



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 25 November 2003

Mardi 25 novembre 2003

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 November 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 novembre 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I'm standing here today in utter disbelief about the comments we heard recently from the Minister of Municipal Affairs. When asked why his government was breaking yet another one of their campaign promises, he responded, "Perhaps we were too naive." Too naive? That's meaningful insight into the meaningless workings of this government.

For the Liberal government to simply plead ignorance as an excuse for not living up to lofty campaign promises is simply cheating the people of Ontario.

Take, for example, the Liberal promise to balance the provincial budget. One of the first things Dalton did after being elected was to hire a consultant at \$1,500 a day—which he promised not to do—so that he could try to convince Ontarians that balancing the budget could not be done.

Well, I can assure you that the taxpayers of Halton don't buy Dalton's blame-game deficit, and I'm sure the rest of Ontarians don't buy it either.

Based on our government's balanced budget plan and the tax increases that Dalton has promised as part of his fiscal agenda, the Liberal government should actually be running a surplus. All the Premier and the Minister of Finance have to do is start showing up for work and accepting the responsibility entrusted to them by the voters of Ontario.

Come on, Dalton: You could balance the budget if you had the political will. It can be done. But of course it is always easier for a Liberal to break his word to Ontarians than to show up for work and make tough decisions.

We really shouldn't be surprised that this government's message is, "Promises made; promises broken."

VENDING MACHINES IN SCHOOLS

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I would like to take a moment, if I may, to talk about junk food in our schools.

There has been a rising obesity problem among children in this province for some time now. In fact, childhood obesity doubled between 1981 and 1997.

Children spend an average of 28 hours a week in front of the TV, and 26 hours a week sitting in a classroom. By taking junk food out of vending machines in elementary schools, we will be setting a strong example for our children.

We can't promote healthy lifestyles when school boards are encouraged to offer junk food to their students. We should help our children to make healthy choices at a young age, encouraging a new generation to make healthy choices throughout adulthood.

Not only will keeping people healthy save us billions of dollars in health care; it will improve people's quality of life.

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): Excuses, broken promises and tax hikes: That is what Ontarians will expect from this Liberal government.

In the eight weeks since this government was elected, they have shattered the record book when it comes to breaking promises. Since October 2, all we have heard from the Liberals is: "Balancing the budget is too hard," "Perhaps we were too naive," or, my personal favourite, "This is not the job we signed up for."

Let's be clear. Being the government is not easy. It requires strong political will and the ability to make tough decisions. Perhaps the Liberals across the aisle should take a long look in the mirror and see if they are prepared to make those tough decisions. It is time for this government to put aside the blame-game deficit and start the task of balancing the provincial books.

Mr McGuinty claimed throughout the campaign that he had \$3 billion of savings in his financial plan. Where has that money gone? The Minister of Finance has also stated that the record-breaking Liberal tax hikes, which will be introduced in this House shortly, will result in half a billion dollars of revenue this year. Where will this money be spent?

Mr McGuinty recently announced that he was selling out to his federal cousins by accepting \$300 million in SARS relief. This is less than one third of what the federal government owes provincial taxpayers. Perhaps Mr McGuinty should stand up to his federal friends instead of playing the role of Liberal lapdog and get the rest of the \$1 billion Ontarians are entitled to.

Come on, Mr Premier: No more excuses. Get to work and balance the budget. It can be done.

PERDITA FELICIEN

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I stand today to congratulate and celebrate a world champion from my riding, Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

On August 27, 2003, a young lady, Perdita Felicien, won a gold medal at the world championships in track and field, the IAF. This was in Saint-Denis, France, close to Paris. She claimed the world title in the 100-metre hurdles, setting a new Canadian record of 12.53 seconds, at the same time shattering her own personal best.

Perdita grew up in Pickering, attending Glengrove Public School and Pine Ridge Secondary School, and these local public schools were where her track career began. Perdita is an outstanding example and role model for any young Canadian. She's currently in her senior year at the University of Illinois, but Pickering is still her hometown.

In the past three years, she's attained an outstanding array of honours as a university student. Although we won't be familiar with all of the titles, being a Big Ten champion, a national female athlete of the year or an NCAA champion puts into context what Perdita Felicien has accomplished during her university career. She accomplished a world title as a Canadian athlete, proudly displaying the Canadian flag in victory.

With the Olympic Games fast approaching, she's on target for stardom. Perdita Felicien is, and will continue to be, a Canadian hero.

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise today to address this government's preoccupation with attempting to, as a Liberal staffer put it in the Toronto Star, demonize the former government.

I understand that the Liberals have spent some 12 and a half years in opposition, but somebody needs to inform them that opposition tactics don't work when you actually are in government. You need to stop making excuses and get on with the job that the people elected you to do.

Thus far, the Liberal government has achieved the following successes: You've broken your promise on the Oak Ridges moraine; you've broken your promise to not raise taxes, with the largest tax increase in Ontario's history; you've broken your promise to not run a deficit, which obviously you're not going to keep; you've broken your promise to not add to the debt—another one; you've broken your promise on hiring private consultants, by hiring an expensive consultant to do some creative accounting for you; and you've broken your promise on the hydro rate cap.

The truth is, this government took office with six months left in this fiscal year. They have plenty of time to turn this supposed deficit into a surplus, but they have yet to take any real action whatsoever. The people of Ontario elected you to make the tough decisions to get the job done. So far, you've proven that the only job you can really do is break promises.

1340

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY AGENDA

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I first would like to congratulate you on your accession to the throne. I look forward to working with you over the next while.

I could not believe my eyes yesterday when I witnessed the New Democrats voting against the repeal of the private school tax credit. It seems they are now in favour of funding private education. They are in favour of taking \$500 million out of our public schools to hand to private schools. They are in favour of a plan that even Mike Harris said would "fragment and weaken public education." They're in favour of a plan that uses religious schools as a smokescreen to hand millions to elite private and for-profit schools. They are in favour of the Tory education voucher.

This is also the same party who couldn't make up their minds on the hydro cap. One day, the leader of the New Democrats openly called for a rate cap, and the next day he criticized subsidized hydro. Yet it was only yesterday when the member opposite said, "People living on low incomes and on fixed incomes will be hit very hard, and many people will not be able to pay their hydro bills."

The NDP love to paint themselves as perfectly consistent in every way, but they voted against repealing the private school tax credit and they flip-flopped on the rate cap.

I ask you: How can anyone believe anything the New Democrats say on such important issues as education and energy when they keep changing their position to suit their own interests?

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I rise today to draw attention to the fact that this government has failed to fulfill its vision for Ontario. Its justification for this is to blame the Tories for a deficit, at which it purports to be surprised.

Last June, I sat on the standing committee on estimates and listened to the then Liberal finance critic, who is now Chair of Management Board, state to the committee, and spell out in some detail, that he and his party felt there was a risk of a \$5-billion deficit. That was in June.

In September, the first act of the new Premier was to hire a private consultant, instead of using the acting Provincial Auditor, at a cost of some \$1,500 per day to the taxpayers. They did this so that he could tell them that in fact if his government did nothing over the remaining six months of the fiscal year, there would indeed be a deficit of some \$5 billion, something they claimed they already knew.

I submit that this government has deliberately manufactured a crisis to delay implementing its campaign promises. Worse, this government is now embarking on tax increases that will hurt every sector of the province, from private homeowners to businesses, big and small.

Medium-sized businesses will be paying 12% higher taxes now and 27% higher taxes as of January 1, 2004, than they would have under the past government.

I distinctly remember that the Premier assured Ontarians that he wouldn't raise taxes, but he wouldn't lower them either. What happened to that promise?

OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I find Tory criticism of the new park in the Oak Ridges moraine very strange indeed. There's the rhetoric and then there's the reality. The reality is that we made the best of their bad deal. The reality is that we've improved environmental protection by striking a new agreement for a bigger, better public park on the Richmond Hill Oak Ridges moraine. The reality is that we were able to reduce the number of housing units on the land by 900. The reality is that we were able to add critical acreage to this park. The reality is that we wanted to do even more, but the reality also is that, given the financial and legal risks of breaking the Tory deal, stopping all development on the Richmond Hill lands would not have been a responsible option for the government or the people of Ontario.

In addition to creating a bigger, better park, we've also expanded the corridor and the wildlife routes. We've protected more of the sensitive lands around Philips Lake, which will be brought into public ownership. We've negotiated a \$3.5-million contribution from the developers to the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation for the public park. More importantly, we're going to ensure that this kind of deal cannot happen again.

We are also going to introduce significant new planning reforms to protect the public interest and prevent deals like this from happening again. We're going to introduce fundamental reforms on the way land use planning is done in Ontario, and we'll boost environmental protection and make planning processes more open to public scrutiny and participation.

TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I want to say to my friends and to the folks of the Niagara and Dunnville area: Hold on to your pocketbooks because the real Dalton McGuinty has arrived. The man who looked into the camera with a straight face and said, "I'm not going to raise your taxes," must have had his fingers crossed because yesterday we saw a bill that is the biggest tax increase in the history of the province of Ontario brought to the floor of this Legislature.

Let me tell the folks in Niagara and Dunnville what to expect from the McGuinty tax hike bill. First of all, businesses in Niagara will be facing a tax hike of 27% above what was scheduled for 2004: an ironclad guarantee that jobs will be fleeing Niagara and jobs will be fleeing the province of Ontario.

Seniors who fought for our country, fought for our democracy, helped to build our province and made us the envy of the world are going to get a tax hike jolt of \$475

a household, courtesy of the George Smitherman and Dalton McGuinty tax hike game right before Christmas-time.

With respect to the independent school tax credit, parents who choose to send their kids to independent schools will see \$3,500 less per child had the tax credit been fully implemented, and it's retroactive to January 1, 2003. Not only is that a tax hike, not only is it unfair and wrong, it's mean-spirited to go back to January 1, 2003. Hold on to your pocketbooks; the real Dalton McGuinty has arrived.

HYDRO RATES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Another day, another broken Liberal promise.

Already Dalton McGuinty has broken promises to stop private hospitals, balance budgets, protect the Oak Ridges moraine and more. Today our broken-promise Premier is going to renege on another one of his so-called ironclad commitments. He's going to scrap the hydro rate cap.

Before the election Mr McGuinty said, "The most important thing to do at this particular point in time is to put a cap on those rates through to 2006." What a difference an election makes. Now our broken-promise Premier says the rate cap has to go.

What does that mean for you, the hydro ratepayer? It means your bill is going to go through the roof, and why? Because Dalton McGuinty isn't going to put a stop to hydro privatization and deregulation. Deregulation lives under Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals. So that big, fat hydro bill you're going to get in the mail—remember, it's not hydro at cost; it's hydro at cost plus a 15% cut for all the private power middlemen who have their hands in your pocket.

New Democrats say it's time to kick the profit-takers, fee-takers and commission-takers off your hydro bill. We need affordable, reliable public power delivered at cost and a real investment in long-term conservation and efficiency programs, not a Premier who breaks his promises at the speed of light.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I'd like all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving the first session of the 38th Parliament.

We have Anna Bronwyn Birss from Parry Sound-Muskoka; Daniel Brett from Scarborough Southwest; Gabrielle Brunet Poirier from Ottawa-Vanier; Joseph Dykstra from Stoney Creek; Emma Jane Graham from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey; Cameron Greer from Kitchener-Waterloo; Vaibhav Gupta from Mississauga Centre; Julie Harmgardt from Oakville; Katherine Hayes from Don Valley West; Charlotte Heath from Durham; Trevor Kezwer from Thornhill; Laura Konkel from Toronto-Danforth; Gideon Kwinter from Eglinton-Lawrence; Howard Leung from Brampton West-

Mississauga; Christopher McGuire from Lanark-Carleton; Janine Pryce from Leeds-Grenville; Benjamin Skinner from Markham; Umesh Thillaiivasan from Scarborough Centre; Olivia Upshur from Beaches-East York; and Mnrup Virk from Etobicoke North.

Would you all join me in welcoming this wonderful set of pages we have today.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD AMENDMENT ACT (ELECTRICITY PRICING), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO (ÉTABLISSEMENT DU COÛT DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ)

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 with respect to electricity pricing / Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario à l'égard de l'établissement du coût de l'électricité.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have got it.

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

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

The Speaker: Will all those in favour of the motion please rise.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Leal, Jeff	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Marsales, Judy	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Cordiano, Joseph	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craiton, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Orazietti, David	

The Speaker: All those who are opposed, please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hampton, Howard	Miller, Norm
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John

Bisson, Gilles	Jackson, Cameron
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario
Eves, Ernie	Martel, Shelley
Flaherty, Jim	Martiniuk, Gerry

Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Scott, Laurie
Tascona, Joseph N.
Witmer, Elizabeth

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 59; the nays are 26.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Introduction of bills?

Statements by ministries?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We haven't done motions yet.

The Speaker: I stand corrected. Motions.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(a), the House shall not meet to consider private members' public business on the morning of Thursday, November 27, 2003.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), Ms Mitchell and Mr Levac exchange places in the order of precedence for private members' public business such that Ms Mitchell assumes ballot item 77 and Mr Levac assumes ballot item 1; and

Notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 1, 2, 3 and 4.

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

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

Those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1402 to 1407.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Flaherty, Jim	Mossop, Jennifer F.
Arnott, Ted	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Munro, Julia
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Gerretsen, John	Orazietti, David
Barrett, Toby	Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Hampton, Howard	Patten, Richard
Bentley, Christopher	Hardeman, Ernie	Peters, Steve
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Peterson, Tim
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jackson, Cameron	Prue, Michael

Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Broten, Laurel C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Caplan, David	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Kwinter, Monte	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Churley, Marilyn	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Craitor, Kim	Marsales, Judy	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Delaney, Bob	Martiniuk, Gerry	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mauro, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duguid, Brad	McGuinty, Dalton	Wong, Tony C.
Duncan, Dwight	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Eves, Ernie	Mitchell, Carol	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The eyes are 86; the nays are 0.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HYDRO RATES

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On October 30, the Premier asked me to commit to delivering a responsible approach to electricity pricing, one that better reflects the true cost of electricity in Ontario. He asked for a pricing plan and an overall approach to electricity policy that first and foremost would protect Ontario's consumers by providing them with fair, predictable and stable rates.

The Premier also wanted a plan that would encourage conservation, promote a cleaner environment and attract new supply. He stressed that a responsible approach to electricity pricing was one of the government's top priorities, and he gave me 30 days to come up with a plan.

Under the previous government, we saw energy pricing and energy policy treated as some sort of political football.

In the summer and fall of 2002, many consumers, without knowing why, found themselves paying volatile market prices for electricity. Every hour of every day the price changed, sometimes dramatically. Working families, small businesses and individuals on fixed incomes were left very uncertain by the tension this created.

Then, late last year as an election drew closer, the previous government imposed a cap of 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour on the retail price of electricity. The price freeze solved the volatility problem but had the effect of obscuring the true cost of electricity and cutting consumers off from information they needed to make better choices.

As Premier McGuinty has pointed out, the electricity price freeze is contributing to the \$5.6-billion deficit at a

rate of hundreds of millions of dollars a year. In fact, since the price cap was put in place a year ago, it has cost all of us—every one of us—over \$800 million.

This policy is simply not sustainable, Mr Speaker, and I remind you it is the taxpayers who will ultimately have to pay that price—the same taxpayers who need to know that their government is investing in schools and universities, that their money is being invested in quality health care, that the air they breathe will be safe, the water they drink will be safe and that they'll have better communities to live in.

If we are to provide the people of Ontario with the services they expect and deserve, the 4.3-cent electricity price freeze simply cannot be sustained.

As we all know, the price freeze provides little, if any, incentive to conserve energy. Today, more than ever, it should be obvious that energy conservation is of paramount importance. It reduces the demands on our electricity system and our reliance on coal-fired generation, and in so doing helps protect our environment.

On October 2, the people of this province chose change. They chose a government that would be honest, open and transparent in its dealings, a government that would give them the straight goods.

It's obvious that we need to move quickly away from the current artificially low fixed price to a more sustainable price that better reflects the true cost of electricity. It is for this reason that moments ago I introduced the Ontario Energy Board Amendment Act for consideration by this assembly.

Under the proposed legislation, our government would get rid of the artificially low price cap of 4.3 cents. The new plan would introduce a responsible pricing structure that is fair and predictable for consumers, reflects the true cost of electricity, gets rid of a subsidy that is completely unsustainable, and sends a clear and powerful conservation message to the people of Ontario.

Under the proposed legislation, an interim pricing plan would take effect on April 1, 2004.

The first 750 kilowatt hours consumed in any month would be priced at 4.7 cents per kilowatt hour. Consumption above that level would be priced at a higher rate of 5.5 cents per kilowatt hour. This would better reflect the true cost of electricity in Ontario.

Approximately 60% of Ontario homes use less than 1,000 kilowatt hours per month. Conservation measures could help reduce that consumption level. There are many tips available, and later this year we'll be announcing more conservation initiatives that my parliamentary assistant will look after.

The government will be taking action to improve its own conservation performance. In the coming weeks, the Chair of Management Board will be announcing a new plan to make a noticeable reduction in the government's overall energy consumption.

Since the proposed interim pricing plan would not take effect until April, consumers would have a chance to review their energy use, take conservation measures and, as a result, limit the impact on their electricity bill.

Under our proposed legislation, the interim pricing plan would stay in place until an independent regulator, the Ontario Energy Board, develops new mechanisms for setting prices in the future. The OEB's new mechanisms would be in place as soon as possible and no later than May 1, 2005.

If the interim pricing turns out to be higher than the average market rate, all eligible consumers would receive a credit after the OEB implements its pricing mechanism.

By ensuring that the OEB, an independent body, sets future prices, we can be sure that electricity prices in Ontario will be regulated on the basis of what is in the best interests of the public.

At the same time, we're also taking steps to allow the OEB to protect and renew our electricity grid by ensuring reasonable charges for the delivery of electricity.

Furthermore, beginning March 1, 2004, local distribution companies would be allowed to recoup some of the costs that the previous government had put on hold. This will ease a tremendous financial burden that these local companies, the vast majority of which are owned by municipalities across Ontario, have had to face.

To mitigate impacts on consumers, the Ontario Energy Board would be asked to ensure that these recoveries to local distribution companies are spread over four years. We estimate that this would have a modest impact on the final price to consumers.

As of March 1, 2005, local distribution companies would be allowed to achieve their full commercial return, but only on the condition that they reinvest the equivalent of one year's worth of these additional monies in conservation and demand management programs. This represents an investment of \$225 million, the largest investment in conservation of its kind in the history of Ontario.

As well, the proposed legislation would restore the normal regulatory regime for transmission rates immediately. We don't anticipate that this would increase rates.

This plan would first and foremost protect Ontarians by ensuring a fair and predictable solution to electricity pricing.

Second, it better reflects the true cost of electricity in Ontario today.

Third, it would ensure that our government, and Ontario taxpayers, stop subsidizing electricity consumption and jeopardizing our ability to invest in health care and education.

Fourth, it would send a clear and powerful conservation message to consumers.

Not only does electricity conservation make sound financial sense; it makes good environmental sense. It reduces our reliance on coal-fired generators, and so helps improve our air quality. Our commitment to phase out coal-fired generation by 2007 remains firm.

Finally, it would attract new supply by sending a clear signal that Ontario intends to deal with electricity issues in a practical, sensible and transparent way.

Energy is critical to the safety and comfort of our families and the strength and security of the economy they depend on. It's simply too important to be continually subjected to political whims and whatever opinion polls show to be popular on any given day.

We're giving the people of Ontario the straight goods. We firmly believe that our plan is in the immediate public interest and that it is a major step toward ensuring a safe, reliable and sustainable energy supply for the people of Ontario, for the future of our economy, for jobs in this economy, so we can all grow and prosper together.

1420

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): To the member opposite, the only real change you brought to this chamber in the last two days is that you've broken some of the most significant election promises you made to the people of Ontario. You have broken a trust.

On October 29, this government's highly priced and overpaid consultant, Erik Peters, issued his opinion report on this province's finances. Within 24 hours, on October 30—less than 24 hours later—your Premier had a knee-jerk reaction to this manufactured deficit projection.

Premier, on that day you announced that you had broken your election promise—you had broken trust with the people of Ontario—and that you were removing this electricity cap that a year ago you and every single member of your caucus had voted for. Minister, less than 24 hours later you were making one of the biggest decisions that your government is going to make this year.

Did you consult with anybody? Did you consult with your caucus in those 24 hours? No. Did you consult with your cabinet? No. Did you consult with your Minister of Health to ask him what the impact would be on hospitals and whether services will be cut? No. Did you consult with your Minister of Education to determine how many teachers may have to be laid off to keep lights on in our schools? No, you did not. Did you consult with the Minister of Community and Social Services to determine how many daycare centres might have to close spaces because you haven't looked at the impact? No, you haven't done any of that. Did you consult with your caucus to ask them if they've talked to seniors, to the disabled, to farmers, to northerners, to people who will be affected by this decision?

The fact is that they can't even look to your throne speech for any relief. What did you tell them in the throne speech? You said that they had to temper their requests for more. Why do you keep loading more and more costs on to these people? You're providing no help or assistance. The reason you didn't consult with anyone is that you knew all along you were going to change this cap.

There's no way you'll convince this province that you had some revelation after Erik Peters's report. You knew all along. This was deliberate, this was deceptive, and it was wilful on your part to make this change. You knew that new energy supply and production are coming on stream in this province.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I have two observations: The points you are making must be directed to the Speaker, not across the floor itself, and I'd like you to withdraw the word you used.

Mr Jackson: I will withdraw the word. But I still believe it was deliberate.

Interjections.

Mr Jackson: "Deliberate" has been approved in this House.

The Speaker: Order. You know the word that you used. I'd like you to withdraw it without any debate.

Mr Jackson: I have withdrawn it.

The Speaker: Thanks.

Mr Jackson: This decision, Mr Speaker, by the Premier was wilful. There's no question. Make no mistake. You have fooled no one, Premier.

You knew that the energy supply and production were coming on stream in this province, that the previous government's mitigation strategy was beginning to work, that our ambitious green energy program was going to work. You chose this 30-day time frame simply so that your new Minister of Energy could deliver a major speech to the Independent Power Producers' Society of Ontario in Toronto tonight. He will receive the largest applause a Liberal cabinet minister is going to get for this government in the next four years. Why? Because you are clearly signalling today that profiteering is the only way that you're going to save hydro, and that the privatization of some parts of hydro is the only way you're going to be able to save it.

Today's announcement may be good news for investors or for generators or for profiteers. All these people want you to go full steam ahead with your reforms.

Premier, you were forthcoming on November 9, 2002, when you said—you promised the people of Ontario a year ago that you had an immediate plan to get electricity prices down, including immediate price relief, and your new Minister of Energy, Mr Duncan, said in this House, "Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals will protect consumers, protect average Ontarians, and put the interests of average people ahead of the big corporate interests." That's not what you've done. As recently as six weeks ago, Premier, you promised voters and taxpayers that the cap wouldn't be lifted. Your first act was to sell out voters, and your next act will be to sell off parts of Hydro. You have taken care of your new, special friends.

Mr Premier, you gave speeches in this House—you made a mythical promise that you were listening to people on Main Street, Ontario. It seems to me that all you're interested in is the shortcut you took through Main Street to find your way to Bay Street as the new Premier of Ontario.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to reply to the minister's speech today.

Hon Mr Duncan: For up to five minutes, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Do I hear consent? Agreed? For up to five minutes.

Mr Hampton: Here is—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could we have the member respond without any heckling. And could you direct your response to the Speaker. Thank you.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, we find ourselves in another very interesting day in the Parliament of Ontario. You see, Speaker, we knew in May of last year, we knew in June, in July, in September, that the rate cap was going to cost \$800 million hidden off-book. We knew that. Everybody in this Legislature knew that. What did the Liberals say at that time? Mr McGuinty said, "I think the most important thing to do at this particular point in time is to put a cap on those rates through to 2006." That was Mr McGuinty on Focus Ontario, November 23, 2002. Then, "We will keep the price cap in place until 2006." That was the Liberal campaign document, Hydro You Can Trust, released September 2003. From the London Free Press, September 30, 2003: the Liberals are going to keep the rate cap at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour until 2006.

I ask, what's changed? We knew in May, in June, in July, in August, in September, that the rate cap was costing \$800 million a year off-book. But at that time, the Liberal position was that the rate cap must stay in place until 2006. Nothing has changed. It's just that now it's after the election; now the promises that were made before the election can be broken.

I want people to clearly understand what's involved here. The Minister of Energy talks about 5.5 cents a kilowatt hour. I happened to bring a little book with me. The weighted price for electricity in this province before the rate cap was imposed last November was 5.6 cents a kilowatt hour. I think the consumers of Ontario ought to know what that means for them. A hydro price of 5.6 cents a kilowatt hour means \$2 billion more taken out of consumers' pockets. That's what it means.

People better also understand that it isn't just the cost of generation of power that's going to go up. As I read the legislation, transmission costs are also going to be allowed to rise, distribution charges are also going to be allowed to rise. So for those people who have that hydro bill now with nine different bills on it, virtually every one of those figures is going to increase. What does this mean? Well, it means that people had better be ready for a hydro bill that at the bottom line is going to double.

The minister talks about people paying the true cost of hydroelectricity. I simply want to remind people at home that in fact you're paying much, much more than the cost of producing electricity.

Let's just take a couple of power dams on the Mississagi River that used to belong to the people, which produced electricity for about a half a cent a kilowatt hour. Right now, the private company that owns those, because they're peaking plants, is charging about 10 cents a kilowatt hour, 20 times what it costs to produce the power. That's what the consumers of Ontario are being asked to pay.

Are there true conservation measures here? The only conservation measure is this: This government hopes that

if they drive up the price, some people will not be able to pay the hydro bill. Let me tell you, that will happen because the reality is—

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): Is that what you recommended in your book?

Mr Hampton: No. What I recommended is that we stop the farce and get rid of the privatization and deregulation of our hydro system.

What you're trying to do is virtually the same thing the Conservatives tried to do, only you're going to try to hide it another way. At the end of the day, privatization and deregulation of our electricity system is going to charge people far more than they should be paying for electricity, it's not going to result in conservation and it's going to kill tens of thousands of jobs in this province, and you're going to hear from the small business sector very soon.

DEFERRED VOTES

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): We have a deferred vote on a motion by Mr Duncan that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet until Thursday, December 18, 2003, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until Monday, March 22, 2004.

This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1432 to 1437.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Eves, Ernie	Mossop, Jennifer F.
Arnott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Fonseca, Peter	Oraziotti, David
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Bentley, Christopher	Hardeman, Ernie	Peters, Steve
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Peterson, Tim
Bountroggianni, Marie	Hudak, Tim	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Jackson, Cameron	Ramal, Khalil
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Brown, Michael A.	Kennedy, Gerard	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldeep	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Scott, Laurie
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Chudleigh, Ted	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Craitor, Kim	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Tascona, Joseph N.
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duguid, Brad	Miller, Norm	Wong, Tony C.
Duncan, Dwight	Millroy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	
Hampton, Howard	Martel, Shelley	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 81; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

PARTY STATUS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There's been an unfortunate and regrettable phenomenon of referring to the seven New Democrats in the Legislature as independents. I rise today on a point of order seeking your intervention and resolution of this matter.

In a very brief set of submissions today, I first want to preface my comments by a short reference to the classic work by C.E.S. Franks, *The Parliament of Canada*, page 3: "Within the House of Commons, the basic structure of proceedings is the adversarial format of contest and debate between the government and opposition parties. Issues, representation, elections, and proceedings are all structured around, and dependent for their functioning on, the existence and strength of the political parties." That is from page 35.

I expect you and others who may comment on this point of order to make reference, of course, not only to the standing orders but to the Legislative Assembly Act, specifically subsection 62(5) of the Legislative Assembly Act, and standing order 2, the first paragraph of the standing orders. I want you, sir, to reflect on the history of these two provisions.

One, let us note that the provisions in the Legislative Assembly Act have as their origin the amendments made in 1974 and once again in 1999, when the number was reduced from 12 to eight.

Similarly, the standing orders, according to the information that I've been able to glean, contained for the first time in 1999 the provision defining so-called "recognized party."

It is the irresistible conclusion, when one reads the Camp commission, particularly report number 2, that the provisions in the Legislative Assembly Act flow directly from the recommendations of the Camp commission. That, you'll recall, was Dalton Camp, Farquhar Oliver and Douglas Fisher who, in the last intensive study of the function of this Parliament, did extensive work and made extensive recommendations in five reports.

For instance, in report number 2 of the Camp commission's recommendations regarding House leaders, dated 1973, Camp and the commission recommend that "Formal recognition be given to the House leader of the official opposition, to be seen as such by Mr Speaker, and to the House leader of the third party," and in yet a subsequent recommendation—this is important—that "Salaries be established in the legislature estimates ... for

the House leader of the official opposition, and ... for the House leader of a qualified third party.”

In other words, the Camp commission recommendations were for the creation of the status of “recognized party” for the purpose—if you read the Legislative Assembly Act, you note that “recognized party” is the threshold which creates access to the predetermined set of salaries, additional pays and budgetary allowances.

Take a look at the standing orders and you’ll see that “recognized party” is defined in standing order 2, there are also frequent references to independent members. In particular, take a look at standing orders 111(b), 31(c), 36(i), 96 and 22.

I put to you, Speaker, that the creation of a class of persons of “recognized party” does not imply that anyone or any group that is not a recognized party is not therefore a party, nor are they necessarily independents, because you also retain the consideration of particular rights and opportunities for independents.

I submit to you, Speaker, that the ruling of Speaker Parent on June 14, 1994, in the federal House of Commons is one that is highly relevant. I had occasion to make brief reference to it yesterday and Speaker Parent, in response to a point of order raised by one Mr Bill Blaikie, who was, and remains, a New Democratic Party representative, a member of the NDP, was in that Parliament of 1994, elected on October 25, 1993, one of nine New Democrats elected. At the federal level there are no considerations of “recognized party” in the standing orders, but there is in the comparable legislation to our Legislative Assembly Act. Indeed, that dates back to 1963, and what began in that House was the adoption of the 12-person threshold by the House procedurally.

Notwithstanding that the New Democrats, having elected only nine, did not meet the threshold either under the legislative provisions or under the common-law standing orders, Blaikie appealed to the Speaker (1) for him and his colleagues to sit together as a caucus rather than be arranged as independents, and (2) for them to be identified and acknowledged as New Democrats, as New Democratic Party members.

I take you to Speaker Parent’s ruling of June 16, 1994. Speaker Parent, who was at the time the federal member for Welland-Thorold, said, “Let me now address the two other matters: the designation of members as members of the New Democratic Party and their wish to be seated together....”

“Let us review the current situation. The members of Parliament belonging to the New Democratic Party are identified as such in the debates and on the televised proceedings of the House. They are designated as ‘others’ in the back row to the left of the Speaker on the seating plan.”

In conclusion—and I should indicate I searched for a June 1, 1994, issue of Hansard, where, in contrast to the Hansard of this Legislature of November 19, which lists as is customary all the elected members, again regrettably New Democrats are identified as independents. However, I put to you in the federal Hansard a practice that should

be persuasive and guiding, indeed conclusive for this Legislature, the New Democrats elected to the 35th Parliament: All nine are identified in the Hansard of that Parliament, even prior to the ruling of Speaker Parent, as members of the NDP, as New Democrats.

Parent concludes, “The honourable members of the New Democratic caucus will ... be seated together and be identified as such on the plan.” A little bit of additional, but of great, interest: “The honourable member for Beauce will be identified as Independent and the honourable member for Markham-Whitchurch-Stouffville will be identified as Independent Liberal” stand-alones.

1450

He goes on to say, at the final two paragraphs, “Members of the same party will be identified and seated together, with the precedence of their respective leaders determining their place in the sequence.”

I demonstrated to you yesterday the history of this chamber in identifying the party label of as few as one member—the case of Joe Salsberg—when he sat as the sole member of the Labour-Progressive Party in the opposition benches, not separated from other opposition members by a disruptive Liberal rump. I referred you to seating plans which had two CCFers identified as CCFers. I demonstrated to you seating plans in which five CCFers were identified as CCFers.

I’m closing my comments by making reference to the Hansard of Monday, November 24, 2003. I find the Speaker, for instance, at page 24: “I’ll now recognize the member from the independents, Mr Hampton.” I don’t point that out to criticize; I point it out to indicate to the Speaker the need for a determination of this matter.

I then look at the Hansard later in the day, page 35: “Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow the independent NDP members....”

So here we are “independents,” then, according to Mr Duncan, “independent NDP members.” Although not having access to the formal Hansard transcript of yesterday evening’s proceedings, once again we heard references to New Democratic Party members, among others, from members of the assembly.

Anticipating the government House leader’s response, I would like to refer to some comments by Mr McGuinty which I believe have laid out the government’s position in this matter: a Toronto Star article, November 8, 2003, by one Theresa Boyle, a Toronto Star journalist. I recall the last time in this House that a member of the government challenged a journalist as to the veracity of the quote that was printed: That minister not only was, in short order, no longer a minister, he is no longer a member of this assembly.

Theresa Boyle, in her article of November 8, 2003: “In Kitchener yesterday, Premier Dalton McGuinty said he had ‘no difficulty whatsoever’ with New Democrats using the party’s name in the Legislature and on office doors, insisting the Liberals ‘don’t have an issue with that,’ Canadian Press reports.”

I appreciate the Liberal support for my point of order. I wait to see whether the Conservative caucus and their

House leader will oppose us or support us, but I put to you that the Parent ruling is very clear. We weren't elected as New Democrats—

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): As independents.

Mr Kormos: We weren't elected as independents; we were elected, clearly, as New Democrats. We weren't elected as independent New Democrats; we were elected as New Democrats, members of a political party registered and campaigning as such. An independent is precisely that, and this House has seen incidents of independents.

I recall, and you'll take a look on the seating plan of the period from 1990 to 1995, Dennis Drainville, when he left the government caucus to sit as an independent, his seat was in the opposition benches. He sat as an independent. Peter North: another independent. When Madame Boyer was expelled by her caucus, she sought no other party affiliation and sat as an independent. There has been the rare time—one Peter North, who ran and was elected as an independent. We didn't.

I submit to you, sir, that the Parent ruling is binding and that that ruling should guide this Speaker in consideration of these matters and in ruling that New Democrats in this House are to be identified as New Democrats on the seating plan, when we're referred to by other members and on all other official documents of this chamber.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I recognize the House leader for the government.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I will try to keep my response short.

First of all, what is binding on this House is the standing orders, which we all agreed to and voted upon, including, I believe, six of the seven current independent New Democrats. We have put forward and tabled a motion which will deal with 27 aspects of the standing orders in order to facilitate the participation of them. With respect to the seating issue which was raised by Mr Parent, I would note that that has already occurred here.

With respect to what we call them, again, in this House normally we don't refer to a party. I recognize that he raised specific issues around Hansard and around the television screen which we are quite willing and prepared to look at and likely will be able to agree to. I've asked Mr Kormos to meet to discuss these and to discuss this informally with the official opposition. It would be our intention to try and meet those. I should also point out that Mr Kormos and I are scheduled to meet tomorrow morning. These are the sorts of things the Premier was very clear about.

I respect the fact that they ran as New Democrats and were elected as such by the people they represent. I should also remind you, Speaker, in your consideration of this, that you never recognize a member in this House based on his or her party affiliation. In the case of the official opposition, it's the leader of the official opposition. That's because the history of this place and the history of Parliaments is such that they're designed

around individual members. In fact, party organizations didn't come into Westminster-model Parliaments until probably 200 or 300 years after they had begun. They're a means by which we organize. I respect their need to organize along the lines that they were elected. I believe, sir, that we will be able to resolve these issues in fairly short order, to the satisfaction, hopefully, of all members.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to briefly comment on the comments made by my friend from Niagara Centre. The whole issue of what constitutes a party for procedural purposes is certainly a big issue that has confronted Parliament. Changes have been made with respect to this. You can look at the standing orders, at the Legislative Assembly Act, at the policies, practices, motions of the Board of Internal Economy; you can also look at precedent.

In 1963, 1966 and 1979, when smaller parties were recognized in various ways for the purposes of procedure and practice federally, there were changes made. Speaker Macnaughton said, "It is not one where the Speaker ought by himself to take a position where any group of members might feel that their interests as a group or party have been prejudiced." But different from Speaker Macnaughton, in our standing orders 1(b) and (c), which was put into the standing orders in 1997, authored by me, it says, "In all contingencies not provided for in the standing orders the question shall be decided by the Speaker or Chair, and in making the ruling the Speaker or the Chair shall base the decision on the democratic rights of members referred to in clause (b). In doing so the Speaker shall have regard to any applicable usages and precedents of the Legislature and Parliamentary tradition." I'll briefly continue. The spirit of protection of minorities of the House should not be entirely based on the generosity of the House.

In my judgment your central role, Speaker, aside from being a parliamentary referee, is to protect the interests and rights of individual members, and in the case of this issue a group of members, albeit small, but nonetheless important. It's your job to be the guardian of the rights of minorities in this place. Our standing orders, specifically in 1(c), give you new powers, authority and ability to enter into such a debate when that generosity has not come about, so it's not a case of unilateral action that's being asked to be acted upon by you.

Speaker Fraser said in a ruling on September 24, 1990: "I also think members should understand that as your Speaker, I have some discretion in dealing with the rights of every person in this House who is in a minority position. I think we have a great tradition of protecting the rights of minorities, and I can assure the honourable member that the rights of minorities will be protected by the Speaker in a way that is both fair and equitable for all other members." And of course there is the Parent ruling, which I won't repeat, given by the member for Niagara Centre.

I'm not one, and I don't think many in my caucus are, who wants to identify our party affiliation on our letterhead, on our Web sites, on our doors—

Interjection: Or on the ballot.

Mr Baird: —or on the ballot, nor do I think New Democratic Party members do.

1500

Fundamentally, this issue is about respect. I think it's regrettable that the member for Niagara Centre has to stand in this place and raise this issue, because it should be dealt with based on the generosity of all three parties. I say to the Premier, who's here today, that all this party, this group of seven members in our Legislature, is asking for is respect, not just for them as individual members of the Legislature but for the people who sent them to this place and for the people who supported their party in all of our communities. So, Mr Speaker, we ask you to intervene to protect the rights of the minority and to allow what is a very small and reasonable request.

The Speaker: Thank you very much, member for Niagara Centre, for putting forward your point of order. I have listened very carefully to all three, and I'm very encouraged that I'm hearing you will be meeting with the government House leader. That is a rather progressive move, because it helps me in making my decision. If you can resolve these problems before they get to me, as you know, my job is much easier. However, if that is not so, then I'll hear all the arguments put forward and come back to you at a time that is reasonable enough to have that decision. Thank you very much.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have unanimous consent coming forward on women and domestic violence today. Before we seek that unanimous consent, I would seek unanimous consent to allow question period to be one hour, so that question period can happen, and also that the normal amount of time be allotted for petitions.

The Speaker: Do I have unanimous consent for an hour for question period? I heard a no.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Mr Speaker, I rise today to seek unanimous consent to recognize that today is the International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women and to make a statement and to allow my friends opposite, the members from Toronto-Danforth and Kitchener-Waterloo, each to make a statement for up to five minutes in recognition of the day.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to follow up the comments by the government House leader and again ask for unanimous consent for question period to be considered for the full hour and petitions for—

The Speaker: Order. I thought I had dealt with that already.

The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore has asked for unanimous consent. Agreed? OK.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I rise in the House today in recognition that November is Wife Assault Prevention Month and today, in particular, is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

First introduced almost 20 years ago, Wife Assault Prevention Month is, sadly, still needed today. Anyone who has recently read the headlines of our province's newspapers will be only too aware that we must continue to work each and every day to take action to prevent violence against women.

These headlines have been bleak reminders that this terrible crime continues to haunt us all. And it is not only the women in these stories who become the victims; it is their children, their families and their communities. Everyone suffers, and that's why everyone must be part of the solution, not just women.

Our leader, Dalton McGuinty, knows that. I am proud to say that Dalton McGuinty and this government are thoroughly committed to doing more to protect women and children from violence in their own homes and in their communities. So committed, in fact, is our leader that in his first month as Ontario's Premier he met with representatives of agencies who are on the front lines in the fight against domestic violence. So committed is our leader that he has asked me to work with a number of government ministries, and in particular with our minister responsible for women's issues, on an action plan to address violence against women.

Our government will not turn its back on women and children who are fleeing domestic violence. We will work hard so that women have safe, secure options that enable them to escape these threatening situations. We will work hard so that men who assault their partners are held accountable for their actions. We will make improvements in the provision of second-stage housing. We will work with the federal government to amend the Criminal Code and to make it more difficult for accused abusers to make bail, and we will work with police to develop risk assessments for those accused of domestic violence.

Governments alone cannot prevent violence against women. Everyone must become more involved. We will be working with our partners to get their advice on the best ways to address domestic violence issues, and that work has already started.

I would like to draw your attention today to two campaigns dedicated to preventing violence against women. The White Ribbon Campaign, which runs today through December 6, started 12 years ago. The white ribbon is now nationally recognized as a symbol of men's opposition to male violence against women. Wearing a white ribbon is a personal pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence.

On December 6, we will also observe Canada's national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women to commemorate the terrible day that 14 young women's lives were so tragically taken at École Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989. Each year, in commemoration of this tragic event and in remembrance of the 14 young women, the YWCA annually mounts its Rose Button campaign. I have both the white ribbons and the rose buttons with me today and I would ask unanimous consent that the members be allowed to wear

these ribbons and buttons during the month of November through December 6.

We have a long way to go to end violence against women, but we are committed to working each and every day to ensure women's safety in their communities and in their homes.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I am pleased to participate on behalf of our caucus, in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women in this Wife Assault Prevention Month.

Violence against women is a crime and it must be eliminated. Regrettably, each year, thousands of children see or hear violence in their homes. These children are at risk, and unfortunately, they often continue the legacy of family violence. Through prevention programs, we must continue to help children and young people learn how to recognize the signs of an unhealthy relationship. We must continue to make improvements to our system of support for women experiencing violence. There is always more to do.

I'd just like to review at the present time what the outcome of violence sometimes is. Sexual assault: According to Stats Canada, one in three women surveyed nationally, or 39%, have been sexually assaulted. The majority, over 51% of sexual assaults, are committed against women between the ages of 16 and 21 years. This means that by the time these women reach adulthood, far too many women will have experienced this form of violent sexual assault. This is unacceptable.

The physical, emotional and psychological toll of these assaults on women is immeasurable. The impact on their families and on society as a whole is enormous. Violence tears families apart, targets the vulnerable and destroys our communities.

I'd like to share with this House what has been done in recent years to eliminate violence against women, keeping in mind that the job is never done. I've stood in this House since 1990 and heard us all make a commitment.

In 2002-03, we spent over \$160 million on programs and services to combat violence against women. This was an increase of 75% since 1995.

We established the Office for Victims of Crime, the first of its kind in Canada.

1510

We worked with many community organizations and experts dedicated to preventing violence, supporting victims and educating Ontarians to end violence against women, and we put in place more than 40 programs.

We took action to ensure that the justice system treats victims with the respect and support they need.

We allocated \$4.5 million in funding over five years to create a crisis line for assaulted women so abused women across the province would have access to 24-hour, seven-day-a-week crisis services.

We've made important strides to address domestic violence, including increasing the number of domestic violence courts, and we created the most extensive domestic violence court system in Canada. There will be

54 courts by 2004 providing enhanced prosecution of abusers by crown attorneys specially trained in domestic violence issues, providing support for victims and specialized processing of these cases.

We increased shelter funding by \$26 million over four years to add 300 new shelter beds and to refurbish 136 others, and \$9 million annually was provided in new funding for counselling, telephone crisis service and other shelter supports.

We developed a province-wide, toll-free, bilingual victims' support line that offered referrals to victims' services, information about the criminal justice system and information about the status and scheduled release dates of offenders.

When addressing violence as a learned behaviour, we developed a new feature on the Ontario Women's Directorate Web site called, "Let's talk about it." Created for young men and women, "Let's talk about it" helps teens to learn how to recognize the signs of unhealthy relationships, identify potentially dangerous situations and learn what constitutes sexual assault.

However, the job is not done, and I was pleased to hear that the government is going to commit to make more improvements to serve women in our province. I would ask all of us, since it is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, that we not only consider women in this province but that we reflect on the global fight of women who endure violence every day in many forms in many nations on earth.

I ask, in conclusion, that we include these women in our thoughts, discussions and actions on violence against women, because violence against women is a crime against all humanity.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I am proud once again to have this opportunity to speak on behalf of the New Democratic caucus on Wife Assault Prevention Month 2003. For those of you who have been in this House for a while, you have seen me stand on many occasions to speak on this issue.

What I would like to say is this: We have the knowledge and the power now to press for change. We know now what needs to be done. Expressions of goodwill and hope go a long way, and I know that the members from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses who were here the other day to talk about their needs and their demands and to issue this report were also very hopeful after a meeting with various ministers in the Liberal government. They expressed that hope, and they were very pleased that they had the opportunity to sit down and discuss the needs that they have to put in place to stop this horrible violence and murder of women and children in our province.

They issued this report. It's not new for us, but it has to remind us once again—when we stand on our feet and talk about these issues, we have to remember that we are talking about real women and children who are now dead. They're listed on this page, and this is just a partial list of the women and children who have died since 1995, which is what this report specifically talks about: "161 women, 21 children, 10 family and friends murdered; a

33% increase in murders of women between 2000 and 2001—virtually all in Ontario.”

We have a daunting task ahead of us, and we must have no more excuses. We must put the resources into the programs that will literally save lives and save the future agony of women and children who are battered and abused for years.

Two of the most important recommendations and advice in this report are this: Women say that they have nowhere to go when they're trying to flee from violence, that there isn't enough affordable housing. Women are saying over and over again that they're forced to go back and bring their children back to their abusers because the affordable housing isn't there. Women say that if they do leave their abusers and do find somewhere to live that they're forced to live in poverty, which they cannot climb out of.

I want to say to the government that we applaud the move to increase the minimum wage to \$8, but I also want to say that it has to be speeded up, that \$8 over a four-year period, as these women analyzed, will not allow these women and children to escape poverty.

So the two most important things needed, as I'm sure all members in this House are aware—housing, affordable housing now.

I want to say to the Premier that I was very pleased to read in this report a statement by him that will go a long way in improving the lives of these women and children, should the government proceed. He was questioning on April 29, 1997, the then Tory government, and in this question about the budget, the Premier said this, and I think we would all agree: “There is a massive human deficit that is mounting in this province. You have become fixated in an unhealthy way with the fiscal deficit at the expense of people in this province. When you cut 24-hour crisis intervention hotlines, human costs add up. When you cut community counselling services, human costs add up. When you cut programs to help women from returning to abusive situations, human costs add up.”

As long as we all move forward together in one voice on this issue, we can make a difference. We know what we have to do.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore has asked for unanimous consent that members could wear the white ribbons in the House during the months of November and December. Do I have unanimous consent of the House to do so? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr Ernie Eves (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): Mr Premier, this afternoon your Minister of Energy in his

statement included these words, that the people “chose a government that would be honest, open and transparent in its dealings—a government that would give them the straight goods.”

How can you stand there as the Premier of this province today and tell the people of the province that you've been open, honest and transparent when for months, for over a year now, you've been telling the people of this province that they could count on a 4.3-cent rate cap until 2006? Do you think you've been honest, open and transparent with the people in the last year?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I think one of the questions that the people of Ontario have been asking is, “Why is it that this rate cap was not in effect and in fact revenue-neutral, because the Leader of the Opposition as Premier maintained that in fact it would cost us nothing?” Mr Peters made it abundantly clear in his report that that price freeze is costing hundreds of millions of dollars and it's compromising our ability to adequately fund health care and education. To keep that price freeze in effect would be irresponsible. One of the things the people of Ontario said on October 2 is to bring a responsible approach to Ontario government for a change, and we are doing that.

1520

Mr Eves: With all due respect, there is nothing in Mr Peters's report that provided any new information to you or the government. You may choose to use that as an excuse.

Mr Premier, did you mean these statements when you said them? “What price would Bruce Power get for the electricity that they generate? Four point three?” McGuinty: “Four point three would be the price cap that we keep on.” “But you said you'd get rid of the competitive market.” “Four point three cents is the price that we are going to keep on our bills. Four point three is what we are going to keep on the price cap. We're going to keep that price.” “So are you running on a promise then to raise hydro rates?” This is on August 21st of this year. “No.”

Today, your Minister of Energy stood in his place. He has introduced a minimum 10% increase in the actual price of producing the product of electricity in the first place, up to 25% for families that use more than 750 kilowatt hours a day. I would suggest that that will include nowhere near the majority of families in the province. You haven't talked about the extra cost that you're allowing distributors, pointed out by Mr Hampton, to consumers as well—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: We are acting decisively and responsibly. We're bringing a pricing regime to Ontario that is fair and balanced. It will encourage conservation. It will discourage waste. It will encourage private sector investment and ultimately the construction of more generation. We are not going to shrink from this respon-

sibility, I say to the Leader of the Opposition. This is not an easy thing to do, but we're doing it because it's the right thing to do for the people of Ontario.

Mr Eves: The Premier just got through saying that he's open, transparent and that's how his government is dealing with this issue. A few moments ago we checked the Liberal Party Web site on this issue, so as of about two minutes ago, this is what your party stands for. You're saying that you're open and transparent. "We will keep the price cap in place until 2006 ... But the cap cannot last forever. You deserve a government that will plan ahead, so that when the price cap is lifted in 2006 you will have the ability to control your costs." Now, which statement is right? The one that he made in here today or the one that's on your Web site as I speak?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I want to remind the members of this Legislature that the Leader of the Opposition, when he served in this capacity as Premier, changed his mind 11 times on hydro. We have acted decisively and responsibly. We're bringing fair, balanced and appropriate pricing to electricity in the province of Ontario.

I am convinced that the Leader of the Opposition as well as the members of his party would agree in their heart of hearts that this is the right thing to do; it is the responsible thing to do. It encourages conservation. It protects those who use little electricity, those in lower income groups. It will encourage private sector construction of generation. It does all the right things for all the right reasons. I'm sure they would agree with that.

TAXATION

Mr Ernie Eves (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): Do you believe, Mr Premier, that you have kept your promise to the people of the province of Ontario with respect to taxation? Do you believe that you are delivering, in the omnibus taxation bill introduced in this House yesterday by the Minister of Finance, what you promised before the election on October 2?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Yes, I do.

Mr Eves: When you signed the taxpayer protection promise with your new best friend, Mr Williamson—I should say your former new best friend—you said, "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise that if my party is elected as the next government, I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters and will not run deficits. I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act."

According to Mr Williamson today, you didn't come close to keeping that promise. You have already violated that promise as well. What do you have to say about that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: We were very, very clear in the election in terms of what we were going to do with respect to rolling back your irresponsible corporate tax. We were very clear about what we were going to do with the private school tax credit. We received a very clear message—loud and clear, in fact—from Ontario seniors who said they were not going to be bought with your

education property tax credit, who want to invest in public schools instead. We've been very clear.

Unfortunately, what Erik Peters discovered for us and made painfully clear to all the people of Ontario is that you left us with a \$5.6-billion deficit.

Mr Eves: In your taxation bill introduced by the Minister of Finance yesterday, one of the most disconcerting impacts is that on modest-income Ontarians, those at the very bottom of the income-taxpaying scale. There has been a program in this province for years, called the Ontario tax reduction program, which removes literally tens of thousands of people from the taxation rolls in this province every year at budget time. Your bill is going to see that those people at the very bottom end of the scale, who are making \$16,000 and \$17,000 a year, are going to get zapped by your bill. Their taxes are going up. Do you think that's fair? Is that what being a Liberal is all about in the province of Ontario today?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition will want to take the opportunity at some point to correct the record. Taxes are not going up on those people.

Here's the truth: The reality of October 2 is that one of the messages the people of Ontario sent to us was that they want us to improve the quality of our public schools; they want us to improve the quality of our health care; they want us to provide better protections for our environment; they want us to provide greater strength to our communities. That's the reality of October 2. That's our priority, and that's what we're moving ahead on.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Yesterday's tax-hike bill and today's hydro rate-cap scrap will have a significant impact on farmers and small agribusiness across the province. We have to assume that the government has done research to project the impact these measures will have on Ontarians, seeing as the Premier promised not to raise this cap until 2006.

Will the minister let the House know what type of analysis was done to study the impact that both the tax hike and the hydro hike will have on agribusiness, such as the many greenhouses and small farms in my riding and all across Ontario?

1530

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): The Minister of Energy was very clear and upfront. He had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture to let them know that this unsustainable hydro cap was going to be lifted. We're going to work with the agricultural community to ensure that the impact is as little as possible.

I've assigned my parliamentary assistant, Carol Mitchell, to work as a liaison with the agricultural community so that we can start to look at how agriculture can be part of the solution to the problem we've got. We're

going to look at biodigesters, methane pumps, wind and solar power, and on-farm generation that's going to help eliminate line loss.

We're going to work with the agricultural community. Unlike you, we're not going to leave them behind. We're going to work with them because agriculture can be part of the solution.

Mr Hardeman: How can the Minister of Agriculture stand in the House and admit that absolutely nothing has been done to assess the impact on our agricultural community?

I would like to quote from Hansard, November 7, 2002, when you said to the minister of the day, "Minister, you should know what's happening on the farms. Do you know what electricity bills are looking like for Ontario farms right now?... We're not talking about hundreds of dollars; we're talking about thousands and thousands of dollars. You should know that farmers have been hit by two years of drought, and you turn your back on the farmers of Ontario right now. ...and now you're zinging the farmers again when it comes to the distribution of hydro in this province."

Minister, I think those comments relate directly to the bill introduced by your government. Is this is the type of advocacy rural Ontario can expect from the new McGuinty government?

Will the minister commit today to not allowing these changes to go forward until a proper analysis has been done of the impact it will have on rural Ontario? Will you do that for the farmers of this province?

Hon Mr Peters: I made that commitment to the farmers of Ontario this morning at the Ontario Federation of Agriculture banquet, that we're going to work with them, that we're not going to leave them behind.

We're not going to do like the previous government did in 2002, trying to hoodwink the farmers of this province. When we talked about a 150,000-kilowatt-hour cap, this government didn't listen.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Minister, do you want to continue?

Hon Mr Peters: They tried to put something through at the very last moment.

We went to bat to advocate for the farmers of this province. The Minister of Energy has done a full cost analysis of this, so you can't say that hasn't been done. As to your comments about tax increases, we're not increasing taxes, former minister. What we're doing is making sure that we're going to make investments and we're going to stand up for the farmers of this province.

MEAT INSPECTION

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. The people of my riding, along with the rest of the province, were shocked by revelations about meat inspection practices in the province. No one wants to have to second-guess the quality of the meat they put on the table.

Under the previous government, the number of meat inspectors was cut from 103 to 10. We have heard allegations of dead stock being used to produce beef for public consumption and about cattle too sick to stand up being taken to meat-packing plants.

Our cattle farmers have suffered greatly and have had to cope with the mad cow crisis and now with this uncertainty among consumers about the safety of our beef. What will you do to improve the trust in Ontario beef?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I thank the honourable member for his question. I'm as unhappy as anyone in this province with the state of meat inspection. The previous government let this system degrade, and now what we have to do is go forward and expose any and all of the problems in this system.

I have today instructed the Ministry of Agriculture to adopt a policy to post on the Web site all abattoir audit ratings and licence hearing summaries. The government is committed to openness and transparency.

Our government is about action. We're not going to sit around and do nothing like the previous government did. In 2001, they passed the Food Safety and Quality Act. They passed it. They never proclaimed the act; they never put the regulations in place. We're going to take action, unlike that government, that stood back and let this industry take all kinds of abuse.

Mr Hoy: I'm sure Ontario farmers and consumers will be encouraged by those positive changes, Minister.

Food safety should be a priority for all governments. I understand that your ministry should not conduct an investigation into its own practice. That could be seen as a conflict of interest. However, we as a government are determined to finally take responsibility to ensure the safety of the food we eat. Perhaps, Minister, you could tell me and the people at large what process will be used to investigate problems in meat safety. We need to know.

Hon Mr Peters: I thank the member for the question, and I'll refer this to the Attorney General.

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex. Yes, you are right: The review of our meat inspection practices in Ontario must be fully independent. We made that commitment. This government is going to keep that commitment in order to ensure that the review is at arm's length.

The Ministry of the Attorney General will be taking on responsibility for this review. Ontarians need to have confidence that the review is independent. Ontarians need to have confidence in their meat inspection practices, so that Ontarians can have confidence in the food they eat. We made that commitment, we said we'd get to the bottom of it, and we will get to the bottom of it.

CORPORATE TAX

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

I'm tremendously concerned about job creation in Ontario. We're all concerned about our ability to attract new jobs, to attract investment and to attract opportunity. Both the federal government on this side of the border and the federal government south of the border are cutting corporate taxes this year and next, and they're doing it because tax cuts create jobs.

With the big tax-raising bill that your government's bringing in, and as the person responsible for our economic competitiveness around the cabinet table, after your bill becomes law, I'd like to ask the minister: Who will have lower corporate income taxes than Ontario?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I know the business community wants to make sure they have a fiscally responsible government at Queen's Park, and that's what we're doing. The business community wants to be reassured that they're not going to face these constant fiscal imbalances in the future. That's just not sound policy. It doesn't create a good business climate for attracting investment.

But let me be clear about tax rates. The Minister of Finance, even after he brings in responsible measures to ensure that we no longer have a fiscal imbalance—Ontario will continue to have one of the most competitive combined income tax rates for corporations in North America. That compares with the national US weighted average, which is about 39.7%. In Ontario it's 36.12%. So we're going to be very competitive. And I'll tell you, we're going to be able to attract even more investment because we're focusing on the right things.

Mr Baird: The reality is, Minister, we don't have to compete with the average; we have to compete with individual jurisdictions with more favourable taxation environments. We can't compete on being a right-to-work province. We can't compete on a whole range of initiatives. The fact is, you couldn't stand in your place and, with this big tax-raising bill, name jurisdictions with lower taxes than we would have in Ontario, and that's disturbing. The reality is that both Alberta and Quebec will have lower tax rates than we have in Ontario. The reality is that Alberta, British Columbia and New Brunswick all have small business tax rates that are lower than Ontario in 2003 and now in 2004 and 2005.

How can industry in Ontario depend on you to be their advocate when you don't know which jurisdictions have lower tax rates than Ontario? How can industry in Ontario compete when our taxes are now going up rather than going down? How can we compete with jurisdictions south of the border where they're seeing economic growth rates revised to 8% because tax cuts are fuelling job creation? Can you stand in your place and defend that?

1540

Hon Mr Cordiano: Let me give you some numbers. Ontario, as I said, is at 36.12%, the combined federal and provincial rate. Combined state and federal taxes in Illinois, for example, are 39.7%. Let's pick another jurisdiction: New York, just across the border, 39.9%. Let's pick Pennsylvania: 41.5%.

The reason we're going to succeed is because we're going to make sure that we're investing in the right areas. We have a strategy, a cluster approach to growing the economic pie. We're going to make sure we're investing in higher-skilled training; we're going to make sure we have key investments in our post-secondary institutions and that in fact we take the great work that's being done in our post-secondary institutions with respect to research and development and we're going to commercialize that research. We're going to make Ontario a leading jurisdiction in the world to attract investment. I'll tell you, that's a lot of confidence that we're putting forward for the people who are looking to invest in Ontario.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. It's a follow-up to a letter I wrote to you, Minister, shortly after you were sworn in. In my letter, I reminded you that during the campaign, the now Premier and I made a commitment to the constituents in my riding that the Highway 3 bypass from Leamington to Windsor would be improved to the point of four-laning. I thank you, Minister, for your joint announcement with the federal government on Friday for improvements in my riding to Highway 401. But Highway 3 still remains a significant problem. I wonder if you can provide assurance to the residents of my riding that our commitment to improve Highway 3 will be kept.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member from Essex for his question and also for his letter. I know how diligent the member from Essex has been in his efforts to improve the safety of Highway 3 and I commend him for his efforts. I can assure the member that the government is committed to improving highway safety throughout Ontario. Yes, we will improve safety on Highway 3. A planning study is underway for Highway 3 from Windsor to the Leamington bypass. This study is examining safety concerns and will identify any necessary improvements, such as the widening of Highway 3.

Mr Crozier: Thank you, Minister. Just prior to the recent election, the previous government of the day said that they would make Highway 3 a priority. I don't know what that meant, but I'm certainly pleased to hear that you and I can work together on the improvement on the Highway 3 bypass and that I can be sure that another four years won't pass before that work is done.

Hon Mr Takhar: Once again, I thank the member for his question and I want to assure the member that I will work with him and we will work with the people in your region to make sure that the improvements to Highway 3 take place. The ministry has already made some recent improvements on Highway 3 and installed new traffic signals at Highway 3 and Division Road. Also, we made improvements on Highway 3 and St Clair College in LaSalle. Further safety improvements are currently being examined. We will continue to work to enhance the

safety on Highway 3. I want to thank the member again for his question.

CORPORATE TAX

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Why do you support an economic policy that promotes a faltering economy, falling corporate profits and loss of jobs for the province of Ontario?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I want to assure the member that what we are putting in place—by acting fiscally responsibly, by putting in place the necessary ingredients to help this province succeed and help businesses succeed, we're going to make sure that they have a very positive business climate. The measures that were introduced by the finance minister will ensure that this province is put on the right footing.

We cannot sustain this deficit. It hurts the business community; it hurts the business climate. We're going to get that deficit under control. That's going to create a positive climate for investment throughout the entire province.

Mr Chudleigh: I find the minister's response somewhat contradictory to the actions this government has taken here in this House today.

Your Minister of Finance introduced a piece of legislation yesterday that we all know will significantly increase taxes. In fact, it's the largest tax increase in Ontario's history. November 24 will go down as a day of infamy to the taxpayers in this province. Specifically, taxes on job-creating businesses will be increased, hurting job creation and starting the new year on a grim note for Ontario's economy.

The people of Ontario need to know why you, as Minister of Economic Development and Trade, support tax increases on job-creating businesses.

Hon Mr Cordiano: We support fiscal responsibility for this province, something you failed to offer the people of this province, something you failed miserably to do. That's why you find yourselves over there, and we're on this side, because the people of this province knew better.

I'm going to repeat what I said to you—

The Speaker: Order. The member for Halton has asked a question. I presume he'll need an answer.

Hon Mr Cordiano: I'm going to send this table over to the member for his edification. It clearly demonstrates that Ontario corporate tax rates are some of the lowest in North America. When we compare to Pennsylvania, for example, Pennsylvania has a combined corporate tax rate of 41.5%. The US weighted average, the combined tax rate, is 39.7%. Ontario's tax rate, I repeat, is 36.12%, one of the lowest in North America.

We will compete, we'll attract new investment and we'll keep Ontario's economy growing and vibrant. That's what we're going to do.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): There's an independent member I must recognize. As you understand, you were recognized earlier on, Mr Hampton.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I request unanimous consent of all New Democrats to ask a question on their behalf.

The Speaker: I think you can get unanimous consent from the independents, but let me see if I get unanimous consent from the entire House.

Have I got unanimous consent to Mr Hampton—
Interjection.

The Speaker: I heard a no.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: At the beginning of this week we received advice from the Clerk of this assembly, who indicated that the Speaker would be acknowledging a New Democrat at the eighth question. I appreciate that as an interim approach to the matter, which of course, as you can understand, is going to be addressed.

However, Speaker, I put to you that it is our choice as to who asks that one question, and New Democrats are clearly indicating that it's our leader, Howard Hampton, who is to ask the question today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I did not send a message like that around. I said I'd recognize an independent member in advance, but only one person per week, in the sense that we should not repeat that individual.

Mr Hampton had a question earlier on. I am prepared to receive another independent member at this time. If you have none, I shall go to the rotation.

Is there someone from the independents who would like to ask a question?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Speaker, I asked for unanimous consent to ask a question on—

The Speaker: You did not get unanimous consent. I'm sorry. Order.

Questions from the opposition?

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. In the rotation, it's the government side now.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to raise this point with you because this is getting to be a little bit hard to take, to a certain extent.

When you recognize a member from the Conservative Party or a member of the Liberal Party, you refer to them by their riding, and that is appropriate according to the standing orders of this Legislature. But you choose to identify us as independent members, which I am not. I'm a New Democrat, but more important, the rules say you call the member by his or her riding or by his or her title within the cabinet of Ontario. I'm saying, for you to come out and identify us strictly as independents and not call other parties by their party quite frankly is wrong.

1550

The Speaker: As you know, I have endeavoured to identify all members by their riding and of course we're struggling at the moment to recognize each one by their riding. I will do so and I have been doing so all day. If that's not the case, I will continue to improve my performance by getting the ridings. I hope, however, that we don't impede this process by getting back to this continually.

CORPORATE TAX

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Minister, we have fulfilled our campaign promise to roll back corporate taxes in order to reinvest in public services. That is what we promised to do during the election campaign and we were elected on that promise. However, there are many businesses in my riding, and my constituents are concerned about the impact of corporate tax on jobs. For many years, the opposition has been hooked on the outdated mantra of tax cuts for the wealthy as a quick-fix solution for creating jobs. We now know that trickle-down economics simply doesn't work any more. How can we ensure that the economy remains competitive in the absence of further corporate tax cuts?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I thank the member for Northumberland for the question. Again, I would say that what the previous government did was entirely irresponsible. We're trying to fix the fiscal imbalance that they had left us. But I want to repeat: We will continue to have one of the most competitive tax rates in North America. Again, I want to point out that the tax rate at 36.12% in Ontario will continue to compete very favourably with US states. The national weighted average is 39.7% across the United States. Great Lakes states—their average will be 40.3%. So there is no doubt that Ontario will continue to be a very competitive tax jurisdiction.

Mr Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister. It is appalling that the former government wanted to lower the tax rate, down to 25% below our American competitors—this at a time when our public service is suffering. The tax levels are not the main factor in attracting quality jobs in the 21st century. Business executives point to other factors, like high quality of life. They stress the competitive edge of public medicare. Mostly, international investment requires a highly educated workforce. Minister, how are we going to advance our international competitiveness?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I couldn't agree with the member more, but let me point out that today the Roger Martin task force on competitiveness and productivity released its second annual report. I want you to hear this, because it's very important. He indicated that there are a number of factors that contribute to competitiveness beyond tax cuts.

"Let's focus on key industry clusters," he said. "Let's promote ongoing skills training. Let's make sure our post-secondary education is more accessible. Let's make

sure that we're capitalizing on the skills and experience of foreign-trained professionals"—very important to our economy. I can assure you that our government is committed to working on all of these fronts. We're going to bring in changes that will see to it that we increase our productivity and that we make Ontario an even better place to live based on quality of life, based on these things that I think Roger Martin has pointed out in his task force.

Let me just add that I congratulate him on the fine work that he's doing for the entire province. Thank you for that question.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment. My question is for the Minister of Education, and congratulations on your appointment as well.

As part of the largest single tax increase in one day in the history of the province of Ontario, yesterday you and your government proposed to increase the tax burden on some parents of school-aged children in the province. Not only do you plan to repeal the equity in education tax credit but to do so retroactively, and that goes back to January 1 of this year, which would mean for those families that they would be denied that tax credit not only for the last half of the last school year but for this entire school year, for which they've done their budgeting and their planning for their children based on their choice of education.

The minister knows, or should know, that the vast majority of families that use independent schools are of modest means. They have budgeted their expenses. Two thirds of those families send their children to religious or culturally based schools in the province. There is a cap on the tuition allowance and on the tax credit, as the minister knows. Five other provinces have this type of credit; in fact, the majority of Canadians have it.

What it means for these families is \$1,400 and more each, Minister, and you propose to do this retroactively to these families of modest means in the province of Ontario. How can you justify that?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): The member is talking about a measure put forward by the Minister of Finance. Just to speak to the principle of it: This is a very poor piece of public policy that you engineered as the chair of the education policy committee. Any five children can constitute a school to get money from the government with no accountability whatsoever. It's a very poor piece of public policy. It's being rescinded after having been discussed in the last election campaign.

It should surprise no one that that's taking place, and for the member to allege otherwise is simply to capture as hostage some people's claims. Seventy per cent of the dollars being put forward in this were going to people in secular schools. Frankly, as a piece of public policy, every other jurisdiction that considered this rejected it in

referendum after referendum and said this was bad policy, and the people of Ontario said the same thing in the election just finished.

Mr Flaherty: The minister didn't answer the question, of course, about the effect on families of retroactive tax legislation. On this point, 84% of Ontarians in a recent poll agreed that parents should have the right to choose a school for their child that best reflects their personal values and beliefs. A majority of the people of Ontario felt that all schools would improve where school choice was applicable. As I say, two thirds of the independent schools in this province are religious and culturally based.

You and your government believe in religiously based education; you fund Catholic schools beyond Grade 10, beyond the constitutional requirement. The argument with respect to cost in the public school systems is inapplicable because the situation for a child going from an independent school to a public school adds \$7,000 a year in expenses to those schools.

Other than your indebtedness to union leaders, who supported you during the election campaign, how can you justify discriminating against Jewish schools, Muslim schools, Christian schools and other schools of religious denominations in the province of Ontario and our multicultural and multi-faith society?

Hon Mr Kennedy: I'll tell you what: We on this side of the House make no apologies for standing up for public education in this province. What we're offering for all the parents in this province is a circumstance that they haven't seen for eight long years, which is improvement in public education. You were proud of your record, a record of increasing private school enrolment by 50%. Not only do I stand with the aspirations of parents who want excellence to be right there in their neighbourhood publicly funded school, but I stand with your leader who called your proposals ludicrous in the leadership contest that you went through.

I am glad to stand in this House and say to parents that what they can look forward to from this government is improvements in education, increasing confidence in public education and all the reason in the world to have their children being part of our publicly funded system.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): As you will observe, it is 4 o'clock, and pursuant to standing order 30(b) I am now required to call orders of the day.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I move government notice of motion number 9, standing in the name of Mr Duncan.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Could you wait a bit until the members settle, then I'll take your point of order.

Very quietly, please, so we can proceed with the House.

The member for Niagara Centre on a point of order.

Mr Kormos: Speaker, I've read government notice of motion number 9, and I put to you that it is not in order. I refer you to the motion brought on November 20, 2003, which has the same effect and intent as notice of motion number 9. I also refer you to standing order 51: "No motion, or amendment, the subject matter of which has been decided upon, can be again proposed during the same session."

The decision made by this government, its House leader, was to adjourn debate on the motion brought on November 20. That motion is the one that is the operative motion, and this motion is out of order until that motion is withdrawn or resolved. With respect—

Failure of sound system.

Hon Mr Caplan: On that point of order, Mr Speaker: In fact, the debate was adjourned. This motion would simply renew that debate and make it operative. So it is entirely in order that we should be debating this. The debate was only adjourned on that particular day and can be renewed by this House at any time, and the government so chooses to call this notice of motion for debate on today's date.

The Speaker: My understanding is that no decision was made on this motion to dismiss it, so it's still in order. So I'll accept it, as the motion is in order.

Hon Mr Caplan: Speaker, thank you for your ruling. I want to first of all congratulate you on your position as the Chair—oh, sorry, do I need to move the motion?

In the name of Mr Duncan, I move that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration as early as the first sessional day, following passage of this motion. I so move, Speaker. Can I speak to it now?

The Speaker: Mr Caplan has moved government notice of motion number 9.

Hon Mr Caplan: As I mentioned at the outset, Speaker, I do want to congratulate you on your ascension to the chair, and I know that you'll do an excellent job.

The people of the province of Ontario spoke very clearly on October 2, that they wanted the government of the day to get on with the business of this province. That is precisely what the speech from the throne did; it elaborated a very broad vision, an excellent one, and the people of Ontario overwhelmingly said we should be moving in this direction. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor read that speech.

By the way, Speaker, I want to tell you that I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Economic Development, the member from York South-Weston, with the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, with the member from Sarnia-Lambton, with the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, with the member from

York West and with the member from Scarborough Southwest. I will be sharing my time.

In the very brief time that I'm going to have to address my comments, the people have asked us to get on with their business, and we are doing precisely that. It is really critical that we do this. There are important and pressing matters that this Legislative Assembly has to get down to. Whether it's to roll back the irresponsible corporate and personal tax cuts, whether it's to roll back other irresponsible measures, or whether it's to remove the unsustainable Hydro cap, there is a very heavy and serious legislative agenda.

It is also important that this body, this House, take into account the vision and the words from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as he so eloquently put it and, I must admit Speaker, as you put it for a second time on that day, an unusual occurrence. Nonetheless, it is important to the people of Ontario that this Legislative Assembly get on with the business of governing this province, of making the positive changes that the people said, with a very strong mandate and a very strong voice, need to happen for our province to move forward, for positive change, for a positive future, and for us to be the best that we can be.

I'm very excited about our legislative agenda over the next short weeks and over the next several years, because there are going to be some wonderful things in this province. I want to give a chance to my colleagues to speak a bit today about some of their thoughts, some of the issues that their constituents talked to them about as they went knocking door to door over the course of the 30-day election campaign.

As I wrap up my comments, I want to give a very special thank you to the people of Don Valley East, who provided me with a renewed mandate to come here on their behalf. I want to let you know, Speaker, that it is for precisely that reason, to represent the people in the great riding of Don Valley East and to do the very best that I can. They said to me that they wanted to see our schools fixed, they said to me that they wanted health care fixed, they wanted a strong community, they wanted investments in transit and housing and clean air and water. They wanted a government with those kinds of priorities. They wanted an end to the irresponsible fiscal policies of the previous government. They wanted an end to the chaos and rancour. I say humbly to the people of Don Valley East that that is precisely what I'm going to do on their behalf in this Legislative Assembly each and every day I am here. It is an honour to serve them and to serve their interests. I do so with my utmost vigour and my utmost concern.

Thank you very much, Speaker. At this point, I'm going to turn the floor over to my colleague the member for York South-Weston, and the rest of my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member for York South-Weston.

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): First of all, I want to congratulate the Speaker, who is not in the chair at the

present time. I was remiss in not congratulating him. As well, I want to congratulate my colleague who is in the chair at the present time for being re-elected. I do want to pass those regards along.

I think this motion is absolutely critical to us, this Legislative Assembly, and not just for the government. It is important that this assembly move forward with significant and important work that it must debate. After all, that is what members are elected to do in this chamber. They are elected to review the matters that are put before this assembly and review the legislation that is processed by this assembly. Each and every member in this assembly must be given the right to express their views on behalf of their constituents. That's what they're elected to do in this assembly.

I believe the stalling tactics do not advance the interests of the people of this province. We were elected with a clear mandate to bring about responsible change, responsibility in terms of our fiscal situation. We had some discussion about that this afternoon. It's absolutely critical for this province to move forward and deal with the fiscal imbalance that was left behind by the previous government. It's not acceptable that we have a \$5.6-billion deficit that goes unchecked. It's not acceptable that we continue to pretend there isn't a problem that we must deal with. On so many fronts that is the case. That is why it is important for this assembly to begin to debate particularly the speech from the throne, because all members want to be heard and all of their constituents want to hear what they have to say on these important items.

1610

This government must move ahead with its agenda. As I say, there's a sense of urgency around which this stalling does nothing more than to waste precious time in dealing with the fiscal imbalance that we face and a number of other areas. The sooner we deal with this, the quicker we can deal with the real questions that Ontario wants us to deal with, the real investments that we need to make in education and in health care and in protecting our environment. Those are the things that I think improve our quality of life. Our economy sustains that. Our economy allows us that standard of living, that improved quality of life.

What we have before this assembly at the present time is a throne speech. Then we move on to other matters. The fiscal measures that have been brought forward by the finance minister must be dealt with in this assembly. We can't put those things off; it would be irresponsible of us—almost as irresponsible as the previous government, which left us with this imbalance. We've got to deal with that, and we've got to move forward with great speed, because if we fail to do that, it makes it that much more difficult to deal with the items and the real issues that people want us to deal with in health care and education.

We have urgent and pressing matters to deal with on the health care front. I don't need to tell everyone that we had a very important debate during the election campaign

with respect to health care and how important it is to deal with the waiting lists, to deal with overcrowded emergency rooms. That continues to be the case, and the sooner we get to deal with the fiscal matters at hand—eliminating the irresponsible tax cuts that were brought forward by the previous government, the tax measures that were entirely irresponsible of the previous government, tax cuts that in many respects resulted in that deficit, in many respects were completely without regard for what had to be done while the province's other priorities went pressing, went forward, and they turned their backs on it. They turned their backs on the matters that we had to deal with, the urgent matters in health care. They turned their backs with regard to what was happening in education.

I would repeat that without dealing with the pressing matters that we had before us—education; let's talk about that for a moment. If we fail to invest in post-secondary institutions, in our post-secondary system, if we fail to meet those needs as we've proposed, then I think we will fall further behind on the competitiveness scale.

Roger Martin, as I pointed out today, brought forward his task force report. It had some very interesting observations. One of them was, as I said earlier in question period, dealing with the matter of investing in post-secondary institutions, in ensuring that we have more opportunities for people to become as highly educated and as highly trained as they possibly can, because that is going to lead to further investment. Around the world, there are 1,200 competing jurisdictions—1,200—that are looking for the same things we are: more investment, attracting that foreign direct investment to our province to create jobs. We're competing with 1,200 jurisdictions.

Tax cuts are not the cure-all; they are not the panacea. It's not the only item that matters. There are critical matters that are priorities in terms of when a company makes investment decisions that go well beyond tax cuts: research and development at our post-secondary institutions and the spinoff that provides for companies; skilled and highly trained workers, who are very, very important. We need to deal with those matters. We need to move on with this debate and deal with what's in the throne speech, because the throne speech, I can tell you, highlights those areas. It's all about improving our quality of life so that we have a higher standard of living. The only way we sustain that standard of living is by making the right investments. In order to do that, we have to deal with the fiscal imbalance that is before us. Unfortunately, we have to deal with that reality. We can't just hide our heads in the sand and pretend it doesn't exist.

This measure today is nothing more than a stalling tactic. It deals with items that are not a priority for the people of this province. It attempts to put off that very important debate that we must have around the throne speech. The throne speech informs the people of this province about this government's important agenda. It lists what it is that the government is going to make a priority—and, I might add, the speech was so good that it was read twice in this House.

I say to you that the throne speech debate, particularly for all of the new members in this assembly, is a very important one for this House to have. It's very important not only for them, but for their constituents to hear the views of the member that they elected. I know that the members of this House want to do the best that they can for the people who elected them and entrusted them to be here in this assembly. But, again, if we have this kind of stalling tactic that's before us, it doesn't allow us to get on with the responsible approach to the matters that are before this House.

I know that there's quibbling from time to time, a great deal of debate around the standing orders of this Legislative Assembly and how they work. The rights of individual members ought to be protected, and certainly they will have their say on that side of the House. The opposition will have their say. Every single member in this assembly will have his or her say. I honestly believe that no member should be denied the right to speak, the right to express himself or herself. That's what a debate of this kind does. It allows members to express themselves. I don't think that these stalling tactics that we see before us are doing anything constructive in that regard.

I say, let's get on with the debate. Let's get on with the important agenda that the people have elected us to deal with. Let's get on with that, because it's very important.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I would like to agree with some of the comments from the minister and just say that this to me is a sad state that we have to debate whether we can debate the throne speech.

This is the throne speech itself. We had the pleasure of hearing it twice. I, quite frankly, have read through it and found more in it each time. But to some people, politics is a game. Unfortunately, to some people, politics is a game. It's viewed as, "Can we win points in the Legislature or can we not?"

The object should be, for each and every one here—we have had the truly unique opportunity. We're each one of 103 people in Ontario whom the public has entrusted to be their servant—not to be their master, not to lord over them, but quite the opposite. Each and every one of us is here as a servant.

The message was very clear from the public over the last month that they wanted a change. They wanted a change not just in policies, but they wanted a change in the way things are done. When we look at the number of people who voted in the last election, the numbers of people who stayed away for a multitude of reasons should be a grave concern to everyone in Ontario.

Everyone here knocked on doors. Everyone here heard, "All politicians are the same." Everyone here heard, "My vote doesn't make a difference." Everyone here heard that people felt disenfranchised from the political system in Ontario. Having to debate this particular item today adds to that feeling that we're playing games, that all politicians are the same. They want us to get on and produce a change.

Here we are—for those of you who are watching this debate on TV and may not have realized that what we're

doing at this moment is debating a bill that would allow us to debate the throne speech. That's what it is. I cannot find any record that this debate has ever had to take place before, because it always passed by unanimous consent in every House, everywhere. Let's get on and do the business of the province.

1620

I'm virtually certain everyone knows this is going to pass and, in fact, I suspect the people who have caused this to take place—they want to debate the budget; they want to debate the throne speech; they want to debate the issues that the people in Ontario want changed. Yet we're playing the game to try to obstruct the business of the House.

The election was held in October, the House has been called back as quickly as it can, but still we have the approach of Christmas with a lot of things to be done. One need only quickly peruse through this speech from the throne to see the number of things that very clearly have to be tackled.

The issue of the deficit: I'm of a generation that has enjoyed a lot of benefits that have been provided to the citizens of Ontario, on borrowed money. My concern is that it not be my children and my grandchildren left to pay for the benefits that I enjoyed while a student, while working before I came to the Legislature. I have the obligation to make certain that the next generation and the generation after that have a viable Ontario.

I have a son who's First Nations, and they have a philosophy that I believe we all should subscribe to, which is that we need to do our planning for the next seven generations. The deficit that is facing us could destroy the future for our coming generations. As the Premier very aptly pointed out, the first issue that we have to address is eliminating the deficit—a deficit that didn't exist publicly during the campaign from the former government side, during the so-called budget presentation at the auto parts plant, but a deficit that has to be addressed by this government for the people of Ontario.

I don't think it's the first choice of anyone to deal with the deficit. There isn't a politician here who doesn't like to say yes to a request from the public. We like to make the people of Ontario happy, but we know that the best thing that would ensure their future is to tackle this deficit.

On security: We have to provide for the future security of our citizens. When we look at it, our seniors want good schools for the grandchildren. If we don't address this—I mean, we've got \$280 million going to be bled out of this province right now in added interest payments because of this \$5.6-billion additional deficit. That \$280 million—what would that have done in schools? What would that have done for seniors? What would that have done for hospitals? Money that is producing no benefit for home care—home care that has suffered. If we're going to tackle home care, as the minister responsible for seniors says, we have to put our house in order, and we found the house in a mess.

Public schools: The infrastructure has been in disarray. Public schools had been abandoned by the previous government. We saw all of the energies focused on a particular, very select group of individuals, rather than the average working family in Ontario. So we need to get on with business. We need to get past the actual debate on the throne speech. Yet here we are, tied up, wasting time on a debate about whether we should debate. I abhor that this increases the cynicism that exists among the people of Ontario.

The throne speech itself—unfortunately, not every Ontario citizen has a copy of this, because I really think they would benefit from it. It is a document that you need to read more than once, and thank goodness this time we were able to do that.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): You can't put it down once you pick it up.

Mr Parsons: It is. This is great reading. I guess I'm saying it with a smile on my face, but it really is great reading.

I think what is unique—this throne speech reflects our commitments as the Liberal Party during the election. But what I found really great as a candidate, when I knocked on the doors, was rather than my presenting a policy that I tried to convince the voters at the door to subscribe to, I really had the feeling that our policies reflected what the people at the doors believed.

Each of us as opposition members had an infinite number of contacts with various people from Ontario. As the Liberal Party, we went through a process where we had a grassroots organization to bring together what we believed the people in Ontario want. Whether it's walking down the main street of a town or a village or a city, or whether it's reading e-mails, or whether it's talking to people on the phone, we got a very clear message on what the people in Ontario want. They want strong, publicly accessible, publicly funded, open-to-everyone health care.

People say to me, "Boy, it's great that they voted you in for that." Rather than our telling them what they wanted, the people of Ontario told us what they wanted. If I can go back to my first statement: Our role and responsibilities as MPPs is to reflect what the citizens in Ontario want.

People in Ontario are not stupid. I find it invigorating to knock on doors and talk to people. In fact, I do it in non-election years because we need to hear what the real citizens in Ontario have to say. They delivered a clear message to us on health care and on education.

They also delivered a message that I'd love to see reflected in this. They expect to see a tone of respect restored to Ontario. They expect us to not make derogatory remarks about nurses. They expect us to not make derogatory remarks about teachers. They expect us to provide the same respect and the same health care and the same services to people who are financially disadvantaged. There are homeless in our communities and there are homeless we should be concerned about, but this throne speech doesn't say, "Let's pick them up and

lock them up.” We’re going to treat them with as much respect as we will treat the multimillionaire in Ontario. You’re a citizen. There are not degrees of being a citizen in Ontario. You’re a citizen, and the speech reflects that. I can’t recall hearing that kind of language in a throne speech before.

Dalton McGuinty, as Premier, has clearly heard and wants to restore the sense of equality and equity within this province, and I am so pleased to be part of the group that will have the very unique opportunity to do that.

I’ve talked about the need for us to be concerned about the next few generations, seven generations, to ensure that they’re successful. Part of that involves our education system. We’ve had a great deal of discussion earlier today and questions about the tax rate and whether it will keep industry out of Ontario. Well, I’ve talked to people in industries who are considering coming to Ontario, and the first question they’ve asked me is, “What skilled workforce will be available in Ontario?” This throne speech makes a commitment to restore a strong education system, that that’s available. They asked me about our health care system and will they get a doctor, and they asked me about the quality of life. Somewhere way down on the list is the tax rate, because they feel assured that we will have a productive workforce, highly skilled, available to them.

Let’s get into this throne speech and let’s debate it, and let’s quit playing these games about trying to block the business of the Legislature to try to get a little more publicity in the newspaper and a few more sound clips on TV. Let’s remember the real reason we’re here, and the reason is not our party affiliation. The reason is, the people in Ontario gave us a job to do. Let’s get on and do it.

1630

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): When I sat on the other side of the House, I sat near the member from Niagara Centre—at least closer to the member from Niagara Centre. As I said, I would watch with great interest—let’s put it this way—the creative ways he could find to deal with some of the issues in the House and to garner attention, I would suggest.

I’d also like to say to the member from Niagara Centre that there is a great deal of work to be done in this province, and I believe he understands that. The stalling tactics are not, in my view, a constructive way to get the business of this province done.

This is how important long-term planning is, that government has a methodical and thoughtful approach to governing, a long-term vision, if you want, for the province and how important it is that government has these long-term visions: One of the biggest issues we’re facing in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton is a critical doctor shortage. It is the worst in the province. We have tremendous issues dealing with health care in my riding, and that is a critical situation. I said to some of the experts regarding the doctor shortage, “Why do we find ourselves in this position today? Why is it that we don’t have enough doctors for the population of this area?”

I found out—it was in 1992, I believe—there was a change, if you want, in policy in this province to cut dramatically the number of doctor spaces. I believe it was from something like 780 down to 560. What are we feeling today? We’re feeling the impacts. In 1995, when the new government came into play, they didn’t address this issue. They didn’t look to the demographics of the province that were going to fundamentally change. We had an increase in population, but more importantly, we also had a large aging population. What do we have now? We find ourselves 10 years behind, in this area of doctor shortages, because some very wrong-headed decisions were made early on.

I say this because it is important now for us as a government to move forward with some dramatic changes in this province so that we can have a better future in the next 10 years. On October 2, the people of this province made a very fundamental decision. That decision was that they wanted a restoration of our services to be done in this province and to have a fiscally accountable, responsible approach to doing that. We have, and we are going to maintain that. We are going to give, and we have given, the people of Ontario the straight goods. It isn’t easy to sit back and say, “You know what? We have to have an independent person take a look at those numbers, take a look at what really is the deficit that we’re going to be incurring.” What happened here is that we had to give them the straight goods and we found that we had a \$5.6-billion deficit.

Now that we know that’s the reality, we have to take steps to clean up the mess. If we don’t tackle the deficit we’ve inherited, we’re going to be a lot more troubled in the long term. We have to deal with it and we have to put our fiscal house in order, but we also have to deliver positive change, because that’s what we promised the people of Ontario. We said we are going to deliver on positive change for the province, a new approach.

So what have we done to date? We’ve already delivered on a number of positive changes. We’ve taken two private hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa and we’ve brought them back into the public system. We’ve introduced legislation and we’ve said we would do that: Roll back irresponsible tax cuts, because we’re already competitive compared to other jurisdictions that we compete with, and we can’t afford those tax cuts, considering the fiscal reality we find ourselves in. We have launched an independent inquiry into the events at Ipperwash. It’s about the truth. We promised that we would do that and we have done that because we want to establish the facts surrounding the death of Dudley George.

We also signalled our support for a national health council to improve accountability in our health care system and provide better service to the public.

We have also named a new interim chair to the Ontario Municipal Board, and we have signalled major planning reforms to give people a real and meaningful voice in how their communities grow and prosper. That is meaningful change.

We've also moved forward and are going to fulfill our key commitments to implementing the recommendations of the Walkerton reports, and we have formed two new committees made up of experts to do that. We've stopped the sell-off and privatization of Ontario Power Generation nuclear inspection service divisions.

I remind those of you listening, because you hear the opposition today stand up and consistently say there is a level of irresponsibility, if you will, in our rolling back the tax cuts, when in fact on October 2 the people of Ontario said, "We do not want any more of these tax cuts, because we understand they are jeopardizing our services in this province."

We've stopped the approving of auto insurance rate increases. The last approval of insurance hikes came about when the Conservatives were in power.

We've removed the supervisors in Hamilton, Ottawa and Toronto school boards, and our elected representatives in the government, including non-ministers, have been given more power in cabinet committees, because we're going to be enhancing the role of MPPs and we've done so right from the start.

We're also intending—and this is tremendous; I believe it's going to change our accountability with some of our public sector. We're going to introduce legislation that's going to give the Provincial Auditor new powers to examine the broader public sector. Why? Because Ontarians need more information about how their tax dollars are spent and improved accountability. You see, it isn't enough just to say we have to put more money into something. We have to understand where and how that money is being spent. We know we have to improve and enhance our public sector services. On the other hand, we also have to have a mechanism whereby the people's money is certainly going to be examined as to how and why it's being spent and if we're getting value for our money. I believe the public expects that of us. In other words, we want government to work better for people.

As I finish my remarks, I say that this is a new era in Ontario politics, and four years from now we can say that Ontario will be the better for it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

Mr McMeekin: The riding with the longest name because our people have such big hearts, big hopes and big dreams, Mr Speaker.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): What are you saying about my constituents then?

Mr McMeekin: Next to Ms Churley's riding of course.

I want to join my colleagues who have articulated so well and so comprehensively the issues before us and the hopefulness that's contained in the throne speech. I don't for a moment pretend to be as earnest as the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, but I'll do my best.

During the election campaign I heard a story that was interesting. It was about the then Premier speaking in Stoney Creek, talking about the fiscal situation in On-

tario, and just then a seagull flew over and laid a deposit squarely in the middle of his head. One of his aides said, "Don't worry, Mr Premier, I'll go get some Kleenex and I'll be right back to clean that up," at which point the Premier turned to another aide and said, "Silly boy, by the time he gets back, that seagull will be 17 miles away." You like that? But, that said, the past is behind us; we need to learn from it. The future is ahead of us; we need to prepare for it. The present is here; we need to live in it.

1640

Living in it means we need to deal with and work with the consequences, the cards, if you like, that we've been dealt. We on this side of the House don't want to be the evil of two lessers. We want very much to chart a new course, to be as concerned about the basic foundational things as the glamorous, starry-eyed policies that we'll eventually get to in our term. But I want to add, in addition to the words of the poet that I shared earlier about the past, the future and the present, that it's not so much what's behind us or what's ahead of us that matters as what's inside of each one of us.

What's inside of us on this side of the House, and hopefully all members of this House, is a very real sense of purpose and a clear and sincere resolve to move forward; to be the change that we want to see in the world, as I think Gandhi once said; to do politics differently; to not just tell people what they want to hear, but to actually be very forthright and truthful in the reality of the situation that we find ourselves in; a resolve to keep the interest of the many ahead of the wants of the few, or the demands of the few—the demands of a few friends, more particularly; to end the wrecking ball politics of the past, which, sadly, left so many good people walking through the rubble, trying to pick up the pieces, with some sober and responsible government.

It won't be easy. Sober and responsible government recognizes the importance, not just of speaking the truth, but of working with all Ontarians to develop that shared sense of purpose. Do you know what? I think it's a sad reflection that we're not really experiencing that shared sense of purpose here today with the kind of shenanigans that are going on from some of the members opposite.

That sound foundation has to be economic, social, cultural and political, for we all know that it's written in the wisdom literature, "Lest we build our house on a sure foundation, the labourer surely labours in vain." Do you know what? I don't want to labour in vain here. There's been far too much of that over the years. I want to work at ensuring a future for the people I represent, who happen to include three teenage girls of my own, who have their own hopes and dreams: two at university, who are working hard to acquire the skills so that they can live to make a difference in our troubled world. I think that's basically all most parents, on a good day, would want their kids to be able to do. We understand on this side of the House that you don't secure that sound foundation, in any sense of the word, by burning storm windows for

heat. That just doesn't make sense. We've seen some of that on the other side: a government that went out and borrowed—

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member used the word “shenanigans.” Is that parliamentary?

The Acting Speaker: In my view it is, and that's not a point of order.

Mr McMeekin: I could have called it “sinanigans.”

Not wanting to be the evil of two lessers, we're wanting to move ahead, we're wanting to work very hard at mirroring the kind of governance that this province needs. We want to work hard at working with partners in a new, open, honest way so that we can move forward with a new deal for our municipalities; so that we can move forward with the kind of health care reform that's been stymied by governments more interested in pointing fingers than pointing direction; so that we can in fact link up with our friends like the Honourable Mr Romanow, who has talked about the importance of expanding the health care basket, and making sure that governments are accountable, that they don't get some seven hundreds of millions of dollars and just throw it into the general revenue pot rather than investing it where it was intended to be invested; so that we can move forward with building the strong economic base that we need so we can assist the most vulnerable: those on the Ontario disability support program and kids who are seduced—literally—into the cult of smoking, at an incredible cost, not just to them but to all of us generally.

The best political advice I ever got in my life wasn't to engage in shenanigans or games; it was to look squarely at what's going on, to tell the people you want to represent what's broke and how it is you're going to fix it. I think we all have an obligation in this place to reflect. In fact, every single day as I come into this place, I ask myself the question—every single policy that's proposed, every single throne speech that's announced, every single budget, which is really a reflection of the throne speech—show me your budget and I'll show you what you really believe in. Show me your throne speech and I'll tell you what you really believe in. The best advice—and I think of this every day—is to look at what's broke and to try to think about how we're going to fix it.

We're not going to fix it by abandoning partners. We're not going to fix it by ignoring realities. We're going to fix it by working hard to get it right, by being prudent, or, as my good friend Buzz Hargrove was wont to say just a couple of days ago, to make sure that the breath of fresh air and the welcome change that we see from this government continues. It's not what we've seen over the last eight years. There's a certain innate wisdom to that.

We can be all that we were meant to be and we can in fact get on with securing that shared sense of purpose if we can move away from the shenanigans and begin to honestly struggle and to wrestle with what it means to build the stronger, healthier, more caring and com-

passionate communities that we all, on a good day, claim that we want to see.

We on this side of the House want to work together to restore and repair the groundwork, the foundation and the future that we have as Ontarians. We want to work together to ensure that the web of our past meets the winds of our future. We can do that today by rising above the nonsense and getting on with the business of the people of Ontario.

Applause.

1650

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I don't know if the applause was for the previous speaker, who did a fantastic job with his first speech of the new session, or for myself for rising the first time to speak in the House.

Let me welcome the Deputy Speaker. Congratulations to you and to all the new members, and all the others who have come back again on behalf of the people they represent in their communities for another four years—of course, the people of York West especially. Again, they have placed their trust in me to continue to serve them for another term.

I only have a few minutes—evidently the aura of this House must not agree with me today, because I'm feeling a little bit under the weather—just to speak on what we are trying to initiate in this House and actually what we are trying to do in this House today.

We as the new government, and our Premier, introduced the so-called speech from the throne, and we are anxious to get going on that. We are anxious for a number of reasons. Time is running short; the demands are great. We want to accomplish many things, and I believe the people of Ontario are looking at the new Premier, Mr McGuinty, and the Liberal government to deliver on those things that are important for the people of Ontario.

What we have said all along, not only during the campaign but what our new Premier delivered in the speech from the throne, is right in here. Rightly so, we want to get going, but we are being stalled, as usual. Of course it's part of the democratic process that goes on in this House that dilatory tactics are being used.

Mr Kormos: Is that parliamentary?

Mr Sergio: Absolutely.

Mr Kormos: Are you sure “dilatory” is parliamentary?

Mr Sergio: Dilatory, yes, absolutely. It is exactly what my friends on the other side want to accomplish.

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: They are very important, because what we want to do, let me say to my friend Peter Kormos—

Interjection: I think you need a new pair of boots.

Mr Sergio: Yes.

They indeed would help their people as well. What would they be, some of those things? Some of those things are that the more we wait, the more it's costing the taxpayers in Ontario and the longer it's going to take for us to deliver on those important issues.

Mr Kormos: Then don't go on vacation for three months.

Mr Sergio: I should tell my friend from beautiful Niagara Centre that every day—

Ms Churley: Is a holiday.

Mr Sergio: —is a waste of taxpayers' money, and it's a holiday for my friends on the other side. I guess they must be anxious. Christmas is coming, so hang on.

We have some \$5.6 billion, and let there be no doubt, because whoever came up with that particular figure is a tremendously respected former auditor of this wonderful province. He agrees.

Mr Kormos: It was Gerry Phillips first.

Mr Sergio: Yes, of course. Mr Phillips is as much, perhaps even more.

We have to deal with those issues. But even before we attack that particular issue, we have to get to work. We are asking for the indulgence of the members of this House to say, "OK, now that you have been elected, let's go and start to work." This is exactly what we want to do. We want to deliver on the things that are important to the people, like providing the quality health care, which we have been talking about, providing health care needs for all the people of Ontario, especially those in particular areas in southwestern Ontario where for some 80 miles they can't find a nurse or a doctor. We want to get to that.

What does it mean to bring quality education? We are not talking perhaps of a faraway country, but here in our own Ontario, in our own Toronto, there are kids in our schools, let me tell my friend Mr Kormos from Niagara Centre, who refuse to use the toilets because they are filthy. The parents have to bring—

Mr Kormos: You're right.

Mr Sergio: Am I right? Then let's get to work.

The parents, on a daily basis, have to go to school, bring their own cleaning tools, bring their own toilet paper, because there are kids in our schools who will not use—is beyond our total comprehension that we have our elementary kids refuse to use bathrooms: unsanitary, completely unacceptable. We want to get to that. It is part of providing a good, clean, healthy environment for all the people of Ontario.

I want to get on to a couple of things in my couple of minutes, Mr Speaker. I believe it's important for my people in York West, because we feel the pressure to deal with car insurance and a couple of other things. Hydro costs us two million dollars a day. People may say, "Wow, you are going to lift the cap." There are good reasons. Because we want to be responsible—and this is exactly what our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, has been saying—to the people of Ontario, and by doing so, I want to be responsible to the people in York West as well.

Two million dollars a day; we find that unacceptable. Somewhere along the line, everybody will have to pay. We are saying that the responsible thing to do is to eliminate the debt as soon as possible. Forget why it's here now. Forget that the former government was irresponsible. We've got to do it.

Let's clear up one thing for all our consumers out there, the small business people as well. People may feel that they are receiving car and home insurance renewals well before the expiry date, and they wonder, "Why is that? My insurance is not due until the end of December." Well, there is a good reason. Mr McGuinty said that as of such-and-such a date the rates will be frozen. But the explaining we have to do with our people is that the increases they are receiving now, well before the expiry date, are increases where insurance companies very smartly went to the previous government, and with the approval of the superintendent of insurance, I believe it's called, they got those approvals, those increases, well before Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals took power. And it's shameful. It's shameful that the previous government allowed the insurance companies to raise their premiums two to three months before the expiry date. We have to deal with that, because it is not acceptable to the people of Ontario, to the small business community in Ontario. We believe we have to fix that, and we're going to deal with that.

I laud the new Premier. I join the members of my caucus in the Liberal government to deal exactly with that. Having said that, I want to share the time with my colleague. I hope we will have opportunities indeed. I would like to ask the members on the opposite side, the independent NDP members, to come to their senses and say, "Guys, let's go to work."

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I just wanted to reiterate some of the points made by some of the earlier speakers to this issue. But before I do so, it's my first opportunity to congratulate the Speaker and to congratulate you on your election. I also wanted to take the opportunity to thank the people from my riding of Scarborough Southwest for electing me to be part of this Liberal government.

The people in Scarborough Southwest and people throughout Ontario wanted change. "Change" was what I got, door after door after door. They wanted to see a change, not only in the way the government was delivering its policies, but in the way the government was governing. There were concerns. People at the door were saying to me, "How is it possible that a government can deliver a speech in an auto parts plant? How is it that we can have millions of dollars spent on all sorts of partisan advertising that was seen for years on television, on the radio and in the newspapers?" People were fed up with that kind of government.

I come from a background of municipal politics in Scarborough. Even though I look fairly young, I've been it at, believe it or not, for 15 years.

1700

Mr McMeekin: Too young.

Mr Berardinetti: Too young. Yes. It has kept me fairly young.

When I first entered Scarborough council back in 1988, the greatest obstacle to getting anything done on

that council was to have certain members try to delay, and find ways to make decision-making as slow as possible. I remember those years, back in 1988, 1989 and even 1990, where we had to struggle to get decisions made because certain people from various backgrounds held fast to the idea that you could read out the telephone book to delay an item so that you wouldn't get a planning approval or a rezoning application done. I got fed up with that and so did several other members of the council at that time. We created a new procedure bylaw that limited and didn't allow that kind of delay tactic to go on.

In 1997, just moving forward, I was elected to the megacity, the city of Toronto council, the new council that was created by the then Conservative government. Once again we ran into the same problem of delay and obfuscation—if I can say that word, which is certainly parliamentary—and also just basic sabotage of the system. After four or five years of being on that municipal council, I thought, “It's time to move on, get into provincial government and (1) try to change the way the city government works, and (2) try to get things to move in a more orderly fashion,” which is not happening right now.

Interjection.

Mr Berardinetti: I can hear quite loudly the member for Niagara Centre. It's wonderful to hear his comments as I speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Keep your conversations at a little lower level.

Mr Berardinetti: I think the important thing to realize, the message that's being brought forward today, is that we really need to get on with the business of this government. Our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, has made it quite clear that he wants to see change, and that we as a government want to see change, on a drastic level that will bring about benefit not just to a few, as has been mentioned earlier, but to many.

When I knocked on doors in this past election, people said to me, “You need better hospitals, you need better schools and you need a better way of governing,” and they have chosen that change.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. I don't really like to do that when it's the member's first time.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: That's fine.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I hate to interrupt the member from Scarborough Southwest on his maiden speech. In fact, I'm a little bit surprised there haven't been more newly elected members from the Liberal government who are actually exercising that privilege of standing and speaking for the first time in the Legislature. I can assure you that I'm just as apprehensive. It's my first time in this, the 38th session, even though it's my third time to rise and make comments. I'm very pleased to see procedurally that the other Deputy Speaker, our good friend Mr Arnott, is taking the chair. Congratulations to you on your recent appointment, much like Speaker Curling is actually appointed as well,

much like yourself. That's another example of many of the things I'd be covering.

I just want to stick to the script to some extent today. If I were to look at the government order paper today, “Resuming the debate adjourned on November 20 on the motion by Mr Duncan that the Speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration on Monday, November 24.” As most members would know, this is a pretty routine piece of business that normally would have gotten unanimous consent and we would have gone on to debate the throne speech. But again, it begs the question whether or not the government was mature enough in its deliberations and timing to achieve that kind of consensus on a very important and more traditional ceremonial event as the speech from the throne.

If I was looking with any depth—I looked at the notes that were handed out by the now Liberal government. I'm going to read the compendium note before I get into any substantive portion of debate here. I'm just reading this as a sort of a press release: “McGuinty outlines ambiguous legislative agenda.” Pardon me, it's, “ambitious legislative agenda.” That's a slip of the tongue. It is an ambitious agenda. In fact, it's been mentioned by a number that the theme that ran through most of the election that each of us were through—by the way, I do congratulate all members of this House, regardless of their party: NDP, the Conservative Party or the Liberal Party. There are three parties here. I congratulate each and every one for putting themselves and their promises and commitments on the line. It's a dubious task to go to the doors and the people and ask for their support personally and, on a broader debate, provincially. Of course each of us knows, as humble members, that we're burdened, saddled, with provincial commitments. These provincial commitments are usually in a policy document, which in the case of our two sessions as government, were promises made and promises kept. In this case here, we're in the very early stages of seeing that these promises aren't being kept. I would have to say that this normally routine function is one first early example of their inability to conduct the business of the House in an efficient manner.

Their very first bill that they introduced is probably where I'll start. I think it follows up very nicely to the remarks made by the Honourable James Bartleman. There's a quote here from Dalton McGuinty and from Henry David Thoreau. On the lead page here it says, in reference to the significance of the throne speech, the statement of vision, “If you build a castle in the air your work needs not be lost. That is where they should be. Now put the foundation under them.” That's a very good quote because the foundation is the beginning of any structure, and the beginning of your structure of government is that everything you promised during the election, you're reversing. You're failing to deliver. In fact, you're reversing your own commitments that you made to get elected. In a strange sort of way it reminds me of the traditional Liberal perspective. I think back to

the earlier engagement federally of the now famous commitments to cancel the GST, the helicopters and the airport. All those deals that they promised to get elected were eventually failed promises. That is the litany of the Liberal legacy in Ottawa. I'm afraid, with much trepidation, of looking forward to, as I said before, what lies ahead in Ontario.

1710

What do I read for the very first bill, Bill 2, which is the bill introduced on the 24th by Mr Sorbara, the Minister of Finance? I'm just going to read the explanatory notes for the viewers today. If you want to get in touch with me at my constituency office in Durham, I'd be happy to send you a copy of the bill. It's quite small, but it's quite large in leveraging money from your pockets.

If I read this, every single chapter and verse in here—and I'm going to read it, because it's going to be in the record. These are the explanatory notes. These are not political notes; these are notes from the Liberal government.

Under corporation tax—these are small business tax increases, by the way: “The Corporations Tax Act is amended. Amendments to subsection 38(2) increase the general corporate income tax rate to 14 per cent, effective January 1, 2004. Scheduled tax rate reductions to 11 per cent on January 1, 2004, 9.5 per cent on January 1, 2005 and 8 per cent on January 1, 2006 are repealed.” We were moving the tax from 14% to 8%. They're moving it to 14% and, in my view, probably will increase it further on. That's the first schedule. Imagine the implications for small business. These are people with under 50 employees who employ and create most of the new jobs.

Another one here—and I'm not picking these at random. These are just in sequence as they are in the explanatory notes on the first page: “Amendments to subsections 43(1.1), (1.2) and (1.3) of the act change the tax credit for income from manufacturing and processing, mining, logging, farming and fishing, effective January 1, 2004. As a result of these changes, the tax rate that applies to income from these sources will increase to 12 per cent...”

I hope some of the members who haven't quite got the experience of the place will understand that you've increased taxes. That is a broken promise. He stood in his slick, American-generated television ad and said, “I will not increase your taxes.” It's just astounding to me. It's almost like when Chrétien put his hand around somebody's throat. The very next day it's off the front page. They get away with, in many cases, what I consider is highway robbery for small business.

The next section here is amendments to the small business deduction. This is talking about the surtax. Many of these are regulatory issues that many members may not pay close attention to, but I can assure you this increases surtax on a certain level of income.

Another very subtle one—because I know I don't have all day here to speak, although I wish I did. This is quite an interesting one. For those former municipal poli-

ticians—I imagine the member from Scarborough Southwest and Mr Duguid would pay close attention to this: “Subsection 9(2) of the GO Transit Act, 2001 is amended to clarify municipalities' authority to enter into agreements with GO Transit and to agree to pay to GO Transit all or part of the operating and capital expenditures incurred under such agreements.”

Really, as part of the Who Does What—swapping expenditure control—we took back the operating portion of GO Transit and capital. You're now allowing municipalities to go back in and place a further tax, whether it's a fee or a subsidy or a ridership contribution. This is what this is about. I hope that members who are municipally based, as I was, are aware that one of the discouraging factors in public transit is the cost to the rider. I believe municipal transits and GO Transit should work more co-operatively. Certainly they need a comprehensive transportation strategy in Durham region. I don't see any comprehensiveness in this particular tax grab.

In fact, it goes on to say, “The new subsection 35(1.1) of the act continues in force, for a limited time, municipal development charge bylaws”—development charge bylaws are basically a tax on new homes. It's a lot levy. So they're going to say that all new homes now are going to have to pay this new thing “that would otherwise expire on December 31, 2003. Subsection 35(3) of the act, as re-enacted, allows municipalities to use those by-laws to collect”—that's the operative word for “tax”—“amounts that they agree to pay to GO Transit.”

There you are. It's another tax that's just buried in there. I hope some of the newer members are reading this.

Under the Income Tax Act section: “Amendments to subsection 3(1) of the Income Tax Act provide that, for 2004, the first tier surtax”—again, the operative word here is “surtax”—“will be payable when Ontario income tax exceeds \$3,856.” there will be a surtax on Ontario tax over an amount of \$3,856, so if you're one of those people who pay provincial tax in that amount, you'll be paying a surtax. There's also a schedule to arrive at a tax over \$4,864.

This is also going to be indexed. It's going to be indexed for 2005 and subsequent tax years, so as the cost of living goes up and the threshold goes up, your taxes go up.

This is all codified language, a very deliberate Liberal policy to increase revenue. I always think it's very simplified to—respectfully, I should go through the Chair. The Liberal strategy for a hundred years has been to tax and spend. Now, if the solution to every challenge brought to government is to increase taxes, I put to you that between 1988 and 1994, we saw that that strategy simply didn't work. People need to be able to keep the money that they earn, as well as paying for public services that we all share in common. There's a threshold there.

I just think that they're not keeping their promises. They told us they weren't going to increase taxes. I think that's why they were elected. It wasn't because they were

doing what they're doing in Bill 2. "An amendment to section 8 of the act repeals the equity in education tax credit...." In other words, parental choice is out the door. They sided with the teachers.

We have a former Toronto school board trustee elected here, and there's another trustee from the public school trustees' association. I have been a trustee for two terms. I have some knowledge that they want more taxing authority. I think, really, what they're doing here is just enshrining the monopoly of public education and eliminating parental choice.

I do believe very strongly, I might say, in the public education system. But when you don't allow people, even the most modest—they're already paying. In my home, we have five children. You know my story. My wife is a teacher; my middle daughter is a high school teacher. I pay a considerable amount of municipal tax, and a portion of that goes to education. I don't resent that one bit.

Now, if I chose to send my child—and I know a very good friend of mine who does send one of their children, one of three children actually, to an independent school. The independent school is a very special school for children with very special needs. They do pay tuition. I think it would have been advantageous for the parents to have that choice as to being put into classes where, arguably, special education doesn't have the proper resources. There may be a billion roads that we could go down on that whole debate, but it's about parental choice. That's what I'm trying to advocate here. What they're really saying here is they're reducing that.

Furthermore, there is another section here on the Ontario home property tax relief for seniors. I just can't believe that one. I know the biggest complaint I had under the municipal property assessment changes, changes to have equal assessment or uniform assessment processes across the province so we don't have the age-old problem of the city above Toronto having a different assessment mechanism from Toronto. We all agreed. All parties—the Liberals, the NDP and us—tried to look at this assessment uniformity and the difficulties, and all backed away from it, I should say. All said, "Whoa, this is a nightmare." I would agree it's a nightmare. Having chaired four municipal budgets, I know something about it. What I'm saying is, that's what you should work with: the assessment process being fair. Most people don't understand what the real implication here is. This whole assessment question is a two-phase process.

The two-phase process is, the assessment comes out—and let's say the house has gone from \$150,000 to \$175,000. That does not necessarily mean your taxes should go up. If the assessment goes up, the tax rate should go down. Otherwise, it's a windfall for the municipality. If they want to scoop more money, and the assessment goes up and they leave the tax rate the same—let's say the assessment of your home went up by 10%; everybody's house, relatively, went up 10%, because interest is down, house prices are up; we understand that. If that's the case, the municipalities would

have a windfall of 10%. If everybody's house went up 10%—figure it out. That's not the purpose here.

The second part of the assessment process is the tax rate. You would know, as a former municipal mayor, that the tax rate is actually set by the municipal council or the upper-tier government. Both actually set their own tax rate. The tax rate should be adjusted so that they don't scoop the taxpayer. What this does, what we wanted to do, really, in this—senior citizens should be able to stay with dignity in their own home as long as possible. If their biggest burden now, as I hear it, is the municipal property tax, then I can tell you that you're about to hear it is the cost of electricity. Electricity in itself is another argument, and I'll get to that in about 20 minutes.

1720

The electricity issue is price insensitive. In other words, your demand doesn't go down because the price goes up. You still have to cook your food, wash your clothes and heat your house. They say, "Well, you have ways of shifting the peak load." That's baloney. Consumers today have absolutely no tools to regulate the demand side of the equation. It would be different if consumers had interval meters or time-of-rate meters or some kind of tools in their hands to actually regulate what they pay—if the rate went up, it would shut off certain appliances—but they don't.

I'm getting back to the issue of seniors staying in their own homes—I've had a private member's bill on this, and I'll be introducing another one. What that bill says is there must be a mechanism for all of us to help keep seniors on fixed incomes in their homes as long as possible.

I think of my mother-in-law's and I think of my family, people who are retired for 10 and 20 years. They may have paid \$20,000, \$30,000 for their homes and now they may be worth \$200,000, but they've been pensioned for a couple of years—in both cases they're over 80—and now their home taxes are enormous. In fact, their income hasn't gone up, their taxes have gone up and they have no say. They're powerless in the whole equation.

What I'm suggesting is that we must be able to find some mechanism, and you may not want to call it the property tax credit, where a senior homeowner on a fixed income, let's say we set the threshold at \$20,000 or under—their taxes would actually be frozen. I don't disagree that this is the education portion. The argument we used is they've paid their share all their lives, whether as a parent, teacher or paying tax, whatever. But I believe the other part is that now—in many cases they have difficulty; maybe they don't drive any more—they have some way of staying in their homes.

One of the burdens is taxes; the other is the cost of electricity. I put to you that the cost of home support is another area. Whether it's home care or community care, all those things aren't free. We think they're free; they're not. They still cost these people. If they want a trip to their doctor's office, they still pay. Even though they say they are volunteer drivers, it's a lot of bunk. They still pay a rate. We've got to find ways to keep seniors in their own homes.

There is another section here, the Ontario Loan Act. This is quite interesting too, and it's quite subtle. What it says clearly—it amends the Ontario Loan Act, 2003, set out in schedule A. “It authorizes the crown”—that's the government—“to borrow a maximum of \$7.1 billion.” That says to me—I know they spend a lot of time talking about the \$5.6-billion deficit, and we can get into that too. I think Mr Hampton summed it up the other day. He explained categorically that Mr Phillips said clearly in estimates—I sit on estimates—that they knew all about it. Howard summed it up the other day. Read Hansard from yesterday and you'll get a good picture of it. But I believe the code language here is that the \$7.1-billion borrowing power by your government is signalling that you're not just going to have \$5.6 billion; you're going deeper into debt and then you'll—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Well, I believe all your tax strategies will kill job creation, kill your revenue side and you will have a problem. I believe quite succinctly you're going about the whole challenge improperly. In fact, I think we'll see some signals by Paul Martin when he becomes Prime Minister.

A very subtle one as well is the Retail Sales Tax Act. I hope people have actually read these schedules, because if you haven't, you're missing the ball game here. “Currently, section 9.1 of the Retail Sales Tax Act authorizes a tax rebate”—that was our tax rebate. It says “currently,” so that means it's law today. We had allowed a provincial sales tax rebate, the PST, on energy-efficient appliances. What this section does—and I'm waiting for Mr Dwight Duncan tonight, speaking to the independent power producers. I hope to be there, because I have great interest in that, and I know our energy critic, Mr Jackson, is watching very closely to see the implementation of this plan. What this says is, it extends that purchase period to May 2004. What they're saying there is, it looks like they're extending that, but they haven't extended it as our schedule had planned to, which was to increase the number of appliances: hot water heaters, freezers, refrigerators, stoves, all sorts of energy-efficient appliances. This is actually a stimulus for job creation as well as conservation.

The real stinger here—and it's hard to debate this—is the last one in this first tax bill, Bill 2. It's the Tobacco Tax Act. I live in a riding that's primarily agricultural. It's a rapidly growing urban area. It's a wonderful riding, Durham. It includes the northern parts of Oshawa, Clarington—which is Newcastle—Newtonville, right next to you, actually. It's about 50% rural and 50% urban, and rapidly growing with new homes. A good portion of my agricultural area was designated for tobacco at one time. I don't see any strategy for helping farmers, both in the previous bill I mentioned, the amendments to the tax credits for manufacturing and farming—that section is worth reading. I looked it up earlier today and it does affect them. Supply-managed farmers are going to get hit with a tax increase. Dairy, chicken and other supply-managed farmers are consumers of electricity, so there's the second whack for agriculture.

So Mr Peters had better stand up and clarify, because I have two calls in; I have people who are directors on those commodity boards. I listen to them; I have respect for them. In this one here, there's no strategy to help them exit from tobacco products, to encourage them to get into greenhouse or other produce sorts of production.

But also, I don't see anything in here that commits the revenue, the hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue—and I'm not supporting the tobacco thing, but what about the commitment to cancer, asthma or respiratory problems? Why wouldn't they include that? I could understand it if it was really to clarify the air and the people that have breathing or respiratory problems.

There's a lot in Bill 2, mostly tax increases, and really it's the outgrowth of the first throne speech, which in my view is summarized as, “Promises made for real change are promises failed,” and that's no change when it comes to the Liberal strategy.

But I think I want to go back a little bit, just to make sure members have it clear that I'm not just being cruel to the government. I'm trying to start this, as Thoreau said, on a solid foundation, as was quoted in the throne speech by the Speaker. I refer members to page 1440 of Hansard yesterday. I think Mr Hampton from Kenora-Rainy River summed it up very succinctly.

I have the greatest respect for Mr Phillips; in fact I'm his critic in Management Board, and it's a privilege. He's a terrific guy, he has a good grasp of numbers. In fact, I sat in that estimates meeting that day where he summarized what he thought to be the frailties in the public accounts. In fact, he said it here in the House, right in this House. I'm still looking for the Hansard citation there, but what he said was we had about \$2 billion of sales; we had our own-purpose-spending savings; you lumped in the \$700 million, which was part of the energy issue of trying to find a mitigation fund. Your electricity bill only looks at today, it doesn't look over four years, which is what our plan was, a four-year plan.

But this whole thing on the deficit—you knew going into the election that there was a deficit and you never mentioned it. You made 231 promises and I think those 231 promises should be emblazoned on my constituents' minds for the next four years. My strategy is, there are about 200-and-some working days per year. I intend to spend every one of those, maybe 231 or 331, every single day, talking about your promises. There's a scorecard and it's not just the newspaper writers who have got the scorecard.

You're writing your legacy. Bill 2 is a very poor foundation for the beginning, as you will be forgiven until your first budget. After that, the \$5.6 billion—you had a half a fiscal year to deal with that deficit. Even in your own budget documents you had sales of assets and that came up from Mr Jackson today, what potentially could be on the table there. I think the best thing—I'm just looking at the remarks made by Mr Hampton.

I'm looking around if anyone else is interested in making a few comments here; otherwise, I'll just keep going. What he said here is quite good, actually.

1730

I have a lot of respect for the NDP, because even when we were in government they were really the only opposition. Quite honestly, I may not have agreed with what they said many times, but I certainly listened to what they said, and on energy they were way ahead of everyone—absolutely way ahead on respecting the consumers. They weren't kind of pro-industry; they were really more consumer-oriented, especially the small consumer, the consumer with little leverage.

Mr Hampton in his closing remarks was saying, "I just want to say that the Premier, in his speech"—he was referring to Premier McGuinty's initial speech, which staff wrote for him and which he delivered quite well, actually, with a couple of reading errors, but he did very well. In fact, in his speech he referred to character education in our schools. I'd agree with that. I think character, respect and tradition are extremely important. Here's his advice:

"I would say, Premier, that your government needs to set an example. Don't make promises you can't keep. Don't make promises knowing you won't be able to keep them, because you already knew," as everyone in Ontario knew, there was a deficit of \$5 billion. "Your finance critic knew about it. Everybody ... knew about it."

Heck, you went and continued to make promises: 231 promises. People will not forget that. You've got to move forward. Forget the rhetoric of the \$5.6 billion. Make the tough decisions that are necessary.

When Dalton signed on to the taxpayers' pledge, the reality was that Mr Phillips, an eminently qualified finance critic, said in estimates—he said it in this House when he sat right here—that there's a deficit. I give him a lot of credit. I don't know why he's not finance minister, but maybe Greg's being president of the party had something to do with it; I don't know. It could have something to do with that, not that I would say that Mr Sorbara is not up to the job. It's an interesting equation, actually, if I can get off track a little bit and think about it.

When I think of this front bench, Mr Phillips almost ran for leader. He had a chest problem. He would have been a great Premier. We were quite concerned, actually, at the time. Then Greg, party president, ran in a by-election—he never repaid his pension, by the way; he never paid that back, actually—and now that he's finance minister, maybe he'll cut the cheque.

I thought Dalton won on the fourth ballot, when everyone was sleeping, pretty well. I watched some of it. I think I might have been asleep too that early in the morning. He sort of won on a fluke, really. I think Gerard Kennedy and Greg Sorbara wanted to take him out—both ministers now in fairly influential positions. I hope this isn't a set-up now, so early in your mandate, to dump him after the next election.

The point I was trying to make here is to be honest with people. During the election, I do believe there was a very sincere message script that he wouldn't increase taxes and that he wanted to bring faith, courage and

confidence, all of those illuminating thoughts and concepts with which I fully agree, and yet he has failed. On this account, on this day, I can only say that so far he has failed.

There are members of the cabinet I have a lot of faith in. I hope they're watching carefully and in cabinet will exercise their authority and duty to make sure that they put the people of Ontario first.

I guess you have to make tough choices. That's why they elect people, to make difficult choices; not to give out the cheques but to make the difficult choices.

I have a little bit of time left. I want to just talk on a couple of things that I have left. I'll summarize some of the promises that are important to me and my constituents in the riding of Durham. One of them is the Oak Ridges moraine. I think there will be more to be said over the next while on that.

The member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, I guess it was, who was the mayor of Pickering at the time, commissioned a study, and that study basically was to start encroaching on the permanent agricultural preserve. I'm interested to see the response from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr Gerretsen, yesterday and probably into the future, on how he's going to deal with the consultation, when there is a study that's been paid for that clearly says that the intent there was to encroach not just on the Seaton land, but also—even the local newspapers had it spread out—the idea that there was paving of a lot of those very sensitive lands.

We had committed to saying that the permanent agricultural preserve would be a permanent agricultural preserve. This is going to be very difficult—maybe not as glamorous as some of the other stuff, but it's very important to my riding. We have the Oak Ridges moraine across my riding, and certainly many of the members from Durham—including the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, in his riding as well. So the Oak Ridges moraine would be one.

The other one I want to spend a few minutes on, having been PA to the Minister of Health and having worked through with the hospital boards etc, is the re-capitalizations. The Health Services Restructuring Commission looked at rebuilding over 230 hospitals in the province of Ontario.

Duncan Sinclair, who was the dean of medicine at Queen's University, did a study. It can be discredited, I suppose, by somebody more informed than I. But they came across with a plan—the plan was very ambitious—to rebuild all these hospitals to the state of the art. We were setting about to do that. Now, it's an insurmountable job. We'd already committed almost \$2 billion to it. We had increased spending in health care, no question, including capital, beyond anything that happened in 10 years. Even in my riding, if I look at Lakeridge Health and Rouge Valley Health System, which basically cover my riding, there's a \$400-million expansion there.

I know in Northumberland the new hospital there has just been opened, I believe, and it's just a gorgeous—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Has it opened yet, Lou?

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's open, but they have no money. They're \$10 million in the hole.

Mr O'Toole: Well, get Mr Smitherman to write you a cheque.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: You should get Minister Smitherman to cut a cheque.

Mr Rinaldi: On time and on budget; it's \$10 million in the hole.

Mr O'Toole: That's good; \$10 million in the hole.

Mr Rinaldi: You built it.

Mr Kormos: Does Hansard know who the member is who—

Mr O'Toole: The member from Northumberland actually is just responding to me, and I hope Hansard gets that because—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Yes. Well, of course, he's not in his seat.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: It's inappropriate. We must have dialogue through the Chair, Mr Speaker.

I want to have a close look at that. Let's just presume for a moment that we all agree we want to rebuild the hospitals. Let's ask the question: Where do we get the money? All the money, regardless of what we're building, schools or hospitals, is basically borrowed.

Most of us have kind of an economic background. Where do they get the actual dollars to pay the tradespeople, the architects and the consultants? Where do they actually get the money? Most people here are very academically qualified. They borrow it. OK. So where do they borrow it from? Do they borrow it from the banks? Well, the banks are declaring their dividends this week. All the banks are having huge profits. Let's say they borrow off the banks, because they're profit-makers, right?

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: They borrow it from the pension funds, Borealis or something. Did they loan it to you for nothing? No, they make a profit for their pensioners, for their shareholders, their unit shareholders. So anybody who tries to sell this as repatriating health care to the public sector is absolutely misguided, because the funding of the capital of the hospitals was technically the only thing that we were doing in the case of Ottawa and Brampton. That's clear. We said that all of the people who do things in the hospital—nurses, radiologists, doctors, surgeons, whatever—would all be regulated health professionals under the Regulated Health Professions Act. We said that's what would happen.

What they've done is, they've sort of said, "No, we're not going to talk about it any more." But they're still funding those hospitals. The people of Ontario should know that they've been duped again. Those hospitals are being funded the same way that we were doing it; they're

just using different words. All they're doing is using different words.

Barb Wahl I'm sure will have more to say about that, because there wasn't one word in the budget or the throne speech—the budget document you introduced—that talked about hiring the 8,000 nurses—not one. In fact, Doris Grinspun, who has a PhD in nursing, a wonderful lady, said right after the throne speech that she was disappointed, that it was time to move ahead.

I put to you that the P3 hospital debate is not over. The demands for more resources and more money are going to stick with you, and there will never be enough money to fulfill all 231 promises unless of course your plan is just to keep increasing taxes, as Bill 2 did.

I expect each bill, including what bill today? Was it Bill 4, the electricity bill? It's really a tax grab too.

1740

Mr Kormos: End of day, sure.

Mr O'Toole: Yes. At the end of the day, it's a tax grab. In fact, it's on the most vulnerable, least able to pay. It's small business and people on fixed incomes that are going to be screaming at your constituency office, even though you understand that the only way to first implement what I call DSM, demand-side management—the only way to implement that policy is to give consumers the tools to actually interrupt how they use electricity, or manage how they use electricity. They need to have different meters in their homes. Are you going to fund those meters for those families who will have a meter that shuts off compressors, shuts off freezers, when the electricity price goes over 4.7 or whatever number you set the price at? If you don't, they pay a blended price. The people on fixed incomes, it won't matter if they shift drying their clothes after 8 at night; it won't matter a bit. Do you understand? It won't matter a single bit if they go into all those rituals of shifting when they do their laundry or do their dishes to off-peak demand. It's baloney. They pay a blended average price.

Electrons, when they're out there, they're either used or they're lost. You can't save them at this point in time. Hydrogen and other forms of—

Mr Kormos: They can't be stored.

Mr O'Toole: They can't be stored. In other words, you can't store electricity, so if you've got the nuclear plants cranking out electrons and they're not using them, then you're just using capital. All you're using is wasted capital. You're burning up the nuclear plants and the fuel cells and all the rest that go with it.

I say that there is more to be said on all of these issues. Conceivably, when I go back to business here, we're actually going back to a very simplified version of what this particular debate's about. This debate is about the right to have a debate. The debate that we're supposed to be having is on the throne speech. This time allocated to me—for the viewers' importance—is to understand that there's time allocated—the government took one hour. Out of that one hour, there were very few new members

that had the chance to get up and speak about whatever was on the top of the mind.

Mr Kormos: One hour? Seven. They needed seven.

Mr O'Toole: Seven. Now, in my case, one hour's insufficient to really conclude with any substance, but we have an hour allocated to our side and I'm pleased to give up my time to people that don't have time given to them. That would be the NDP. I'm afraid that they've been denied—that's another broken promise, technically. The argument there—I can't agree with Peter Kormos very often, but the fact is, it's denying democracy. It really is. It's a substantive argument that I don't think has received enough attention by the media, some of whom may or may not be listening. My plea to them is: It's just these few members—it's like the young child screaming in the forest—the young child being Peter Kormos, the member from Niagara Centre—and no one's noticing him in the media—the ones with all the trees—the paper.

It appears to me that it's incumbent on us as government once, and now opposition—to be effective, we need effective opposition. To be effective opposition, you need resources. You need the resources that they need to do the research—not in a partisan way, but to be asking substantive questions. I've made two references today to Howard Hampton and his eminently well crafted remarks and to Mr Kormos's, the member from Niagara Centre's, remarks on points of order with respect to the seating order, with respect to the right to be recognized as a party as opposed to individuals. I believe that there will be more of those, probably every single day. It may seem unproductive, but democracy takes time. The new government members, please pay attention. Listen to Mr Kormos. You don't have to agree, but the point he's making is, they're a party. That's the only point he's really making: They're a party. Do I agree with him? No, it's a whole different issue. The same problem that I think Mr Murdoch is having is trying to rationalize, to give them the proper resources to be in a more effective democracy in this House.

I can only say that the example we've had so far is that democracy goes back to the statement—again, I'm making an unnecessary but productive reference to Mr Hampton. There's 20 minutes left here; I don't know if I can go on and on. Mr Hampton said it here. I'm going to read it in full, because I do have the time: "I just want to say that the Premier, in his speech, referred to character education in our schools." I agree with that. With five children, I think respect and dignity—we all want that, in this House and in our own decorum. We're all learning; I should say, I continue to learn.

Character in our schools: I would say, Premier, that your government needs to set an example. The best instruction for our young people is our own actions, so you've got to set an example.

What he's saying is very simple; it's not some classical line here from Thoreau. It says, "Don't make promises you can't keep." Some of your decisions, by the way won't be popular, I hate to tell you. I've been a trustee; I've been a local councillor. The first thing I had

to get used to was that on some of the decisions, most people were mad at me. They were. But they knew that you couldn't continue to have a \$10-billion and an \$11-billion deficit each and every year. When we had to cut certain things, I thought, "Holy gee." I went out and the streets were lined with teachers. Some of them were relatives of mine.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Most of the time I did. Even some of them understood that you just can't spend money that you're borrowing from some other cause.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): But the big corporations take it all.

Mr O'Toole: The member from London-Fanshawe says, "Just raise the taxes."

Mr Ramal: No, I didn't say raise taxes.

Mr O'Toole: I thought you said, "Just raise the taxes." The member from London-Fanshawe has a typical Liberal response, to sort of say, "Just tax the big corporations." Well, then the jobs go to some other jurisdiction. God, it's so simple.

I hope you're thinking about how every time you raise taxes, member from London-Fanshawe, you're putting at risk the very jobs in London. The General Motors diesel plant—if you touch their taxes, property or business, or deficits or whatever, they will move those jobs and your constituents will have no work. They can't pay their taxes at home, they can't pay their hydro bill, they lose their house, the kids are—these are the decisions you're making. It's a precipitous effect, and it all starts here about having the proper tax policy that creates jobs. It's that simple. If you have policies that threaten our economic security—now one of the senior members is coming over to tell you not to talk because you'll just get engaged and in trouble. I wouldn't think that's a good idea. I really feel, though, that the strategies I've tried to outline here today—it's clear they're now worried. Even some of the members are saying that—

Mr Ramal: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I never said we have to raise taxes. I have to just correct the record.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you for your intervention, member, but it's not a point of order.

Mr O'Toole: I respect—I'm not trying to set it up in any way except to say that I wouldn't attribute something that maybe I didn't hear correctly. But the point is still the same. In the first section of your bill, number 2, you have increased taxes, and on manufacturing you're increasing the tax. Increasing the tax is what General Motors' London diesel, whatever they're called, make their decisions on. That's all I'm saying, and I don't want to make it difficult for the new member. I've looked at his bio. He's a very competent and well-respected gentlemen.

In the very few minutes I have left, I did want to say that during the throne speech I was appalled. I believe the number 5.6 was used 28 times. I found that to be an umbrella excuse for a lack of execution of your promises. The 231 promises are all shelved. In fact, you've

reversed some of them completely. Oak Ridges moraine is paved. You paved it.

Mr Rinaldi: You paved it.

Mr O'Toole: Well, I would say, member for Northumberland, you're part of a caucus that has promised to eliminate 6,000 homes. Is that correct? I don't want to misstate you, but in fact you haven't. You've actually allowed 5,600 homes. I'm concerned that the permanent agricultural preserve in Pickering is in jeopardy because of the secret deal by Mr Gerretsen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the secret deal that I'm sure none of the caucus knows about.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: I haven't got a clue. I'm waiting anxiously to make sure. This is an even more tragic broken promise, the more I think about it and dwell on it, the tragedy that this land is lost permanently. For the viewer at home, this is intractable. You can't recover it. Some of these tax policy things can go back and forth. I'm sure you could lower taxes; you probably won't. Those are the things you can reverse. This kind of encroachment on a permanent agricultural preserve worries me. I think of my five children in the future; I think of the seniors now who can't afford to heat their homes; that you've repealed the education component of their property tax. Now their property taxes are going to go up \$500 and \$600. It's starting to worry me already. This is only the second day and you're already in trouble. I must say that it struck home, in some degree of passion, that some of the newer members must be worried themselves: How many promises can you break before you teach children that not declaring the truth is OK? Setting an example: What example are we really setting?

1750

At the end of the day, all you have left is the integrity you had on the campaign trail. I credit each of you for sticking to that integrity, and now it's at risk. It's being put at risk. I've outlined quite clearly today that in Bill 2, the two front pages of explanatory notes, every single one is a tax increase. I've gone over the P3 argument on the hospital issue. I have 13 minutes to use.

The P3 thing: I just want to go off on to that one a bit. The private thing in hospitals is really good. I did read the Kirby report and I did read, and had full briefings on, the Romanow report, because I was PA to health. There was a lot of good material in both. I kind of believe in the national council on health care. The reason is that the biggest persons to advocate their responsibilities in health care has been the federal government. It was Paul Martin, if you want to know the truth. Look at your history. Health care was a 50-50 deal. We all know that. The member for Sudbury is old enough to know. At that point in time—what are the numbers? Fourteen cents, is that their share, or 17 or 25 cents? It still isn't 50-50. The biggest abdicator in health care is, in my clue, the federal government. In fact, Romanow said it. He said they should move up their funding, let's say, to 30%, and they got the first down payment.

I put to them that health care today in this entire country is 50% private. No one is talking about it but it is. Today it's 50% private, nothing to do with us. If you go to the dentist, that's oral health, it's all insurance money. If you go to an optometrist and get your glasses, get your eyes tested, it's all insurance companies through your employer or through some other coverage that you have as a legislator, a teacher or a nurse, whatever. You have insurance coverage. Your employer has compensation insurance. It's insurance against injury. If you fall in the workplace, who pays for it? The insurance company. WSIB pays for the broken arm. That's true.

Mr Kormos: They're public, though.

Mr O'Toole: No. It's private. Mr Kormos, if you think about it, I've covered compensation, oral health—actually, almost all health to do with what is a non-medically necessary procedure is insurance or you pay personally. In most cases, if you want to get a mole removed, you pay.

Also, I would say that auto insurance is a big issue, a huge issue. You know something? When you pay auto insurance, it's called personal accident insurance.

Mr Kormos:—public auto insurance now.

Mr O'Toole: Personal accident insurance: The portion of your auto insurance bill is for personal accident benefits. The Insurance Bureau of Canada is assessed over a billion dollars a year by the provincial government to pay for injuries related to auto accidents. That's insurance. It's private money. You buy a premium, you get the coverage and they fix your arm.

Mr Kormos: Let's make it public.

Mr O'Toole: That's a whole other debate. I'm just saying that half of health care today, anyone who is telling the truth, is private. I don't agree with it, essentially. That's not what I said. Who's going to own up to it, though?

Now let's get into the MRI clinics and all that. I'm going to refer to two very successful, very highly respected clinics in my riding. One is the Port Perry medical clinic and the other is the Oshawa clinic, one of the largest in Durham region. It certainly is the largest in Durham. There's another one in Courtice. It's new.

These clinics are private. They pay for the financing, the mortgage, the operating and every other thing that occurs in that building through insurance, basically OHIP, because most of the procedures or tests that they do are paid for by the government. They use that money to pay for the building, to get it cleaned, to keep the windows clean, to fix and maintain the building. They're private. The doctors themselves have private businesses. The more business that goes through the door, the more they make and the larger share of that building they can own. So it's private. I didn't say it was good, bad or indifferent; I'm just saying that's the truth.

Now, if you're going to cancel these new MRI clinics—the biggest thing the new interns want is an office ready to go when they graduate. That's what they want. We're recruiting doctors, as most people are. I'm a supporter of foreign-trained physicians and making sure

there's fast-tracked licensing. I've supported them since 1995. I have one in my riding, a wonderful lady. She's a graduate from Hong Kong but she did pediatrics in London, England. If you spoke to her on the phone, she speaks four languages—not like me, one and a half—and she should be fast-tracked. I have no question about it all. Making sure that she's a qualified physician, that's what we need to do.

But in these cases here, the doctors, when they graduate—if you practise in an underserved area today, because of our policies, your tuition is paid. Did you know that?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children's Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Not all of it.

Mr O'Toole: It's \$20,000 paid. When they graduate, if they go to an underserved area they get up to four years paid, plus the community gets, I think, \$15,000 for recruiting and a few things like that.

The point I'm trying to make here is that what they want is a key-start operation. They want a building. Now, if there are other doctors who are prepared to invest their money, take a mortgage, put an expansion on the clinic, build the offices and rent it to them for so much per month, then I think that's OK, I personally think it's OK. Let's do anything we can to give them a place to do what they do best, which is to practise medicine. Let's remove the barriers. I'll support you on some of this stuff. I'm saying that publicly here on the record. Doing the right thing isn't going to be hard for any of us.

I'm just looking at the clock here. I've pretty well done a good job. I've got seven minutes on that clock and I've got one minute on this clock, so why give up now? I appreciate the fact that the viewers at home have listened and that many of the members here in the House have listened and that we have had time to debate whether or not we should debate the throne speech. There will be another day to debate the throne speech.

Mr Kormos: When, though? When?

Mr O'Toole: Exactly, I hope there are no more procedural interruptions. I was going to write this speech out, but I'm glad now I didn't, because I've roamed around a fair amount on a broad collection of areas. An hour is a long time to speak and it's certainly been fun. It's like having your own time, and my own members allowed me to do it, which is even more fun.

I think that there were good points made during today's debate, but I leave you with one commitment, and that is the commitment made by none other than the leader of the NDP, and I give him credit when he says, "Mr Premier, don't make promises you can't keep." I think that's a good lesson for all of us. Those would be my remarks on whether or not we should debate the throne speech. I think we should.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, member for Durham. It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
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Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
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Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
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Etobicoke North / -Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique (L)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
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Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)		
Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L) Minister of Children's Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance, ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration		

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Oxford Parkdale-High Park	Hardeman, Ernie (PC) Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles Bisson, Gilles (Ind) Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parry Sound-Muskoka Perth-Middlesex Peterborough Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge Prince Edward-Hastings Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke Sarnia-Lambton Sault Ste Marie Scarborough Centre / -Centre Scarborough East / -Est	Miller, Norm (PC) Wilkinson, John (L) Leal, Jeff (L) Arthurs, Wayne (L) Parsons, Ernie (L) Yakabuski, John (PC) Di Cocco, Caroline (L) Oraziotti, David (L) Duguid, Brad (L) Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	Toronto-Danforth Trinity-Spadina Vaughan-King-Aurora Waterloo-Wellington Whitby-Ajax Willowdale Windsor West / -Ouest	Churley, Marilyn (Ind) Marchese, Rosario (Ind) Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Gregory S. (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances Arnott, Ted (PC) Flaherty, Jim (PC) Zimmer, David (L) Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest Scarborough-Agincourt	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L) Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	Windsor-St Clair	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Munro, Julia (PC) Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough-Rouge River Simcoe North / -Nord Simcoe-Grey St Catharines	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Wilson, Jim (PC) Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	York Centre / -Centre	Sergio, Mario (L)
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique	York North / -Nord York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)	York West / -Ouest	

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

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

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