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Tuesday 17 June 2003

Mardi 17 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 juin 2003

The House met at 1332.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My statement today is to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Minister, I have been a member of the Hastings Children's Aid Society for over 25 years. Thanks to some good changes in legislation, we have the most children in care ever, but at the same time we have the worst funding challenges we've ever experienced.

Your ministry funds the number of workers employed by the agency based on the volume of caseload. That makes perfect sense, although they now spend most of their time filling out the forms that your ministry has generated. On the other hand, your ministry does not properly fund places for children to live. It is you who sets the rates for what outside, paid institutions can charge, but you then have the nerve to give the children's aid society less than that to pay for these outside, paid resources.

Workers have to drive to do their investigation. They cannot accomplish child safety in the office. Your ministry funds mileage for workers at a dismal rate.

Last, you need to know that when you hire new workers, they need to have an office and a desk. You provide no capital funds. CAS in Belleville is forced to rent a number of office spaces—extremely inefficient. At the same time, you have the opportunity to save money by putting some upfront capital money to allow all of the workers to work in the same place—better protection for the children and, from your government's viewpoint, better use of the money.

I am demanding, Minister, that you do the right thing: fund the Hastings Children's Aid Society so that they can do the right thing efficiently and quickly. Our children should be our number one priority.

JACK BURROWS

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): I'd like to speak today about a friend of mine, the mayor of North Bay, Jack Burrows. Last week it was announced that Mayor Burrows has decided to retire and not to seek a fourth term as mayor. I had both the honour and the privilege to

work with Jack while I was a member of the municipal council and in my role as deputy mayor.

Jack Burrows has accomplished many things for the city of North Bay. He has worn many different hats over the years, such as the Rotary Club president, member of the YMCA board, the Nipissing University board, chair of the North Bay Hospital Commission and the North Bay and district health care centre, and he currently serves on the North Bay Hydro commission, the North Bay Police Services Board, the North Bay Economic Development Commission and the Rail Lands Development Committee.

Jack is well known in North Bay for Burrows Country Store and Garden Centre, a business in which he was hands-on until he took a semi-retired role when he became the mayor of the city of North Bay.

It's been said that Jack is truly a prince of a man, a very honest and decent man to work with. I can honestly say that no truer words have been spoken about this individual.

During his years as mayor, he had a vision for North Bay's downtown and waterfront which led him to initiate the purchase of the CP Rail lands, and now the results of that vision are beginning to materialize. His dedication to North Bay has been commendable and he will be greatly missed in office.

He will now have the time to enjoy his retirement and share his free time with his wife, Elaine, and his nine grandchildren. Elaine has always stood by her man, and they form quite a team together. I'm sure he'll even find the time to take in a round of golf or two, one of his favourite hobbies.

On behalf of all MPPs in this Legislature, I want to wish Jack and Elaine the very best for the future.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I hope the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is listening.

"Fair Deal Is No Deal for Municipalities," said the press release, and frankly, we in the Liberal caucus couldn't agree more. Cities, AMO, and municipal finance officers have warned that the Eves government referendum proposal, like Proposition 13 in California, will lead to reductions in municipal service levels, infrastructure deterioration, more user fees and debt rating downgrades, but you don't seem to care.

You've received a very reasonable request from the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus for an independent review of municipal finances, but you were quick to reject that

too. You'd rather download costly referenda. It's estimated that in the city of Toronto alone, the cost of a referendum would be almost \$6 million; in Mississauga, almost \$1 million; in the city of London, \$700,000. Who's going to pay for that? The property taxpayers in these communities through more service cuts.

No one seems to have summed it up more clearly than former Toronto mayor and Tory activist David Crombie. At a recent meeting of the Toronto City Summit Alliance, he said, "In the last five or six years, the provincial government has basically humbled and hobbled municipalities. Municipalities don't have a sense they have partners. This government is more interested in gimmicks than in delivering public policy."

Minister Young and Premier Eves are clearly unwilling to listen. I want to reassure our municipal partners that a Dalton McGuinty government will strike a real new deal with you, sharing our tax room, not tying your hands. You deserve better than what Ernie Eves and David Young are offering you.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): A Dalton McGuinty government? That's like Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dumber. My God. Don't want to go there.

Je veux amener l'attention du gouvernement à une situation qui s'établit, j'imagine, pas seulement dans mon comté mais dans d'autres comtés à travers le nord et d'autres parties de la province. C'est une lettre qui a été écrite par M. Richard Boucher, qui écrit :

« Le 26 mai dernier un appel d'urgence a été placé au service 911. Mon petit neveu s'était étouffé en avalant un bonbon et il était en train de s'asphyxier. Sa grand-mère a appelé le 911 pour finalement tomber sur une téléphoniste unilingue... »

C'est-à-dire qu'il y avait des problèmes quand une madame qui ne pouvait pas s'exprimer en anglais a téléphoné le 911 pour dire qu'il y avait une urgence à sa maison et que le jeune était en train de s'étouffer—qu'il y avait un problème.

Je veux dire au gouvernement très clairement que vous avez besoin de comprendre qu'à travers la province il y a beaucoup de francophones, et, comme le savent M. Beaubien et autres, il y a certaines régions de la province où il y a non seulement beaucoup de francophones, mais où les francophones sont unilingues français.

Je vous demande très simplement comme gouvernement de vous assurer d'avoir en place les téléphonistes nécessaires pour être capable de répondre au téléphone quand il y a des urgences en français comme en anglais, parce que très souvent, dans un comté comme Timmins-Baie James et autres, il y a beaucoup de personnes qui parlent seulement le français et non l'anglais.

Je veux dire à M. Boucher à travers cette déclaration qu'on demande au gouvernement de s'assurer qu'on ait le "staff" adéquat pour s'assurer que cette situation-là ne se répète pas et qu'on va surveiller de très près les actions de ce gouvernement.

CRIME PREVENTION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I rise to report on the recent completion of a series of community crime forums that I was very pleased to host in my home riding of Scarborough Centre.

Once again I want to thank our public safety and security minister, the Honourable Bob Runciman, for consenting to be a special guest. My constituents were pleased he took the time to visit us in Scarborough.

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What we learned is that my constituents continue to be concerned about crime in our communities. Plainly and simply, they want their governments to crack down on crime. I agree with them.

My constituents applauded the Premier's announcement in Scarborough that 1,000 new police officers would be hired to increase public safety. This is of course on top of the 1,000 additional police officers who are already on our streets thanks to this government—something, by the way, that the Liberals failed to support. I suspect they would have also applauded recent news from the minister. Especially in light of the Holly Jones tragedy, I too applaud the announcement that \$700,000 is being given to the Toronto Police to keep closer tabs on the city's known sex offenders.

The government is able to make our streets safer in this way because of this government's foresight in creating the Ontario Sex Offender Registry. Too bad I cannot say the same thing about the government in Ottawa, where the Liberals put their summer vacations ahead of creating a national sex offender registry. Shame on them. I suspect, given what I heard at my community crime forums, that my constituents would say the same.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My comments are for the Minister of Finance and they're about skyrocketing auto insurance premiums. We're ready to sit here all summer, if she wants to do that, to take care of the business of this province.

This is a promise made but not kept. Last August I wrote to the minister and I reminded her that in her 2002 Ernie Eves budget she said, "Mr Speaker, when we were elected in 1995, Ontarians were facing double-digit increases in auto insurance rates—the flawed policies of previous governments. As a result of our 1996 auto insurance reform legislation, rates fell for a number of years. However, the market has changed." Has it ever. She went on to say, "We will address pressures on the system and also consider longer-term solutions to ensure that automobile insurance remains available and affordable to Ontario citizens."

I told her how my auto insurance rates had gone up 47.6%, and they're going to go up another 20% this year. That's neither fair nor is it affordable. What did the minister write back in October? It took her a few months. She said that "increased reinsurance costs resulting from

the events of September 11, 2001" are the reason. "Our government is dedicated to maintaining a fair, balanced and cost-effective auto insurance system." I haven't seen it yet.

BSE

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to tell my fellow members of a public meeting I hosted along with my newly elected federal counterpart, Gary Schellenberger, to give farmers of our riding an opportunity to ask questions about BSE, mad cow disease, and tell us their concerns.

We held this meeting in Mitchell at 10 am last Saturday. We had more than 90 farmers, agricultural leaders and others whose businesses have been impacted by the trade ban on beef and cattle. They came to listen to representatives from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Ontario Cattlemen's Association and the Ontario Minister of Agriculture and Food, and to tell Mr Schellenberger and me what they need.

First and foremost, they need the border reopened. At the same time they need compensation now. That compensation should be considered disaster relief and not loans, and not be tied to the federal government's agricultural policy framework, the APF. Farmers support Minister John's stand against signing the APF. They're afraid any federal compensation will be held hostage, made contingent on the signing of the APF, and they don't want our government to cave in to that tactic.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the individuals who gave up their Saturday morning to speak at this meeting. They are Jim Wheeler, assistant deputy minister in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food; Dr Nina Szpakowski, veterinarian with the CFIA and animal products program network director for Ontario; Dr Dan DeWit, regional veterinarian with the CFIA; as well as Gord Hardy, Middlesex farmer from near Lucan and a member of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association board of directors.

RESIGNATION OF MINISTER

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Chris Stockwell's semi-resignation raises a lot more questions than it answers. This issue goes right to the heart of Ernie Eves's standards for integrity in his government. We now have confirmation that Ernie Eves has no standards.

It was wrong for Chris Stockwell to funnel expenses through private corporations, where they are hidden from the taxpayer. He should have resigned for that. It was wrong for Chris Stockwell to change his story from one day to the next and hide the truth from taxpayers. He should have resigned for that. But we learned today that Chris Stockwell doesn't have the decency to resign because of his poor judgment and inability to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. No. He resigned for political reasons, certainly not for ethical reasons.

Why is it that Ernie Eves didn't ask for Chris Stockwell's resignation last week, or even today? Ernie Eves thinks it's OK for a cabinet minister to funnel expenses through a private corporation. Ernie Eves thinks it's OK for a cabinet minister to tell ever-changing stories. Well, Ontario Liberals have news for you, Ernie. It's not OK. We will form a government that has moral and ethical standards. We will have cabinet ministers who have integrity. Chris Stockwell should not be in cabinet, because what he did was wrong. He should never be allowed back.

WIARTON FLY-IN

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to let my fellow colleagues and their friends know about an upcoming event in my riding called the Wiarnton Fly-In.

Wiarnton, home to Canada's foremost weather forecaster, Wiarnton Willie, is the gateway to the Bruce Peninsula, with its towering limestone bluffs and the blue waters of Georgian Bay. The fly-in is based on an idea by Brian Reis, a member of the Great War Flying Museum. This is a brand new event landing in Wiarnton on August 9.

The Bruce Peninsula Festival of Flight will host a fly-in and a static display of amateur-built vintage aircraft at the Wiarnton-Keppel airport. There will be exact full-size replicas of World War I aircraft, and the Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association will have a vintage World War II Harvard on-site, ready to take people for rides.

There will also be a vintage motorcycle show with a special display of the British Ariel motorcycle. For all of you automobile admirers, there is a classic car show presented by the Bluewater Region Antique Car Club and the Owen Sound Classics Car Club. While you are there, take time to enjoy the exhibits at the Gallery of Early Canadian Flight, a museum strictly dedicated to displaying Canada's aviation past.

This is a true celebration of humanity's passion for moving at great speed in great style. Congratulations on the first annual Wiarnton Fly-In, and I look forward to many more to come.

VISITORS

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Today we're privileged to have two students of democracy visiting with us. Mr Gordon Albini and his daughter Amanda have travelled down from Hamilton to watch the proceedings in the people's place, and I'm sure all members of the House would like to join in welcoming them.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Also here in this chamber witnessing democracy, if you will, is my good friend Earl Manners, the candidate in Victoria-Haliburton and former head of OSSTF.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Thanks to technology, my mother, who is 92 years old, is probably watching this show and also watching democracy in action.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): And a special welcome to all mothers.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Monsieur le Président, j'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue; I would like to welcome two students from my riding who are here today on an educational program. They'll be spending the week. The two students are Amélie Laflèche de l'école Ste-Trinité de Rockland and Melissa Laflèche de l'école St-Paul de Casselman. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

KAWARTHA HIGHLANDS SIGNATURE SITE PARK ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE PARC DE LA RÉGION CARACTÉRISTIQUE DES HAUTES-TERRES DE KAWARTHA

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act respecting the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park / Projet de loi 100, Loi concernant le parc de la région caractéristique des Hautes-Terres de Kawartha.

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

The Premier for a short statement?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr Speaker, I'll give my statement during ministers' statements.

CABINET MINISTERS' AND OPPOSITION LEADERS' EXPENSES REVIEW AND ACCOUNTABILITY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EXAMEN DES DÉPENSES DES MINISTRES ET DES CHEFS D'UN PARTI DE L'OPPOSITION DE L'OBLIGATION DE RENDRE COMPTE

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to amend the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002 and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act / Projet de loi 101, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur l'examen des dépenses des ministres et des chefs d'un parti de l'opposition et

l'obligation de rendre compte et la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): This bill will amend the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability act by eliminating the loophole created by the Premier last year by exempting cabinet ministers' expenses paid for by crown corporations and crown agencies.

It will also make requests under freedom of information with respect to cabinet ministers' expenses subject to freedom of information which you excluded last year, and it has cost you one minister already.

The Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre in the rotation.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Niagara Centre has the floor.

CHRIS STOCKWELL ACT, 2003 LOI DE 2003 CHRIS STOCKWELL

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act / Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections.

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

The member for a short statement?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. And the worst part is, we're not even into question period yet. This is introduction of bills. I appreciate all the co-operation. The member for Niagara Centre has the floor.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This bill amends the Election Finances Act to prevent constituency associations from paying the expenses of members of the Legislative Assembly, unless the expenses are incurred during an election period. The short title of the bill is the Chris Stockwell Act.

CONSUMER REPORTING AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT LE CONSOMMATEUR

Mr Cordiano moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act / Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I am forced to reintroduce my private member's bill that

passed second reading as moved by the standing committee on finance and economic affairs but of course died on the order paper when the Legislature was prorogued.

This bill is a very important bill, I believe, for all consumers. It will increase the accountability of credit report agencies to disclose information and to correct mistakes that appear on a person's credit history. It will also provide consumers better access to information that might be used in the reporting of a credit-worthiness statement and it will also ensure that consumers are not penalized every time a report is conducted.

I would also like to thank the many organizations and agencies that have supported this bill, including the Public Interest Advocacy Centre in Ottawa and the newly formed Consumer Federation of Canada.

PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU
HIGHWAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'AUTOROUTE
PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to name Highway 417 the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Highway / Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun afin de nommer l'autoroute 417 Autoroute Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Pierre Elliott Trudeau became a member of Parliament representing the Montreal riding of Mount Royal in 1965 and in 1967 was appointed Minister of Justice. He was Prime Minister from April 20, 1968, until June 4, 1979, and from March 30, 1980, until June 30, 1984.

The commencement and completion of Highway 417 took place during Pierre Elliott Trudeau's tenure as Prime Minister of Canada. During his time in office, Mr Trudeau spent countless hours on Highway 417, travelling to and from his private residence.

TENANT PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT
(FAIRNESS IN RENT INCREASES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES
(AUGMENTATIONS ÉQUITABLES
DES LOYERS)

Mr Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Tenant Protection Act, 1997 to ensure fairness to Ontario's tenants / Projet de loi

105, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection des locataires en vue d'assurer un traitement équitable des locataires de l'Ontario.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): This bill, if passed, would amend the Tenant Protection Act in two major ways. First, the bill would ensure that rents are not increased beyond the guideline if there are outstanding work orders.

Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, the bill would ensure that above-guideline rent increases are rolled back if the landlord either ceases to incur the costs that justified the increase—capital repairs or utility costs, for example—or if mutually-agreed-upon increases meet those conditions, so-called costs no longer borne.

This bill will provide some fairness and balance for tenants to ensure that they do not pay for capital improvements, increases in utility costs and other such increases in perpetuity.

This bill is the right step toward building some fairness back into the rental market for tenants in Ontario who have been attacked by all sides from this government, and I look forward to debating it in this Legislature.

1400

TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC
MATTERS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE
DES QUESTIONS D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

Ms Di Cocco moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to require open meetings for provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies / Projet de loi 106, Loi exigeant des réunions publiques pour des commissions et conseils provinciaux et municipaux ainsi que d'autres organismes publics.

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

The member for short statement?

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I introduced this same bill in 2001 and 2002. This open meeting act is needed, according to the latest report of the privacy commissioner. The bill requires specific provincial and municipal councils, boards, commissions and other public bodies to hold meetings which are open to the public. The public can only be excluded from meetings of the body when certain specified types of matters are going to be discussed. Minutes of the meetings open to the public have to be made available to the public in a timely fashion and must contain sufficient detail. Section 8 imposes a penalty for failure to comply with the requirements for notice, minutes and rules.

ABOLITION OF THE ONTARIO
MUNICIPAL BOARD ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ABOLITION
DE LA COMMISSION DES AFFAIRES
MUNICIPALES DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to restore local control over planning by involving citizens and ensuring decisions are made by democratically elected officials / Projet de loi 107, Loi rétablissant un contrôle local de l'aménagement du territoire par la participation des citoyens et veillant à la prise des décisions par des représentants élus démocratiquement.

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for short statement?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): The bill provides that the government of Ontario has a duty to strengthen planning in the province and should exercise that duty by ensuring there is local control over planning decisions and by considering abolishing the Ontario Municipal Board. Too many communities across Ontario have had their rights to be heard on crucial development issues taken away by an unelected, appointed Ontario Municipal Board. This act, if passed, would end the Ontario Municipal Board's monopoly on planning decisions in Ontario.

KEEPING WATER IN
PUBLIC HANDS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 VISANT À MAINTENIR L'EAU
DANS LE DOMAINE PUBLIC

Mr Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to prevent the sale of municipally-owned water works / Projet de loi 108, Loi visant à empêcher la vente de stations de purification de l'eau dont les municipalités sont propriétaires.

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for short statement?

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Retaining public ownership of our water utilities is fundamental to protecting our drinking water. This bill evolves from Justice O'Connor's recommendations from the Walkerton inquiry. He said the following:

"In not recommending the sale of municipal water systems to the private sector, my conclusion is based on several considerations: the essentially local character of water services; the natural-monopoly characteristics of the water industry; the importance of maintaining

accountability to local residents; and the historical role of municipalities in this field." This is found in part two, page 323 of his report.

The government has had two major opportunities to act on this warning from the Walkerton report; since they haven't, this bill will do that. However, this bill will not prohibit municipalities from entering into partnerships relating to the construction and operation of their utilities.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

PROVINCIAL PARK

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It gives me pleasure to rise today to speak about a very important piece of legislation. Ontario is known around the world for its extraordinary natural environment and its beauty. I believe that each generation of Ontarians has an obligation to protect our precious natural assets so they can be passed on to future generations.

In 1999, our government embarked upon the largest expansion of parks and protected areas ever with the launch of Ontario's Living Legacy. Ontario's Living Legacy is creating 378 new parks and protected areas in the province. In addition, Ontario's Living Legacy identified nine signature sites because they exemplify Ontario's unique natural heritage. One of these sites is the Kawartha Highlands.

Today I am pleased to announce that we are keeping the promise we made in this year's throne speech by introducing legislation to protect the Kawartha Highlands signature site. This bill is the culmination of extensive public consultation over the past four years. It builds upon the valuable work done by the Kawartha Highlands local stakeholders' committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague Chris Hodgson, the MPP for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, who has worked hard to create a made-in-the-Kawarthas solution. This will protect and manage the area for future generations. Thank you, Chris.

Four key stakeholder organizations have also worked hard to create a made-in-the-Kawarthas solution and have signed a charter outlining a shared vision for the future of this unique natural environment. As recommended by these organizations, our government will establish the Kawartha Highlands signature site as an operating provincial park.

This bill, if passed, would set the ground rules for the planning and management of the park based on the directions in the stakeholder charter.

I would like to acknowledge some people in the gallery today who are from the organizations that helped make this happen. Thank you to Jim Faught and Monte Hummel from the Partnership for Public Lands; Andy Houser, of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and

Hunters; Rick Meridew, from the Stakeholder Groups of the Kawartha Highlands; Sissy Tanner, from the Local Stakeholder Committee; as well as Kim Dunford, of the local stakeholder groups. I would also like to take a moment to thank Gail Beggs, assistant deputy minister from the Ministry of Natural Resources, and her team for all of their hard work in making this project a reality. Thank you, Gail.

The Kawartha Highlands signature site encompasses more than 36,000 hectares and would be the largest protected area in Ontario south of Algonquin Park. Situated along the southern edge of the Canadian Shield, this relatively undisturbed area features a rugged, rolling landscape of rocky barrens, scenic lakes, sensitive wetlands and dense forests.

This bill, if passed, will protect the ecological integrity of this semi-wilderness area.

Our government is determined to preserve the natural heritage of the Kawartha Highlands while maintaining traditional uses and providing the opportunity for compatible recreational activities.

In addition, this bill would allow private property owners and affected crown land tenants to continue to enjoy free access to their property or lands through an approved road and trail system.

1410

Finally, the proposed legislation would also establish a management advisory board to provide advice about the planning and management of the park. We intend to appoint a board reflecting the diverse interests of the local and provincial stakeholders and park users.

I am also pleased to announce that our government is planning to invest \$6 million over four years to help build park infrastructures such as roads, signs, boat launches and recreational facilities such as trails and campsites.

By protecting the Kawartha Highlands signature site, we intend to create a living legacy that will be enjoyed by residents and visitors to this part of Ontario for many generations to come. I know all the members share in the ideals of stewardship, and I urge them to join me today in supporting this important legislation to conserve this very special feature of our natural environment.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): It is my pleasure to respond on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals. I would first like to read you a letter from our House leader to the acting government House leader which states: "The Liberal caucus is pleased that the government will be introducing the bill this afternoon. We look forward to having the opportunity to assess its content with stakeholders prior to passage. I see no reason why the bill cannot be passed before the end of this session, once review is complete."

This bill has been a long time coming to this House. There was consultation held over the last several years, as has been mentioned—consultation that cost the taxpayers \$500,000 and resulted in the ill-fated Bill 239, introduced the last day before the House rose for Christmas and a bill that managed to incorporate virtually

none of the recommendations of the advisory committee. That was consultation at its worst.

I do compliment the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, who undertook real consultation. It has resulted in a bill that appears to incorporate what all the parties want. What an innovative approach: to truly go out and talk to all of the stakeholders and listen to them. This is a wonderful example that this government could pursue in the short time left.

If I refer back to a statement by the Ministry of Natural Resources for Ontario on August 10, 2000, it says: "Ontario's Living Legacy announced by the Premier in 1999 features the single biggest expansion of parks and protected areas anywhere. It will add 378 new parks and protected areas in Ontario totalling 2.4 million hectares."

With the addition of this new park, the total of new parks created is one—that's one—since it was announced in the year 2000.

For the stakeholders that are here, for the people of Ontario, you have not crossed the last hurdle in making this park work. I would refer you to an excellent document called the 2002 Annual Report of the Provincial Auditor of Ontario. Here's what the auditor has to say, once it becomes a provincial park: "The ministry had management plans in place for only 117 of the 277 provincial parks. Such plans are essential if animal and plant life resources are to be managed and protected." That's the future that this park potentially has with this government.

"The ministry did not have an overall strategy in place to manage species at risk of extinction in the province even though the Endangered Species Act has been in force since 1971." The only species of animal in Ontario that appears to be safe are the animals that are not managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

"Although the ministry had identified"—and this isn't me saying this; it is the Provincial Auditor. You need to read the document—"a set of outcomes related to its objectives, it had not defined performance measures to assess the overall effectiveness of the program." They are saying "plans," but they don't know whether they work or not.

"According to the ministry, the majority of the existing capital infrastructure, including buildings, roads, bridges, docks and water distribution systems, is between 20 and 45 years old and is approaching the end...." There's no money going into it to manage it.

We state that "park resources are not adequately protected and that enforcement efforts needed to be improved."

To introduce a bill and pass it is only the very small first step. You have literally a hundred other parks that you're not managing that need to be managed.

"Overall, three quarters of the park superintendents who responded stated that the parks that they are responsible for had not been adequately maintained to ensure that natural resources were protected." If there is no money allocated by you now, where are you going to

get the money for a new park? Let's see some action and not just words.

On moveable assets, the auditor is very clear: "However, many of the parks we visited had not maintained an inventory list since 1998." That means the ministry doesn't even know how many half-tons it owns, let alone how to manage the system.

Certainly the announcement of this park is good news for the people of Ontario, but we need to see some action. When it comes to the Ministry of Natural Resources, this government talks the talk, but the auditor very clearly demonstrates that they don't walk the walk.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): While I welcome the announcement today, I want to remind people across Ontario that what we have here is a government that is trying to rewrite some of its own bad history.

There already was a very good stakeholders' group that presented a report to the government, calling for the creation of this park and setting out the kind of protection that was necessary. In fact, this stakeholders' report was available in the fall of 2001. But what did the government do with that? The current Minister of Natural Resources tried to totally ignore that report, and through his incompetence and his desire to listen to a few of his friends, wanted to turn this very good stakeholders' report into something that was much less than that. He almost would have succeeded but for the activities of a number of local activists, outdoor enthusiasts, environmental groups and, if I may say, New Democrat candidates Earl Manners and Dave Nickle, who were part of that very activist process to make sure this wrong would be righted.

I understand why the Minister of Natural Resources isn't introducing this today, because he was the culprit. He wasted the efforts of those stakeholders, he wasted time and he wasted money. It was necessary for the government to cover its tracks, so a second stakeholder group was brought together and, I say again, I thank Earl Manners, Dave Nickle and those activists who participated.

This is important. New Democrats want to review the legislation. We want to give the stakeholders a chance to review the legislation. And I want to congratulate Mr Hodgson for getting this back on track after the Minister of Natural Resources totally botched the process.

In saying that this is important and that pending a review of the legislation by ourselves and the stakeholders we want to support this process, I also want to point out some other things.

Before the government give themselves a pat on the back, I want them to recognize that over 80% of the lands that have been designated under the Lands for Life process have yet to be regulated. Over 200 so-called Living Legacy sites have not been regulated as parks, and the parks and conservation areas that have been regulated in Ontario are not being fully protected. The privatized parks customer service is abysmal, park infrastructure is deteriorating and most parks have no operating plans or enforcement. The result is that natural features and the

beauty of our parks are being neglected and destroyed by careless people taking advantage of the lack of park protection and enforcement.

While Ontario's park visitor numbers have increased by 60% over the last 15 years, the parks management budget has been slashed by 62% by this government. The MNR staff has been decimated to the point where the ministry simply doesn't have the people to do the job. Since 1995, over 3,000 jobs have been cut in the Ministry of Natural Resources. Lack of management plans for parks in Ontario is the issue. There are plans for only 117 of the 277 provincial parks. This has resulted in the deterioration of the parks, habitat destruction and a lack of information for properly protecting the parks. Customer service standards at parks have become woefully inadequate. The private company that now operates the computer reservation and registration accounting system didn't answer 65% of the phone calls from the auditor; 65% were not answered. The capital infrastructure, including buildings, roads, bridges, docks and water distribution systems, in parks is deteriorating. The majority is now between 20 and 45 years old and is in bad need of replacing.

So I say to the government, it's a good thing you overruled your Minister of Natural Resources, because he had this process headed in exactly the wrong direction. But New Democrats call upon you to start making reinvestments in our provincial parks. Stop the deterioration that's happening.

1420

Hon Mr Eves: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of this bill today. The opposition House leaders indicate they want the approval of the stakeholders. They're sitting right there and they approve, and they see no reason why this can't proceed today. So perhaps the opposition members would like to explain to us why it can't.

Mr Hampton: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: A number of stakeholders have indicated they have not had a chance to read the legislation. After they've had a chance to read the legislation—

The Speaker: I'm afraid that's not a point of order.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask the Premier if he would agree to use the section of the standing orders that his government put in to refer the bill to committee immediately for a quick review after first reading and immediate passage. Will you refer it to committee?

The Speaker: The Premier has asked for unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FORMER MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question today is to the Premier. Chris Stockwell

resigned from cabinet yesterday, apparently of his own accord. We've learned a lot about Mr Stockwell's standards in the last few days, and today I would like to ask you very directly about yours.

Here are three important facts in this matter. Mr Stockwell ran some \$5,000 to \$10,000 of his expenses through OPG. He said that he himself paid for his family's expenses when he in fact did not. Thirdly, he ran those family expenses through his riding association. Mr Stockwell maintains that he did nothing wrong and that he stepped aside because this was becoming a distraction for the government.

Premier, what I'm wondering today is, according to your standards, did Mr Stockwell do anything wrong?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm kind of surprised that the leader of the official opposition would stand in the House today and be talking about Minister Stockwell's expenses when Minister Stockwell has done the admirable thing and stepped aside until the Integrity Commissioner rules on his expenses.

There are important issues before the people of Ontario today. There are issues in health care, there are issues in education, there are issues in legislation before this Legislature, such as the seniors' property tax credit, and the honourable member doesn't want to address any of those issues.

Mr McGuinty: I can understand why the Premier doesn't want to talk about this, but I think it's very important. This is now bigger than Chris Stockwell's judgment; it's about your judgment, Premier, and your standards.

To my way of thinking, to be very direct about this, it was wrong to run expenses through OPG, where they're not public. It is wrong to say that you paid for your family expenses when you did not. It is wrong to run some \$25,000 in family expenses through the riding association. To my way of thinking, Premier, you should have fired Chris Stockwell, because what he did was wrong.

So I'm asking you, Premier, how low are your standards if you maintain that what Chris Stockwell did in all three instances was not wrong?

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable leader of the official opposition knows better than perhaps any other member in this Legislature that we changed the rules for the better with respect to expenditures of cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants and leaders of opposition parties. We now have received the input, as he well knows, from the Integrity Commissioner into what those rules should be. Those rules are incorporated with the advice of the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner, Mr Justice Coulter Osborne—I'm sure the honourable member is not questioning his integrity—is looking at Mr Stockwell's case, as he should be.

My question to the honourable member is very simple: will the leader of the official opposition submit his \$25,002.29 that he paid on junkets to Chicago and Washington, with taxpayers' dollars, to Bill Clinton

image consultants in the United States of America? Does he think that's an appropriate taxpayers' expense? Why is he trying to hold Mr Stockwell to a higher standard than he holds himself?

Mr McGuinty: Your attempt to change the subject is weak. My expenses were public and approved. You cannot fob this matter over to the Integrity Commissioner. It's about you, your judgment and your standards. At what point in time are you, as Premier, going to exercise some leadership, at least some modicum of leadership, and tell your caucus and cabinet ministers that in your government, there are some things that are right and there are some things that are wrong, and what Chris Stockwell did was wrong? When are you going to have the courage, the intestinal fortitude, the conviction to stand up and condemn this minister for what he did as wrong?

Hon Mr Eves: We did do the right thing. We reformed the system. It's going to the Integrity Commissioner, where it should go.

Why won't he come to the House today with clean hands and his certified personal cheque for \$25,002.29 to the taxpayers of Ontario? You took their money, Dalton; pay it back.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): A question to the Premier: three weeks ago, we revealed that your top fundraiser struck a very, very unusual deal with your party's top donor involving millions in taxpayer-backed funds from the Ontario Pension Board. Every time that we have tried to ask you about this deal, you have decided to duck it.

I believe the people of Ontario have a right to know something about the nature of your ethical standards that you set for your caucus, your cabinet and others who work for you.

Don't you think that it was wrong for an individual to have worked simultaneously at both the fundraising wing of your party and the pension board, and do you not think that it's wrong for that very same individual to then change the rules and lend your party's biggest backer tens of millions of dollars?

1430

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Chair of Management Board has answered this question, as indeed the Deputy Minister of Management Board has. What is important is that there are rules and guidelines that are followed and that preferential treatment is not shown.

Now, will the honourable member stand in his place and come to question period with clean hands about expenses and his certified cheque for \$25,002.29 to the taxpayers of Ontario? Yes or no?

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you can run from this but you cannot hide. Here are the facts—I can understand why you don't want to listen to this. Your party's biggest

fundraiser lends your party's biggest donor millions in pension fund dollars. The deal is very, very unusual, not only for the Ontario pension fund but for the pension industry itself. It is so unusual that the Ontario pension fund has never done this kind of deal, neither before nor after this particular one. Mr Weiss, for nine months, worked both as a fundraiser and as a member of the Ontario pension fund.

This has everything to do with your standards that you're setting for your government, your cabinet and your caucus. I may be a little bit old-fashioned about this, but I think your responsibility is to inspire confidence in the people of Ontario. What I want to know is whether you approve of what happened over at the Ontario pension fund and whether you approve of what Chris Stockwell did. I think the people of Ontario are entitled to know where you stand on these issues.

Hon Mr Eves: The Integrity Commissioner will rule on Minister Stockwell's expenditures, as he should. Talk about old-fashioned; whatever happened to paying your own way? Why are you ripping the taxpayers off for \$25,002.29?

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you may not have recognized this, but your caucus and cabinet take their cues from you. What does it say when you as Premier say, "You know what Stockwell did? There's not a damned thing wrong with that. You know what happened over at the Ontario pension fund? There is nothing wrong with that either." You know what it says? It says you lack the moral courage, the conviction, the strength to say in your government that some things are right, some things are wrong, what Stockwell did was wrong, what happened over at the Ontario pension fund was wrong, and you're not going to stand for it. The people of Ontario are entitled some modicum of leadership, some moral courage and some conviction in these matters. When are you going to provide that?

Hon Mr Eves: He talks about my standards. My standards were that despite the fact that I was not required to do so and despite the fact that there was no conflict, I repaid the amount of severance money I was given to the taxpayers of Ontario. You won't pay for your US consultants, Ontario taxpayers' money that you used, and you sit there like a smug, arrogant person. You took \$25,002.29 of Ontario taxpayers' money and spent it at the Bill Clinton democratic image agency in the United States of America. Did you get the cigar at least to go with it, Dalton?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Earlier in the session, the Premier referred to Monica Lewinsky. Now he has referred to—

The Speaker: Just before you continue, if it's going to be a debate, I'm going to get up quickly. Could you explain under what standing orders you are rising, please?

Mr Colle: I think the Premier should withdraw the statement he made about the cigar and Monica Lewinsky in this House.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order.

FORMER MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. The Premier should recognize that smoking cigars is bad for your health.

Premier, if a private hydro company like Northland Power secretly paid for an energy minister's vacation to Europe, most people would call for a criminal investigation, but under your government, when a cabinet minister gets Northland Power to funnel the cash into his riding association, and then the riding association pays for the energy minister's vacation to Europe, you tell us that's OK. But to people across our province, it's not OK. To people across our province, it seems like ministers can be bought.

Premier, what is your response to people across Ontario—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the member is going to have to withdraw the comment that ministers can be bought. You'll have to withdraw.

Mr Hampton: Yes, but people across Ontario see this as wrong. What's your response?

The Speaker: No, you must—

Mr Hampton: I withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

Mr Hampton: The people across Ontario see this as wrong. What's your response to them?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, nobody said it was right or appropriate. The Integrity Commissioner is going to rule on that aspect. Minister Stockwell has asked him to take a look at that as well, and the information has been supplied, as I understand it, to the Integrity Commissioner to comment on.

Mr Hampton: Premier, this is not about the Integrity Commissioner. In fact, looking at the legislation, I don't think the Integrity Commissioner has the capacity to rule on that question. It's really about your integrity and your government's integrity.

The public knows that Bay Street money from private power corporations, from Adams mine developers and from Oak Ridges moraine developers poured into Mr Stockwell's riding association bank account. The public knows the then minister dipped into that account to take his family and friends on a five-star tour of Rome, Paris and Glasgow last year, and Moscow and Helsinki the year before. You seem to be saying that's OK. Premier, I don't think it looks OK, and at the heart of it, I don't think it's OK.

I think there is a solution. We should ban corporate and union contributions to political parties and political candidates. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon Mr Eves: I am interested that the honourable member is following Jean Chrétien's lead in Ottawa and believes the taxpayers should pay for everything, but the way our system works is that individuals, and individuals who lobby corporations or unions, are entitled to donate to election campaigns and to donate to riding associations and individual candidates. If he wants to have a debate whether or not taxpayers should pay 100% of all that, as

opposed to private donations, I'd be happy to engage him in that debate. At least that's an issue of substance.

Mr Hampton: In this case, the money didn't go for political debate; the money didn't go for public discussion of issues. It was pretty transparent. Corporations that wanted certain results from the Minister of Energy and, as he was then, the Minister of the Environment, contributed all kinds of money to the riding association and the minister used that for his personal benefit, to pay for a five-star junket to the capitals of Europe. Now I say to you, that looks very bad to the public out there. That looks as if all you have to do is launder the money through the riding association, and what would otherwise be directly illegal is suddenly, under your terms of reference, allowable. I think to the majority of the people across Ontario this is not OK, and I've pointed out a solution. We should ban corporate and union contributions. We should take the big money out of politics and these kinds of junkets. Do you agree or disagree, Premier?

1440

Hon Mr Eves: I don't agree. I believe the way our system works is that individuals are entitled to contribute to the individual candidate or the party of their choice. I believe that's the appropriate amount. We have discussed in this House, many times over the years, changes to the limits that individuals and corporations or unions can contribute. I'm quite happy to engage him in that discussion.

But no, I don't agree with his statement that taxpayers should pick up 100% of the tab. It's very interesting that he finds himself agreeing with Jean Chrétien, the Prime Minister of Canada, on this issue.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Try Gary Doer.

Mr Hampton: In fact, Premier, I agree with Premier Gary Doer of Manitoba, who I think has it right.

INSURANCE RATES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My second question is also for the Premier. Ontario drivers are angry and frustrated with the huge increases in the cost of auto insurance. They've also had it with the arbitrary cancellation of their auto and home insurance.

Just today, a self-employed Ottawa resident wrote to me because, for the flimsiest of excuses, the auto insurance company cancelled his auto insurance and his home insurance. That's despite the fact that he has a 20-year clean driving record and no traffic ticket record. The insurance company, as I say, used the flimsiest of excuses, and they say now that if he wants his auto insurance renewed, he'll have to pay a substantially higher rate.

Premier, do you think that's acceptable in the province of Ontario, and what are you going to do about insurance companies that do that very thing?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm not going to comment on any individual circumstances obviously. I certainly wouldn't do that without their permission, and I don't believe it's appropriate, unless I know all the facts in any event.

With respect to auto insurance, yes, it is indeed a concern of average Ontarians. The Minister of Finance is bringing forward a proposal with respect to regulation, assisted by her colleague Mr Sampson, and you will see in short order some method of protection of Ontario consumers with respect to auto insurance.

But I must say that since 1996, the average premium in auto insurance in the province has fallen by 12% to date. I wouldn't want to point to the NDP record when they were in power. His colleague sitting to his right certainly knows more than needs to be said about that issue, seeing as how he lost the debate with former Premier Rae with respect to publicly owned auto insurance in the province.

Mr Hampton: I am quite willing to say that I believe Premier Rae made the wrong decision then, and now it's time to make the right decision. The reality you have, Premier, is that for drivers across Ontario, premiums have gone up by over 40% over the last two years. Your finance minister admitted yesterday that what she has in mind will not roll back any of those premium increases. It may moderate them in the years going forward, but it's not going to reduce them.

In Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, what they have found is that a not-for-profit public system of auto insurance has provided for a 20% reduction in auto insurance premiums. Why not implement a driver-owned, not-for-profit insurance system in Ontario when we know from experience in other provinces it can reduce premiums by 20%?

Hon Mr Eves: I am rather surprised by the admission here in the House today that while he sat in Bob Rae's cabinet, he actually disagreed with a basic matter of principle of the government. At least the member for Niagara Centre had the intestinal fortitude to stand up and be counted for his beliefs.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. Premier, I want to speak to you as well about the matter of skyrocketing auto insurance rates.

You promised exactly one year ago today, in your 2002 budget, that you would get rates under control. That was your very promise. Auto insurance rates continue to go through the roof, drivers with clean records are seeing double-digit increases, and some people are being refused insurance altogether.

Premier, there's a growing crisis in Ontario. While you sit on your hands, drivers are suffering. Why have you broken your promise? Why have you failed to protect Ontario's drivers?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): We have not. Up to this year, as I just pointed out to the leader of the third party, auto insurance rates in this province since 1996 have fallen, where in fact they have been going up dramatically in other jurisdictions across the country.

The Minister of Finance will be bringing forward, in short order, a proposal of regulations to control auto insurance premiums in Ontario.

It might be interesting to know if the honourable member opposite agrees with his leader colleague in the province of New Brunswick that there should be public auto insurance in the province of Ontario.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you made a very specific promise. You said you were going to get rates under control. You said that in the budget of 2002. Since then, you have done absolutely nothing. Your commentary here reveals that once more you are out of touch with what ordinary Ontarians are experiencing. Their premiums are going through the roof, and they are looking to you for help.

Yesterday your Minister of Finance said that if it were up to her, these regulations that you've been talking about would be in place by now. That's what she said. I can only presume, then, that the only thing that stands between her and the regulations having force of law is you.

So I'll ask you again: since the budget of 2002, why is it that you have sat on your hands, you've done nothing, while premiums have skyrocketed in the province? Why is it now that you are standing in the way of regulations which presumably will help provide some kind of assistance to Ontario drivers?

Hon Mr Eves: Mr Speaker, he should wait until he sees the package of reforms that the Minister of Finance brings forward and then comment on it. But I'm quite happy to compare Ontario's record in auto insurance premiums with those of a lot of other provinces, and I'm quite happy to compare them with the Liberal record the last time you guys were in power in the province.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question today is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security.

Minister, I saw your announcement last week on the new Web site launched by the repeat offender parole enforcement unit, also called the ROPE squad. It is not often that we publicly see or hear about the ROPE squad unless they have made one of their newsworthy captures.

My understanding is that this new Web site will highlight those individuals who are not only criminals but are also in this country illegally.

Minister, can you please inform the members of this House of the work done by the ROPE squad in Ontario and the reason for such a tool?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): Thanks to the member for the

question. The ROPE squad has been very busy in keeping our communities safe. To date, they've captured over 230 criminals who are unlawfully at large from correctional facilities.

Unfortunately, because of the federal Liberal government's lax approach to public safety, the ROPE squad has had to expand its mandate. The Eves government has provided money to fund special apprehension teams that focus on those who have immigration warrants against them. We're doing this without any financial help from the people whose policies create these high-risk challenges: the federal Liberal government.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Minister, for that response. I know the funding of our government has gone to create special apprehension teams whose main job is to focus on those types of individuals who are represented on the ROPE Web site. I also know how frustrated our government is by the federal immigration system. Minister, why exactly does our government focus our resources on a federal government problem?

1450

Hon Mr Runciman: Regrettably, the McGuinty Liberals see themselves as apologists for their federal cousins.

We are investing our resources to fix a federal government problem because we care about public safety. We care enough to have Canada's only sex offender registry. We care enough to have Canada's only Office for Victims of Crime. And we care enough to invest Ontario tax dollars in ROPE squads to try to cope with issues like 36,000 individuals ordered out of this country that the federal Liberal government has simply lost track of. We're doing the federal government's dirty work because, unlike them, public safety is a key priority for the Ernie Eves government.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): That's a hard act to follow, no doubt.

I have a question to the Premier today. Last year during his leadership bid, former Minister of the Environment Chris Stockwell vowed to make Kirkland Lake the waste mecca, as he said, for Toronto garbage, and at every opportunity he continued to promote the Adams mine as a waste solution. On May 26 of this year, he called a secret meeting with Toronto, Peel, Durham and York representatives to discuss garbage problems. He offered no help for Toronto's 2010 zero waste initiative, but he actively pushed the Adams mine at that meeting. A few weeks ago, when I stated in this House that his brother asked for and received a package of information on the Adams mine from Mario Cortellucci, he corrected me to say, "That was my father." When the Adams mine land deal story broke early in April, Chris Hodgson attended an all-day meeting at Cortellucci's office with other Adams investors to deal with this crisis.

Premier, can you assure this House today that no member of your government, in cabinet or in the back-

bench, or any of their immediate family has any interest, direct or indirect, in the Adams mine dump project?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Certainly not to my knowledge.

Mr Ramsay: Ten weeks ago your government was about to sell 2,000 acres of crown land for \$22 an acre to your biggest contributor, Mario Cortellucci, in order to complete the certificate of approval requirements for this dump project. Even though this is almost twice the land required, you were attempting to do this without notice or tender or EBR posting or any First Nations consultation. In fact, the regional MNR manager phoned one of our dump opponents at home to ask him how he found out about this secret land deal when he found out that you initiated a 60-day review of this transaction that has long since expired. Weeks ago the Deputy Premier stated in this House that the government would commit to giving us a status report as to that review.

Premier, is it your intention, as last year with the nursing home rate increase, to wait until the Legislature rises for the summer before you announce this dirty little land deal?

Hon Mr Eves: I'd be happy to look into the undertaking that the Deputy Premier made and find the information for the honourable member as soon as possible.

With respect to the nursing home rate increase, he will know that this government limited increases last year to 3% and this year to 1.16%, which is exactly the same amount that every senior's pension was increased this year, and the same is in effect for next year as well, so out of pocket it will cost seniors nothing.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario is seeing a diversity of new immigrants who find the promise of a better future in our province. Many of these new immigrants are vital in addressing the skilled labour shortages in underserved areas of the province.

In order to maintain our economic strength and prosperity, it is important that we have a plan to attract skilled immigrants and to make sure that they can contribute their skills to society. What is the government doing to train skilled immigrants and help them find jobs?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm very pleased to have a question from my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka. This is an area that our government has been totally committed to, and we have had a plan.

When we first became the government, we realized that nothing had been done about a whole generation of new Canadians who never in fact had a chance to practise their trades and professions. So we began very quickly with programs to assist them—bridging programs—and now we're starting to see the results.

We have committed \$15.5 million over four years to the development of bridge training programs to speed access to the labour market for qualified, internationally trained individuals. Very early in our tenure as government, we authorized WES, the World Education Service's academic credential assessment service, to assist our new immigrants in looking at their secondary and post-secondary education qualifications, from over 180 countries in the world.

Mr Miller: Minister, I'm happy to hear our government offers a variety of opportunities for new immigrants to hone their skills, as well as employ their skills. I know that two government initiatives—Job Connect, which helps prepare immigrants for the job market, as well as our bridge training program, that helps train immigrants to acquire the additional education they need—help new immigrants play a significant role in strengthening the economic prosperity of our province. Could you tell me more about the bridge training program and the Job Connect program?

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I should perhaps ask my critic if she would like to ask the question. She's asked five questions in almost three years. I don't really think this shows interest in this area. We have to ask our own people.

I will also say that in our own book, the next stage is this: the federal government, with regard to our immigrants, should, in fact, be giving opportunities to prospective immigrants to see if they do qualify before they come here. That is a promise we have in The Road Ahead. We will ask our new immigrants to get their qualifications accredited before they come here and help them before they come.

What have we done? In September 2003, I say to the Minister of Health, there will be almost 300 internationally trained nurses who have worked so hard to bring their pass rates from 30% to 70%—

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

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, my colleague the member for Timmins-James Bay and I toured northern Ontario. Things are beyond desperate. It's the perfect storm, and it's flattening the north's economy. Skyrocketing hydro rates are killing jobs, and then you've got US actions on softwood lumber. Dubreuil Forest Products cut over 300 jobs. In White River, the sawmill will close its doors on Friday. This Sunday, the people in Wawa are holding a rally to save their town, and they've invited you. Will you come to Wawa this Sunday and explain why your government has abandoned the north?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The member does make a very valid point with respect to hydro rates in Wawa, and indeed, that issue has to be addressed to benefit the people in

Wawa who find themselves in a very extraordinary situation. I would agree with him that action has to be taken to protect those people.

With respect to northern Ontario generally, I hear what he's saying. A lot of those issues he raises, like softwood lumber, he certainly understands are beyond the purview of a provincial government. However, we have been very supportive of the industry, and it's exactly why we declared all of northern Ontario to be a tax incentive zone, to provide incentives for businesses that aren't there now to locate there and provide jobs for northern Ontarians so they can be full participants in the economic benefits of Ontario.

Mr Martin: So I take it that the answer is no, you won't come to the rally on Sunday.

According to Statistics Canada, hydro rates for large users are up 75%. That's about to kill whole towns in the north. Today we learned that you just downgraded your northern development minister to part-time status when these communities need his full attention. We met with the mayors and mill managers in four towns. The message is the same: these communities have no future unless something is done quickly. The people of northern Ontario have been abandoned by you and your Liberal counterparts in Ottawa. Will you do at least one thing: will you cancel the deregulation of hydro that's killing jobs in the north, or do you plan to turn the north into an economic graveyard?

1500

Hon Mr Eves: I have told him we would address the situation in Wawa and we will.

With respect to the economy of northern Ontario, it would be very interesting to know whether the honourable member and his caucus are supportive of the tax incentive zone for all of northern Ontario to stimulate job creation in the north, to benefit people in the north. It's also a little strange that there haven't been any questions about the amount per kilowatt hour that hydro costs in the province this month. For your edification, it is now at 3.89 cents to date this month in Ontario.

FORMER MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday I asked the Deputy Premier about the review you promised regarding Cam Jackson's expenses. You will remember, that promise was made last fall, but you wouldn't tell us who was doing the review, what the context of that review was or when it would be complete. Yesterday your Deputy Premier said this: "I've been informed that the Premier's office has done a review, and my understanding is that they are presently in discussion with Mr Jackson on this particular subject."

Premier, I'd like to give you an opportunity to report to this House on the results of the review. What was part of that review? Did you in fact set a new standard for your cabinet and your caucus? Please give us that report now.

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): We did in fact change the system, as she knows, the way expenses of cabinet ministers are reviewed. Certainly a lot of individuals, not just the particular minister she refers to, found the pre-existing rules rather ambiguous. That's why we asked for the Integrity Commissioner's input into drafting new rules, and he's agreed graciously to take on that responsibility as we go forward. It's my understanding that the expenses she speaks of are being reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner as well.

Ms Pupatello: We know that Mr Jackson billed the taxpayers, for example, \$842 for a meal at Soul of the Vine, and then in that same time frame he billed the riding association \$842 for a meal at Soul of the Vine. There're countless examples of these bills then being run through the riding association.

Did you, as Premier, go through this review to suggest that your cabinet ministers in fact should take those receipts and run them through the riding association? When it's been determined those bills were for a personal nature and therefore taxpayers shouldn't be footing that bill, did you then tell them to put that through your riding association? Are you setting any kind of standard for how these monies are being spent or who should be recouped for that money? You have an opportunity now. We've had several examples where money for apparently personal reasons—these receipts are being put now through the riding association. Are you telling your colleagues this is OK? Have you in fact set any kind of standard?

Hon Mr Eves: She obviously hasn't got the point that a new system has been put in place. We tabled all the expenses of ministers and parliamentary assistants that were under review or request under the freedom of information act all at once. It's the first time any government has ever done that in the history of the province of Ontario. Certainly, when the Liberal government was last in power—we can rhyme off all the names, if you wish, of cabinet ministers who had to resign under David Peterson's regime for conflicts of interest, for misappropriation of funds, for other activities that weren't exactly up to date, but I'm not going to go there.

Suffice it to say that we have set a new standard in the province for the first time. We are quite confident that the Integrity Commissioner, Mr Justice Coulter Osborne, will make appropriate rulings with respect to expenses as we go forward.

BSE

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. For the life of me I can't understand why the opposition aren't asking about The Road Ahead and the strong economy to remain competitive in this province.

Minister, this past Saturday I hosted a meeting in Mitchell to discuss BSE, mad cow disease. We had more than 90 local farmers, agricultural leaders and business people there to hear from representatives of the Canadian

Food Inspection Agency, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ontario Cattlemen's Association.

As you are aware, the restrictions imposed by our trading partners are having a significant effect on the numerous farmers and farm-related operations across my riding. Minister, could you please explain what our government's position is on compensation for farmers affected by BSE?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'd like to thank the member and congratulate him on his meeting this weekend. I know he pulled almost 100 people out to this meeting. It shows real interest in his community and rural interest from him.

Let me say very clearly that this government is concerned about rural issues. Ernie Eves speaks hard and long about rural issues and how important they are to the economic engine of this province.

We are also speaking to the BSE issue specifically. We are concerned about the people not only in the beef industry but in all of the spinoff industries of the beef industry and how they will make a livelihood with this imposed trade restriction that we have.

On June 6, I wrote to Minister Vanclief and brought to his attention the important things that need to be done by the federal government to provide adequate compensation. As everyone in this House knows, this is a national issue and it demands national attention. So we asked that the federal government fund this with new dollars—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up. We have a supplementary.

Mr Johnson: I'm impressed with the work that you do in your ministry, acting for a strong economy, ensuring the road ahead and what we need to get to where we're going. I know you had planned to attend the meeting in my riding last Saturday but you had to go to Vancouver to meet with your provincial colleagues and the federal Minister of Agriculture, Van something, on Friday to discuss the possible assistance packages to those affected by BSE and related trade restrictions.

Could you tell the farmers in my riding and across Ontario what your position was at that meeting and where we're going from here?

Hon Mrs Johns: Our position is clear. It was laid out in *The Road Ahead*. It talks very clearly about compensation for the agricultural community in this province.

The Premier wrote a letter to the Prime Minister and asked the federal government to move forward with compensation for this industry. He agreed with the western Premiers that this compensation should be based on a disaster relief program of 90-10, or 90% federal and 10% provincial, as the western Premiers had done, and he suggested that that funding should come immediately because this industry is in crisis.

He also asked that the federal minister work quickly to lift the ban on this industry, because this is providing incredible problems to this industry. He supported the western Premiers. We stood with them, and we expect the federal government to come out immediately—

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

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask why immigration in *The Road Ahead* is under the crime part of your—

The Speaker: Order. It's not a point of order.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. You will know that the children's heart surgery program at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario is very, very important to families in eastern Ontario. You will recall that when you originally decided that you were going to shut that down, over 183,000 people signed petitions and many, many thousands took lawn signs. In fact, if you were to drive through the Ottawa area, you would still find lawn signs in support of maintaining that program in our community.

Since you first announced that you would cancel this program, we lost two surgeons, and a couple of weeks ago we lost a third, this one to Texas.

A short while ago, the Premier came to Ottawa and said the matter was under review. I think this matter should be a no-brainer. I think a province of 12 million people deserves to have two centres of excellence when it comes to children's heart surgery, one here in Toronto and one in Ottawa.

Will you now lift the cloud and guarantee to people living in eastern Ontario, families in particular, that you will assure them that they will not lose the children's heart surgery program from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm surprised the honourable member hasn't mentioned London in his remarks. It appears that the audience is different here, so he doesn't mention London. When he goes to London, he mentions London, but that's a different issue.

1510

In answer to the question, I can only say to the honourable member that I hope he agrees, as I do, that we should make these decisions based on the best clinical information that will save as many children as possible who have some desperate situations and diseases. I can commit to you that this review is all about ensuring that we act on the best possible clinical information.

Mr McGuinty: Why not just admit that this is not about acquiring further information? This is all about buying some more time until after the election, when you intend to proceed with your unequivocal plans to shut down the children's heart surgery program at CHEO in eastern Ontario. Why not just admit that?

This is nothing more than a cynical ploy. If you were committed, if you understood what was happening in eastern Ontario, if you understood the value of this program to those families, then you would stand up and say that in our province we're going to have at least a

second centre of excellence that will be located in Ottawa. It is already there at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Why don't you stand up now, put politics behind and guarantee us that we'll be able to hang on to this program in our community?

Hon Mr Clement: I'm trying to accord the honourable member the respect his office deserves. But when he accuses this side of the House of cynicism on this issue when his activities could smack of the same action, I would only say to the honourable member, let's put aside the issues of accusations and the issues of politics. I'd be happy to include the honourable member in a decision or a review where we look at the very best, most modern information, the best information that is supplied by clinical experts and scientists in the field, to make a decision as a matter of public policy. The honourable member doesn't know a lot about being a Premier if he says no to that.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. The federal Minister of Immigration, Denis Coderre, is on record as saying that Ontario has shown little if any interest in signing a deal to select smaller numbers of immigrants first, as Ottawa has asked it to do. Minister, why has Ontario not signed such a deal?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I thank the hard-working member from Scarborough Centre for the question.

The honourable member is referring to the provincial nominee program. This program gives provinces the ability to nominate a limited number of economic immigrants for entry into Canada. As you know, Ontario receives almost 60% of Canada's immigrants. What Ontario needs is an efficient and effective system for selecting newcomers. Under the provincial nominee program, only 2,000 immigrants came to Canada last year. Compare that to the more than 130,000 immigrants who settle in Ontario each and every year. You see, for Ontario that is a drop in the bucket.

We want the federal government to fix the main selection system. We are not interested in the federal down-loading of its responsibilities through nominee deals. We say to the federal Liberals, either fix it or get out of the way.

Ms Mushinski: I know that immigration is very important to this province. Indeed, I believe it's vital to its future, and Ontario truly deserves a hand in shaping the policies that bring newcomers to our province.

I know, as I'm sure you do, Minister, that members of the Ontario Liberal Party, who are nothing more than apologists of course for the federal government, claim that we are scapegoating immigrants and insulting all Ontarians by supporting a made-in-Ontario immigration policy that's clearly outlined in our great plan, which is called The Road Ahead. Minister, how else has the federal government let down Ontario's newcomers?

Hon Mr DeFaria: One of Mr Coderre's priorities was to encourage immigration to small and medium-sized communities as a further lack of federal Liberal responsibility, if you can say "Liberal responsibility"; that's an oxymoron. They have committed only \$3.8 million over two years to this program. Now Mr Coderre says that it's up to the provinces and municipalities to pay for the bulk of the federal initiative. Well, the government of Ontario is already doing its part. Recently Premier Ernie Eves announced an initiative that increases opportunity for foreign-trained doctors to become licensed to work in underserved communities. Mr Coderre says that immigration is about sharing. Well, we are doing our share; the feds are not.

The good people of Ontario have had enough. Ontario deserves a hand in shaping the policies that bring newcomers—

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is for the Deputy Premier. I don't think the Premier is still here. Is he gone? If he's gone, I'll direct it to the Deputy Premier.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Deputy Premier can handle it, thank you.

Mr Prue: The question, then, is to the Deputy Premier. Madame Deputy Premier, the trickle-down theory for housing does not work in this province, or anywhere. This is not just the NDP talking. Today TD Economics released a report, Affordable Housing in Canada: In Search of a New Paradigm. They say very much the same thing: that tax breaks given to developers don't work. The TD says the same thing the New Democratic Party has been saying for years: to build affordable housing through direct government grants. If you won't listen to the New Democratic Party, will you at least listen to the TD Bank when they're talking about housing?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I appreciate the question, and I refer it to the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I am pleased to address the question today. Housing in Ontario has increased, and due to the policies of this government is in a much better state than it has been in the past.

I take great issue with the member across the way for bringing such questions to this House, which really have to do with the increase we've had in affordable housing in this province. We are doing more in the province of Ontario for housing than any other government ever has. We've signed an affordable housing agreement with the federal government.

It took a long time to reach that agreement because the federal government was not co-operating with some of the unique issues in Ontario. Everyone in Canada has had

difficulty reaching an agreement with the federal government.

Mr Prue: Madame Associate Minister, there are 90,000 families in Toronto alone who are on the list for affordable housing. We're not talking about housing for the rich; we're talking about housing for the poor. Former Premier Harris slandered non-profits, and the Chrétien government put them at a disadvantage with this new housing policy. We believe that non-profits work. They know the needs of the community, and they are affordable in the long term. The TD Bank has written, "There is no compelling reason to think that tax breaks would work more effectively than grants targeted at affordable housing."

My question is quite simple: will you do what the TD Bank and the New Democratic Party have suggested and undo the boondoggle of the Harris years, when not one affordable housing unit was built in this province?

Hon Mrs Molinari: When we raise the issue of boondoggles, I want to let the member know that this government knows that hard-working families won't benefit from returning to the social housing boondoggles of the previous Liberal and NDP governments.

Real progress comes from removing the barriers that stand in the way of the private sector building affordable rental units and new homes. That's why this government has invested in effective tools, not costly failures. We've also cut taxes and helped create one million new jobs since taking office. This has played a big role in the booming growth of the housing sector in Ontario. New single-family homes alone have grown by 11% in Ontario. This means more families leaving the rental housing market and pushing vacancy rates up.

1520

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): My question originally would have been for the Minister of Public Safety, but he has denied coming with me on debate on this immigration issue and told me it was the Minister of Citizenship, so I'm afraid I'll have to ask you the question. Why is the immigration policy under the crime section of your Road Ahead program?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): My friend is wrong. The immigration policy in The Road Ahead is under "Safe Communities."

Ontario is a welcoming province. Ontario is the most diverse jurisdiction on the planet, with over 200 cultural communities living side by side raising their families and speaking some 70 or 80 different languages.

Ontario continues to be a land of opportunity. Everywhere I go throughout this great province, I hear from people who arrive in this province, worked hard and built their families here and built their professions and careers. I'm so proud to be the minister responsible for immigration and to interact with all our diverse communities of Ontario.

Mrs Bountrogianni: For the last few weeks, I've been honoured to go to flag-raising ceremonies and other ceremonies for our ethnic communities. You've been proudly there. How do you think they feel when you have their issues under "Safe Communities"? Perhaps you're trying to divert the attention from your sorry record—from the sorry record of the Minister of Public Safety: 10,000 arrest warrants outstanding, according to the Provincial Auditor's 2002 report, many for serious violent offences, not from illegal refugees, not from immigrants.

Four out of five sex offenders are not receiving proper rehabilitation after being released into the community—from the Provincial Auditor's 2002 report—not illegal refugees, not immigrants.

Forty percent of serious offenders being released into the community go unsupervised or unmanaged by the ministry—Provincial Auditor, 2002. Those are the facts you would like the people of Ontario to—

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Scapegoat.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Thank you. You want to scapegoat the immigrants so that people will be diverted from the real facts—

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

Interjections.

Hon Mr DeFaria: Do you want to hear the answer?

The Speaker: Order. We'll stop the clock and let you finish.

Interjections.

The Speaker: We've stopped the clock so he can finish and wrap up. Minister?

Hon Mr DeFaria: It is here under "Public Security": the federal government lost connection with 36,000 illegal people and doesn't know where they are. Those are the people under "Public Security."

I'll answer the question of my friend. I know exactly what the diverse communities think. Do you know why? Because I'm there, day in and day out.

Just this weekend I was in eight different communities celebrating Father's Day with people of diverse communities. I know they love our platform; they love our tax credits for seniors; they love our tax deductibility; they just love waving Ontario flags.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: the Premier, in response to an opposition question earlier today regarding the accommodation co-payments in long-term-care facilities, referred to percentages and not dollars. The Premier is asking to correct his record today. He intended to say that this government limited increases last year to \$3.02 and this year to \$1.16, not 3% and 1.16%.

The Speaker: I appreciate it. It's not a point of order. I thought he was correcting his record, but he slipped the Premier in. I apologize; I should have been quicker on my feet. Actually, the table is much quicker and did catch it. I should have listened to them.

Mrs Bountrogianni: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to register my dissatisfaction with the answer of the Minister of Culture, and I would like to submit the proper paperwork.

The Speaker: I thank the member. She will know to file the appropriate papers with the table, and she may do that.

It is time for petitions, and the member for Sudbury. Sorry. Before we start the clock, a point of order.

Hon Mr DeFaria: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If they want me to answer the question more, I'd love to.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Come to order, please. Question period is over. We're now going to petitions. I would ask all members for their co-operation. We've had our fun for the hour. Now we move on to the next order of business, and it's petitions. The member for Sudbury, who is getting tired, can lead us off—I guess he's not going to lead us off.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe I heard the member for Hamilton East tell my caucus colleague the member for Mississauga East to go back where he came from.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We're at the stage now where we are going to say something we're all going to regret. The member for Hamilton East, please come to order. We're at the point where somebody is going to say something they'll regret. I ask all members to please cool it.

It is now time for petitions, and the member for Sudbury.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It might be best if members decide on their own to move out, because we are going to get into something I think we're all going to regret that won't reflect well on any of us. I don't need to remind any of the members that we still have a class sitting up there. You should see the faces of those children—they're young adults—looking at the behaviour down here. I ask all members, please—question period is over. If you need to, and you feel your temperature is up, I would ask you all to please just remove—

Interjections.

The Speaker: That's it. The member for Hamilton East is named and the Minister of Finance is named. Both of you are out. I name both of you: Mr Agostino and Janet Ecker are out. You can go outside and yell at each other for five hours, as far as I'm concerned. You just won't shut up, either of you. I gave you ample warning and I was very reasonable with all of you. But no, you can't do it, you've got to keep yapping, so you'll both be out—disgraceful.

Mr Agostino and Mrs Ecker were escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: Now we're going to get to the member for Sudbury on petitions.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like to congratulate Bridget, who is from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, on being very patient while she was waiting. Well done, Bridget.

This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

“Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

“Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

“Whereas the ... Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

“Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of” any “government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Eves government has failed to do so;

“Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Eves government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease.”

Of course, I affix my signature to that petition.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have hundreds of names of petitioners. It reads: “Petition Against the Continuing Actions of Supervisors in Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto District School Boards.

“To the Ontario Legislature:

“Whereas the government has cut over \$2 billion from public education over the past seven years;

“Whereas the provincial funding formula does not provide sufficient funds for local district school board trustees to meet the needs of students;

“Whereas district school boards around the province have had to cut needed programs and services, including library, music, physical education and special education;

“Whereas the district school boards in Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto refused to make further cuts and were summarily replaced with government-appointed supervisors;

“Whereas these supervisors are undermining classroom education for hundreds of thousands of children;

“We, the undersigned” members “of the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, call on the government to restore local democracy by removing the supervisors

in the Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto district school boards.”

I support this petition very strongly

1530

HIGHWAY 518

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“That the ministry immediately proceed with the reconstruction of Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11.

“This highway is in a deplorable condition. Those who have to travel this corridor to their jobs, shopping, medical services etc have been promised by the MTO that this highway would be upgraded to allow for safe and problem-free travel.

“We request the ministry to commence reconstruction as soon as possible.”

I affix my name to this petition in support of it.

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% over three years, or \$3.02 per diem in the first year and \$2 in the second year and \$2 in the third year, effective September 1, 2002; and

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

“Whereas this increase is above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario for 2002; and

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

“Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based upon government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; 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 back in 1999; 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;

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

“We demand that Premier Eves reduce the 15% increase over three years in accommodation costs to no more than the cost-of-living increase annually and that

the provincial government provide adequate funding for nursing and personal care to a level that is at least at the average standard for nursing and personal care in those 10 jurisdictions included in the government’s own study.”

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

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): It is my distinct pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents for the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credits for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas, prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and make independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

I am pleased to endorse this in support of Knox Christian School and other schools in my riding. The parent choice comes first.

HOME CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition concerns the cut in homemaking services in the Manitoulin-Sudbury area by the CCAC.

“Whereas we are outraged by the community care access centre’s decision to cut homemaking services to seniors;

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

“(1) Provide enough resources to the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre so that they can provide homemaking services; and

“(2) Instruct Associate Minister Dan Newman to attend a public meeting with MPP Rick Bartolucci to hear stories about what will happen when homemaking services are cut off.”

I affix my signature to this petition, as I did last week and yesterday, and give it to Brittany and ask her to take it to the table.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Bob Wood (London West): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): “Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

“Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

“Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

“Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

“Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

“Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

“Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents a kilometre, with driving time considered ‘hours worked’;

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

“To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers.”

I will affix my significant to this petition as I am in full agreement.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

“Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

“Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario introduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years.”

1540

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition concerns the four-laning of Highway 69. Speaker, I know it will upset you to hear that that road was again closed near the area you represent, Killarney, once again today.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

“Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

“Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

“Whereas the Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

“Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of any government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Eves government has failed to do so;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Eves government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease.”

Again I give this petition, after I sign it, to Aja to bring to the table.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): It is indeed again my pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and to present it to the page Caitlyn. What

riding are you from, Caitlyn? Brantford? She will take it to the table when I'm finished.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced the financial burden of paying taxes ... to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit supports parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario reintroduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years."

I'm pleased to endorse this on behalf of Knox school and other Christian schools in my riding of Durham.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it states as follows:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15%," and the member from Niagara Falls remembers that quite well, "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 amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; 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 for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; 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;

"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'm handing this petition over to Bridget, one of our pages. I agree with it entirely and have signed it accordingly.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit, when Bill 53 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on second and third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Clark has moved government notice of motion number 53. We split the time evenly. Minister?

Hon Mr Clark: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak today to the time allocation motion on Bill 53, The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act is so named for two important reasons: first, because it's the right thing to do for the parents of children in independent schools; second, because it's the right thing to do in terms of fulfilling our budget commitments.

When my colleague Finance Minister Janet Ecker introduced the 2003 Ontario budget, she noted that the people of Ontario had delivered one overarching message to her during our government's pre-budget consultations: they wanted the government to stay the course, cutting taxes and continuing investments in priority areas, such as health care, education and strong communities, and on ensuring accountability for the dollars that we spend.

Mr Speaker, let me remind you and the members of the House and the people watching at home what Bill 53 is all about. There's been a great deal of debate and discussion. The bill is entitled The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. It's all about supporting parental choice. We want to give parents the flexibility to decide whether to send their children to an independent

school. We believe that parents and not government officials or bureaucrats are in the best position to make that particular decision. So we've introduced this tax credit which allows parents that flexibility to make the right decision, the right choice, for their families. Parents may choose an independent school with a particular religious focus, whether it be Christian, Jewish, Muslim or some other denomination. Perhaps it's a school with a particular academic style or educational focus, like Montessori or Waldorf. Whatever parents decide, the important thing is that it is their decision, not ours.

For 2002, the tax credit reimbursed 10% of the first \$7,000 of tuition fees, for a maximum tax credit of \$700 per child, and 10% of the first \$3,500 of tuition fees for a child of kindergarten age, for a maximum tax credit of \$350. If the Legislature passes this bill, the tax credit rate will rise to a maximum of \$1,400 or 20% for the child for 2003, 30% in the year 2004, 40% for 2005, 50% for 2006 and beyond. At the same time, independent schools where parents claim the tax credit will now be required to assess student progress in core areas of reading, writing and mathematics. They will need to ensure that parents and legal guardians are informed of how schools monitor and assess the progress of their children in the core subjects. Independent schools will need to enhance student safety by verifying the status of their instructors with the Ontario College of Teachers and share the results of this verification with parents. They will need to inform parents and guardians where they can find information about consumer protection from the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

It's important to point out as well that we have delivered on this important commitment just as we have made the historic investments in public education. Education funding for the upcoming 2003-04 school year will be a record \$15.3 billion. We recognize that education is a top priority for all Ontarians. By 2005-06, multi-year-based funding for school boards will be 14%, or almost \$2 billion higher than the funding level provided in the 2002 budget.

As I've said, education is one of the top priorities for the people of Ontario, and therefore this provincial government has invested wisely in public education. It's been very confusing for members in this House, especially on the government side, to watch the dithering of our opposition members on this particular tax credit.

There has been a lot of discussion about the United Nations and whether or not we're following what the United Nations had recommended. The United Nations at one point had recommended full funding for all denominational schools, but we recognize it is very difficult in this type of society to provide that type of full funding. So we came up with a novel, innovative approach, one that we thought all sides of the House would respect. It's with great interest that I watched to see the opposition, specifically the Liberal Party, try to portray this as somehow fragmenting society.

1550

I'd like to read into the record, if I may, a pastoral letter that was written in 1989—that's quite some time

ago—by the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops. This is what the bishops of the province of Ontario had to say to their people:

"Our commitment to the best education for all students impels us to respect and support the wishes of parents in other faith communities for religious education in the public school system or for alternative schools which will reflect their values and beliefs. The primacy of parental rights in education is a value which should be realized not only by Catholic parents but also by others. We have publicly committed ourselves to support the concept of the development of alternative schools for people of other faith communities."

The Conference of Catholic Bishops clearly put into the record what their position is for parental choice, for education of this particular description. So when the opposition and specifically the Liberals stand up in their place and rail that somehow we're fragmenting society by doing this, that somehow we're being punitive—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Give the whole thing.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kingston, come to order.

Mr Gerretsen: Very selective.

Hon Mr Clark: The member opposite would suggest that we're being selective; I would suggest that we're not. As a matter of fact, from your own opposition platform, you stated that you believe in free votes. Then I'd suggest that the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora, the member for St Paul's and the member for York Centre might want to exercise that free vote and vote for the education tax credit, since they actually believe in it and have actually stated that on the public record. However, the leader of the loyal opposition has whipped that whip, and they will, in fact, be voting with the opposition opposing it, even though their principles and values state that they support this particular proposal.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Clark: The member opposite is obviously a little bit annoyed that we're taking issue with what they've been saying in the House.

One of the other things they've been doing is they've been stating in this House that we're going to suck money out of the public education system.

Mr Gerretsen: You are.

Hon Mr Clark: The member just said, "You are." So they're admitting that that's what their allegation is.

It couldn't be further from the truth. As a matter of fact, we have proven that we've injected \$2 billion into the education system, an additional \$2 billion, and we have not taken money away from the public education system for the tax credits.

I find it awfully striking that opposition members would oppose tax credits for education, and yet tax credits for education are not new to the government of Canada or to the government of Ontario. Tax credits for education have been around for quite some time. When you go to university or college, you supply receipts to the government at the end of the year for your income tax.

You get a tax credit for that. This is not an unusual item; it's actually quite commonplace. What we've done is simply made it more innovative and provided it for private schools.

I'd like to read into the record a media release of May 10, 2001. For those who are watching at home and are curious as to who's actually telling the truth about this education tax credit—they have that curiosity because they've heard both sides of the equation; they want to know who's actually telling the truth—we are telling the truth. We are telling the people at home exactly what this is all about. I have in my hand a press release dated May 10, 2001:

"The Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops commends the Ontario government for having taken a first initiative to support parents who for conscientious reasons choose to send their children to faith-based independent schools.

"The OCCB has long been in support of parental choice in such matters. Ontario is now a very diverse community. Parents with a sincere desire to educate their children in their faith tradition deserve to be supported in what is often a difficult task.

"At the same time OCCB appreciates the continued support of the government for the publicly funded systems of the province with their own diversity of faith" and "language."

I wonder, would the leader of the loyal opposition, would the Liberal Party or the NDP accuse the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops of trying to fragment society? The Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops have stated very clearly that they believe this is the right thing to do, that it's about equity, it's about fairness, it's about compassion and it's about principled values of parental choice. Since the Liberal Party and the province of Ontario have in their platforms parental choice, since the Liberal Party has in their platform free votes, one would suggest that there should be at least one, two or three brave souls on the other side of the House who will rise with the government and actually support us.

I have before me quotations from the member for St Paul's, Michael Bryant. Michael Bryant stated on May 12, 2001—you'll like this now. You've heard this before, but I'm going to give it to you one more time—"I can't suck and blow on this (the tax credit). I've got to support this. It's a step in the direction of equity."

Clearly, Mr Bryant agrees with the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops. This is a step in the right direction. Opening line: they commend "the Ontario government for having taken a first initiative to support parents who for conscientious reasons choose to send their children to faith-based"—

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): You're torquing it.

Hon Mr Clark: This is not torquing it. Would you like to read it? Or perhaps you'd like to call the Conference of Catholic Bishops and ask them. They stated that very clearly and emphatically. They made that very clear.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): He read it verbatim.

Hon Mr Clark: I read it verbatim. You're happy to have this. It's on their Web site. By all means look it up.

For those of you over there who are accusing the government of Ontario of somehow trying to fragment society, of somehow trying to polarize society, of placing one religion against another—we've heard these allegations for the last couple of days in this House—I'd like them to say that to the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops. When the OCCB stated very clearly that they believe this is the right thing to do, I'd like to know how any member in the opposition can somehow slander this government and state that we're trying to fragment society, when clearly we're offering equity, when clearly we're offering an opportunity for compassionate opportunities for education in the schooling system.

Monte Kwinter, November 16, 1999: "I now call on the government of Ontario to respond in a positive way to this United Nations human rights committee ruling." To Monte Kwinter: we have. The United Nations made that ruling. We looked at that ruling and we said, "You know what? We can't afford to provide full funding for every single school system, every single denomination in Ontario." My colleagues over there would agree that would be an onerous task at best. So we came up with an innovative plan of tax credits, an innovative plan that clearly is supported not only by the Muslim community, the Jewish community and many other denominations, but the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops supports it. They put it in a press release. There cannot be a clearer indication of support from the Catholic church.

Mr Maves: Read Monte's other quote.

Hon Mr Clark: Monte's other quote. Point it out for me. Here's another quote, June 8, 2001, so this is clearly sooner: "I've always supported it. As a matter of fact, I advocated it for 16 years." For 16 years, the member for York Centre has advocated for this. "We had 5,000 people in support of the position that there is a real issue of discrimination."

It's unfortunate that the leader of the loyal opposition has torqued this issue, has twisted it in such a manner that he's now convinced his entire caucus, including principled men of integrity: the members for York Centre, St Paul's and Vaughan-King-Aurora who believe this tax credit makes sense. If they had the right to a free vote, they would be rising in this House with their conscience, with their integrity, with their values and voting with the government. This is about equity. This is about fairness. This is about democracy. This is about doing what is right.

So often we've heard the lectures and the preaching from the other side. This is about doing what is right for the province of Ontario. I will wholeheartedly support this, and I will support the time allocation.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is a pleasure to again rise on this bill. This is the limited debate. This is the measure of the courage of the government and its conviction of what it's doing today that they would permit only three days of debate. Yet it affects every single student in this province, this alien concept,

this policy that does not exist in any Canadian jurisdiction, that is only to be found in a few US cities—a voucher, a tax credit of public money going to private schools.

We see that the members opposite here glory in this particular initiative. They finally get the chance to be the kind of Tory party they really are, the kind that has stripped down and undermined public education. That's been their hallmark. That's been their success. What they've managed to do actually bears marking, because over the last seven years this government has managed to grow private school enrolment by 50%. They've managed to increase that enrolment manyfold over what it was under previous governments. And they have managed to squish down the growth in enrolment in the public schools by half. Now 37,000 students, one in every four new students, under the Conservative government, under this government, goes to a private school, compared to one in 16 under the NDP and one in 25 under the Liberals. This is the government's salient success: one in four students choosing to go to private schools and now getting paid government dollars for it.

1600

Mr Bob Wood (London West): What's wrong with that?

Mr Kennedy: The member from London West asks, "What's wrong with that?" He agrees wholeheartedly with the idea that this is the priority use. The best use of public dollars, for the member, is to see schools that already charge tuition of \$33,000, which is what they're charging at Albert College, be able now to charge \$35,000. That's what the member glories in. That's what he thinks is a good use of public money. He wants to put those public dollars into those high-end schools.

Would it be that Albert College was alone, but it isn't. In fact, Appleby College is going from \$35,100 to \$36,850, an increase of \$1,750, of which \$1,400 comes from you. It is a gift from this government: \$1,400 in a tax credit coming from the Progressive Conservatives of Ontario. That's where they think our dollars should go. Meanwhile, we can't fully provide English as second language in our schools. They cut it back. It takes five to seven years to acquire another language. This economy needs to grow with immigrants who know how to be part of society and are rewarded for learning the language. Instead, they cut back the money. We're missing those dollars, and now we know where they're going. They're going to Albert College, Appleby College and Ashbury College, who already have \$30,000 a year to spend on students. And they would deny a few hundred dollars more to public students.

We know why there's a closure debate here today. We know why these guys don't have the courage of this particular bill: because they want to hide it. They won't stand up in their communities and defend how they are undermining their public students. And make no mistake, that's what they're doing. They don't even have the courage to do what their own independent report said. It said to each one of you, "You're shortchanging the

students in your communities. You're cutting the money away from them. You've taken dollars from them and used them for other purposes."

In fact, all they have managed to do, after all the pressure, all the crumbling schools and all the difficulties that students have had achieving, is to promise—and we know what that promise might be worth—to put back into public education only 31% of what was asked of them. They have failed the Rozanski test. They have failed it miserably in every single community in this province.

Take the two together, because you have to. It adds up to the coherency, the education policy that every parent in this province now fears, which is that their child will not have the chance to go forward based on their ability and based on their willingness to work hard. That's the changing face of Ontario that these people would engineer with their backhanded bill here today.

Well, this party will do differently. We will cancel this tax credit the minute we get into power, and we will see those funds available to improve the public system.

It is no accident that we see these things coming together at this time. On the one hand is a government unwilling to do the things that Dr Rozanski said should happen in schools; not willing, for example, to provide the money for music teachers or smaller class sizes, which children desperately need, for phys ed, for services that are being stripped out of our public schools. No dollars for English as a second language. Even though they were told point blank that we now know that children in our schools coming from backgrounds in poverty will do better if we deal with that set of issues early on in their lives, right now, as we speak, their appointed board in Toronto is cutting away all-day JK. The money that Dr Rozanski, their hand-picked, independent person—as mild an indictment as you're going to get from their own person was, "You have to put \$50 million in there."

How much money is available for kids living in poverty to do better in school under these Conservatives? Not one dime. They're sending it instead to Havergal College, which is going to increase their tuition by \$950, taking up all of the increase of the \$700 that's available. It's going to Rosseau Lake College in Rosseau, Ontario. Their tuition was \$28,650 last year; next year it will be \$30,900. So \$1,400 of that \$2,250 increase is coming as a gift from the Conservatives, because that's the kind of government they run. They don't do the things that are needed.

As everyone who represents an Ontario community knows, Dr Rozanski said, "Crumbling schools have to be dealt with." Do you know how much of a liability this slipshod, lazy government has built up in our schools' infrastructure? Some \$5.6 billion. How much, then, has this government rushed, falling all over themselves, to put back into making these schools safe again, making them places where parents want to send their kids and know they'll be safe and secure? Not one dime. Not one cent of the \$200 million annually that Dr Rozanski said

had to be put in those schools, had to start next fall, has been committed by this government. It's too busy giving the Toronto French School the ability to raise their tuition from \$16,900 to \$17,750—an \$850 increase, all of it paid for, courtesy of the Conservative Party of Ontario. It's an election-style gift at the direct expense of the people in public schools.

I would say also that when we touch on the lack of gumption, the laziness, the absolute inappropriateness of this closure motion today, we only need to look where this government has looked time after time. If they would just get themselves out of the Republican used-goods bin and spend some time looking more broadly at what happens in the States, they'd find out that last year there were 25 measures put forward in state Legislatures to promote tax credits and, yes, with more courageous people who call them vouchers, for what they are. That's what these are: vouchers. These are Tory vouchers. Twenty-five of those proposals hit state Legislatures last year; 25 of them failed because they were subject to public debate. When they went on the ballot in California and in Oregon, they got defeated. If you give this issue to the public, they'll treat it with the respect it deserves.

This is a diversion by the ideologues in the government seeking votes and, along the way, exploiting religious objectors around the province. They know, the members opposite know—if they don't, then they've been hornswoiggled by their own minister and their own government—that 75% of the money of this tax credit is going to secular private schools, not religious schools. They know that's where it's going.

As the list that we've had circulated now demonstrates, it's not even going to the parents. They can't even make that argument. Instead, it's going to Lakefield College School to enable them to increase their tuition from \$35,310 to \$37,075—a \$1,765 increase, almost all of it paid for by the Conservatives of Ontario, who can't bring themselves to pay for the textbooks, the smaller class sizes, the assistance to kids in poverty, to do the things that need to be done by a government that took them away in the first place.

This is a government that doesn't know, has yet to understand, the meaning of responsibility, that can't bring itself to stand responsibly even for this legislation that is subjecting the closure motion, or indeed for any of the outcomes of the policies that it brings in front of us.

We have in front of us today a small chance, an opportunity to alert the people of this province that this is about a fight for public education, the kind of which we've never seen before. This measure, this tacked-on, artificial inducement that this government would give away—tax dollars, some \$500 million in tax dollars—to private schools to allow them to pad their tuitions is about more than that. At root, this has the ability, unfortunately, to tear down public schools all across the province.

Let's look at the record. This government has lost us a net 115 schools. No other government has done that. In the last two administrations there were a net 150 schools

built over the ones that were closed. They closed 400 public schools but they have gained somewhere else. They've lost as a net 115 public schools but they've gained elsewhere: 225 private schools have opened under this government, 40 under the last year alone, a doubling of the opening of private schools in the first year of this misguided tax credit.

If the government had the gumption, they'd stand up and talk about their success in undermining public education and in driving kids away. Those 37,000 kids they managed to chase into private schools represent a loss to every community. It means an accelerated shut-down of public schools. There are rural schools that have been closed because this government has undermined the confidence that some parents have and they've put them on the provincial closing policy list again and again. Those discouraged parents, some of whom have headed into these private schools, don't want to be there. Special-needs parents, for example, paying \$12,000: I read about Miss Diane Allen, who had taken out a second mortgage to pay \$12,000 a year for her child because this government took away the special-needs funding.

We see a clear distinction, a clear choice shaping up for Ontarians: a poorly thought-out tax credit with no conditions, meant to foster private, exclusive education; or excellence in public education—that's where the Ontario Liberals will be right now, that's where we'll be at the time of the election and that's where we'll be if we form the next government, based on bringing excellence to public schools.

1610

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's a pleasure, on behalf of New Democrats, to speak against this closure motion, a pleasure to beat up on and berate the Conservative government on a regular basis, and I do so on behalf of so many Ontarians who would love to have the opportunity to be here and do the same but can't. Through me vicariously, many of you hopefully will enjoy the kind of beating we give, so that you can see that from time to time there are members who can do that on your behalf and do it well.

New Democrats are unequivocally opposed, not just to this closure motion as we always are, but to this bill that they call “right choices for equity in education.” New Democrats have always been unequivocal: you will never find a quote from any New Democratic member in this House that in any way shows ambivalence toward the issue of funding private schools, be they denominational or non-denominational. You will not find one New Democrat who will do that. You will find many Liberals, however, who have equivocated on this matter, and you've heard quotes from many of them—you've heard them from me and you've heard them from others. I don't want to berate the Liberals, as I sometimes do, because the real focus today is the government.

Mrs Dombrowsky: What does Nellie say?

Mr Marchese: Nellie Pedro? I don't know what she says. I'm looking forward to it.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I'm looking forward, Marie Bountrogianni, to facing your friend Nellie Pedro in the next election. You just can't understand the relish I have; in fact, I salivate at the thought.

Interjection: So does she.

The Acting Speaker: Through the Speaker, please.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, through you, I'll read the quotes again, because clearly the Liberals want me to.

"Gerard Kennedy, Liberal education critic"—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Marchese: In 2001, Marie Bountrogianni.

"[Gerard Kennedy] contends that funding for religious schools doesn't necessarily mean less money for the public system. Both can be accommodated, he says. How? 'We don't have the answer to that at this time'"—Monsieur Kennedy, the member you just heard, for those of you watching, speaking on funding for private schools in NOW magazine in 2001.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): That's denominational schools. There's a difference.

Mr Marchese: Is there a difference?

Mrs McLeod: Yes.

Mr Marchese: The Liberals will claim that defending private schools as it relates to religious schools is OK because that's different.

Mr Gerretsen: No.

Mr Marchese: That's not OK?

Mr Gerretsen: They're different from non-denominational schools.

Mr Marchese: Are they different?

Mr Gerretsen: Yes.

Mr Marchese: The Liberals claim that private non-denominational schools are different from religious schools. A wonderful deduction you make; brilliant logic. By that, do you mean that if we fund religious schools, that's OK by you?

Mr Gerretsen: I didn't say that.

Mr Marchese: What are you saying?

Mr Gerretsen: They're different circumstances.

Mr Marchese: They're different circumstances, the member from Kingston and the Islands says. I'm not quite sure what circumstances he is referring to. Either he is confused or he's attempting to confuse, but it is a typically Liberal slithering, reptilian kind of position that attempts to have it either way.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): What does Nellie say?

Mr Marchese: Nellie will have an opportunity to have her say. But I hear the Liberals and I enjoy it. I'm so happy they're engaged in the debate. My attack was going to be on the Tories, but when the Liberals engage, I love that kind of debate too, because the member from Kingston and the Islands—and others; perhaps I could name names—just said he makes a distinction between denominational, religious schools versus non-denominational.

So when I read Monsieur Kennedy, your education critic, who "contends that funding for religious schools

doesn't necessarily mean less money for the public system," which is what they're doing and funding, "Both can be accommodated," but he doesn't have the answer as to how they're going to accommodate them financially—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Then I ask the member for Kingston and the Islands, what is he saying? I am curious to know the logic of that kind of thinking. Tories are funding both religious schools, which are denominational, and non-denominational schools such as Upper Canada College; one religious, one not religious, but they're funding both. By way of these quotations that I read to you from the various Liberal members, I'm not sure what the Liberals support. Monte Kwinter said, "I've always supported full funding for faith-based schools.... There should be some recognition in the" provincial "tax regime. I'm personally delighted that that's happened." That's Monte; and that's the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Sudbury agreeing.

Mrs McLeod: Do you have any of my quotes, Rosario?

Mr Marchese: Yours? I wish I could find it. How many Liberal members do I need to quote before you, taxpayers, and you, citizens, get the impression that they are somewhat ambivalent, possibly confused, and they don't know what to do? Michael Bryant, my buddy close to me, said, "I can't suck and blow on this" tax credit. "I've got to support this. It's a step in the direction of equity." How many Liberals do we need to quote before you, citizens, get the impression that the Liberals perhaps have a reptilian position, perhaps unrecognizable? But what is clear to me is that it is not a clear position. What is clear to me is that they are as confused as—they don't want to be. But they are trying to say, "Yes, in 2001, many of our members said what they said, but they're no longer saying it." That I understand, but say that. Say, "In 2001, four, five or six of our members said what they wanted to say, but they're no longer saying it, and that's OK, because we're Liberals and we can say whatever we want to say, and we can change our minds whenever." That's OK, but say that. I don't have any problems with that. I have no problems with the serpentine positions that you take as long as you say it. New Democrats are unequivocal.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Yeah, right.

Mr Marchese: The member for Sudbury laughs jovially, because he's a jovial man. He says, "Yeah, right." But I defy the jovial man from Sudbury to find a quote from any New Democrat that is similar to the quotes that I read by Michael Bryant, Monsieur Kennedy and Monsieur Kwinter, including their leader. I defy the jovial fellow from Sudbury to find a quote from any New Democrat here that supports private schools, Monsieur member for Sudbury.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Oh, member for Sudbury. You might want to take us back to the days of Peterson, who through his regulatory measures was going to control the auto

insurance rates. I am sure now, member for Sudbury, with your leader you can introduce another regulatory regime to control it.

I tell you this, jovial fellow from Sudbury: New Democrats support public auto insurance. Many of the members who are in this place today opposed the move to go the way we said we should. While it is true that our Premier at the time was worried about the recession and 15,000 people being laid off as a result of the move that we were interested in, while he had those reservations, many of us who are here today calling for public auto insurance were saying to him, "In spite of those concerns you have, Premier Bob, we need to go ahead." We here are committed to a public auto insurance plan that will, I tell you, fix skyrocketing insurance rates. The Liberals can only say to the Tories, "Fix it." They know Tories can't regulate it. The Liberals can't regulate this beast. No one can regulate that beast except public auto insurance.

Mrs Dombrowsky: What did you do in government?

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Mr Marchese: I just explained it. Have you been sleeping or what? Where are you from? Let me check you out and see what riding you're from. She is from Hastings-Frontenac. My goodness, I was just telling you the story. Do you want me to repeat it?

Mrs Dombrowsky: No. You did nothing.

Mr Marchese: If I have to repeat it, then we've got a problem. How many things can one repeat here when we're talking about what the Liberals are saying or doing? Citizens, New Democrats are unequivocal on this matter. Liberals take reptilian positions regularly. You will never know where they stand. The reason why you will never know where they stand is because they will change their positions on a regular basis and not cringe when doing so, because that's in their nature. It is in the nature of Liberal politics to vacillate, here and hither—daily, weekly, monthly, yearly—and not one ounce of feeling bad about their change of position from day to day. I'm tired of the Liberals. I need to focus on the Tories. Liberals exhaust me.

Mr Gerretsen: We're tired of you.

Mr Marchese: I'm sure you are, member for Kingston and the Islands. You will get your opportunity to have your say. When you, member for Kingston and the Islands, get to have your say, you can comment on what your leader has said on this matter and you can comment on what the other members have said on this matter, because I would be pleased to hear your answer. I know you will divert, you will skirt away, you will hide, you will skulk, but you will never address what is in your nature as a Liberal, and that is to continually vacillate on positions as soon as the issues get hot—just like hydro. You supported the sell-off of Hydro One, you supported the sell-off of hydro generation, and when things get hot, all of a sudden your leader stands up and says, "Oh, no, we're opposed too, like New Democrats. We're opposed to that." It's in your nature. As soon as things get hot, you switch your position, and that's OK. That's why you

guys tire me. You are such a difficult moving target to pin down. You are like water to hold. You are like jelly to hold. Please.

Back to the Tories. The government has been able to find to date 120 million bucks. Yesterday the member from Scarborough Centre said, "The money won't be coming out of public schools." A curious thought. Where would the money be coming from, member from Scarborough Centre? Out of the blue, like manna from heaven, like some alchemist will simply produce money out of the blue? To date, 120 million bucks. Where is it coming from? Additional income taxes?

SARS has put a damper on our economy a little bit. We have less money than we did before. The American economy has slowed down a bit and we are exporting less to the US. We don't have as much money as we did before, but we found \$120 million for private schools.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Where is it coming from, Bob Wood?

Mr Wood: Revenues are up.

Mr Marchese: Ah, revenues are up. We give away corporate tax cuts. We give away more in individual income tax cuts. Where's that money going? How much money is coming in? How much money is going out? What are we going to cut next?

I tell you, citizens, should this government be re-elected, we would be very, very broke. This government would have to find a whole lot of money from some source to pay for these promises, to pay for these private tax credits, to pay for the corporate tax cuts, to pay for the individual income tax cuts that are going to wealthy people who are sending their kids to Upper Canada College. Bob Wood wants to send my money to parents who can afford to send their kids to Upper Canada College, where the tuition fees are 16,000 bucks a year. His income tax cuts that will go to parents who send their kids to Havergal, just up the street at Lawrence and Avenue Road, where the tuition fees are \$20,000 a pop; his tax cuts, this tax credit, to serve the needs of these high-income parents who are able to pay tuition fees for kids whose total tuition fee yearly is a yearly salary for someone earning \$6.85 an hour, literally. Someone earning \$6.85 an hour, citizens, is barely earning close to what one person has to pay by way of tuition fees to send their kids to Havergal, and Bob Wood wants to send my money and yours to subsidize these parents because they're needy.

I don't want to send my money to them, but that's where the money's going. The money's coming from somewhere and the money doesn't grow on trees. It's coming out of somewhere, and they're stealing it from our public system to send it to the private system so that rich parents can send their kids to Havergal—\$20,000 a year for one kid. Maybe they have two kids—\$40,000. Maybe they have three children. Havergal, an old girls' school up the street—maybe they have three kids—60,000 bucks. Good heavens—\$20,000, \$40,000, \$60,000 for tuition fees, and the member from London West and the member from Perth-Middlesex think that's

OK? You call that flexibility? You call that parental choice?

Do they send the poor kids from your riding to these kinds of rich schools where they've got to pay \$20,000 a year?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: The member from Northumberland, I couldn't hear you.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You want to be part of whom?

These are private schools. These parents send their kids to private schools so as to avoid their kids mixing with our kids who are in a public system. They choose to send them to a private system so that they do not mix with our kids in the public system. They want a private system so as to make sure that when their kids grow up and marry, they're going to marry someone of their own kind. I'm not talking religion here; I'm talking money kind. That's what that's about. It's a private club. Havergal is a private club. Upper Canada College is a private club, sorry. That's why rich parents send their kids there.

That's what this tax credit does. It sends your money and mine so that we can subsidize poor rich parents who are paying 16,000 to 20,000 bucks a year to send their kids to private schools. It's nuts. You've got to understand that. You, taxpayers, must agree with me that it's a nutty idea for this government to send your money away, \$120 million away, this year to subsidize rich parents. Oh, they're not subsidizing these schools, the private schools, no. They're subsidizing parents. "Oh, but that's OK, because we're subsidizing choice." Oh? Rich parents get to have my money so they can have more choice that they don't already have? Someone who is sending their kids to a private school doesn't need my help to make that choice. They make that choice with or without you. They don't want your money, but you are giving away my money. They're rich and they don't need your money, but you're giving away our money, their money.

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When someone earning \$6.85 an hour, the minimum wage, because you, the government, says, "They're earning too much; \$6.85 is too much; we can't raise it"—for eight years the minimum wage has stayed at \$6.85 an hour. They barely make 20,000 bucks a year, but some rich person can send their kids to Havergal for 20,000 bucks. It's kind of funny, isn't it, member for Perth-Middlesex?

Interjection: It's sad.

Mr Marchese: But it's sad. It's pitifully sad.

Then you have the member from Niagara Centre, who said yesterday, "The great equalizer is not public education, it's education," by which he meant that if parents send their kids to a private school, that's part of the equalization, part of what creates equality, presumably, among all children, I guess. Sorry, 95% of our kids go to public schools; 5% do not. The great equalizer is our public system. That's where we need to put our resources, not private schools.

Is it a level playing field when a wealthy child is educated at a private school, with ample resources both at home and in their schools, because they're not short of much? Is it a level playing field when these kids have so much and yet so many of our poor inner-city schools have so little, lacking text books, having fewer librarians than ever before—I'll get to the list in a moment—having fewer music teachers than ever before?

We have a situation here in the city of Toronto where the supervisor, your marionette, who controls the Toronto board of education has determined that nine inner-city full-time senior kindergartens would be closed. Do you believe that Mr Christie, your supervisor, the marionette you control autocratically from this place, is giving us the equity we are looking for? Is education the great equalizer when you have Christie taking away from our inner-city schools nine full-time senior kindergartens? I don't think so, member from Niagara Centre. I don't think so at all.

Public education is the great equalizer when we put back resources, not take them away from it.

Mr Maves: You've still got it wrong. Education is the equalizer.

Mr Marchese: The member from Niagara Centre just joined us and he says that education is the great equalizer. I agree.

Mr Maves: No, you don't.

Mr Marchese: The member from Niagara Centre is going to have two minutes to explain to us how, by giving my public money, your money, to a private school is going to make education equal for all when those who have a lot, who don't need my help—

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): "Equal" means more for Toronto.

Mr Marchese: No, I'm not saying that. I'm saying that when you suck away 120 million bucks from the pockets of ordinary citizens, poor people, to give away to wealthy people, that is bad, Bob Runciman. That is bad, Minister.

In a study that I've just seen, done by the National Post—I'm sure they won't attack the National Post as they will the Toronto Star when I quote them in a few moments—the Alberta study found that full-time attendance in junior and senior kindergarten programs had a dramatic impact on children's mastery of key learning skills, particularly reading, and may be an important influence on their ability to succeed in the first years of school. The study raises the question of whether it may be a mistake for schools to hold back on kindergarten time, as they may end up eventually paying the cost for students lagging behind.

José da Costa, an education professor at the University of Alberta and one of the authors of the study, said, "The evidence should compel educational authorities to implement full-day, five-day-a-week kindergarten immediately, particularly for schools in low-income neighbourhoods," yet Mr Christie, the marionette whose strings are controlled centrally by Monsieur Eves and Madame Witmer, just got rid of nine senior kindergartens from inner-city schools.

“Why should Toronto have it all?” says the Minister of Public Safety and Security. “Toronto wants it all.” Toronto doesn’t want it all. It just would like some fairness. It would like some equity. Toronto says, “If we have more poor kids than some other area, it would be nice to give a little more,” because the way to get to equality is to make sure that where the situation is unequal or where people are unequal, we give them more to reach a level playing field. Otherwise, we will create inequality forever.

So, Minister, I’m telling you, taking money away from poor kids is bad public policy. Sucking away \$120 million from our public system that is badly needed, I argue, is bad policy. Eliminating through your supervisor Christie, who ought not to be there, a highly paid Conservative former city councillor who ought not to be there—the kind of money you pay him to close nine senior kindergarten schools is bad public policy. It’s dumb politics. But it is Conservative politics. It is a way of nurturing inequality in our system. It is a way of perpetuating inequality under the guise of a bill they call Right Choices for Equity in Education, so that rich parents can get my money and yours to send their kiddies to private schools. It’s bad, sad public policy.

Some \$2 billion has been taken out of the education system, and Mr Clark, the minister, stands up and says, “We’re telling the truth.” I couldn’t believe that statement. “We’re telling the truth. We put in \$2 billion; we didn’t take out \$2 billion.” It’s amazing that a minister could stand up in spite of the fact that Dr Rozanski told them they have to put back \$2 billion, including raising the benchmarks that had been deliberately set low in 1997, which would mean you’d have to put another \$1.3 billion or \$1.4 billion in order to get to the point where we were.

People for Education, the group that has diligently tracked your cuts, the group that you sometimes deride, the group about which you often say, “Their research isn’t research at all,” the group that is able to track your cuts to our education system, says the following.

“Specialist teachers: there has been a 22% drop since 1997-98 in the number of schools with physical education teachers—down to 32% this year.” This is June 3, 2003. “But in southwestern Ontario, only 25% of schools have physical education teachers.

“There has been a 29% drop since 1997-98 in schools with music teachers—down to 41% this year, and in northern Ontario only 23% of schools have music teachers.

“The percentage of grade 7 and 8 schools with guidance counsellors has dropped by more than half—down to 12% province-wide; but outside central Ontario and the GTA, fewer than 8% of schools report guidance counsellors for grade 7 and 8 students.

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“English as a second language (ESL): The number of schools reporting ESL programs has dropped by 29% since 1997-98. The number of schools with ESL students

but no ESL teacher has increased by 62% since 1999-2000.

“Libraries: The number of schools with teacher-librarians has declined by 28%—down to 58% this year. In Eastern Ontario that number drops to 26%. There has been an 85% increase in the number of schools with libraries open only part-time.

“Special education: Student-teacher ratios in special education have increased every year for three years, with ratios varying from an average of 16 students to one teacher in Toronto, to 30 to one in southwestern Ontario. In 2002-03, there were approximately 42,000 students in Ontario elementary schools waiting for special education services, a number that continues to increase every year.

“Fundraising: Parents raised a total of approximately \$35 million province-wide; 67% of schools reported fundraising for basics (textbooks, classroom supplies, computers).

“School buildings: Fifty-two per cent of schools in our survey are over 40 years old;”—member from Niagara Centre, listen to this—“16% reported that renovations or additions were required but not approved; 33% reported that general upgrades for roofs, furnaces, paint and carpets were required but not approved.

“Phil Sarvino, consulting engineer for Read, Jones and Christopherson, estimates costs for maintaining school buildings. He says, ‘Leaving school maintenance undone is going to cost more than double the money in the long run. We are in danger of losing valuable buildings, irreplaceable architecture and, even worse, risking the health of the students.’

“Community use of schools: There has been a 10% drop since 1998-99 in the number of schools reporting community use. There has been a 113% increase since 1998-99 in the number of schools reporting charging fees for community use.”

Then Minister Clark stands up here and says, “We are telling the truth.”

Mr Maves: Whose document is that?

Mr Marchese: Member for Niagara Centre, I told you who it was. You weren’t here when I said it: People for Education.

Mr Maves: Annie Kidder?

Mr Marchese: Annie Kidder. Annie, the member for Niagara Centre is laughing at you, meaning he doesn’t trust your work. He obviously believes you must be some radical lefty. You ought to tell him. He derides your work. He derides the fact that you and so many others for so many years have voluntarily tracked this government’s malfeasance, the only group at the time that was able and has done this voluntarily, without pay, for many years. But the member for Niagara Centre and Monsieur Clark, the minister, say, “We are telling the truth.”

One hundred and twenty million bucks—money taken from our pockets to support wealthy people. It’s this kind of politics that has encouraged billionaire Garfield Weston from making an announcement in what he calls the Children First School Choice Trust, where he will pay \$3,500 to any poor parents on a scaling basis, those

earning less than \$35,000 or \$40,000 or so, based on a lottery so that poor kids of poor parents—because if you're making \$25,000, \$30,000, \$35,000, \$40,000, it's not exactly rich in this province. But Mr Garfield, the billionaire, like this Conservative government, supports choice because he argues, like this government, that this is great competition, that it will force the public system to deliver better services. He's giving \$3,500 through a charitable foundation, working alongside the Fraser Institute, a very neutral organization—

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Mr Speaker, I would ask you to call this member to order. I think it's totally out of order for him to malign the husband of the former lieutenant governor.

You don't even have the name right, if you are referring—

Mr Gerretsen: It's Galen Weston, not Garfield.

Mrs Marland: You're saying "Garfield," and I think it's a bit—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Sit down.

The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: The member for Kingston and the Islands enjoyed that. Isn't that funny? He enjoyed that intervention. Funny that he should; I'm not sure why.

But, member for Kingston and the Islands, you know the billionaire we're talking about, don't you—Mr Weston? I'm sure you do. I don't know where you stand on this issue, but all I'm saying is that he, like this Conservative government, is giving away \$3,500 through a charitable foundation that was set up by the Fraser Institute. Member for Niagara Centre, that's an organization that I'm sure you recognize. He's hardly a socialist, but he's giving away his money through a charitable foundation through the workings of the Fraser Institute, so he can help poor kids go to private schools. Can you believe that? Can you believe that he's going to allow a parent who only earns \$35,000 to send their kid to a private school, where that individual is going to have to find the additional \$3,000, \$3,500, \$4,000, \$6,000 or \$10,000 or whatever it takes to send them to a private school? He's going to force an impoverished parent to find the additional money to send them to a private school?

What favour is he doing? What charitable act is this? He would force a poor parent, by winning a lottery, to find the extra \$3,000 or \$7,000 so they can send their kids to a private school, and he thinks he's doing them a favour? Better that he send some of his money to help the Conservatives restore the textbooks we're missing in our schools. Better that he help this government send some money so we can have guidance teachers, librarians, music teachers and phys ed teachers, so that poor kids can have access to our community schools, so they can play basketball and the like.

Mr Weston, use your money more wisely to help the poor, if you want to. This is not the way to do it.

But Mr Weston's initiative and the government's initiative go hand in hand. They work in tandem. Their policies are the same. The billionaire's policy of helping

choice, of helping promote private schools, of creating the impression that private school is the only answer for poor kids, gives them a fool's dream. It doesn't work. Poor kids would never feel at home in a rich school, let alone find the extra money to be sent there.

The answer is in our public system; the answer is in providing full-time junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten, like New Democrats propose and promise in our platform, so that kids have a chance to succeed in our public system. That's the direction we need to move in, not your road map and your go-kart kind of platform policies. Sorry, it's not going to work.

In the Toronto Star there's a big article talking about "When students are on the edge, whether they're homeless, or suicidal, or in an abusive relationship, they're likely to blow if they don't have a release valve. Youth counsellors were that release valve."

Christie, your marionette at the Toronto board, cut them all. Youth counsellors, who help students at risk—who otherwise would be dropping out and be a harm to themselves and society—they're gone. They can't help those students. They are youth at risk, supported by youth counsellors. Christie, former city councillor, Tory, former Stockwell campaign manager and marionette for your malfeasance, cut them all. Bad, bad; bad politics and bad policy.

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New Democrats are unequivocal about this. We do not support private schools. We do not support public dollars for denominational or non-denominational schools. That is a belief and a principle of ours, and no New Democrat has ever wavered in that regard. We're very clear: we need to put public dollars in our public system. That's where our money needs to go. Dr Rozanski had the right idea. If only you had the willingness and the desire to implement the majority of those recommendations, we wouldn't have Mr Christie here; we wouldn't have the other supervisors in Hamilton and Ottawa because they would have the money to give our public school kids the opportunities and the equality that so many are desperately looking for.

I'm happy to have had this opportunity to beat up on this government, to beat up on the Liberals and to have an opportunity to beat up on the federals when the time comes.

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I was quite entertained by the speaker we were just listening to from the riding of Trinity-Spadina. Most of his speech talked about wealthy students. I can't help but think of the independent schools in my riding. It's anything but particularly wealthy students who go to the two Christian schools. Their parents say they struggle pretty hard to raise the dollars to send the students to those schools. There may be a little more wealthy students who go to one of the other schools, but in general it's certainly not the wealthy who are going. He speaks as if that money is just disappearing down into a black hole, when in fact it's a tax credit that will be recycled many, many times over

and probably have quite a stimulus to the economy by being able to be spent in other ways.

I particularly enjoyed his reference to the Liberal Party of Ontario and their incompetence. That's one thing I would indeed have to agree with him on. It's also interesting, as I mentioned, how the Liberal Party of Ontario hammers out some of its policy. I'll read the headlines from a publication of OSSTF. It says, "OSSTF Members Hammer Out Liberal Education Policy." Now I know where the Liberals get their education policy: it comes directly from OSSTF. No wonder they're so supportive of the union.

Our government puts students first, parents put students first, teachers put students first; teachers' unions put students last. We're with the students. Students should be first, and that's certainly not where unions, the teachers' union anyway—many other unions would put students first, but certain teachers' unions don't. Teachers do. I don't think there's any question that the number one concern that teachers have is for the students, and rightly so. I would think that even the member for Trinity-Spadina would put students first, although he's awfully concerned about those that might be wealthy.

This article is quite interesting. I quote: "OSSTF had a strong presence at the three-day meeting due in large part to our members assuming delegate responsibilities for their local Liberal riding associations. OSSTF members made up over 15% of the 400 or so delegates at the meeting." That would be about 60 teachers' union members who were there. I'm wondering—400. This is February 1: "Liberal Party members gathered in Oakville for the weekend of February 1 to prepare the pillars to support their commitments to Ontarians in anticipation of a provincial election."

Is that all you get out: 400 delegates? That's only four per riding; it's less than four per riding. Where were the rest of your delegates? Were they at home, twiddling their fingers? Are they not interested in your party? What is going on? You could only rally out 400 delegates to a convention in the middle of the winter, when there's nothing else to do. If I were a Liberal member, I'd be ashamed of that.

I was also listening to the member from Parkdale-High Park. He was talking about this time allocation issue like it was a terrible thing that we're bringing it in. If we weren't blocked with every bill we bring in—getting in the road, not allowing a reasonable amount of debate and getting on with the vote—it's because of their tactics that we have to bring in time allocation so that something can get done in this Legislature.

I think it's interesting that the Liberals are totally committed to eliminating this credit. What a shame. They're against parents to have a choice, against students to go to a Christian school; penalize them.

As a matter of fact, they're also against the tax credit for seniors. Imagine, that they'd be against seniors getting a few dollars back so they could stay in their homes just a little longer. But no, not for the Liberals. They will take that away. They'll take away any other tax credit or

tax cut we've made just so they can feed this spending frenzy. Spend, tax and borrow—the acronym is STAB—and we had been stabbed in the province of Ontario by the Liberals and the NDP for those 10 lost years. Spend, tax and borrow has been the policy.

If you look at Dalton McGuinty, Dalton came out and actually honestly said he thought the tax increase would have to be \$4.8 billion; we calculated somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$12 billion based on the promises he has come out with. Imagine, if it's really what Dalton says it is—\$4.8 billion—what that will do to our economy. It will drive industry south of the border; jobs will disappear. Most of those 1.1 million net new jobs in Ontario that have been created in the last eight years will disappear. Where will they go? They'll go across the border, they'll go to other provinces—exactly where they've come from to this province. That's just some of the reality that's going to happen.

Maybe I should just go back to some notes here. I do have some notes.

Our government believes in a strong publicly funded education system, and we respect parents' right to choose. As a matter of fact, that's in our platform: the right to choose. I've lobbied for a very long time that regardless of which school area a student lives in, they should have an opportunity to choose to go to any school within that school board, and that's exactly what's in our platform: the opportunity to go to any school that is in their school board jurisdiction.

Then, with this tax credit, it will give parents the assistance to choose some of the other schools, such as the independent schools. Why should a student, just because they live at lot 10, concession 2 in rural Ontario, have to go to a certain school and to a certain teacher? That's a monopoly at its worst. I know there is a separate school and a public system. There's certainly a choice in secondary but a rather limited choice in the elementary panel. I think it's back to making sure there is a choice for our students.

The plan to reinstate the phase-in of the equity in education tax credit is about supporting parental choice in education. We've introduced this, and with this bill 20% of this credit will be recognized in 2003 and will be up to 50% by 2006.

The member from Trinity-Spadina was awfully concerned about the wealthy. Well, it has a limit, going up to \$3,500 as a tax credit maximum. Even if the tuition is \$30,000, \$40,000 or \$50,000, it really isn't going to matter, because there is a limit on this and \$3,500 will be that maximum amount.

I wanted to spend just a little bit of time talking about some of the things that are happening in education and where it's going in general. When we took office in 1995, the international tests for our students were truly an embarrassment, there was no question. We were coming in at the bottom of the pile consistently. Now, it's surprising how well our students are doing in such a short amount of time. For example, provincial grade 3 math test scores have increased by over 35% since 1998. That

in itself is quite a turnaround. International math and science tests show Ontario improved significantly between 1995 and 1999, moving ahead of England and the US, countries that were way ahead of our students before. More recently, international literacy test scores show Ontario in the top five, ahead of jurisdictions such as the United States, Germany and Singapore. High school students taking the new four-year program are graduating in record numbers, well prepared for their next important steps.

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I think that's something that's so important in education today, to have our young people prepared to compete on the international stage. It's not good enough when you're out in the workforce to get 50% or 60% to pass. If you're going to put your product on the market, you have to be better than all the other companies that are out there competing. We see what's going on in Asia, particularly with China, and how they're competing in hi-tech areas where we really have to have our students be more than up to par. They have to excel past par. They have to be coming out topping many other countries or our country is just not going to compete. We're not going to have the prosperity that we've gotten used to.

I'm sure you've had many people come to you, Mr Speaker, saying that grade 12 students can't read and write. That's quite an embarrassment to the system. We're ensuring that anybody who graduates with a grade 12 certificate can indeed have a good level when it comes to English comprehension and being able to read.

Equal funding for students across Ontario has been a hallmark in some of the things that we've been doing, to ensure that there would be equal funding.

It was a bit of a shambles looking at some of the school report cards and trying to figure them out. You almost had to have a glossary of terms to really know what your student was doing. We now have a consistent report card. I'm sure if the member for Kingston and the Islands looked at one of those, if he has some children or grandchildren in the system, he'd be able to understand the accomplishments of those students now that there is a report card that's consistent and is filled out consistently.

That leads me to another point, and that is teachers in work-to-rule not filling out report cards and refusing to do that kind of work. It was good to see the legislation go through for the separate board here in Toronto and to get them back to work, which included that they couldn't continue with work-to-rule. But that wasn't what the Liberals thought. No. They wanted to send them back and have work-to-rule, where the teachers would be there just when the students were in class and couldn't take any work home with them. I've been told and I understand that they were having their briefcases or dinner pails searched as they left, just in case they were taking work home to help the students. That's the point to which we've deteriorated. I think that's most unfortunate, and then getting \$500 fines because they wanted to help the students. That is not putting the students first. That's the union attitude of not putting students first. The teachers

want to put students first, but that is certainly not what the unions would allow them to do.

We're going to be bringing in legislation right after the next election—the sooner, the better—

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Bring it now.

Hon Mr Galt: We need a mandate. You'll complain if we bring this kind of thing in without a mandate. It's in our platform. We'll get the mandate, we'll come back, and we'll then bring in legislation to make it illegal for teachers to strike. Education will become an essential service.

Mr Duncan: Call an election.

Hon Mr Galt: We'll call an election right after you call some nomination meetings. When it comes to the democratic process, the Liberal Party of Ontario is opposed to democracy. Dalton McGuinty has been out appointing candidates. He wouldn't let the local Liberal association select—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Galt: Five. That's right. He can appoint one more. You had better be careful, member for Kingston and the Islands. Somebody may get appointed in Kingston and you won't be the candidate to run. That's what's going on with the Liberal Party of Ontario: appointing candidates. And they talk about democracy, talk about calling an election? If they would have a fair nomination meeting, then maybe we could get on with an election. We're just giving them some extra time to have a fair nomination meeting.

I come back to this bill. The opposition sort of got me just a little sidetracked here. It's a very important bill. It's Bill 53, The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act, that will have 20% this year and will rise to some 50% of a tax credit by 2006 based on tuition of up to \$7,000. So they'll get a tax credit of \$3,500. I think that's just tremendous. I look forward to this bill receiving speedy passage.

I'm quite sure there are many in the Liberal ranks who also want to see this bill get speedy passage. I would bet dollars to doughnuts that when the vote comes, there will be a half-dozen seats over there that will not be filled because those members just can't come in the House and vote against it. We heard the Minister of Labour speaking a few minutes ago, talking about the different members and their quotes. Although it would be typical Liberal to flip-flop back and forth, I have enough respect for those Liberals that I doubt if they'll come in the House and vote with their party. It's best they just stay away so they don't have to flip-flop.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on the time allocation motion for Bill 53.

Mr Gerretsen: Of course the first thing that ought to be said is that this is once again a closure motion, another closure motion where the government is basically saying, "We don't want any further debate. We do not want this bill to go to committee. We do not want to have any debate on third reading. We're shutting her down."

I believe they've got a 100% record. There may have been one bill that was unanimously approved by every-

body, but other than that, they've invoked closure each and every time since we came back at the end of April. This has got to be the most undemocratic government that has been elected in the province of Ontario, having invoked closure more often than all the other governments put together over the last 135 years in this province.

I cannot let the comments of the last member go by without saying something about senior citizens. I'll tell you, this party, the party that's headed by Dalton McGuinty, the Ontario Liberal Party, is absolutely committed to making sure that the senior citizens of this province, who have done so much for this province, are being treated correctly and rightly. The idea of treating them correctly is not to give \$450 million in tax credits to all of the seniors out there, but to say, "No. We are going to put \$450 million toward those seniors who really need the help." Those are the seniors who need the help through home care. We've already said we're going to invest \$225 million so that seniors can stay in their own homes as long as possible with the care that they require from the home care services that are out there. We all know that VONs have closed across the province, and many other organizations as well, and the main reason for that is the fact that there have been so many cutbacks in the CCACs across this province in home care services for both post-acute-care and for chronic care individuals who need it at home. That's where we're going to invest the money.

We are going to invest money into long-term care so that Ontario will no longer rank last in the amount of nursing and hours of personal care that seniors are getting in the nursing homes but will rank near the top. The only way to do that is to start investing \$250 million in that area.

So what we're saying, seniors, is, yes, we're totally with you. We are with those seniors who need the help, and that's where the investment should be.

Let me very quickly talk about this particular bill we're dealing with here, Bill 53. Let me just say that this is not an easy decision. From what we have heard so far from both the New Democratic Party and from the Tory party it's all clear-cut, and there may be differences of opinion on this. My golly, within your own ranks there you had some differences of opinion too.

What did Ernie Eves say back in December 2001 about the private school tax credit, the same thing that's in this bill right now? In the Windsor Star he said, "I think it's kind of ludicrous myself," when he was referring to Jim Flaherty's idea at the time. Of course Flaherty won that day, because now Eves is embracing it. But that's what he said then. And what did Flaherty say when this bill first came forward? He said, "I think it was a flip-flop" by the Premier, and that's reported in the Toronto Star of March 2002.

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Let's go on to Janet Ecker. There was this discussion earlier as to whether or not this bill is taking money out of the public system. They get kind of cute, because what

they're really saying is, "Well, the money hasn't come into the system and therefore you're not taking money out of the system." But we all know that the system, when it's fully implemented, is going to be about \$500 million short. Even the Minister of Finance agreed with that, because what did she say in the year 2000 to the Toronto Star? She said, "We've been very clear that our goal is a good quality public education system, and the estimates of \$300 million"—it's now up to \$500 million—"needed to fund religious schools would be \$300 million that would come out of the public school system."

Interjection: She's seen the light.

Mr Gerretsen: "She's seen the light," the member says—the would-be minister, but he's a member now.

The point is simply that, yes, people have differences of opinion on this, and there may be some members in our party who may have made different statements and had different opinions on it as well, and that's healthy in any democracy. Surely to goodness no party comes into any situation, any position at all, without having some divisions within their own ranks. You talk it out, and then you decide collectively what the position on the particular situation is going to be. I don't think there's anything unusual or unhealthy about that.

Let me make it quite clear that I personally feel that there's a great difference between the private schools, such as Upper Canada College, and the denominational schools. I believe, and I will even agree to a certain extent with some of the comments that the member from Northumberland made, that the people who send their children to denominational schools are not the rich or the wealthy. Quite often they're people who are hard-working but feel they want to give their kids a different education. I say more power to them.

The real question is, are we as a system going to support that kind of situation? That's the real issue, and the issue as far as I'm concerned and as far as this party is concerned is that right now the money is needed in public education. You may recall the minister here talked about, "Well, we're spending more money on public education now than we did in 1995." Well, obviously you are. I don't know what the cost of living has gone up by in the last eight years, but it's got to be around 20% to 25%, and presumably with just about every government program that's out there, whether we're talking about education or health care or what have you, just to keep up with the increased demands for services, with the increased cost of living etc, obviously the government's going to spend more money in that particular area. There's absolutely no question about it.

The real issue is, should people who send their kids to Upper Canada College, in effect, once this is thing is fully phased in and implemented, be able to take \$3.8 million by way of tax credits? Is that the right thing to do? I doubt very much that even the backbench members in the Conservative Party agree with that notion. I don't think that you agree with that notion, not at this point in time. You and I go into a lot of schools, as all good

members do, and we all know that there are fewer music teachers now, there are fewer phys-ed teachers, there are fewer special-ed teachers. We've all heard those complaints. Those complaints don't just come to Liberal members. There are many more fees that have to be paid now for school uses etc.

The point quite simply is that from a human resource viewpoint and from a physical structures viewpoint and from a supply viewpoint, schools simply do not even have the same kinds of resources that they had in 1995. I think it's our obligation, on behalf of the youngsters of this province, to make sure that those schools are properly funded before we start going down the road of funding some other schools that are out there as well.

We all know that there is a method whereby an associated school concept, under an established school board, can operate, provided that those schools, whether denominational or otherwise, adhere to the Ontario curriculum, adhere to the teaching standards that are required and adhere to all the other requirements, such as, for example, the provincial curriculum, the standardized testing and having certified teachers.

If somebody wants to go outside that scheme and send their kids to schools that do not have those kinds of requirements, they should be allowed to, but they shouldn't expect the taxpayer, in effect, directly or indirectly, to support it. That is the position.

I say to my friends opposite, yes, it is a difficult issue for some individuals, particularly for those of us who have some private denominational schools in our ridings, because those are hard-working people. What I say to those people, quite simply and directly, is that the publicly funded school system has been completely underfunded, and unless you're willing to bring your school within one of the associated models under one of the school boards, we simply cannot support this at this point in time.

Mr Maves: It's a pleasure for me to rise and join the debate, and to comment on my friend from Trinity-Spadina beating up his colleague from Niagara Centre through his speech. I mentioned that to him before. I know he's going to have a chat with his own member and correct the record.

I wanted to pick up on good Dr Galt from Northumberland, who talked about who sets the policies for the different parties. He talked about the OSSTF article. This has appeared in the OSSTF magazine. Members opposite catcalled and yelled out, "When was that article printed?" This article, "OSSTF Members Hammer out Liberal Education Policy," which Dr Galt talked about, was from February 12, 2002, I say to my good friend from Kingston and the Islands. So it's a very recent article. Very recently, where you had a Liberal convention of 400 people, nearly 15% were members of the OSSTF who set the Liberal education policy. That's kind of sad.

On the other side of the aisle, of course, you have the NDP, where my friend from Trinity-Spadina very clearly said his policy is set by Annie Kidder, a well-known education activist in Ontario.

On this side of the aisle, we are happy to have education policy set by the people of Ontario, I say to my colleagues. Let me give you some examples. It was the people of Ontario who said we need a newer, fairer funding formula in the province, that the old way of funding education based on where you lived and the size of the property tax assessment was not fair, was not right. In fact, there are 24 studies dating back to the 1950s that said that. The people of Ontario asked us to change that, and we did.

The people of Ontario said they wanted teachers tested. We listened and we've done that. The people of Ontario said they wanted a tougher, new curriculum for students in the education system. Once again, it was our party that listened to the public of Ontario and did that. We didn't sit back and let the OSSTF union and the OECTA union leaders and everyone else tell us what our policy should be. We listened to the public of Ontario and we implemented those policies.

We listened to the people of Ontario who were very frustrated for many years about report cards. They couldn't read them any more. They didn't understand them any more. They weren't uniform. They wanted standardized, province-wide report cards. We did that, because the people of Ontario wanted that.

One more thing that was long overdue in Ontario was province-wide standardized testing for kids, some objective testing so you could know what your kids were learning, if they were on track or if they were not on track. They wanted to know if the schools their kids were in were performing well or not performing well. The boards, compared to other boards, wanted to know how they were doing. They wanted some objective testing.

Members opposite said we were crazy to bring in that kind of testing. We were wrong, they said. They said, "It's too much pressure on kids. Don't have testing on kids. Don't have testing on teachers. It's too much pressure." But we said to the people of Ontario, "You're right," and we implemented that.

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Out of that, we've seen, for example, that recent international literacy test scores show Ontario now in the top five, ahead of jurisdictions such as the United States, Germany and Singapore, instead of behind them. International math and science tests show Ontario improved significantly between 1995 and 1999, moving ahead of both England and the US. Provincial grade 3 math test scores have increased by over 35% since 1998.

Clearly, our education policies, which the people of Ontario asked for and which we implemented, are working. Why is that? Because we don't sit back and have OSSTF union members hammer out our policy, as the Liberal Party does, or let Annie Kidder, the education activist, dictate to us what she thinks our policy should be; we listen to the people of Ontario.

The odd time we'll send out an expert in a field to do a consultation process and come back and tell us what we might do differently. We sent Mr Rozanski out to do that recently. He came back after meeting with over 500

groups from all across the province, including union groups and school boards, and said to us, "You need to put \$1.8 billion of funding into the education system over the next three years." We've already committed to doing that and going beyond that, putting \$2 billion into education funding over the next three years.

I'm going to sit down now to leave some time for my colleague Ms Molinari.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I am very happy to speak on what amounts to yet another time allocation motion by this government on a very serious matter: the education tax credit that this government is offering.

I don't think there's any doubt that this is a very serious threat to the public education system. I don't think you could make the case that publicly funded education in our province has done very well over the last eight years, since this government was elected. In fact, sometimes I give my head a shake and say, "Is this the Ontario I knew when I was growing up? Is this the Ontario of the Progressive Conservative Party of Bill Davis, of Progressive Conservative Parties in the past that had the wisdom to know that funding public education was of great importance to the people of this province?" It led to the kind of society we now have, which is somewhat threatened, I have to say, because the public education system is threatened by this education tax credit.

There is no doubt that any dollars going to private schools in our province are dollars that are taken away from the public system. Since 1994, I believe, we have measured how many students are enrolling in private schools. What is truly remarkable is that the rate has gone up; that is, the level of growth in public education is going down but the level of growth in private schools is going up, in fact to the tune of about 10 times. So private schools have grown about ten-fold. In 1994, one of out 16 students used to be enrolled in private schools; it's now one out of every four students enrolled in private schools in Ontario. That's a startling difference in numbers. One out of every four students is now enrolled in private schools—it used to be one out of 16—a tremendous growth in the private school system. And of course this tax credit will only exacerbate that, will only increase that dramatically.

Who are we trying to kid? This is a direct threat to the public school system. The public school system needs continuing support. Notwithstanding that the government had the Rozanski report before it, which called for \$1.8 billion to be invested, this government has failed to accelerate those expenditures. They say they'll do it over three years.

Interjection.

Mr Cordiano: Well, you're falling well short of what's required. In fact, my colleague the education critic, the member for Parkdale-High Park, pointed out that tuition fee increases that resulted this year at private schools were exactly the amount of the tax credit being offered by the province: approximately \$1,400. So the

tuition fee increases are eating up any of the tax credits that are being offered by the government. It's not going to parents to defray the costs. It's being eaten up by these private schools.

It's truly remarkable how much money it takes at some of these higher-end private schools. The amounts for tuition per student per year are \$31,000 and \$36,000. These are the upper-tier private schools. Huge amounts of dollars are being spent on per student tuition fees. That is enormous compared to what we actually spend in the public system, which is roughly \$7,000 per student. In some cases the amount that's being spent in the private sector is five times that. So we're asking the public education system to keep up with the private system, and when you compare the two systems, obviously there is a great deal more money in the private system. Yet this government wants to give that private system even more, which will result in the erosion of the quality that we have in our public school system. That's why we as Liberals don't agree with this.

You know, there's a lesson to be learned from the experience south of the border. More than a generation ago, American cities stopped funding their public education systems properly and the middle class moved away from sending their kids to publicly funded institutions. What happened? Well, there was a hollowing out of the inner city. People started moving because those schools saw an erosion. There was a decline in the quality of that education system, and guess what followed: people moved away from the inner city as a result of the lack of public education funding. So not only do you have an erosion of the public education system; you have an erosion in terms of the inner city and the support that was there. Property values went down, and people stopped supporting the public education system and stopped sending their kids to public schools.

That is the experience south of the border, and I say to the government that we cannot allow that to happen here in Ontario. The strength of our province and our society has been a pluralistic system that enables people who did not have wealth and opportunity to get their opportunity for a publicly funded education of high quality. That is the only way to have the kind of society where we look to the future and say there will be opportunity for all of those who are qualified and willing to work hard enough.

We forget at our peril that basic, fundamental value that we hold so dear. It's important not just because we're trying to democratize—that is very important—but it's also important from an economic standpoint. We gain, in the long run, immeasurable wealth from that. As a result of a publicly funded education system, we have a better, more highly trained workforce. We have been able to compete with the rest of the world largely based on a publicly funded education system that brought true value to bear. There is a real value in having a publicly funded education system, and this tax credit threatens that publicly funded education; I don't think there's any question about that. So of course we, as Liberals, are opposed. We will be opposed to this tax credit and to any measure to erode the publicly funded education system.

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Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I am pleased to speak today on the equity in education tax credit. This legislation is very important to my riding of Thornhill. What this is about is giving parents choice in the area of education.

It's our belief that students need a quality education system to receive quality education. That's why the Eves government has provided the largest in-year education funding increase in the history of Ontario. I take great exception to the opposition's saying that this is taking away from the public system. It's not taking away from the public system. We have increased funding to public education from \$12.9 billion in 1995 to \$15.3 billion for the 2003-04 school year. This is the highest level of education funding in Ontario.

I know the benefits of parents having choice. It's important that the members across the way recognize that this is what parents want: choice. I don't see what they have against giving parents the ability to choose where they want to educate their students.

For me, in my riding of Thornhill, it's also a matter of fairness. I don't have any trouble standing up for the policies and initiatives of this government, equally levelling the playing field to make it possible for parents who, for religious needs, have to send their kids to a denominational school.

I want to highlight the assistance and help of a number of residents of Thornhill who have come to me quite often and asked the government to recognize fairness, to recognize the equality they needed for their children going to denominational schools.

I want to highlight Rabbi Israel Janowski, who is also a parent in Thornhill. He is the founder and former president of the Ontario Association of Jewish Day Schools. Rabbi Janowski said, "We are happy that the Eves government has taken into account the educational needs of each child in the province. We are tremendously appreciative of the support we have received from this government and others who were supportive of this initiative."

And it's not just in my riding. I want to quote John Vanasselt of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. He said:

"We are very pleased that the Ernie Eves government has reaffirmed its commitment to parental choice in education by restoring the tax credit.

"We also support the government's initiative to keep parents informed as to how our schools evaluate students' progress."

These are just two people I can quote and highlight some of the positive things they have said about what this government is doing.

There is an organization, Jewish Parents for Equality in Education Funding, which came about around 1999. They got together to push government to recognize some of the plight they have: years and years of sending their children to schools for denominational reasons because the public system does not accommodate the needs some

of these families have. Over the years these people have been paying education taxes to the province of Ontario on their residential tax bill. In addition to that, they've been paying tuition to educate their students in a school. They felt they didn't have a choice. The public education system was not a choice for some of these parents, at least not the parents who have their children going to Jewish day schools in my riding of Thornhill. They have specific needs of the education system that are provided for in those schools but not in the public education system. This government has recognized the needs of these parents and other parents across the province.

I don't believe for minute that funding the equity in education tax credit across the province is going to take away from the publicly funded system, because we have continued to invest. The publicly funded system continues to be a priority of this government, along with some of the other priorities such as health care and the environment.

This is a government that is responsible to taxpayers and is responsible to all Ontarians, recognizing that there are some who, for whatever reason, cannot choose public education.

For a number of years, I was a school trustee with the York Catholic school board. I was there for 11 years, and I was chair of that board for four years. I'm proud to say that the Catholic system was a wonderful system, so I'm really surprised to see that some of the people across the way who purport to support Catholic education do not recognize that there are other religious denominations in the province that also deserve equity and that also deserve rights.

I want everyone in the province to know, and they've said over and over again, that if a Liberal government were to win an election, then they would take away the education tax credit. Not only would they take that away, they would take away all the tax cuts that this government has initiated—tax cuts that have provided an economy in Ontario that is booming. We'd go to the dark decade of the Liberals and NDP government, and rising taxes.

The Liberal platform is very clear. They talk about what it's going to cost, yet we all know that it's going to cost a lot more than they're saying. They clearly say that they're going to take away any of the tax cuts that we've initiated. They also say that it's going to cost them money, but it's going to cost more money than what they're saying. I wish I had the figures in front of me, because they are absolutely appalling.

I want to continue to say that in Thornhill this issue is very important. As a matter of fact, it was the single most important issue back in 1999 during the provincial election. At that time, the Liberals were saying that they would consider it. I remember the candidate who ran in Thornhill in 1999 was saying that if he were to be elected and if a Liberal government were to be in power, they would in fact consider recognizing educational choice in the province of Ontario. They don't even have all of their candidates singing from the same song sheet, so I don't

know how we can believe anything the Liberals are saying.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): We have yet another time allocation motion. For people who are watching at home, I have to say that's a motion which chokes off debate on an important piece of legislation. I have heard some good speeches on this legislation and I have heard some that are not good speeches, but all are speeches that are allowed to be made. I must say that I have heard some good speeches which have been made by members on both sides of this House.

This is a very important, philosophical, ideological and practical issue that is before the Legislative Assembly. I would like to see every member with an opportunity to speak to this bill for at least the 20 minutes that would have been available at one time, because I think it is an important bill and there is an important exchange of views to be made. It is a dramatic departure from Premier William Davis, Premier John Robarts, ministers such as the Honourable Robert Welch, the Honourable Tom Wells, the Honourable Larry Grossman, the Honourable Dr. Bette Stephenson. This is a major departure in policy, so I think it's important that the issue be put before the House. What do we have this afternoon? We are dealing instead with a time allocation motion, which the government routinely invokes now to push legislation through.

I want to remind people that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario did not sit, was not in session, from December 12, 2002, until—well, the first question period was May 1, 2003; that's the first time there was a question period. I think we are elected to deal with the business of the province in this House. What happens now is that government wants to sit day and night, wants to invoke closure of motions of debate, confine the debate to as short a period as possible so that the government can be as unaccountable as possible to both the House as a whole, where they have questions directed to them, and to the media scrums or questioning that takes place outside.

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I think this is most unfortunate, this at a time when we're dealing with a crisis in the insurance business, not only automobile insurance but other forms of insurance, where either the premiums are skyrocketing or in fact people are unable to get insurance from the same company they had it from previously. So that's another issue.

We have government advertising, a barrage of government advertising on television, on radio, in the newspapers, in magazines, in pamphlets arriving at the doorstep, paid for by the grateful taxpayer of Ontario, not by the Progressive Conservative Party. Though I may disagree with the content of the ads of the Progressive Conservative Party, I have no objection to those, because that is part of the partisan political process. But using taxpayers' dollars to promote government policies, to congratulate itself because of policies and positions that it's taken, is simply not acceptable. I would not say anybody in this House is hypocritical, but I say a situation would be hypocritical where people would be on the one

hand saying that they do not think money should be squandered on unnecessary expenditures, but on the other hand they would be spending it on government advertising. The situation, rather than any individual, would be hypocritical, because it would be against the rules of this House to refer to anybody as being a hypocrite.

I know that this is a very important issue. I've looked south of the border on the daily news to see what has happened with their system. What has happened is that the public system in the United States is being allowed to deteriorate, and people, by necessity almost, are exiting the public school system and placing their children in private schools. So it is only the poor and others who are unable to access the private school system in the United States who are in the situation where they must go to the public schools, which are being underfunded.

I think what is preferable is to see any jurisdiction improving its publicly funded system. What we need is a strong, vibrant, high-quality publicly funded system that meets all of the needs of students in the province of Ontario or any other jurisdiction. The public school system brings people together. There are people of different religions, people of different ethnic backgrounds, people from different economic backgrounds, people from different geographic areas of the country or even of a community who come together in the public school system, who have access to each other on a daily basis, who learn to tolerate and understand people who are different from themselves. That is a virtue which our publicly funded system offers to people in this province or any other jurisdiction. It provides equality of opportunity for people. We cannot guarantee the outcomes. I understand that, and I'm not one who would say you can. But you can guarantee that equal opportunity, that in a milieu where people are together, the whole society is brought together.

I ask members of this House to consider in their own minds what the ramifications are of curricula which allow people to teach something other than tolerance. In other countries, that happens. We would not want to see that happen in our country, but I give fair warning that in other countries that does happen, and it tends to divide those particular countries and the people within them.

I notice that where we used to offer music and physical education, where we used to offer good library services within the school system, good guidance services, this government's policies militate in favour of phasing those out. The school and the school property, which used to be seen as part of the community, are now becoming more exclusive because very large user fees have to be imposed by boards of education on community groups that wish to use those public buildings, those publicly funded buildings.

I think it would have been important with a bill of this kind to go to the people of Ontario, as we used to, I think with some major effect—to go across the province, to hold public hearings, to gather the necessary input from across the province on this particular piece of legislation so that we could determine whether that's the direction in which people believe we should move.

I recall sitting in on a previous bill that was before the House where it went to various communities, and there were some outstanding presentations made to the committee. I can recall some by long-term Conservative supporters who were part of the publicly funded system, who believe deeply in the school system that Bill Davis as Premier and John Robarts as Premier, and Les Frost before that, had evolved in this province. The Ministers of Education that I mentioned before had tried to strengthen the public school system. I heard those people, loyal Conservatives, come in with a bitterness in their voice that I have not heard in a long time, denouncing what they felt was a major departure from policy which was traditional to the progressive Progressive Conservative Party in this province.

I think the full debate on an issue of this kind, where every member who wishes to speak in this House has an opportunity to do so, is the best kind of debate to have. A time allocation motion, a motion which chokes off debate, as this motion does once again this afternoon, is not a motion that militates in favour of the democratic process but rather shuts down the democratic process.

I am for debate; I'm for placing these ideas before the people. The people, when they choose, make the right decision, because in a democracy the right decision is a decision made by the majority of the people in a province. I think that's an opportunity we should always have in this Legislature, each member elected, perhaps some with different views—I know that within the caucuses that we have represented in this Legislature today there is not necessarily an entirely uniform view. I've listened in the past to different views expressed by members across the way; I've listened to different views expressed by members on this side of the House. This is obviously an issue which is very personal to many people in this province. It's an issue which requires a lot of debate and a lot of assessment.

There was a projection. People said, "Don't worry. If you allow funding that will assist private schools, there won't be a mass exodus." Let me tell you what's happening: there is a very substantial exodus from the

publicly funded system to private schools in this province. Those figures are out there.

Hon Mr Galt: I wonder why.

Mr Bradley: The member says "I wonder why." There are two reasons why, I say to the member for Northumberland: (1) because of the atmosphere that your government has created in the public school system; (2) the incentives you are providing financially for people to leave that system. Those are two very good reasons why there's a betrayal of the Bill Davis, John Robarts, Les Frost view of education in this province.

I have in my own community—I remember they made a presentation to the committee—what used to be called Eden Christian College in Niagara-on-the-lake. Eden Christian College is now Eden High School. It is an alternative school in the city of St Catharines which has a strong enrolment. It is a strong, vibrant school that encompasses people. It is a special kind of school with special consideration within the publicly funded system. The people who are on the board of directors at Eden Christian College made a presentation strongly against what the government was proposing and in favour of the model that they represented within the system. They were part of the Lincoln County board of education; they are now part of the district school board of Niagara.

My message to members of the House, particularly on the government side, is that you should allow a full debate, you should allow public hearings before you proceed further with legislation with the ramifications that this legislation has for this province.

The Acting Speaker: This concludes the time allocated for debate.

Mr Clark has moved government notice of motion number 53.

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

It being nearly 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock this afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1750.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre délégué à la Condition féminine
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Rob (PC)
Eglington-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl (PC) Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiles, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Chris (PC)		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC) Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Chris (PC)		
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, government House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, parlementaire du gouvernement	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister of the Environment / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, ministre de l'Environnement
Northumberland	Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Oshawa	Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Thornhill	Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Willowdale	Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
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Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

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

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