to leave the workforce, is to simply do away with the retirement age and force people to work longer and harder for less. This government's image seems to be having people working into their 70s.

The real issue out there is—and it doesn't matter where you are in Ontario—people want to retire earlier. Most people, if they could, would like to retire before 65, at age 60; if possible, at age 59 or 58. In fact, I remember the Conservatives amending the RRSP rules governing members of the Legislature so some of them could tap their pension plans at age 55. It seems that the Conservative members of the Legislature want their pensions set up so they can tap into them at age 55, but for other people in the world they want to bring in legislation which postpones retirement to past 65.

Pushing people to work longer and harder in life for less is not the answer. The answer is to reform Ontario's pension legislation to ensure that vesting happens earlier. The first day you go to work is the day your pension should vest, to ensure that when people have to move from one employer to another their pension travels with them—pension portability—and finally, to ensure that we start to create some inflation protection for people's pensions.

I know the Conservatives and, yes, the Liberals will say, "Oh, you can't do that." Other provinces are doing it now. Quebec vests pensions on day one. There is full portability for pensions in Quebec from day one, and a number of other jurisdictions have begun to move toward inflation protection or at least partial inflation protection for people's pensions. That is what the agenda should be, not setting up the tables so that people are forced to work into their late 60s and early 70s.

Put in place decent pension legislation so that more people can have multi-employer pension plans and those multi-employer pension plans can be protected by the insurance fund; more people can have vesting, portability and inflation protection. That's the agenda people want to see, not working longer and harder for less. It is that pension reform that New Democrats are committed to—now more than ever.

Conservatives and Liberals will say, "Oh, New Democrats can't do this." They will say, "This can't be done." Well, I have set out very clearly in our plan how we would pay for the Public Power agenda. I said very clearly that from 1993 until 2000, corporations in this province were making very healthy profits. They had no trouble paying their corporate taxes and then having very

healthy profits beyond that. So we would restore corporate taxes to the level they were at between 1993 and 2000. That would provide us with a substantial amount of money to be able to implement some of the progressive, positive Public Power reforms that I've outlined here today.

We actually took our plan and submitted it to an independent economist. I would recommend that Liberals do the same and I would recommend that Conservatives do the same. The independent economist came back to us and said, "Given the positive and progressive tax changes that you're prepared to make, given the priorities that you've set out, your program is certainly affordable. It will result in balanced budgets. In fact, in some years it will actually result in modest surpluses."

The only way the Conservatives' so-called budget plan makes sense is if they sell Hydro One again this year, though they don't want to admit that it's Hydro One; they just admit that there's a \$2-billion hole in their budget. It's the same \$2-billion hole they had last year. Last year they proposed selling off Hydro One. They know that is a very unpopular idea out there with the public, so they just don't want to admit that it's Hydro One. But it's very clear when you read the fine print that there's a \$2-billion hole in their budget and the only way they would find that money would be to sell off Hydro One.

I had a chance to watch the Liberal leader on Focus Ontario when he was confronted by Mr Graham Richardson, who said, "You know, your numbers don't add up," and the Liberal leader, Mr McGuinty, said, "Yeah, we're a few billion off." So I challenge the Liberals: take your so-called plan and submit it to an independent financial analysis, an independent economic analysis, and then come clean with the people of Ontario. Don't pretend that you can reinvest in health care, reinvest in education, reinvest in protecting the environment, yet maintain all of those corporate tax cuts and all of those individual tax cuts that the Conservatives implemented, up to and including the year 2001. It cannot be done. That's why the Conservatives have a \$2-billion hole in their budget and why the Liberals are at least \$3 billion off as well.

Let me just conclude by saying this: I spend a lot of time going to small communities, large communities, rural communities and First Nation communities in this province. The overwhelming message I hear, no matter where you go in this province—you can even hear this message on Bay Street—is that it is time to start re-investing in the things which matter most in people's day-to-day lives. Everyone in this province recognizes that we must provide health care for our citizens. It's not a choice; it's not a frill; it is just a reality of life that we must provide health care for our citizens. Everyone recognizes that we must provide a good level of education for our children; that safe, clean drinking water is important; that protecting the environment is important; that, especially in cities, having a good system of

public transit is important. All of these things are unavoidable.

1630

The agenda that the Conservatives have mapped out is to say, "Oh, we'll cut your taxes and you can buy these things privately." But the experience of hydro privatization is this—what's the difference between public non-profit electricity and private profit-driven electricity? The difference is, when you privatize, the hydro bill doubles. That is equally true of health care and it's equally true of education, and it's equally true of a number of other services that we must have in our life.

The reality is that for many of these essential services, the most cost-effective way, the most efficient way, the fairest way to provide these services for our people, to ensure that they're available, is to do it through a public, not-for-profit system where we all make a modest contribution through our taxes but what we get individually and what we get together as a society in terms of quality of service is far greater than the modest contribution that we're called upon to make.

New Democrats have fought for that principle for a number of years. We continue to fight for that principle and we are dedicated to implementing that principle now and in the future in this province. That is the vision that this province deserves, that is the vision and direction that this province needs now, and New Democrats are pleased and proud to be able to put it before the people of Ontario.

I say to the Conservatives and I say to the Liberals, let's call the election. Let's have people make their choice. Let people make their decision.

And I say to people across Ontario, your vote is your say. If you want a private world where you pay more and get less, the Conservatives will certainly deliver it and they'll deliver it quickly. The Liberals will certainly deliver it as well; they'll just be a little slower about it.

New Democrats are committed to those essential public services that we all need, and we're committed to providing them publicly in a not-for-profit way which is affordable and reliable for all of us.

Call the election. Let's let the people of Ontario have their say.

The Deputy Speaker: Funny how things seem like they were at this place a while ago.

Further debate?

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): It gives me great pleasure to stand up and speak on the throne speech debate. I will say this about our previous speaker, the leader of the third party: Mr Hampton, if nothing else, is consistent and very clear about his policy, unlike the people across the aisle.

I would like to say that this throne speech sets a very clear direction for this province. This throne speech is a follow-up to the budget that clearly outlined what this government is in the process of doing in committing the funds that are required for the proper, good and conscientious management of the taxpayers' dollars in this province.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member talks about a budget. I haven't seen a budget in the House. Can he please elaborate what he is talking about?

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Spina: There was a budget speech delivered, and furthermore it was tabled with the Clerk's office when this House resumed, and therefore it is an official document as of last week. Furthermore, there are bills that will be introduced regarding the various tax measures and commitments that were made by this government, some of which I would like to elaborate upon. Furthermore, I would like to say what they were, in particular when they affect my constituents of Brampton.

There were 17 tax cuts for seniors, businesses and wage earners. Most particularly, what we had was a tax cut that was committed to for seniors who have paid for many years in support of the education system and who said, "We need a break." We heard these people. We listened. We chose to give them a break on the taxes they pay toward the education system. These retired people, on fixed income in particular, are the ones who are going to benefit from this tax break. The issue here is, they have contributed to education for so many years and they now deserve a break.

We will be introducing legislation to allow seniors to retire at the time of their choosing. The leader of the third party indicated that he felt it was unfair to force people to work beyond the age of 65. The reality is that I've had constituents, as I'm sure you have, who have come to me and said, "You know what? I want to work. I'm able to work for an extra couple of years. I still have children in university. I want to be able to help them through school and I can't do it on a fixed income. Therefore, it would really be appreciated if I could work beyond the age of 65, if I am capable." We intend to ensure they have the right of choice.

With respect to people who work in various sectors—teachers, other professionals, police officers, firefighters, people even in the corporate sector—they are working within the proper environment of a good, solid collective agreement that entitles them to a particular retirement age and a set of factors that influences the age at which they can retire.

Let's look at teachers for a moment. I'm proud to be the husband of a public high school teacher who will have the opportunity to retire with the 85 factor, which is a combination of age and years of seniority. I'm very pleased to know that that is clearly set within the collective bargaining agreement with the teachers' pension plan, and incidentally, with teachers, with assistance from the provincial government in allowing that opportunity to be created by lowering that factor from 90 to 85.

Providing a special benefit to meet the unique needs of children requiring a helping hand: one of the elements that was committed to was funding for special education to expand the programs that are already working fairly well in the province, but need to be expanded because we have growth in population but also because we have

expanded the identification of children with special needs. Once you expand the ability of the boards to identify children with special needs, you must be able to follow through and deliver the services to help with children of special needs.

We are looking to increase the Ontario disability support program payments. This is important to help people with disabilities lead happier, more productive and more dignified lives. We know, it is clear, that we froze the welfare rates, but we also did one very important thing in this province: we separated the disabled from the welfare rolls. When the welfare rate was reduced by 21%, the disabled people were not touched; they did not suffer any decrease in their income. However, that being said, we have inflation in our society and therefore it is important to recognize that there is an increased cost of living. As a result of that, we want to make sure they also are able to cope with that increased cost of living. Therefore, they will have an increase in their disability payments.

1640

We're introducing a more comprehensive approach to Ontario's energy sector. The minister spoke very eloquently in the last few days on increasing Ontario's energy sector, increasing the supply, creating an integrated conservation plan and ensuring that pricing will continue to be stable.

We've announced a comprehensive rural strategy that is aimed at addressing the concerns raised by people in rural communities. The Minister of Education today very clearly addressed the question that was posed to her regarding the top-up funding for rural schools, particularly single-school communities in this province where that school acts not just as a school, but as an overall community centre. It's important that the specific rules surrounding the funding formula for schools and their utility factor be modified to address the single-school communities.

In health care, we pledge to help hospitals deal with SARS-related backlogs. There's a compensation package announced by Minister Clement for workers and other people who are impacted by SARS, and to help protect and promote our economy there's the investment in public relations advertising, particularly in the great campaign that's been launched to make sure Toronto is once again one of the leading cities in the world.

We are looking to engage Ontario's health professionals in developing the guaranteed waiting times for things such as general surgery, cataract procedures, cancer treatment and MRIs. One of the things I'm very happy to announce is the expansion of the cataract surgery program that Minister Clement is implementing. Being the son of a 78-year-old mother, I'm very proud of the fact that other seniors will now have the ability to engage and get more cataract procedures provided to them under the OHIP program.

We're launching an aggressive nurse recruitment and retention program, breaking down barriers faced by nurse practitioners to expand their numbers and the range of services they're able to provide. Last week I spoke

briefly with a nurse practitioner who is very excited about the changes and the expansion of the program that would allow her to be a better health care deliverer in this province, and not be limited so much under the direction of a particular physician, but rather allowing her the opportunity to be a nurse practitioner in the full sense she should be entitled to be and that she is capable of doing to provide better services for the patients in that community.

We're improving access to doctors by increasing the number of international medical graduates trying to practise in Ontario by 20%. My honourable colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, who is the son of an immigrant and whose wife is a practising physician, very much welcomes this initiative. He's lobbied hard for it. Raminder Gill has worked very hard to try to expand this program to increase the number of international medical graduates so that they can practise in Ontario with clear-cut guidelines to provide expanded services for doctors, but also in addition to that, to make sure they don't have to completely redo the whole program where they have gone through their educational process in a different environment, but whose standards are equal to or as good as Ontario's.

We are looking to provide free tuition for current and future medical school students who agree to practise in underserved areas or join family health networks. I cite a couple of specific examples. The two medical schools have been announced and are on the road to being opened in both Sudbury and Thunder Bay. Speaking as a native of Sault Ste Marie, I'm really pleased and proud that we finally—I know my colleague from Sault Ste Marie, Tony Martin, is pleased—now have medical schools and training schools in northern Ontario. Once these students go to those schools, they will understand and appreciate the great lifestyle of northern Ontario and will be able to stay there and be a member of the northern community.

But just as important as that, we have many students from northern Ontario. I know colleagues of mine, kids that I grew up with who were bright enough to become good, solid professional doctors, went to medical school in southern Ontario and they never came back to the north. That's a pity because we have a lot of bright students in northern Ontario who, if given the opportunity to stay in northern Ontario to get an education, to get a job, we know would stay there.

We are looking to invest about \$6.5 million to support the Electronic Child Health Network North, and that allows more remote medical services to be provided to these patients.

In addition, we know there are systems that are operating now that are very successful. The Family Health Network, for example, which is a pilot project in various parts of the province, was modeled after the Algoma Health Unit in Sault Ste Marie, which has been there for—what, Tony, 30 years maybe? That family health unit, I must say, is the most successful deliverer of service in health care to its patients that I've seen any-

where. You have a group of dedicated health care practitioners. It astounded me for years why this model was never adopted anywhere else in the province, and I'm very happy to see that this particular model will be adopted and will be expanded in this province, particularly with the co-operation of the medical profession.

I'm going to take this last couple of minutes to talk about some of the ramifications of both the budget initiatives and the throne speech, in particular to my home riding of, well, not just Brampton Centre but Brampton in general.

We are very pleased that we will be building, or are in the process of building, a new hospital at Bramalea Road and Bovaird Drive. The leader of the third party roundly criticizes the process that we follow. In fact, I know he mentioned in his speech that Brampton was the system that they "would put a stop to."

I want to make it very clear to the residents of Brampton that the NDP stated very clearly that because this is a P3 project, they would put a stop to the process. That means the shovel that will likely be going in the ground in about three weeks would be stopped. Rather than having a hospital opening in two years, they would likely be caught up in legal entanglements for at least five, and I doubt that we would see a hospital in Brampton for another five or 10 years.

Just as it was committed by the minister of the day, by the Liberals in 1990—I think it was Minister Caplan. The approval for the new hospital was on her desk. She didn't sign it when Premier Peterson dropped the writ and, as a result, when the NDP took power, Brampton was left in the wilderness—a growing city, now 300,000-plus, with a small hospital of 375 beds. We did not benefit from the largesse that Windsor did, which had a smaller population and had as many as four or five hospitals. They decried the fact that they had not enough hospitals with a population of 200,000-plus or an area in Essex County of 300,000, and here we are, in Brampton, with 300,000 people and one single 375-bed hospital. Sixty per cent of our patients travel in order to get full and complete service.

This hospital will open. It's a \$350-million project; it's a 608-bed unit. It will be the largest community hospital—that is, non-teaching hospital—in this province and, furthermore, we are very pleased that Minister Clement announced that the current Brampton hospital will be redeveloped to have 112 complex continuing care beds, continue to have a modern emergency and ambulatory care centre, an eye institute, out-patient surgery and a comprehensive rehabilitation program.

1650

We are building over 1,100 new long-term-care beds in Brampton. Province-wide, this government has increased spending 7.3% in this year alone. That's \$1.9 billion; \$8 billion since 1995. I don't know where the cutbacks are that the opposition talks about; they are non-existent.

In education, the Peel Board of Education budget increased by over \$188 million since 1997, the year that

the student-focused funding model was introduced. The total budget is now \$857 million, which is a 22% increase. Why? We have the students; they deserve the funding to be able to go to school.

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board budget has had a \$169-million increase since 1997. Now it's at \$603 million, which is a 28% increase.

We've improved the new school capital funding formula in 1997, and helped to build or renovate more than 37 new schools in Brampton alone. That is a record. That is the most new construction and rehabilitation programs in the history of the Peel boards of education, in Brampton alone.

The Peel board is building 15 elementary and eight new high schools, creating space for over 10,400 students. The total funding for those schools exceeds \$105 million.

The separate board is building seven elementary and seven new high schools in Brampton alone, not in Peel, creating space for over 7,400 students. The total funding for these schools exceeds \$95 million.

This government is putting its money where its mouth is. We continue to have the balanced budget, and this is what we are all about. It is proper management and allocation of the taxpayer's dollar in a responsible manner, putting the money where it's needed. In 1995, drastic cuts were required to government spending because we were bleeding all over the place. We stopped the bleeding. We now have revenue that is unprecedented as a result of tax cuts. In addition to that, with that revenue we are allocating those dollars specifically where they are needed, where the people of Ontario wanted them: in health care, in education, in law enforcement. In Peel alone, we've hired 124 new officers this past year, and we're very proud that Chief Catney complimented this government for its support.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I listened to the member with some interest. I note that the member forgot to mention that this Conservative throne speech is really a "me too" document. It's a compilation of a great many Liberal ideas. For example my leader, Dalton McGuinty, pledged 1,000 more police officers in our Growing Strong Communities platform that we released. That's lifted right out of our platform. A number of other ideas, and you go on down the list—it clearly demonstrates time and again that this Conservative Party, this Eves-Harris government has run out of steam and run out of ideas so they're lifting ideas from Liberal platform pieces.

I want to comment on what the member was talking about with respect to health care. He forgot to mention that this is a government that shut down 20 emergency rooms in the province. This is a government that fired 1,000 nurses. This is a government that, in my riding, closed down the Northwestern General Hospital. It has not been reopened. In fact, the plans for restructuring have never been undertaken. We have a situation in my riding where health care services that ought to be de-

livered are not being delivered because this government has failed to move ahead.

When this member talks about what a wonderful job this government has done on health care, I remind him that your record is abysmal when it comes to health care. You have systematically reduced the ability of our health care system in Ontario to deal with a growing list of problems, and that's because you have run out of ideas, you have run out of steam, you are not acting in the interests of all Ontarians.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I am pleased to respond to the speech by the member from Brampton, who, yes, hails from Sault Ste Marie, a place that we both dearly appreciate and love, but we come at this job from two completely different perspectives. My perspective on the speech from the throne that we're debating here these days in this House is that this government has yet again missed another opportunity to say to the people of Ontario that they believe in them, they believe in their communities, they believe in the power of government to improve their lot in life and to improve the communities in which they live.

They have not done that, and they have not done that because they've chosen to give away the revenue that government generates by way of its tax system. It was interesting to hear the member say that they were actually increasing revenue for government by giving tax breaks. That in itself is a misnomer. I believe this government has missed eight years of opportunity, good economic times that generated revenue for this government in record amounts that they then in turn gave away to those in our communities who needed it the least when they could have taken that money, literally billions of dollars, and invested it in good community programs, in education and health care that would have served all of us for years to come.

The member speaks of a medical school in northern Ontario, which we all dearly anticipate with great expectation, except that, like everything else they do, they have embroiled it in great chaos and difficulty. We hear today that it won't in fact be built on time or opened on time, that it will be another year before we see that. That's not unexpected from this government.

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I certainly enjoyed the presentation made by the member from Brampton Centre, just an excellent summary of the throne speech.

The member from York South-Weston made reference to the 1,000 police officers being copied from their platform. We already put in the 1,000 they're talking about some five years ago. We're moving on to another 1,000, for a total of 2,000 officers. I bring to his attention the fact that when we brought in those 1,000 five years ago, they voted against it; so a typical flip-flop of what happened.

And he was a little confused about the closed hospital beds. That happened in the 10 lost years. That happened when only two hospitals were built in Ontario. The member from Brampton Centre was making reference to

building one there, and I'm pretty proud that in my riding, during my term of eight years, we've built two hospitals, one that was opened some three years ago and another one that will be opened this fall. That's two in one riding, while in 10 years they only built two in the province of Ontario.

I'm so pleased to hear the member from Brampton Centre speaking about his hospital and how proud he is of it. I'm rather disappointed to hear how the Liberals dragged their feet and wouldn't sign before they called an election, and then when the NDP came along, for their five lost years here in Ontario, they cancelled that construction. Then they talk about health care and their vision. It's a vision to close beds like they did, it's a vision to pull the spade out of the ground and not allow a hospital to be built. I'm so pleased for the member from Brampton Centre. I know how I feel about the hospitals being built in my riding and I'm certainly thrilled that he is experiencing that same kind of thing, that he can look forward to that grand opening in a couple of years' time, to cut a blue ribbon.

1700

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): There are two things I'd like to get the member's comments on further, because he didn't have enough time in his speech to deal with them. One is the virtual orgy of blatant, self-serving, self-congratulatory political advertising that his government is engaging in, because I know when he ran as a candidate, first of all, he was interested in ensuring that there was not anything in the way of a bad expenditure of money. When you run on that particular platform of wanting to save money—we now have television ads you can't miss. There have to be two or three an hour. The Premier, I understand, is now going to go on the US stations and broadcast back into Ontario, knowing the Buffalo and Detroit stations are watched back in Ontario. He's going to do an intro and the end of the SARS one. We have radio ads going on now extolling the virtues of your virtual budget that happened at the Magna plant. We have full-page newspaper ads. We have pamphlets arriving on your doorstep virtually daily.

So I ask the member whether he thinks that can be justified—because I know he's a person who believes that his government particularly, that ran on a platform of not abusing public office or the taxpayers—whether he believes that this orgy of government advertising is appropriate.

Second, I heard him playing down the significance of West Nile virus for the people of Ontario. I want him to correct me if he can. He talked about more people being killed in car accidents than would die of the West Nile disease. I note that Dr Neil Rau, who is an expert in this field—and I think is from his general part of the province, Mississauga and Brampton area—said that the Ontario government was actually hiding information last summer on the West Nile virus and how serious it was.

So I hope the member will be able to address those two items.

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

Mr Spina: I always listen with respect to the member from St Catharines. It's always interesting. If this government is engaged in an orgy of advertising, you must have had five full years of that, because five years of Liberal government was 10 years too long. I remember the honourable member on his Ministry of the Environment ads. Not only did they try to give a message; he had his picture in it. Why would we be interested in the minister's picture in the Ministry of the Environment ads? That was another orgy of Liberal advertising spending.

On the other issue, I'd be happy to clarify the record. West Nile is an important and worrisome element in this society, just as SARS is. It's important that we remain diligent. It's important that the government is diligent. We do not trivialize it, because we should all be diligent, wary and cautious. We live in a global economy and there's an opportunity for us to be exposed to all kinds of different things. That's why it is important for us as citizens in this province to make sure that we have good screening processes, good protective processes and good educational information from the ministry, from the government to allow the citizens to take proper precautions when we are out in the community.

Interjections.

Mr Spina: No, I don't want to be shushed on that. Thank you very much.

But we're very happy to know that the criticism was to the WHO. We have 2,000 people killed in car accidents in this province. Why didn't they issue a ban on driving? That's how silly their ban on Toronto was. That's what I wanted to correct.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Windsor-St Clair.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I will be sharing my time with the member for Parkdale-High Park.

I want to take the brief amount of time that I have to first of all address what a throne speech is, what it should be, its parliamentary context and then try, again in the brief time I have, to share some thoughts about the throne speech before us.

A throne speech sets out the plan a government has for a session of parliament. It's an ancient parliamentary ritual, one that goes back to the beginnings at Westminster. It's one that historically, and by our own standing orders, precedes a budget. The government lays out its agenda, then it brings in a budget. Now this throne speech was brought in in this House amid great fanfare. They brought out the calèche that hadn't been used in some 20 years, as I understand it, to bring His Honour to the Legislature.

They did the speech here in the House, but unfortunately they had done something they called a budget in Brampton. They laid out a series of ideas that were supposed to define this government. I read the speech, I attended the speech and I reviewed it, and I share the

views of several columnists who said there was certainly no vision in it. It was a grab bag of different things. I think one columnist referred to it as something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue. Many of the ideas contemplate the spending of money, yet they weren't contained in the budget speech. So we had a document tabled in this House that had a grab bag of promises, some which make some sense and some which were lifted from our policy documents. Mandatory retirement, for instance, was taken from Mr Colle's private member's bill. A number of other ideas, like the thousand police officers was taken from Dalton McGuinty. It really wasn't a visionary document, so I'm wondering will we be getting a platform or a campaign document sometime in the next two weeks? The speculation is that they will move to ban teachers' strikes. We will oppose that because that, among the other desperation, Hail Mary passes if you will, is from a government that's on its last legs, a government that has no vision, no new ideas, is stale and is tired.

The Minister of Education ought to be very careful as their party proceeds notionally on the idea of banning teachers' strikes, as should the Premier. The Premier has said many things over many years, many things on clips about that very issue. So it would have been nice to have seen a throne speech that actually had a vision, but this had no vision. Instead, they fell back to their old, right-wing, non-tested, ideologically based ideas that aren't selling.

Interjection.

Mr Duncan: The former judge for Ottawa, Mr Guzzo, has a big mouth that can be heard from here and down the Ottawa Valley, but I tell you, Mr Watson will put him in his place in very short order, I would suggest. We welcome yet another Conservative who has come to the fold on this side of the House. It means Guzzo's gone. He will not know what hit him when this thing's done, and that's because this government lacks vision, it lacks ideas.

They're back to the old rhetoric about tax cuts working. I love to hear them talk about the 208 tax cuts. Well, you know what we did? We went back and we looked at those tax cuts, and something like 190 of them were for businesses; they weren't for average Ontarians. If you were someone who owned a racetrack and produced motion pictures and made more than a million dollars a year, I would expect you to vote Tory. You'd be absolutely crazy not to, because that's what this has been all about. It's been about their friends, it's been about a narrow, ideological agenda that even the Premier himself seemed to renounce immediately after the leadership. But then he came back. Now he's back to the Common Sense Revolution. We don't know where he's going to be next week, we really don't.

There was no vision in the throne speech. We have not seen an election document, and we're looking forward to that in the next two weeks.

Interjection: We don't have an elected Premier.

Mr Duncan: We don't even have an elected Premier, that's right. He hasn't been elected by anybody. So we're looking forward to an election. We'll be reviewing a number of issues, some of which were in the platform, some of which were in the speech from the throne, some of which, presumably, the government will be introducing in the next day or so. But it's lacking a vision, and at its core that's what a throne speech ought to be. This is a grab bag.

1710

They're very nervous over there. They're jumpy. They're edgy. We understand that we're going to hear more about—

Interjection.

Mr Duncan: The Minister of Education likes to heckle. The Minister of Education, who is on the record as supporting the teachers' right to strike, is about to flip-flop. We know that. It'll be interesting seeing her defend her past statements versus what they are going to campaign on in the next couple of weeks; it will be very interesting. We're looking forward to that election.

So this document lacked substance, it lacked ideas. The only good ideas were taken right from Dalton McGuinty. Those were the only ones, and we've urged them to pass. My colleague Mr Bartolucci, his bill has been lifted. That is an important thing to keep in mind.

Interjections.

Mr Duncan: I think I've struck a nerve with Mr Guzzo.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): You have.

Mr Duncan: I think I have, as has Mr Watson.

Interjection.

Mr Duncan: I'm sorry, his Honour Justice Guzzo. Is that the proper term, "His Honour"? Well, His Honour is about to meet, as I say, Mr Watson. We'll have Mr Watson to deal with and we'll look forward to that.

People in Ontario know. They're not going to be cowed by this government's lack of vision, its twisting of statistics, its factual inaccuracies, defending a record that, frankly, is indefensible. We need to return and restore our vital public services: health care, education, the environment. Most importantly, we need a change, real change, change that lays out a carefully costed platform and delivers a balanced budget. This government that prides itself on being—what is it they call themselves?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Fiscally responsible.

Mr Duncan: Fiscally responsible. The only way they can balance their budget this year is by selling off \$2.2 billion of our assets. The Dominion Bond Rating Service says that, not me.

The debt: guess which government, next to Bob Rae's government, has added more debt to Ontario's balance sheet than any other? Which one was that? The Harris-Eves government. A net increase of approximately \$16 billion. In effect, they borrowed their tax cuts and they didn't equitably distribute them—absolutely.

So this is a failed government that lacks vision, that lacks a leader, that lacks a meaningful agenda. They will

attempt a Hail Mary pass in the next few weeks, if they have the guts to call an election. They will find those wedge issues, but I say to you that the people of this province can see through them. The people of this province can see through desperation. The people of the province will reject a wedge issue platform.

Hon Mr Stockwell: They haven't yet.

Mr Duncan: No, they haven't. That's why we want you to call an election. So let's get it on. Let's have this thing on. Let's go at it. Let's take it out of here.

In conclusion, we need real change in this province. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals offer a new vision that's carefully planned out, carefully costed, that's for the people of Ontario, that will deliver meaningful change, take education out of the hands of wreckers and put it into the arms of builders, take health care away from those who would privatize it and make it less available and have people committed to the principles of public medicare, managing a system that has served this province and this country well throughout its 40 years of existence.

They want a government that will restore economic and environmental confidence. This party, this Liberal Party led by Dalton McGuinty, will do that. It has laid out a plan to do so, a plan that has been costed carefully. We'll balance the budget and give Ontarians back a government they can be proud of again.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is my pleasure to join the debate and to follow the member from Windsor, who I think has aptly put the context for this. It doesn't in fact have any of the drive or energy you would expect from a sitting government, a sitting government that gave itself 138 days to prepare for this session, 138 days to wind up and see what it had left to offer the people of this province. At least we used to see in past throne speeches some huffing and some puffing, some effort. Instead, this is the last wheeze from this government, barely getting out what it is they might have left to stand for.

We know the context for this. We saw this. We saw a government that thought it would be exultant that they were going to do all kinds of things, finding out, in sad example after example, the shortcomings of its own agenda. They tried to get rid of their last leader. They got rid of him. They've replaced him. They're tinkering. They move this way and that, but this throne speech doesn't summarize for the people of this province any kind of future that they would want to have a part in. Is this really, in fact, anything close to the best that Ontario can be? Does it have anything to offer the people of this province in terms of some hope for a future that they would really want to be part of?

Sadly, it isn't. It is instead in service, as most of the instruments of government at the provincial level are, of a party seeking re-election. This is the nimblest, the best they can put together in the service of themselves. It's really the only way to understand this particular document and this apparent direction. We don't have from this government a vigorous agenda, even for the

short eight weeks it says—possibly pretends—we might be in this House. There are not enough bills or initiatives that require our full attention, yet the people of this province do need our attention, do need energy coming from elsewhere.

Let me give you a quick review of what could have been in the throne speech. There could have been a commitment from a government that was going to make public education work to improve the test scores on standardized tests such that 75% met the provincial standard, from around 50% or 55% today. There could have been a word coming from this government in this throne speech. There could have been a commitment to stop giving up too early on students in school and commit to have 16- and 17-year-olds be engaged in learning in programs that could work for them. There could have been a message sent to every set of parents in this province that their young children would not get lost in the crowd, that instead they would be in classes of 20 where they could get immediate attention to their needs, their potentials and perhaps their challenges at a time that would help them and, frankly, do a good thing for the people of this province by saving the money that we'll have to pay later on.

There could have been a speech to tell plainly and clearly to the people of this province that our practice of dependence on coal-fired generation has been wrong, has been misplaced. Instead, it could have said clearly that by 2007 we can do something exact, precise and measurable and that is to close those coal-fired plants. But that would have taken a throne speech from a different government, from a Liberal government, the same government that would have said 15% more doctors would have been trained in this province, and 8,000 full-time nurses of the kind that would have helped us to deal with the stress and the strain of the SARS crisis that is still with us. It would have been plain incredible about setting maximum waiting times because it wouldn't have come from a government, this time, borrowing from this side of the aisle, but from a government that said four years ago that radiation treatment will be available within four weeks. How many patients have that available to them today? Just 31% of patients needing radiation treatment are getting it within the four weeks that this government now, at the end of its tenure, at the end of its leash, would propose to have available.

We could have sent a signal to our embattled cities. We could have said this is a government that isn't going to aggrandize everything unto itself and would share 2% of the gas tax to make sure that transportation and a turnaround, in terms of liveability, of cities could start to happen. But those things aren't in the throne speech.

The things that are are awfully telling, particularly when this government turns to specific subjects like education. Where are the solutions? Where is the energy, the roll-up-the-sleeves hard work to give people confidence back in the schools we have in this province? The language in this speech is very telling. It says that in the past some schools were privileged. That language

does aptly tell us what this government did about that. They pulled all the schools down. They felt that some schools conferred too many advantages on their students. So this government's response to that was to break down some of the existing system and pull everybody down to a lower standard. That's perhaps one of the few lines in this speech that aptly and accurately conveys where this government is coming from when it has to do with education. It still tries to exhort the value of some of its reforms, and I would recommend to people the study done by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, which looked at the merits of what the government has been attempting these last seven and eight years as they have poked and prodded people in the education system. They said that the implementation is so poorly done that students in Ontario are worse off than they would have been if it hadn't been attempted at all.

1720

This comes from a government that now, late in its mandate, after closing nearly 100 rural schools, after not giving Avon Maitland and a whole range of parts of the province any access to rural funding—in Oxford, for example, only after we raised the issue in this House about southern Ontario schools in rural settings getting access to the fair kind of funding that would allow them to be treated properly did a small amount of money appear. But we didn't have the member from Oxford, we didn't have the members of this House, standing up on behalf of their schools and saying, "We need to have this fair treatment. This one-size-fits-all formula doesn't work in Oxford county." We didn't get that.

Instead, we have had 400 public schools off the official roster the government keeps on its Web site, 200 more private schools—and we know how to gauge and how to measure the intensity and the sincerity of the government when it comes to public schools. They put in this speech, as they equivocate back and forth—do they want to be known for something, do they not want to be known for something—about their private school tax credit. This is a government that would divert \$500 million into private schools with no conditions. Any person with five children can access \$3,500 of public funds for each of those kids, any single one. This is what this government is going to offer. It doesn't say in this throne speech or anywhere else that 70% of that money is going to end up in private schools, not in religious schools, and in fact they aren't the primary beneficiaries.

What is very troubling is that this government forced itself to appoint a commission—Dr Rozanski—and we see now where this government is coming from. It's got to be a crushing disappointment for people out there who hoped that maybe even this government could be forced to do what was necessary for the children of this province. Instead of seeing the real dollars and the real commitment to policy change that Dr Rozanski is looking for, in fact the \$854 that Dr Rozanski said, he caught this government. He actually has identified specifically in every area where students have been made to pay for the other priorities of this government. The

government pretends in this speech that that job is done. That means that less than \$300 is going to find its way back into the essential education services that these students need. That means that they will go without. There will not be any funding to put back the 15,000 teaching positions this government has cut that used to be available to help kids in their classrooms, in their libraries, with music and with phys ed. There is no funding for children in poverty. Not one dime has been committed as recommended by Dr Rozanski—none for English as a second language to help kids in our cities do the fundamental things they need to do to get ahead, which is to learn language, a service that most boards that are heavily engaged in it say has been cut by a half or two thirds.

Most of the money needed for transportation reform is not coming from this government; in fact, 80% of it has not been committed to. There is no money to repair schools even though the Rozanski report says there is a \$5.6-billion backlog in our schools. The Nativity school, in one of the members' ridings opposite, has met over and over with the Minister of Energy and asked him to be involved, to be engaged, has shown him the bathrooms, the washrooms, the things that are falling down in that school, and nothing's been forthcoming, and it's not in this throne speech. And it's not in the government's response on Rozanski that basically there is no money for computers, no money for the dollars that are missing in special ed. The government instead has used its money as this speech has been used: as an exercise in false hope, in self-promotion, in an attempt for re-election. Instead, the public interest has lost out.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions.

Mr Martin: It was interesting to listen to the two members of the Liberal Party challenge the government in terms of their throne speech and the lack of vision therein. As I said, they again point out the missed opportunity that was there over the last eight years to actually do something concrete and constructive in support of communities and some of the public services that we've seen deteriorate, particularly our health care system, our education system, and the ability of communities to look after infrastructure—water and sewer, for example—and the very terrible, tragic circumstances that we saw in Walkerton, which is a reflection of the diminishing investment that the province has continued to make in the public health of our communities and of the province.

When you take a look at what each of the parties, as we are now on the precipice of an election, has to offer in terms of vision for the province, there isn't really a whole lot of difference, in my view, in my purview of the presentation that has been made so far by the Liberals or the Conservatives. The only really clear commitment being made that is an alternative to what we've seen for the eight years around the province these days is the Public Power document platform that has been released by the New Democratic Party—our caucus and our party—that we're taking and very confidently sharing

with people in community after community across the province to show them what really could be done with the public money that is collected on their behalf if they had a government that was really committed to making government work, to creating healthy communities, to supporting every individual citizen who calls Ontario home, in their aspirations to have good schooling both at the elementary and secondary level and at the university level, to have good health care and to have communities that in fact work for them.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I appreciate that opposition members are here to oppose and be critical. I, myself, believe that the government and the administration—

Mr Duncan: Cansfield used to be a Tory.

Hon Mr Stockwell: She's a wonderful person; I like her quite a bit—have done a good job. I think that a million-plus jobs, 600,000 off welfare, has been a boon for this province: good prosperity, good growth, good investment, tax cuts—\$16 billion in tax cuts and \$16 billion in additional revenue.

I appreciate the fact that members opposite don't believe that the changes we made in the education system were good. I disagree. I have two children in the public school system in Toronto. My son is in grade 10 and my daughter is in grade 8, and I can tell you, from before we came into office until after we got elected, the changes I've seen have been excellent. Yes, it's more difficult; I don't deny it. My son himself has said that math is very difficult and I said to him, "You know what? It's supposed to be difficult. It's supposed to be tough and you're supposed to learn. You're supposed to develop skills to prepare you for university."

I've been to their schools on a number of occasions and I think they're well-run. I think the students are achieving at levels they had never achieved before. I think this government is expecting students to do better and they are doing better. I think the testing is proving that, because every year we test they do get better. I think if you're going to go and graduate from grade 12, there should be some obligation that you could pass a literacy test that a grade 10 student would be expected to pass. I don't think that's an unreasonable request to make of someone graduating out of grade 12. I know the opposition is there to criticize and I hear them criticize daily. But from an economic point of view, from a social welfare point of view, from an education point of view I believe, without a doubt in my mind, that in 2003 this province is infinitely better off than it was in 1995, when we came to power.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I want to express to my colleagues from Windsor-St Clair and Parkdale-High Park my gratitude to them for pointing out some of the things that are going to be brought to this province, and that's the theme: the change that's necessary. There are changes in the wind and we're going to get change and we're going to provide change. That's why my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and the Liberal caucus have come out with a plan much earlier than this government has and

we're quite prepared to govern Ontario in a very smart, manageable way.

I want to make a point about the fiscal responsibility of this government. Let me share with you a fact: seven days a week, 24 hours a day, \$75,000 an hour is being spent by this government on consultants—\$75,000 an hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The auditor said that \$660 million, up from \$230 million, is being spent by this government on trying to teach it how to manage this government. It doesn't know how to do it so it's spending that much money. Let me ask a favour; let me ask a favour of this government: would you please spend a few hours of that consultant time to try to save BCI, Brantford Collegiate Institute, in my riding, that's going to be condemned because your funding formula doesn't save it? Would you please do me a favour and stop closing the rural schools? Use a few hours of time to make sure that those schools in my riding—and the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, because I'll speak for him—don't get closed.

And how about those brownfields? They've put the regulations in now and they're not making any sense whatsoever. They're not giving us a dime on brownfields.

Why don't you use some of those hours to give Laurier Brantford—a campus that has not been given one dime of capital money. It's the only one in the province that has not been given a dime of money, yet we're still running this campus and we're going to have 700 students on campus next year. Why don't you use that? Why don't you stop perpetrating this on to the people of Ontario?

1730

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to say a few words in response to the speech from the Liberals across the aisle.

First, I want to say that as they started their presentation, they made a very good point: what a throne speech is to do, which is to outline the vision of the future for government and where the government believes we should be going in the next session and on into the future. I believe this throne speech does just that. I guess that's maybe the end of where I agree with their synopsis of what happened.

I think it's very important that we recognize where we've come from. They talk about their spending in their time in office and the fact that we came here with an \$11-billion deficit. That means their governments were spending \$11 billion a year more than they were taking in. Yes, I think everyone in 1995 agreed that that was not going to be solved in one year, that in fact we had to reduce the spending and increase the revenues in order to make ends meet. As we promised in the throne speech of 1995, we accomplished that at the end of that term.

We have now moved along and we have had five balanced budgets. We have paid down the debt by \$5 billion. We have created over a million new jobs in this province, in our economy. I think this is all good news.

But they are right: we need a vision of where we're going from here, and that's what the throne speech does.

I also think it's very interesting; we've heard a couple of comments from the Liberals who suggest there are some things in this throne speech that in fact they have suggested in the past that they would implement if they should form a government. I find that not hard to understand, because I don't think there is anything that the Liberals haven't promised at one time or another. So I don't find it hard to understand that right now we have something in here. But for those items that would be the same things they have promised at one time in the past, I would surely hope we can count on their support for that in this throne speech.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Windsor-St Clair has two minutes to respond.

Mr Duncan: I would like to say that Ontario's prosperity is due to the most productive workforce in the world, it is due to strong businesses and it is due to strong individuals.

I would submit to this government that yours is a record of lost opportunity. You took prosperity and squandered it, at the very time we could have been investing in public services, at the very time we could have been improving our schools and hospitals. At the only time in the last 30 years where government had revenues rolling in, you chose to give those surpluses away in tax cuts for the wealthy, and that is a mistake we will rue for many years to come.

I say to the government, your record on education betrays falling test scores. Your successes are not successes; your successes are mere rhetoric. There had to be change. All sides agreed to that. All sides proceeded on change. Now let's look at the test results and let's make sure our kids have enough teachers, enough textbooks and enough resources to learn the things they need to learn to make sure that this country and this province can continue to be the strongest economic engine in the western world.

It is the height of arrogance for the government to suggest that this province's success economically is a result of their policies. I would submit to the government that yours is a record of lost opportunity, broken promises and lack of real vision for the future.

But there is an opportunity in the next short while to change all that. There is an opportunity for real change, an opportunity to choose a government and a Premier that will no longer take credit for the achievements of our working families but will give those working families the supports they need to continue to be resourceful and productive and continue to make Ontario the best place in the world to live. For real change, I challenge the government: throw out the speech, call an election and let's let the people have a say.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair recognizes the member from Northumberland.

Hon Mr Galt: I was listening to the last speakers and I found them quite entertaining, especially the member

for Oxford who made reference that the Liberals had promised everything under the sun, so in the throne speech how could we possibly miss their claiming some items in there that they have already promised, thought of and committed to. They just keep going all over the place. The member from Oxford is absolutely right.

The member from Windsor-St Clair got ranting and raging, going on about missed opportunities. In the late 1980s, we had one of the biggest booms in the history of Ontario, not by their economic policies I can assure you, but because of the tremendous boom that was going on in the US. In spite of that, they still couldn't balance a budget. You look at the track record of our present Premier when he was Minister of Finance. He set in motion and got that turned around, that economic shift. It was in just terrible shape, but he turned around in a space like the Toronto harbour the great big ocean liner of economic chaos and ended up with a balanced budget, now balanced for four years and predicted in the budget for this year to be balanced once again. I think that is a phenomenal record, one that he should be very proud of and that our government can be proud of as well.

I was interested in the comments made by the member from Brant, concerned about \$75,000 an hour for consultants. I don't know where he got that figure. It's interesting that he pulled it out of the air, but I'll take it for granted that what he's telling us is reasonably accurate. I think of when we took office in 1995. Well over a million dollars an hour was being spent that was not being taken in. We had a budget at that time of under \$50 billion, with over an \$11-billion deficit, roughly \$11.3 billion, that we weren't taking in. Mr Speaker, what was happening was we were laying the debt on these young people sitting around you on the platform. They're the ones who are going to have to pay off that debt once they graduate from university and get into a working career. That's who we were dumping the debt on to, and you people were responsible for doing that.

Thanks to our present Premier, who was then Minister of Finance, we got that all turned around and it's now a balanced budget. But we went from a \$50-billion budget to now over a \$60-billion budget and it's still balanced, with some \$16 billion in tax cuts for people in Ontario. By cutting those taxes, we've stimulated the economy enough that over a million people, 1.15 million people, are now working in Ontario who weren't working eight years ago. With their revenue, with the taxes they're paying, with the gizmos they're buying and the sales tax etc, we've ended up with a \$16-billion increase in tax revenue here in Ontario, a proven success story.

I think our track record speaks for itself as you look back on what's been going on.

More recently, I'm so proud of the leadership of our party and our government when it comes to what happened with SARS. This is the first time a medical emergency has been signed, rolled out and used to protect the people in Ontario since 1867, since the founding of the province. It's the only time it's been used. We responded; our government, our minister, our

Premier responded within an hour of knowing what the crisis was and what was going on, and as you read and now find out the potential of that disease, it's probably saved a very large number of people's lives, possibly some right in this Legislature who might have succumbed to that, had that leadership not been there.

We have one phenomenal Premier in his ability to respond. That takes nothing away from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, who was right at the forefront, and also Dr D'Cunha and Dr Young, who showed phenomenal leadership in their job, in their role, and all of the medical community that responded—hospitals, nurses and physicians.

1740

We've seen other leadership, such as with the double cohort, and—it's way overdue—getting rid of grade 13. There was an attempt in the early 1980s, but it moved to OACs, not really getting rid of grade 13; it was just a change in name. We were the only country, the only province or jurisdiction that I know of, that had that extra year. When I went to veterinary college back in the fall of 1957—

Mr Guzzo: What year?

Hon Mr Galt: In 1957. It's a while ago. Most of my classmates were from other provinces. When it came to the end of that year there were over 20 who failed out, and most of them were from Ontario, many of them valedictorians in their local high schools. It wasn't students from other provinces with grade 12. So since the fall of 1957, I've been on a campaign to get rid of grade 13. It's finally happening. It's the right thing.

We've invested \$2.3 billion in new buildings and classrooms to handle this increased number of students. We've also increased the funding. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has said she will spend whatever is necessary to ensure that the professors and the schools and everything is in place to look after them. This is being third party. The various university professors are saying the same thing.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Galt: Well, they're laughing on the other side of the House, but they know. They've seen the quotes in the paper. They know what's going on.

Now, getting around to the throne speech, which is what this debate is about, I hear the opposition talk about a lack of vision. Maybe the vision should have been repeated in every other paragraph for simplicity, to assist them to follow what the vision is. The vision is all about stimulating the economy, stimulating it through tax cuts. We've had way over 200 tax cuts now since we've taken office compared to that lost decade when there were some 66 tax increases, devastating to the economy at the time. Now we've had all of these tax cuts, stimulated the economy, an extra \$16 billion in revenue coming in. That money now can be used to balance the budget and invest in education, invest in health care, invest in our other social programs.

This is a vision that is there. It's been a vision since we took office, and that vision is continuing with our present Premier.

I'm so pleased that in the throne speech there's a fair amount of talk about agriculture and what's going on in rural Ontario, that a rural strategy will be rolled out. This takes me back to the Premier's Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal that Premier Harris asked me to chair back in the spring of 2000. That is one of the recommendations that came out there: jump teams, economic development such as OSTAR-RED, the rural economic development portion of OSTAR. This rural strategy is going to be a vision for rural Ontario and, I think, very, very helpful not only to the ministry but to everyone who lives in rural Ontario.

Our Premier has a real concern about farmers and agriculture in rural Ontario. As a matter of fact, during the leadership campaign he mentioned it regularly. Shortly after he took office, he did have a round table with key farmers from around the province. They met in Guelph on June 6, and a lot of good information came from that.

We've also led with protecting the family farm from unionization. That was mentioned in the throne speech. We cannot afford to have strikes and/or lockouts on the family farm, because it's just logical, with the produce that's being produced, you just can't go and cut the grain or whatever crop whenever you please. There's only one or two days when it's ripe and at the right stage to go ahead and harvest.

There are also comments made in the throne speech as well as the budget about the Nutrient Management Act and how farmers are good stewards of the land, protecting our environment. Of course in any profession or trade you can find a few bad apples, and consequently the Nutrient Management Act has been brought in to assure the public that the land will be properly looked after as it relates to nutrients being applied to it.

All in all, I think some pretty good news was being rolled out there. Also if I could, just for a moment, for agriculture, reflect back on the budget speech that was delivered back in March, it made reference to farmers being able to have a farm card that they can take with them to stores, which will exempt them from the retail sales tax, something that they have been asking for for some time.

Also, it was made reference to in that budget—and of course it won't be long until we do debate budget bills etc, and that certainly will happen in these hallowed halls. One was exempting the land transfer tax when farmland is being exchanged between family members.

It also talked about an Ontario wine strategy. If I could just make reference to the tremendous evolution of the wine industry in Prince Edward county over the last five, six, maybe seven years, I believe there are some three wineries that are now in place in Prince Edward county. It's growing very, very nicely. It's going to assist tremendously in the tourism industry. My congratulations to those entrepreneurs and those pioneers in Prince

Edward County that are heading off into the vineyards and growing the wines, and also developing the brewing establishments and wineries.

Also in the budget was the cutting of capital tax rates by some 10%, introducing an additional 100% corporate income tax deduction for new investments in self-generation of electricity from alternative or renewable energy sources, including ethanol and biodiesel. Certainly, the production of ethanol from corn is a big boost for farmers, as it's my understanding that we're importing ethanol at this point. There's more demand than is being produced here. We look forward to producing more ethanol in the future.

There have been a few comments made, especially by the member from Brampton Centre, who was talking about his hospital and the fact they're starting now to build a new hospital in Brampton. I just want to reflect back for a few minutes, if I may, to when we were talking about health care and the hospital that's being built in west Northumberland, a 137-bed hospital to be opened on the first Friday in October for open house. It will be fully up and operational on October 22. It's on budget and on time. It's a bit of an exception to be on budget. It's actually \$1 million or so under budget. We have a tremendous board and overseers there that are looking after that hospital. I had the pleasure on Monday morning to be able to announce to my constituents that the provincial government would be funding the operation of their CT scanner. That will make this a truly state-of-the-art hospital for one that is that size. The community is pretty excited and pretty thrilled with what is evolving, and the fact that the new hospital—if you happen to be driving down 401, it's right on the cloverleaf, the Burnham Street exit, going into Cobourg. It's a very, very visible building, a very impressive structure, indeed. It's going to look after all of the municipalities in west Northumberland.

Then, just as the last election was being called, we were into construction in Quinte West at the Trenton Memorial Hospital site. A very significant wing, you might say, was being built for the rooms as well as surgery. The older part of the hospital is now under renovation to upgrade it for long-term care, radiology and some of the other areas.

A lot of good things are happening in health care. It's just unfortunate the opposition didn't recognize what is going on out there. During their combined term, for some 10 years, two hospitals were built in the province of Ontario, I'm told. They can prove me wrong, but my understanding is two hospitals. I understand there was one in Orangeville. I don't know where the other one was. Dear knows. I have no idea. But two in my riding have been built during the last eight years.

I think it was interesting and very brave, on the part of our government in the throne speech, to talk about wait times in our hospitals for things like general surgery, cataract procedures, cancer treatment and diagnostic MRIs. Of course the throne speech committed us to an additional 20 MRIs and another five CT scanners.

1750

There was a tremendous turnaround in our emergency rooms when we brought in the triage. I happened to have an unfortunate experience four years ago with a kidney stone. I went through that. They hustled me through pretty quickly, I can tell you, when I first went in with the kidney stone. When I went back for some routine X-rays, I sat back and had to wait for three or four other people who were obviously in more distress than I was at the time. It just makes so much sense.

I also think in terms of Telehealth, where people can phone in and get some indication of their need, whether they should be going to an emergency room or whether it's just something routine and not all that urgent. Those are the kinds of things that have been introduced that are new and innovative.

We're also looking at a very aggressive nursing recruitment program and assisting nurses with tuition. We've already been doing that for physicians if they'll go to underserviced areas. That's something that has been carried out by some of the armed forces in the past. We're also promoting international graduates more, opening it up by some 20% more than it was before.

We've developed a new medical school. This is a first in a very long time, with split campuses in northern Ontario. This will be where northern students will be trained. It's the hope, and I expect it's logical, that they will stay in the north afterwards. I think it's going to work out very well.

A tremendous number of good things are happening in health care. A very high percentage of the hospitals in Ontario are either under construction, are being renovated or are being replaced. There was a tremendous deficit with the hospitals in Ontario when we took office. It was most unfortunate that some 10,000 hospital beds, acute care beds, had been closed, but no hospitals closed. There was not the intestinal fortitude in the two opposition parties when they were in government to take that extra step and really do what was needed. When we took office, the Honourable Jim Wilson appointed the Health Services Restructuring Commission and they did some pretty tough things, some that hurt me, but in the end it is happening and it's going the right way.

I look at the hospital in west Northumberland. The right thing is happening in the end. There was a struggle in between. Three studies before recommended that very thing. The HSRC came in with a recommendation of an addition on the Cobourg hospital and the closing of the Port Hope one—one I totally disagreed with, lobbied and had turned around, thanks to the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, who understood the situation and was the Minister of Health at that time.

I mentioned the double cohort earlier, creating some 135,000 new post-secondary student spaces. What we've invested in is the largest expansion in the history of Ontario. The only one that kind of came close to that was back in the mid-1960s to late 1960s, when there was a tremendous expansion as it related then to the baby boomers who were moving through the system.

The throne speech has indicated more preferential choice as to where parents can send their students, to any school within that school board. This is something for which I've lobbied for a very long time. Why should you be sort of locked in? You don't have any choice to go to this teacher in this school. This is going to open that up. I think that's absolutely tremendous. It's similar to giving assistance to those who want to send their young people to an independent school.

We're committed to a tax credit, something for which I've lobbied for a very long time. I remember being on a school board and trying to arrange that some kids in an independent school would get a lift three or four miles down the road in empty seats, a bus that was only half-full. They were just moving down the road. They were stopping at both points anyway. But no, no way would the school board consider it. From then on I've been on a lobbying effort to ensure that what's right is done, and that's happening with the tax credit for independent schools.

There are so many more things that I could speak on in this throne speech. It was one with a theme. It's unfortunate the opposition couldn't follow that theme through, but maybe it should have been repeated several times so they would understand where the theme was and where it was coming from. I congratulate our Premier on putting together just one excellent throne speech. Thanks very much for the 20 minutes.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I could hardly expect a Minister without Portfolio of the government to say less than congratulatory things about their own throne speech. Obviously government members are paid to pat themselves on the back and, fairly enough, opposition members are paid to criticize. That's the way our system works. Fair enough. But for anybody to suggest that this throne speech had any vision at all, I think, is a stretch of the greatest imagination. There was no support for that from any quarter—not within this Legislative Assembly but from out there—from any commentator that I've heard. You can be sure that if there was someone somewhere in any part of this province, government members and ministers would be standing up extolling the virtues of what some third party had to say positively about this throne speech. Fair enough. But I haven't heard one member of the government use one quote from anybody anywhere in the province of Ontario talking about a visionary throne speech. And there's a reason why: because it just wasn't there.

This was the bridal throne speech: something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue. That's truly what it was, and that's fine. But if that's where Mr Eves and his government wish to lead the province of Ontario, I'm very happy to allow the people of Ontario the choice between real change, represented by Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals, or something old, something tired and something lacking in vision, represented by Mr Eves and the Conservative government.

Mr Martin: I just wanted to comment on the speech from the member for Northumberland. It was typical of him. Not much changes in the years that he's been here. He could probably open his desk at any particular point in time and take out a copy of a speech that he always gives, and gives with some relish and energy, I must say.

He talks about a theme. There certainly was a theme in the speech from the throne. Should he repeat it? No, he doesn't have to. They've been repeating it for eight years, and in my view it's been eight years of missed opportunity to really do something exciting, constructive and positive for the people of this province—to build communities, to invest in infrastructure, to develop an education system that would be second to none in the world, a health care system that will be there in a timely fashion for everybody.

But no, they chose not to do that. They literally spent billions of dollars—and I would suggest \$40 billion, \$50 billion, \$60 billion—over that period of time on tax breaks for people who really didn't need it, when in fact if they would have taken that money we could have all been so much better served in developing those communities and community supports and structures that we all need, count on and depend on.

But no, they missed that opportunity, and yes, they chose a theme: a theme of reducing government, of privatizing anything that is of any value that the private sector might have an interest in, and a theme of reducing expenditure on behalf of government on those things we all collectively know we need if we're going to have a quality of life that reflects the wealth that all of us participate in developing and generating in this province.

It's too bad. It's too bad that they continue to choose to make the choices that they do, because in the end it's going to hurt all of us for a long time to come, and it will be difficult for the next government to fix what they have broken.

1800

Hon Mr Hardeman: I want to thank you for the opportunity to say congratulations and a job well done to the member from Northumberland for such a good explanation of what was in the throne speech. I think anyone who would suggest that there wasn't a theme in the throne speech obviously either didn't listen to the Lieutenant Governor reading it or hasn't taken the opportunity to read it since.

Obviously, the throne speech was built on building a strong economy and creating more jobs so that we can afford to support the programs people in our society want and need to have the quality of life they have, such as health care, good education and protecting our environment. I think the member for Northumberland spoke to those, particularly starting with the number one priority for the people of Ontario, which of course is health care. He mentioned building two hospitals in his riding. I've been pretty elated that we are building a new hospital in Oxford county too, and we're very proud of that. I didn't realize there were some ridings that were getting two new hospitals in that time. But we're very happy and pleased

that the government is supporting the building of a new Woodstock General Hospital in Oxford county. Again, that can only be afforded because we have an economy which can support those services. That is the theme of the throne speech.

I also wanted to commend him for the work that he did on the Premier's task force on rural economic renewal. It relates to the throne speech because there was a section of the throne speech which spoke about investing \$1.6 billion in rural Ontario over the next number of years to build on the suggestions from that task force. I think it's very important to point that out—to build those rural communities people want and need in our province and which I think they have a right to expect. I think they expect those of us who represent rural Ontario to be here for them. He mentioned some of the recommendations in his report that talked about jump teams and the OSTAR RED, and we're doing all those things.

Mr Levac: The member from Northumberland was a little confused by my numbers, so I'll give it to him very simply: \$660 million, by the auditor's own book, was spent on consultants. The interesting fact is that three days after several of the employees of this government at this Legislature retired, they hired them right back and doubled their salaries. It's rather interesting that that type of money was being used to consult this government on how to run itself. Some \$660 million—\$75,000 an hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they're spending that kind of money. All I was asking is whether or not we could steal some of that hour's worth of consultants' fees to help with rural schools, brownfields, Laurier Brantford, BCI and call centres for our emergency service and our ambulance dispatch. We have so many problems out there that with that kind of money—I'm just asking if you would be wise enough to use some of that hour's worth of money to put back into things which are actually helping save lives. It's not that complicated.

The member from Don Valley East made it quite clear: we need to have somebody who understands what a vision means to go forward. Our Six Nations people tell us to think seven generations ahead. Whatever you do today, seven generations from now they'd better be able to respond to whatever it is you did. That's not going to happen with this type of vision they're saying they have.

Quite frankly, this is the one which always gets me. They always want to talk to us about the 225 tax cuts they've made, but they fail to add the second part of the sentence: 553 user fees. There have been 553 user fees since 1995 by this government, including the 225 tax cuts. It's a wash. We're not ahead. The individual is not ahead. Ask them on the street whether or not they're tremendously far ahead. They're not ahead. They're spending on 553 user fees.

The Deputy Speaker: The chief government whip, the minister without portfolio, the member for Northumberland has two minutes to respond.

Hon Mr Galt: I'd like to compliment the member from Oxford for his two-minute response. He was the

best one of the group by far. He really zeroed in on the debate and the comments that were made. He recognized the strong economy and that there was a theme in that throne speech. He recognized the fact that I had chaired the task force on rural economic renewal. He also commented on something I had forgotten to mention, and that was that \$750 million is to be invested over the next three years in water and sewer treatment plants here in the province of Ontario, particularly in rural Ontario.

Just as he was being cut off and was running out of his two minutes, he was talking about the resource jump teams to stimulate the economy in rural Ontario and how OSTAR RED is doing such a tremendous job. It was only thanks to our present Premier, when he was the Minister of Finance, that we put in the interim report and he came forward with some \$600 million for infrastructure and for rural economic development, that any of this could have happened.

I was mildly amused by the member from Don Valley East talking about “something old, something new,” but

he didn't quite finish it, “something borrowed, something blue.” It was obviously blue throughout that throne speech. You could see it to the right. It was true to our form. The vision was there. Even though they have missed that vision, it was there: stimulate the economy so we can afford the social programs. Unfortunately, they put it the other way around when they were in government: “We'll put in the social programs. Forget the cost. Forget how we're going to get the money. We'll run the programs anyway to keep everybody in Ontario happy. We'll be everything to everybody,” and they certainly were. They should have finished out that “something borrowed, something blue.” It would have completed that comment you were on to.

The Deputy Speaker: It being well after 6, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning. That's May 8 in the year 2003.

The House adjourned at 1806.

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