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Tuesday 1 March 2005

Mardi 1^{er} mars 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1^{er} mars 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a special report entitled *Looking Forward: The Environment Bill of Rights*, from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): As you know, February was Black History Month, and I rise today to acknowledge the events and projects that commemorate black history in Owen Sound.

Emancipation Day, August 1, 1834, has been celebrated in Owen Sound since August 1862 by holding an emancipation celebration picnic in Harrison Park. I remember that you, Mr. Speaker, have attended this picnic a number of times.

Owen Sound was the most northerly point for the Underground Railway, offering a safe haven for the slaves fleeing from the southern states.

Chair Dennis Scott and his committee have been holding this picnic for many years to “inform, educate, recognize and celebrate those individuals and groups who made the Underground Railway journey possible.”

On July 31, 2004, I had the pleasure of attending the unveiling of the black history cairn in Harrison Park. The cairn is an interactive monument allowing visitors to approach the site and have a sense of shelter and protection. It's located on the banks the Sydenham River on a parcel of land donated by the city of Owen Sound.

Councillor Peter Lemon and Bonita Johnson-de Matteis partnered with several organizations in Grey county to construct a monument that could be identified with the Underground Railway. It also recognizes the contributions of early black settlers to Grey county and the city of Owen Sound.

I would encourage all members and their families to visit Harrison Park in Owen Sound and view this wonderful symbol of freedom. The Emancipation Day picnic will be held on July 30, 2005.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Ms. Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke–Lakeshore): I would like to share with the House a letter that made its way to my desk a few days ago. It was addressed to Premier McGuinty, and it was signed by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario president, Roger Anderson. In it he states:

“AMO and Ontario's municipalities stand with you for a fair share of national health and education funding, a fair share of social services funding, a fair share of infrastructure investment and a fair share of funding to support the successful settlement and integration of immigrants in our communities.”

He goes on to say, “Ontario's municipalities understand all too well the implications of fiscal imbalances. As you know, Ontario's municipal governments have been trying to manage their own affairs in the face of a massive structural fiscal imbalance created by the previous government of Ontario.”

Like the provincial government and health organizations across Ontario, AMO wants a fair share for Ontario. Like Ontario, AMO and its members are proud of Ontario's tradition of being a provider for those regions that are less fortunate than we are.

AMO understands that Ontario gives \$23 billion more in taxes than it receives from the federal government. There is a huge disparity in Ontario in funding for post-secondary education and immigration as compared to what other provinces receive, and these disparities must be addressed. It's now time for the federal government to understand that Ontario needs its fair share so that we can continue to be an economic powerhouse for the rest of the country.

HYDRO ONE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House in response to an article by John Spears in the *Toronto Star* that indicates that the chief executive officer of Hydro One has received a 35% increase in compensation. The increase brings the salary and income of the CEO to almost \$1.5 million.

As MPP for Durham, a riding in the region known for being the powerhouse of Ontario, I recognize the valuable work done by the staff of OPG and Hydro One. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that Hydro One is provincially owned and that Ontario citizens, the

taxpayers, are the shareholders. We must remember that all costs incurred by Hydro One contribute ultimately to the bill paid for by the pensioners, the hard-working families, the farmers, the large and small business people of Ontario—the taxpayers. I would like to remind the government that it has an obligation to monitor the expenses of Ontario Hydro with this in mind.

Compensation for senior officials is one part of that obligation. My concern is that this increase of 35% for the CEO's compensation will filter its way down through the entire organization, eventually to the taxpayer. This must not be allowed to happen. I am confident, as a member of the official opposition, that we will carefully monitor future compensation and indeed all spending, not just at Ontario Hydro but all public spending in the province of Ontario.

COINS FROM CARING KIDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): On February 17, I attended a very special event that highlighted what happens when you have Hamilton's children, youth and agencies working together for a great cause. The Coins from Caring Kids program started with Donna Quigley and Joan Browning, two women who wanted to engage young people in the collection of coins for the Red Cross and tsunami relief. In no time, these two Hamilton residents had our entire city on board, including the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, the Hamilton Catholic board, Mohawk College, Hamilton Police Services, every school and student, their families and teachers.

Young people contributed coins they earned doing odd jobs or that they found under cushions, in their piggy banks and in their pockets. Police and volunteers collected and counted mountains of coins. So successful was the drive that police brought in Brinks security, who volunteered and delivered the massive load.

Everyone reached out and made a difference, especially Hamilton's caring kids. They raised a truly amazing sum of \$204,346.56 in just a few weeks. It's a contribution that will be felt a world away, helping survivors and the affected nations recover and rebuild. To me, there's no better symbol than this program to illustrate the spirit of Hamilton and what it's all about.

1340

I'd like to thank and acknowledge Joan Browning and Donna Quigley, Hamilton Police Chief Brian Mullan, PC Scott Moreton, PC Scott Mahler, police services volunteers Isabel Scozzaro and Donna Knight, Susan Lennox of the Red Cross, and all the others who made this program the pride of Hamilton.

SENECA COLLEGE ANIMATION ARTS CENTRE

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): It's with great pride that I rise today to recognize the very talented faculty and students at Seneca College school of com-

munication arts; namely, the chair, Jed DeCory, animation coordinator Larry DeFlorio, and graduates Paul Kohut, Jeff Panko, Sebastien Kapijimpanga and Dave Bachelor for their contribution to Chris Landreth's animated short film Ryan. It was the winner of the Academy Award for the best animated short this past Sunday night.

It never occurred to me when I viewed this 14-minute film while touring the college's new animation arts centre last June that I was watching an award-winning Oscar production. But these talented people have surprised all of us and have taken the community by storm with their tribute to fellow animator Ryan Larkin, who has fallen on very difficult times and is living in a Montreal shelter.

These students and faculty have shown the world that when it comes to cutting-edge digital art and film production, Canadian and Toronto professionals and students from Ontario at Seneca College are the best in the world. The winning of this Oscar has brought Seneca's animation arts program its due recognition and respect as a program of excellence. Educating students for 10 years, Seneca College's program has seen its graduates go on to work in other blockbuster films: The Matrix, Spiderman, the Harry Potter films, Gladiator and other leading films.

We should all be very, very proud of the contribution that these students have made to Ontario.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Over the next week, thousands of rural Ontarians will be arriving on the doorstep of a government that has turned its back on them. I'm reminded of the words of Helen Keller, who said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." As this government is about to discover, farmers and rural people are not alone.

When farmers suffer, everyone around them is affected. Small businesses go under; schools, hospitals and churches feel the effect. As OFA president Ron Bonnett said, "Farm incomes have been devastated by the BSE crisis, poor crop conditions, trade actions, record low crop prices, rising energy costs and a crushing regulatory and legislative burden initiated by the Ontario government." Mix in unfair property tax assessments and unaccountable bureaucracy, and you have a rural farm and non-farm alliance.

Rural protests and tractor rallies are not new. Think of the 2001 cash crop crisis. There was a 12-mile tractor parade in Winchester. Back in 1969, tractors arrived here at Queen's Park, which resulted in the Challenge of Abundance report.

Farmers are asking again, "Where is the plan?" They're fighting back. After empty Liberal promises, rural Ontario is fighting back. See you all on March 2 and March 9. There is an alliance.

I will mention the that Lanark Landowners are here today in the members' gallery: Randy Hillier, John Vanderspank and other members of the Lanark Landowners.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): I rise today to speak about the McGuinty government's commitment to agriculture. Since coming into government, we have taken a number of steps to improve the state of agriculture in Ontario. One of the most important things we've done is provide assistance to help farmers deal with the fallout of BSE. We have delivered \$410 million of federal-provincial funding for farmers and industry affected by mad cow disease, and we're working to restore a fully open border with the United States. In addition, we've invested increasing abattoir capacity for older animals. We've also hammered out a better deal on the agricultural policy framework with the federal government in order to ensure the financial health of the industry. We've hosted the first-ever Premier's summit on agri-food in order to develop a common vision for the future of the agri-food sector in Ontario.

We've done all this because agriculture is a huge part of this province's economy. It represents 12% of all goods produced in Ontario and more than one in 10 jobs in this province.

To ensure that the agricultural industry continues to play a large role in Ontario's economy, this government is committed to providing the support that the sector needs. This will always be a challenge, there are always challenges to face, but by working together, we can make Ontario's agriculture and food sector the envy of the world. And remember, if you ate today, thank a farmer.

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): The McGuinty government fully supports Ontario farmers and our strong agri-foods industry. Our government's commitment to a new \$6-million agricultural drainage program will enhance rural infrastructure by helping agricultural landowners and rural municipalities cover the costs of drainage infrastructure.

The recent record low prices for grain and oilseed crops have resulted in difficult times for Ontario producers. Our government will deliver the \$94 million remaining in the MRI fund to producers before spring planting. As well, we are working with the grains and oilseeds sector to develop and implement solutions that will make this industry sustainable.

Our government is providing up to \$25 million in transitional funds over three years to assist processors in meeting the new, stronger standards for meat safety in Ontario. We are providing \$20 million to assist Ontario's large livestock operators to cover the cost of the requirements of the nutrient management regulation. Up to \$396.5 million of federal and provincial funding for farmers and industry affected by mad cow disease will be delivered. The Ontario government is supporting farmers by providing funding for deadstock collection and increasing domestic slaughter capacity.

The McGuinty government understands the issues facing Ontario's farmers and our agri-food industry. We are working hard every day with our partners to build a strong and viable rural Ontario.

FIREFIGHTER AND POLICE
BRAVERY AWARDS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): This past Friday, February 25, 2005, I had the opportunity to attend a special ceremony here at Queen's Park, hosted by the province of Ontario, which recognized 10 firefighters and 10 police officers with medals of bravery for their heroic efforts. These medals are the province's highest honour, in recognition of firefighters and police officers whose actions demonstrate outstanding courage and bravery in the line of duty.

It is with great honour that I have the opportunity to acknowledge the bravery and courage of two firefighters and one police officer from the riding of Northumberland. Constable Christopher Garrett of the Cobourg Police Service was the recipient of the 2004 Ontario Medal for Police Bravery. On May 15, 2004, Constable Christopher Garrett was fatally wounded while responding to a robbery call. Constable Garrett, although seriously wounded, was able to pursue the attacker. The extraordinary, heroic actions of Constable Garrett saved the lives of other police officers and citizens. I offer my congratulations, my deepest gratitude and my sympathy to Constable Garrett's family.

The 2003 Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery was presented to firefighters Kory Hietala and Mike Jacques of Brighton District Fire Department. In March 2003, Brighton firefighters Kory and Mike risked their lives to retrieve a man from a vehicle which had been driven into a burning house, in spite of the great risk involved.

Once again, I offer my congratulations to all 20 medal recipients and express my sincere thanks for their courageous dedication and support for all our communities.

VISITORS

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Page Victoria Bragues's mom, brothers, sisters and best friends are in the members' gallery today. On behalf of Mr. McMeekin and myself, I'd like to welcome them.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order.

1350

ERNIE EVES

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that the House adjourn during pleasure and that Ernie Eves, former Premier and MPP for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey, be invited on to the floor, and following remarks of up to five minutes from each recognized party that he be permitted to address the assembled members for up to five minutes.

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

I now adjourn the House during pleasure.

Mr. Eves was accompanied into the chamber.

The Speaker: I invite Mr. Eves to be seated on the floor.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It is my pleasure to rise and pay tribute on behalf of the people of Ontario to our friend and colleague Ernie Eves.

Ernie, first of all, welcome back to this House. Welcome back to the chamber you entered for the first time in 1981, fresh from your six-vote-margin landslide victory in the riding of Parry Sound. Welcome back to the place where you left your mark over the course of almost 24 years of public service. It is good to see you here again.

Former British Prime Minister Edward Heath once said, "If politicians lived on praise and thanks, they'd be forced into some other line of business." I think all of us in this chamber can identify with that sentiment. After all, there are many places where you can earn much more money than you do in Ontario Legislature, and there are many careers that offer more recognition and more opportunities for praise. But there are very few places where someone can do more good for more people than in this House. And I know for certain, Ernie, you agree with that statement.

Just a moment ago, I referred to Ernie Eves as our "friend and colleague." I used those words advisedly. While Ernie and I have clashed over many issues over many years, he has throughout made it clear to me that his motivation was always the same: a sincere desire to do what he believed was right for his party and the people of Ontario.

His actions as a politician have reflected his profound understanding that there is a line in politics which separates vigorous debate, something which enlarges all of us, and personal acrimony, something which diminishes all of us. Ernie always stayed on the right side of that line. So it makes it easy for us on this side of the House to call him more than just a colleague; he is our friend.

I recall in particular, shortly after the last election, receiving Ernie's phone call inviting me to meet with him as part of the transition process. At that meeting, he was gracious and most helpful at a time which for him surely must have been very difficult. He offered sound advice—the kind of advice that only a Premier could offer—and he made it clear that I should feel free to call upon him if he could be of any further help to me in carrying out my new responsibilities. Ernie Eves was as classy in defeat as he was in his many victories.

For more than 20 years, as Premier, as a minister and as an MPP, Ernie Eves tirelessly served the people of Ontario, and he did so with the strength of his convictions, with good humour and with an unwavering love for his province.

Mr. Eves's career has been a testament to public service: public service in good political times and challenging ones, public service in government and in opposition, public service before a private career and after one. But perhaps the greatest measure of the man's commitment to Ontario and the greatest measure of his

personal courage was his continuing public service in the face of great personal loss. It's a lesson the members on all sides of this House would do well to draw upon whenever we are dealt a blow by fate. It's a privilege to lead one's party and an honour to lead one's province, but to lead one's peers by courageous example is the truest form of leadership.

As our 23rd Premier, Ernie Eves enjoyed the privilege of leading this great province. It was an honour he embraced with his whole being. Although he could only serve for a short time before he was compelled to call an election, he faced more than his share of challenges. In fact, as Premier, Ernie saw this province through some of the most difficult and demanding times in recent history. He faced the SARS crisis and the blackout of 2003 with quiet confidence and courage—the mark of a true leader—and he conducted himself at all times with a manner and a decorum that enlarged the office he held and the province he served.

Ernie's commitment to serving the public continues. He acts as an adviser for the Justin Eves Foundation, which helps learning disabled youth working toward post-secondary education. His commitment to his family—his life partner, Isabel, and his daughter, Natalie—is total. Isabel has our admiration. She herself knows only too well the cost of political life, the slings and arrows, the compromised family time.

I extend a special thank you to Natalie for sharing her father with the people of Ontario for so long.

Applause.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I speak from personal experience. There is just no way around it; some important times together just weren't possible because of Natalie's father's public responsibilities. We are very grateful for the time he devoted to his province and the love and support that you gave him while he worked for others.

Stephen Lewis, on the occasion of his retirement from this very Legislature in 1977, said, "The surest route to affection and esteem is defeat and retirement." If that is the rule, then you, Ernie Eves, are the exception, for you have long had our affection and our esteem. On behalf of all Ontarians, I thank you. Thank you for over two decades of public service. Thank you for coming here and doing good. I wish you and your family the very best the future has to offer.

Applause.

1400

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): What a pleasure and privilege it is for me to pay tribute to Ernie Eves from the Progressive Conservative caucus of Ontario and to pay tribute to Isabel and Natalie as well.

I first learned of Ernie's victory when I was sitting in the caucus room here—I guess it was March or April 1981. March seems to be a good time for elections for Progressive Conservatives.

We're back on the topic, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Are you resigning, Norm?

Mr. Sterling: If I got this kind of treatment, I might.

Although Ernie Eves won his first election by six votes, I want to assure everyone that in each subsequent election, and I think there were eight of them, he won by much larger pluralities. That was because the people knew that he was not only busy here at Queen's Park, but that he was busy representing his constituents—and represent his constituents he did.

When he first came here in 1981, after the recount, he became parliamentary assistant to Bette Stephenson, the then Minister of Education. That developed into a long, lifetime friendship, as well as a professional political relationship.

When Frank Miller became Premier in 1985, Ernie was appointed Minister of Community and Social Services. Both of his first two appointments were in the area of social services, and I think that has related to a part of his character that perhaps didn't shine when he became finance minister. But his first and most passionate belief was to care for people who couldn't care for themselves.

From 1985 to 1995, of course, we were sitting in opposition, and while that has a lot of detrimental impacts on politicians, it also had some good impacts on those of us who were sitting in opposition at that time. Ernie worked with Mike Harris, myself and a small caucus, 16 of us, from 1987 to 1990 to put the party in a comeback position. From working with Mike as the House leader and Ernie as the whip, I can tell you that these two gentlemen knew what they were doing in this Legislature as opposition members.

Part of the beauty of sitting in opposition for Ernie at that time, from 1990 to 1995, was his ability to see his son more frequently, who was being educated in Boston. He had a learning disability that couldn't be satisfied in our province or in our country. I talked with Ernie on many occasions as he was preparing to go down to see his son on the weekend or in a time when the Legislature was off.

In retrospect, Ernie, I always think that, given the circumstances that followed and the very terrible tragedy in 1995, in some ways it was a godsend that we were in opposition during that period of time so you could spend more time with Justin. Of course we know that in 1995 Justin perished in a terrible automobile accident. I can never forget going to Parry Sound for the funeral and the strength with which Ernie held his family together, and particularly how he showed his love to Natalie during that period of time.

From 1995 until he retired the first time around, Ernie served as our finance minister. When he became finance minister, he was given a job to do, and, as I talked with Mike Harris this morning, he did it with great skill and adaptability. In addition to dropping the annual deficit in the province by \$3 billion in the very first part-year we were here in government, he worked that deficit down until we had a number of balanced budgets before he left the post. As well, I think some of the hallmarks of his budgets that were forgotten about were that he took hundreds of thousands of low-income earners off the income tax payroll of this province and that he also gave

additional child benefits to people in this province so that they could afford daycare. Ernie, either in cabinet or in his decision-making, always would do the right thing, often at some political peril.

Gerry Phillips, in the tribute he kindly put forward at our leadership convention, on stage—it was a film of Gerry—said, “I'm going to talk about the serious part.” He did a lot of funny things too, Gerry. It was very, very much appreciated. Gerry said that Ernie Eves set the role model for ministers to work with opposition members when he was a minister. If an opposition member stood up in this House and asked the minister a question about an individual or a problem, instead of parroting back an answer, often Ernie would say, “I will see to it, I will meet with that person, I will deal with that problem and we will find a resolution to that particular problem.” I think that says a huge amount for him.

I also think that his compassion was shown in terms of what happened after the tragic death of Justin, in the setting up of the Justin Eves Foundation. Ernie, along with his friends and his political allies—Bob Rae serves on that board; Bette Stephenson serves on that board—gathered money for individuals who had learning disabilities like his son, Justin. I believe they've helped over 130 individuals who could not get satisfaction from our public education system at the present time.

Ernie gave up a tremendous amount to come back to public life and run and be our Premier. So I think we owe him a great deal of gratitude for that decision. He came back to a difficult situation. No one denies that, Ernie. I, who have had a little bit of experience in here, know of the many challenges that you did face.

I also want to talk about his staff. I think he had the same constituency staff person for all of the time he represented Parry Sound–Muskoka. I know of the loyalty of his staff in this area.

Ernie, in spite of your sometimes outwardly sombre expression when you were in public—and I think that is due to shyness more than anything else, quite frankly. As Hugh Mackenzie has explained to me, he is actually very humorous in his own right. He is a great guy to be with and a great guy to play golf with—as long as he gives you a lot of strokes.

I know that he is very proud of his daughter, Natalie, who has just recently graduated in veterinary medicine and is setting up, I believe, in Parry Sound. Ernie has recently been working with her to get her on her way. But I know that during the period of time after the loss of Justin, Natalie was a tremendous strength to Ernie in carrying forward. She is a beautiful young lady, and I know that Ernie was most happy in the celebration of her marriage in the last year.

Lastly, Ernie and I agree on most things, or have agreed on most things. We are, I guess, in the same area of the political spectrum. But I do want to remind Ernie of a resolution in this House that I put forward in, I think it was, July 1992. Ernie, I think I did you a great favour, because I put forward resolution number 22 on July 23, 1992, which said that in the opinion of this House, the

Senate of Canada should be abolished. I want everybody in this House to know that I voted in favour of my resolution. But I want everybody in this House to know that he voted against the resolution.

Anyway, he has stayed consistent. He has been a great leader in our party, a great finance minister and a great Premier. Ernie, thank you. Thank you, Natalie; thank you, Isabel. Thank you for sharing so much of his time with us in public life. You've done a great job, and we wish you all the best in the future. Thanks very much, Ernie.

1410

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): It is indeed a pleasure to have the opportunity to say a few words about our colleague Ernie Eves. Indeed, there is much one can say about Ernie Eves. Someone who has been elected eight times over 24 years: that by itself is something quite incredible. Perhaps 2% or 3% of the members of the Legislature will ever be able to claim that kind of record. To also be Minister of Community and Social Services, Minister of Finance, government House leader, leader of the Conservative Party, Premier of Ontario and the Leader of the Opposition is an incredible record.

There are many people who will remember Ernie Eves in different ways. I'm not sure Ernie knows this, but I will always remember him as by far the most effective opposition questioner in the Legislature between 1990 and 1995, the days when I came to the Legislature saying under my breath, "Please, God, let him ask somebody else today," because Ernie was a fierce questioner and he was always on his feet, able to take whatever you gave in your initial answer and turn it back against you in the supplementary.

Many will always remember him as "Landslide Ernie," who was elected on election night with 10 votes and who, after the judicial review, won by six votes. That in itself, I think, is some kind of record. Still others will remember him as the perennially best-dressed member of the Legislature: always dapper, never a hair out of place, always with the stylish ties and everything that went with it. Still others will be heard to say for many years, "Where did he get that tan?" Ernie, you'll have to let us in on some of these facts at some point in time.

I think many of us have experienced some of the highs and lows for Ernie Eves. I always felt that the job he most enjoyed was Minister of Finance. It seemed to me, knowing you as I did from 1987 until 1995, that it was the job that seemed to naturally fit you. I remember how as Minister of Finance you seemed so unflappable, so confident, always seemingly in control of events, no matter how fierce our questions were. I remember as well the lows. As one of those who attended the funeral of your son Justin, I remember the obvious pain and the obvious hurt that you had to overcome.

I think it's a real test that, whether through the highs or the lows, you always conducted yourself in the same way. I remember fierce arguments when, after those arguments, you would politely say, "Good question

today." I remember equally fierce arguments when, at the end of the exchange, you would say, "Gotcha." I think that the real test is that you conducted yourself in the way that I believe all members of the Legislature would want to conduct themselves and indeed ought to conduct themselves, and you did it for 24 years.

Many people outside this place probably would never understand the stamina, the energy, the commitment and the dedication that is required to go through eight elections, to serve at a time when the Conservative Party was unpopular everywhere—and I certainly remember that time: I remember seeing some of the polling results following the Mulroney government, when virtually no one wanted to have the word "Conservative" written after their name. Ernie, you served through that. You have served at the most difficult of times, and you have served during some of the best of times.

I remember a reception for Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip down at Ontario Place, when I think Ernie had just presented his fourth or fifth budget. I was standing beside him, and I said, "Ernie, you're lucky." And he responded to me, "Sh; don't tell the media." I think he understood what I was getting at; I think he was saying to me, "Touché. You may feel this way, but the media doesn't agree with you, Hampton."

Ernie, we obviously wish you the very best. From those of us who hardly ever agreed with you on an issue in principle, we wish you the very best. I say, in respect of your stamina, your dedication and your energy, that obviously you did something right; otherwise, why would people elect you and re-elect you and re-elect you over 24 years and eight elections? You obviously understood that your constituents, at the end of the day, were the most important people, and I think that's reflected in the results.

So we wish you the very best, and we—all of us—sincerely mean that. Whether Mr. Sterling's private member's resolution may or may not have something to do with your future, we wish you the best. We thank you for the service to the people of Ontario. We thank you for your service to the people who have served in the Legislature and for setting a personal example for all of us.

The Speaker: Mr. Eves.

Mr. Ernie Eves: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that a lot of you had hoped that you had seen the last of me in this place, but here I am. You may have noticed over my 24 years of service that I very seldom seem to do anything the easy way. A few little tidbits of knowledge: Even my birth, perhaps, was not an easy thing either, according to my mother. I was born in the middle of a tornado in Windsor, Ontario, on June 17, 1946. Perhaps that explains some of the difficult circumstances that the Premier referred to in his remarks with respect to SARS, the blackout, West Nile and mad cow: These things seem to follow me around wherever I go.

Even my first election, as Norm has pointed out and as the Premier and Howard have pointed out, wasn't exactly easy either. Everybody always thought that you could run a dog in the riding of Parry Sound under a Conservative banner and get elected. The answer was yes, but just

barely, on March 19, 1981. I did manage to improve upon that, though, as has been pointed out, in several subsequent elections. I wasn't able to take my seat in the House right away; in fact, I can remember arriving at Queen's Park after the recount confirmed a six-vote plurality, having lost 40% of my majority in the judicial recount. I was given an office in room 416, half of which was a vault; perhaps that was a prelude of things to come in the future. Of course, even my leaving this place, according to some pundits, has not been the easiest thing to do—no names mentioned, of course.

One never knows where one's life journey will lead them as they go through life, and perhaps that's just as well in many cases.

I have a great deal of thanks to give to my mother, who is watching on television today. She never misses question period, by the way, whether I'm here or not. She reminded me not to be late. Mothers certainly seem to know their offspring quite well. My advice from Isabel today was, "No pointy-headed comments, please," so I'll try to refrain from those as well.

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I've learned through my many years of public service that one should never take oneself too seriously. You should indeed take the office seriously and the system seriously and the institutions of our democratic society seriously, but one should never take oneself too seriously.

Public service, I would say to the young people out there, is a very fascinating, rewarding, interesting, worthwhile endeavour. I've been fortunate in life. I had parents who instilled in me—my mother, especially—the value of a good education. I was the first person in my family on either side to receive a post-secondary education. I learned from my father, who was a labourer in Windsor, Ontario, a strong work ethic and principles. I am proud to carry those roots with me to this day.

I say to my former wife, Vicki—she was very, very supportive in many, many years of public service, as indeed were my children, Justin and Natalie. Natalie, in her own right, is quite a little politician. She was five years old when I was first elected. She decided, along with her friend, that they would conduct an election in their kindergarten class. I won that election by more than six votes, I might add. Her friend happened to be the daughter of the returning officer in Parry Sound riding, who then proceeded during the course of the election campaign to put my sign up in her bedroom window, which of course was a no-no, and led to some discipline on behalf of her father, I believe.

I say to Isabel, who certainly has been in public life and understands what this is all about: Nobody could have been more supportive of me than you were during some very difficult times. Certainly, to be the spouse of an elected member is difficult enough. To be the spouse of the leader of a party is difficult enough. But to be the spouse of a Premier and travel on a bus across the province is something that you have to experience to understand, and I see the Premier shaking and nodding his head, as indeed Mr. Hampton is as well. It's certainly an

interesting and fascinating experience, but one requires tremendous support. So thank you, dear, for all that support.

I've been very fortunate in my 20-some years of public service. I've always had great staff, some of whom are in the members' gallery here this afternoon. You're quite correct; I have had the same staff person, or did have—Norm has inherited her now—in my constituency office in Parry Sound, when I was the member for Parry Sound and then Parry Sound–Muskoka. I've always tried to treat my staff as I'd like to be treated myself, and I've always tried to treat them as part of my family. Indeed, they are very important people in the life of any member of the Legislative Assembly.

I've also been fortunate in having had many decent mentors throughout my lifetime. One that first comes to mind is my former law partner Bill Green. For those of you on the government side of the House, you'll be happy to know that Bill Green was the president of the local Liberal Association for some 25 years. He was also the chairman of the West Parry Sound Board of Education for some 25 years. His wife, Beth, who may indeed be watching today and is still with us, was heading up the social family services in Parry Sound at that time. They instilled in me a lot of social conscience, especially with respect to the native community in the province of Ontario. It's something that has never left me and will always be with me, and it's something that I've appreciated every single day that I've been allowed to serve in public service.

I also had some very good teachers in the personas of Lorne Maeck, Gordon Aiken, Allister Johnston and the late Stan Darling, all of whom gave me different aspects of what it takes to be a good representative.

It's kind of fitting that when I was first elected, the first event I went to was held in a local agricultural society hall. It was the delivery of a fire truck in northern Ontario, I say to the Minister of Northern Affairs. The last event I attended as a local MPP was also to a local agricultural society, this time to an annual general meeting. That brings back to me the fact that all politics are local, as someone once said, and that this province is really, truly great. We have literally hundreds of great communities. There are great people throughout this terrific province of Ontario, and they are who we are as Ontarians and who we are as Canadians.

I've had the experience of bumping into and working with a lot of decent people over the years. Some have been mentioned here earlier today. Norm mentioned the Honourable Bette Stephenson. Bette was the Minister of Education and Minister of Colleges and Universities when I was first elected. The Premier of the day, Bill Davis, approached her and asked her who she would like to serve as her parliamentary assistant. She said, "Either one of the Bobbsey Twins would be fine." Bill Davis asked, "Who the hell are the Bobbsey Twins?" The Bobbsey Twins, according to Bette, were Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. They both came from the same part of the province. She couldn't tell us apart, so she'd take

either one of the Bobbsey Twins as her parliamentary assistant. I lucked out and became Bette's parliamentary assistant. Bette certainly spoke her mind and continues to speak her mind to this day, but was a tremendous asset and mentor to me throughout my political life.

Larry Grossman: Talking about principles and dedication and having your heart in the right place and following it, I can't think of many better people in this Legislature than Larry Grossman.

Bob Nixon: Bob Nixon was the individual who phoned me and wrote me a very nice letter when I was first appointed Minister of Finance, informing me that he and his wife were now on their third cup of coffee that morning. He was having a chance to completely read the *Globe and Mail* and knew I would be up to my behind in alligators going through numerous briefings as finance minister. He certainly was quite helpful to me, as indeed the Honourable Darcy McKeough was as well.

Politics has a strange way of "what goes around comes around," and sometimes you get back what you give. I can remember as Bette's parliamentary assistant—she was much more large-P political than I was—going to an event in Quinte riding when we were opening a new community college there. I was surprised to learn that I was speaking but the local member was not, so I insisted that the entire proceedings be stopped until one Mr. Hugh O'Neil was given his rightful place on the podium and asked to speak. I didn't do that for any political gain; I did it because it was the right thing to do. Little did I know that many years later, when I was in opposition and Mr. O'Neil was in cabinet, that would pay great dividends for me. I don't think there was a small community—I had 48 organized communities in my old riding of Parry Sound and then Parry Sound–Muskoka—that didn't receive some benevolence from Mr. O'Neil in the form of a skating rink, a baseball diamond, an arena or things of that nature. So I say to members of cabinet, you should remember that as you go forth on your many deliberations.

Elie Martel of course was a great character. I will never forget going to House leaders' meetings with Bob Nixon, Elie Martel and Mike Harris. This would usually be around Christmastime when tempers were getting thin in the Legislature. It would be a very late dinner. On a couple of occasions when Elie and Mike almost came to blows, Bob and I didn't know whether to help them or continue on laughing, but they always seemed to sort themselves out at the end of the day.

My very first recollection of doing anything outside of this place as an elected member with Norm wouldn't surprise you: It was a trip. I believe Norm was Mr. McMurtry's parliamentary assistant at the time. Jim Breithaupt, Jim Renwick and Norm were off to some meeting that attorneys general were supposed to be attending in Vancouver, and I was asked by Norm if I would like to accompany them. I see you're still here, Norm, so that must have gone relatively well.

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I learned a lot about camaraderie among different political parties in that simple two- or three-day adven-

ture. It's a side of our life, I think, that the public doesn't very often get to see. They assume that what they see on the screen in question period is what really goes on all day, every day, 24 hours a day. I'm here to disappoint you and tell you that nothing could be further from the truth. There indeed is a lot of respect in this House among members on different sides. We may have different ways of achieving goals, but I believe that we all have the same goals in mind at the end of the day, and that is to try to make our little part of the province of Ontario—or, if you are fortunate enough to serve in cabinet or as Premier, the entire province of Ontario—a little bit better place in which to live.

When people talk about important things that you've done in your political life, I still think back to one of the very first things that I fought hard for, and that was a young boy by the name of Peter Mang, who had received a serious head injury, having been hit by a pickup truck when his toboggan crossed the road around Christmas-time. The only treatment for young Mr. Mang was, it seemed, in Philadelphia, and the Ministry of Health refused to pay his way there. I can tell you, speaking of pit bulls, Mr. Attorney General—I understand this is a very significant day in the Legislature—I was like a pit bull with that particular issue. I would not let go of it until young Mr. Mang received the treatment that he deserved. Those are the things that I think of when I think about, "What have you accomplished in your 20-some years of public service?"

I can remember going to my first interprovincial ministers' meeting. I was Minister of Resources Development, and I was going there as the Minister of Native Affairs for the province of Ontario. I guess the Premier, Bill Davis, thought I needed some guidance, because he sent Bob Welch, the then Deputy Premier, along to watch the proceedings. Much to Mr. Welch's surprise and everybody else's, I pronounced that the province of Ontario was in favour of native self-government.

These are some stories that don't usually hit the media. Needless to say, I received a very startled phone call from the then Premier, Frank Miller, asking me what the hell I was doing. I said, "Well, Frank, I listened to all the arguments on all the various sides and I thought it was the right thing to do. So as I see it, Mr. Premier, you have two choices: You can fire me, or you can work with me to try to make this happen."

To Mr. Miller's benefit, he became a strong, strong advocate for native affairs. I can remember going to a first ministers' meeting on this issue, accompanying him to Ottawa. I can tell you, there has never been a stronger advocate for native people. It's a side of Frank Miller that I don't think many people ever got to see.

There are a lot of highs and a lot of lows in political life, and they have been alluded to. I can think back to the day when, not only my first election and in the recount, but getting to meet the Pope, of course, and fishing with Cardinal Carter. These were quite lofty things for an altar boy from the Anglican Church. They certainly impressed my mother to no end; there's no

doubt about that. Speaking of my mother, I had the good fortune to be able to introduce her to the Queen. That was certainly a very significant moment in her life.

The election of 1995, of course, was a tremendous high for us, and for me personally. There was a lot of hard work that followed that, and Mike Harris asking me to serve not only as finance minister but as Deputy Premier and as House leader, which of course brought the typical response from my mother: “Are you sure you can do all those jobs?” I guess the answer was, “Some of them better than others, at the end of the day.” But I always loved the challenge and was happy to embrace it.

One of the lows in 1995 was as the House leader. When it was time to read the throne speech that I was to give to the Premier, it was not on my desk. And there was, it seemed like, an eternity of silence in this place until my staff member realized that she had left the original throne speech in the Speaker’s office—not you, Mr. Speaker; a former Speaker. There was a lot of hastening down the hallway to get the throne speech and deliver it so it could actually be read.

Obviously the low in my life as an elected member would be, first, the death of my dad in November 1994 and then the death of my son, Justin, in October 1995. Losing one’s parent is something that I guess is in the natural order of things, and you can accept it one way or another. Losing your child is something you would never wish on anyone, and unless you’ve experienced it, as I know some members in this House have, you can’t begin to appreciate what a difficult time that is.

It may surprise the public to know that Conservatives actually have a social conscience, that the NDP are not all Marxist-Leninists—some even do relatively well on Bay Street, according to Bob Rae—and that Liberals do have some principles and actually stand for some things.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Don’t go that far.

Mr. Eves: I had you right up until then—right, Frank?

In all seriousness, as I said a few moments ago, I believe that all 103 members are here for the same reason, and that is to try to improve the lot of others in the province of Ontario. We just have different ways of going about trying to achieve that.

I would like to leave you with a few thoughts.

You are indeed a very privileged group. There are not many people who are fortunate enough to ever become elected as members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Out of a population of millions, you are a very fortunate group indeed. It is a family, whether you like it or not, of all three political parties, and we are all here and serving for the same reasons. I would ask you to think about that in some of your debates—not that I ever entered into any difficult debates in my lifetime or disagreed with others. But we are a privileged group, and I would ask you to remember that you’re fortunate indeed.

I say to the government members that not everything previous administrations did was wrong. They actually did some good things, and perhaps you should maybe acknowledge that from time to time. I say to the members on the opposition side of the House that not everything

they do is wrong, and you might actually care to acknowledge that from time to time. I don’t believe you can improve yourself or improve the lot of others by lowering or destroying others. I’ve never had that philosophy.

All politics are local. We all have our roots in the community. Mine happen to be in the Big Brothers organization, the Kinsmen Club and helping children with cystic fibrosis, in making a difference and improving the lives of others. I know that you all come to this place with similar stories. I have always believed in fiscal responsibility with a large social conscience; in balancing the books but taking care of those people in our society who, through no fault of their own, are unable to take care of themselves.

My son, Justin, taught me an awful lot about that. When Justin was first going to Curry College in Boston, he was asked as a psychology and sociology project to take under his wing a young, disadvantaged youth. Justin being Justin and being somewhat stubborn, not unlike his dad, decided to take two disadvantaged youths under his wing. They were two black, inner-city youths named Malcolm and Jamal. They didn’t have a father or a mother. Their father had long since left, and their mother was in jail for murder. After their mother was sent to jail, they lived on their own in a tenement without anybody realizing they didn’t have any parents at home. This carried on for several weeks until one of their teachers finally twigged that something was amiss.

Justin made a huge difference in the lives of those two young people, and that is really, to me, what life is all about. That is what the driving influence behind the Justin Eves Foundation is all about.

There is a saying on Justin’s tombstone that reads like this: “He looked for the best in others and he gave the best of himself.” I hope the same can be said of me, having served in this place for some 24 years. Thank you very much.

Applause.

Mr. Eves was accompanied from the chamber.

The Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY AMENDMENT ACT (SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY), 2005 LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L’ACCÈS À L’INFORMATION ET LA PROTECTION DE LA VIE PRIVÉE (PRÉSIDENT DE L’ASSEMBLÉE)

Mr. Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 173, An Act to amend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act respecting the Speaker of

the Assembly / *Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée en ce qui a trait au président de l'Assemblée.*

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

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr. Kormos?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The bill amends the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to provide that the act applies with respect to records in the custody of the Speaker, with the exception of records that pertain to his or her role as a member of the assembly.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HOURS OF WORK

HEURES DE TRAVAIL

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I rise to mark the fact that this government has put an end to the 60-hour workweek as of today.

Je suis fier du fait que nous protégeons les travailleuses et les travailleurs vulnérables en renforçant leur droit de décider s'ils veulent ou non travailler des heures excédentaires. En même temps, nous veillons à ce que les entreprises de l'Ontario soient en mesure de s'adapter rapidement afin de soutenir la concurrence au sein de l'économie d'aujourd'hui.

This is part of a four-point plan to protect workers, while securing the productivity of business. The four points are to (1) eliminate the forced 60-hour workweek; (2) increase the awareness of the rights and responsibilities of employers; (3) increase the awareness of the rights and responsibilities of workers; and (4) enhance enforcement to target employers who choose not to comply with the law.

In January a year ago, I announced that we would undertake to end the 60-hour workweek. We then embarked on a period of consultation. During these consultations, Ministry of Labour officials met with 31 key labour, employer and community stakeholders. We received over 30 submissions from other stakeholders and almost 80 letters from members of the general public.

Last April, I had the privilege of introducing the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Hours of Work and Other Matters), 2004. On December 9, 2004, this legislation was passed by the Ontario Legislature.

Today that law comes into force. Today, workers in Ontario have a genuine choice as to whether they will choose to work extra hours or not. They will be protected from the type of pressure they could have been subject to under the previous legislation, which did not require government approval for hours above 48, up to 60.

La loi qui entre en vigueur aujourd'hui protégera le droit des employés de décider, librement et en connaissance de cause, s'ils vont travailler davantage d'heures ou utiliser ces heures pour trouver un équilibre entre leur vie professionnelle et leur vie personnelle.

Employers who want employees to work more than 48 hours in a workweek must meet the requirements of the Employment Standards Amendment Act, including giving non-unionized employees an information sheet, published by the Ministry of Labour, on rights and responsibilities regarding hours of work and overtime pay; obtaining written agreement from the employee, or from the union if the workplace is unionized; and receiving approval from the Ministry of Labour.

What about overtime averaging? Overtime averaging has been around since 1968. From that time, approval by the ministry was required for overtime averaging of two or more weeks. With the Employment Standards Act, 2000, the requirement for ministry approval was eliminated except for periods over four weeks. We have restored the requirement for approval of averaging of two or more weeks.

This government believes that we must build a strong and prosperous economy, one that makes Ontario the place to be for years to come. That is why, when we proposed these changes, we took a fair and balanced approach. We are determined to protect the vulnerable, but we are also determined to do so in a way that will ensure that the businesses of Ontario have the necessary flexibility to compete nationally and internationally. We have done that. The legislation coming into force today achieves the balance we were seeking.

Today, employees have greater choice in balancing their work life and their home life.

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We listened to business and came up with a system where businesses will be encouraged to apply on-line. It is user-friendly, speedy and efficient.

We have also expanded our awareness initiatives to make employers aware of their employment standards rights and responsibilities. The Ministry of Labour Web site readily directs employers to the information they need.

We have also created an Internet portal, the workplace gateway. This is accessible through the ministry's Web site and also through the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services' Service Ontario initiative. Congratulations to my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Businesses are now able to easily find out their rights and responsibilities. When businesses know their rights and responsibilities, they are much more likely to comply.

We have also gone to work creating greater awareness of the law for workers. We have made presentations and provided literature to more than 100 community centres. As well, since many of the most vulnerable in our society do not speak English or French as a first language, we have created brochures in languages these workers more easily understand. They are available in Arabic, Bengali,

Chinese, Dari, Farsi, Filipino, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Urdu and Vietnamese, in addition to English and French. If you are going to fully protect people, the place to start is making them aware of their rights. We have done that.

I want to emphasize that the vast majority of businesses are either doing the right thing or trying to do the right thing. For businesses choosing not to follow the law, we have stepped up enforcement, targeting those employers with poor employment standards records. We have also set a target of 2,000 proactive inspections this year.

We have kept our promise to the people of Ontario. We said we would end the 60-hour workweek; we have. By giving employees a greater choice, we're improving their quality of life. This is part of our plan to strengthen our greatest competitive advantage: the people of Ontario.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I am delighted to rise in the House today to inform the members of the House about the tremendous strides this government has made to address the community and economic development needs of northerners.

In December, I joined Premier Dalton McGuinty in Sudbury and Thunder Bay to unveil details of the northern prosperity plan, a plan that will strengthen communities, foster job creation and generate prosperity opportunities for all northerners. Part of that plan is a refocused northern Ontario heritage fund. As chair of the fund, I was delighted to announce last month in Sault Ste. Marie that our government has delivered on its commitment to refocus the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. so that it responds more effectively to urgent northern priorities.

Through six new programs, the NOHFC will help private sector enterprises committed to creating jobs in the north, while continuing to support vital infrastructure and community development projects. They will address such pressing needs as economic diversification and opportunities for youth to remain in, or to return to, the north. During a recent tour of northwestern Ontario to acquaint representatives of community groups with the new NOHFC programs, my parliamentary assistant, the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Bill Mauro, was gratified by the high level of interest in the new programs. A refocused northern Ontario heritage fund points northerners on to the path to prosperity.

In recent weeks, our government has announced other key initiatives that stand as milestones on that path. Just over one week ago, I had the honour of unveiling three of our four new northern development councils and introducing the distinguished northerners who have stepped forward to serve on them. Through the northern development councils, this government is fulfilling its commit-

ment to engage northerners in the decisions that will affect them. With the establishment of these councils, our government is enabling a stronger northern perspective to be brought to provincial policy and program development.

Another important initiative is the northern Ontario grow bonds business loan program. Last Friday, I launched this program in Thunder Bay, a program that will provide new and expanding small and medium-sized businesses across the north with access to business loans. My ministry will continue to spread the word about both the business loans program and the sale of northern Ontario grow bonds. The sale of these bonds will run from March 21 until April 11 and will be coordinated by the Ministry of Finance. We have set a northern Ontario grow bonds sales target of \$20 million. As a passionate northerner, I anticipate that northerners from across the region will show their pride in and commitment to the north by buying bonds and investing in our communities.

The future prosperity of northern Ontario hinges on having communities that are well positioned to attract new investment and growth. The future prosperity of northern Ontario hinges on the ability of our private sector partners to generate the investments necessary to create jobs, to grow, to expand and to thrive. The future prosperity of northern Ontario hinges on the region's capacity to retain and attract tomorrow's workforce, tomorrow's families and tomorrow's community-builders. Our government is working shoulder to shoulder alongside our northern stakeholders, including our First Nations partners, to ensure that northern Ontario is on that path.

Without question, we are doing what the previous government failed to do: We are ensuring that the interests of northern Ontario are front and centre on our agenda for positive change. Our tireless efforts and our many initiatives are specifically targeted to make certain that the northern prosperity plan supports this. And we will continue to work diligently for the good of the north, because ensuring the best interests of the north translates into a better and stronger Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound—Muskoka): It's my pleasure to respond to the statement by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines today.

In the spirit of Mr. Eves's comments today, I'd like to start out by saying I'm pleased to see the government is implementing the northern Ontario grow bonds initiative. I know the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce had been pushing for that initiative. I do believe it's important to create opportunities for business to gain access to capital. I am, however, concerned that the government is going to botch the implementation of this program. For example, I hope you don't burden the whole program with too much expensive administration. I'd like to ask why you didn't partner with the federal government and use their already existing offices, the Community Futures offices that are operating very much in the banking services now, and save on the administration costs.

I would also like to question why you seem to be excluding the hospitality industry, the hospitality business. It says on your form, "Please note, funding cannot be used to set up or expand a retail, construction or hospitality business." I assume that includes the tourism business, and you can correct me if I'm wrong. I hope I'm wrong on that, because certainly the tourism industry in northern Ontario has great potential and also has great needs for access to capital. So I would hope I am wrong on that.

The timelines also seem very restrictive. The application time is February 25 to April 15. It's a very restrictive amount of time to be able to get a business plan together and make application to make use of the funds. I would like to see that extended or there to be no deadline whatsoever.

Unfortunately, you're also doing a lot to hurt business with many of your government's actions. Recently, of course, you announced a 12% increase in electricity prices for large users. I have to ask you, what do you think that is going to do for the mills and mines of northwestern Ontario? I have countless news clippings to show that the mills and mines are very concerned about that, but in two and a half minutes I don't have time to read them all to you. There is your 27% increase in corporate taxes that you have already brought into effect, as well as your new health tax. Your 60-hour workweek is a major concern, and I know the critic for labour will speak to that.

I don't have time to go over the list of things you aren't doing, but thank you for your statement today.

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HOURS OF WORK

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I want to begin by clarifying that this bill today to end the 60-hour workweek does not do so. This bill does not purport to do what the minister claims it does. What it actually does is create a huge paper burden for employees and employers once an agreement is reached to work beyond 48 hours.

This bill, regrettably, will not help employees in this province find new jobs. In fact, we've already heard from small business that this is going to reduce their flexibility. We've heard from the logging industry that this does not recognize the short window they have to get their product to market. So if this bill does anything at all, it provides a disincentive for job creation and for business to stay in the province of Ontario. In today's globalized economy, the reality is that businesses are able to relocate very easily.

I would also say, it's very interesting that the minister states in his release, "Some employees reported feeling pressured into agreeing to an employer's request to work more than 48 hours a week," and yet on the other hand he introduces Bill 144, which takes away the democratic right of a secret ballot vote in the construction sector. Do you not think employees in the construction sector felt

and feel pressure to join a union? Why would you take away their basic democratic right to a secret ballot vote? They are pressured. If you think employees are pressured in the workplace to work 60 hours, I can tell you that employees in the construction industry feel very pressured to join a union as well. So you had better take a look at what you're doing when you are introducing new legislation, because in the case of Bill 144, you are turning back the clock on democratic labour relations by 15 years. In fact, you are doing this at a time when democracies around this world are emerging.

I think all these bills are just an attempt to divert attention from the real crisis that we have in health care: a shortage of doctors, no funding for hospitals, a huge health tax, and many broken promises.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I say to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines that this is not a bad thing in itself. The only thing I would say is this: This is certainly not the model that people had asked for, in the final show when we see the details of this thing. But in the end we'll take a look.

There's nothing new, because this type of stuff has been done before. This is not the first government to put in place investment vehicles to allow people in northern Ontario to invest in themselves. For example, our government put in place labour-sponsored venture capital funds that were used to great success in many projects in northern Ontario.

If you really want to help northern development, Minister, talk to your Minister of Natural Resources; talk to your Minister of Energy. Those are the ones who are running around gunshot when it comes to prosperity and jobs in northern Ontario. On your watch, since Premier Dalton McGuinty took over the reins of power in Ontario, we have lost 6,000 jobs in northern Ontario. Why? One reason has to do with what you are doing in regard to forestry. You know what is happening in northern Ontario. We've got companies like Domtar, Tembec and others that are saying, "Listen, the wood is ours. We can do what we want with it." It doesn't belong to the crown, in their view. "We'll take the wood and we'll ship it from smaller communities and put it into supermills." Bravo for the supermills; boo for the small communities that are going to lose their only employer, communities like Kirkland Lake and Opasatika and others. So I say, get hold of your Minister of Natural Resources and get him to do his job, which is to say that the forest belongs to the community and doesn't belong to corporate entities. The quicker we get that into his head, the better off we are going to be in northern Ontario.

To your Minister of Energy, I certainly hope I'm not boring you, because the 12% hydro rate increases that were announced in this House last week, I'll tell you, are not being very well received where I come from. The largest hydro user in this province is Kidd Creek Mines in the city of Timmins. They are absolutely petrified

about what this means to them. They're looking at this and saying that for a company that is so energy dependent, as they are, a 12% increase is really a big blow to deal with, not to speak about what it means to the paper industry. If you are running Tembec's plant in Kapuskasing, which runs a TMP process, if you are the mill in Kenora, if you are the mill in Thunder Bay—Inco as well—you're looking at these hydro rate increases and saying, "How am I going to be able to survive over the upcoming time?"

So I say to you, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, get your Minister of Energy and your Minister of Natural Resources and take them behind the woodshed, beat them up and get them back in here doing what they should be doing for northerners, and that is helping us develop strategies that really put northern Ontario first.

HOURS OF WORK

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Let me say on behalf of New Democrats to the Minister of Labour, who has been, oh, so self-congratulatory about his Bill 63—the Minister of Labour says he has rolled back the 60-hour workweek. Horse feathers. The Minister of Labour supersized the 60-hour workweek. The Minister of Labour has created legislation and standards in this province that will allow permits to be presumed to have been provided upon the mere application by employers for thousands upon thousands of workers to work in excess of 60 hours.

This Minister of Labour and this Dalton McGuinty government have left workers still but dreaming about the prospect of overtime after 40 hours a week. The 40-hour week is the furthest thing in the world from reality for the Liberals in the province of Ontario.

Let me tell you that for women like the women in Niagara, who work two jobs because this government has denied them adequate increases in minimum wage—they work in the hospitality industry, breaking their backs cleaning hotel rooms in the early morning, and then go to the 7-Eleven or the Avondale to work the balance of the day, till 10 or 11 at night, because this government has denied them real and meaningful increases in minimum wage. There's no such thing as a 60-, 50- or 40-hour workweek for workers whose incomes are inadequate to allow them to support themselves unless they're working at two and three jobs.

The Dalton McGuinty Liberal government has demonstrated itself to be the good buddy and friend of big business—whether it's the banking industry with their tax reductions or the auto insurance industry with unheard-of new profits of \$4.2 billion a year—and they leave working women and men in their wake.

This Liberal government at Queen's Park has continued a concentrated attack on working women and men and their trade unions. I say to you, this government has nothing to brag about when it comes to their ongoing attack on working people in this province, especially the

most vulnerable, the lowest paid, those workers who are inevitably women working in those low-wage job ghettos. This government should be ashamed. This minister should acknowledge his absolute failure as a Minister of Labour.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): On a point of order, the member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My point of order is pursuant to standing order 97(d). On October 28, 2004, I filed seven questions with the Minister of Education. As you well know, the standing orders require that the minister "shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days." I want to point out that the 24 sitting days in which responses should have been made expired on December 16, 2004. Further, the minister has had the entire intersession to deal with those questions. We're now in the ninth sitting day of this session, and I still have no word from the minister on these questions.

I would ask that you, as Speaker, use your authority to call on the minister to comply with the standing orders.

The Speaker: I'd just like to remind the government House leader that you are required, under standing order 97(d), to provide answers to written questions within 24 sitting days. Your responses are overdue, and I would ask that you give the House some indication as to when the answers will be forthcoming.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): It's not a point of order, Mr. Speaker, but my understanding is that those questions will be tabled today.

The Speaker: I hope that will satisfy the member.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I just want to bring to the attention of the House that in the east lobby is Mr. Mohammed Benattia, a member of the federal Parliament and National Democratic Liberal Party of Morocco. I just want to welcome him.

DEFERRED VOTES

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SÉCURITÉ PUBLIQUE RELATIVE AUX CHIENS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 132, An Act to amend the Dog Owners' Liability Act to increase public safety in relation to dogs, including pit bulls, and to make related amendments to the Animals for Research Act / Projet de loi 132, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens pour

accroître la sécurité publique relativement aux chiens, y compris les pit-bulls, et apportant des modifications connexes à la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1511 to 1516.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Qadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Boutrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Brown, Michael A.	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Sterling, Norman W.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	Tascona, Joseph N.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I was voting against the bill.

The Speaker: You cannot have a point of order. We are just having a count of the votes.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 56; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'd like to hear the point of order from the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Mr. Baird: You will know, as an experienced parliamentarian, that sometimes for the best of us there is a bit of confusion. I would ask for unanimous consent that the member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford's vote reflect his opposition to the bill and be put in as a "nay."

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Do we have unanimous consent? I'm hearing a no on this.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. Premier, according to a TVO story by Susanna Kelley that aired last Friday, you and your wife were hosted at the Sorbara family household for a \$10,000-per-person fundraiser. The invited guests to this exclusive, swanky soiree included a dozen developers, most of them with interests in the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt.

A year and a half ago, you promised to—and I'm quoting—"fully disclose political donations in real time." This fundraiser took place last May. Almost a year has passed since then. That's a year in real time. When will you keep your promise and disclose the names of these \$10,000 donors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I've made the offer at least twice in this Legislature, and I'll make it again. If Mr. Tory is prepared to submit to this, if Mr. Hampton on behalf of his party is prepared to submit to this, then we can move very quickly to ensure that we have real-time reporting with respect to all of our political receipts.

Mr. Runciman: Mr. Tory is prepared. I remind the Premier that promise 166 of your Liberal Party election platform states, "We will fully disclose donations in real time." Premier, this is about your showing leadership and actually keeping a promise.

A dozen developers were invited by the Liberal Party to the finance minister's home for an exclusive meeting with the two most powerful politicians in Ontario, and it cost them \$10,000 each for that privilege. TVO obtained a letter addressed to you from one of the developers. The letter states that you were making promises to developers at the fundraiser regarding what lands would and would not be included in your greenbelt scheme. You seem incapable of keeping your promises to the public but quite happy to make them and keep them to those who can afford to pay.

How can anybody have confidence in your greenbelt map, given the revelation that you personally made promises in exchange for \$10,000 donations to the Ontario Liberal Party?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Hang on a second. Let's understand what we're talking about. We made a commitment in our platform to create 600,000 more acres of protected space. We've gone beyond that and protected one million more acres of protected space. How does that somehow connect with breaking a promise? That's what I call fulfilling a promise and much more.

Mr. Runciman: The Premier is perfecting the art of obfuscation. He's not answering my question here, and

we now see the Premier again trying to defend the indefensible.

What you said—and I'm quoting you again—in 2001, Premier McGuinty, then the Leader of the Opposition: “We don't believe that we are accountable to the well-connected or the wealthy few or to the government's special interests, such as their developer friends.”

Premier, you have failed to release any scientific basis for the boundaries of your greenbelt and you were caught making promises to developers in return for a \$10,000 cheque payable to the Ontario Liberal Party. This is what it looks like: It appears that the going rate is \$10,000 a promise and that paying more taxes doesn't guarantee someone that your promises will be kept. It has to be a direct donation to your party.

Premier, you can very quickly clear up this mess. Keep your promise and immediately disclose the donations and attendance at the Sorbara fundraiser.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The source of the complaint here comes from someone who is complaining that his land has been included in the greenbelt. How is that buying influence? I ask you, how is that buying influence? We have said that when it comes to the greenbelt, we will act in the greater public interest. We are proud of what we've done and proud that we've protected a further one million acres of green space, for a total of 1.8 million acres, a land mass larger than Prince Edward Island itself. We have done that, we have protected that in perpetuity and, let me tell you, it has nothing to do with what anybody might have said. What we have done here is acted in the greater public interest.

Mr. Runciman: If it's in the greater public interest, let's see the names; let's see the donations; let's see the real impact here. You made the promise to disclose donations in real time. As I said, that's number 166 on your list of over 230. Promise 171 from your platform stated, and I'm quoting again, “We will make the government's business your business.”

Premier, \$10,000 swanky soirees hosted by your finance minister's family, where you've been caught making promises to developers, isn't the people's business. We now have a greenbelt with arbitrary boundaries that have not been backed up by any scientific reason, and I guess we know why.

Premier, what promises did you make on the night of May 14, 2004, at Mr. Sorbara's home?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm not sure my friend wants to go down this path. We're having a dispute with developers because we stood up for the greenbelt. We refused to allow ourselves to be influenced by any financial contributions, and we're proud and open and transparent in that. We're having a dispute with developers because we went ahead with the greenbelt.

When the shoe was on the other foot, when those people sat on this side of the House, we know where they stood when it came to their unholy alliance with developers in Ontario. Again, I'm proud to say that we stood up for the greater public interest, and the result is to have a brand new 1.8-million-acre greenbelt in Ontario.

Mr. Runciman: The Ontario Liberal Party doesn't exactly have a long tradition of above-board relationships with developers. This is your chance to right a perceived wrong. You made promises to developers at an exclusive Liberal fundraiser in exchange for a \$10,000 donation per person to the Ontario Liberal Party. Will you finally do what's right and disclose all details and records from that fundraiser to prove—

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I remember, Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I'll remember if you will keep quiet. In the meantime, allow the leader of the official opposition to ask his question so that I am able to hear it. The leader of the official opposition, your supplementary.

Mr. Runciman: I will repeat it just to get it on the record: Premier, will you finally do what's right and disclose all details and records from that fundraiser to prove that everything is above-board?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I appreciate the member's belated interest in disclosing this kind of information, but I'm proud to say that we ran on full disclosure as part of our platform. I know that the Attorney General will in due course be introducing legislation, and we look forward to delivering on that commitment, along with the others.

Mr. Runciman: In due course? The government has been in office for about a year and a half now, so we're not sure what “due course” means.

You have not released any scientific data supporting the drawing of your greenbelt boundaries. The only evidence we now have as to how these boundaries were drawn is a letter from a developer saying that you made promises to them in an exclusive Liberal fundraiser at the finance minister's household. For this privilege, developers were told to write a cheque to the Ontario Liberal Party for \$10,000.

Premier, this smells, and you have done nothing to put anybody's mind at ease. Release the records from this fundraiser, as you promised you would do.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: What we have done here, and I think the record is very clear: We ran on a commitment to create 600,000 more acres of protected green space in Ontario in the greater Golden Horseshoe. After taking a close look at that, after we assumed responsibility as a government, we decided that we could and should proceed to exceed our commitment and protect an additional one million acres.

If people want to know where we stand on this issue, the record speaks very much for itself. We stood up for 1.8 million acres of protected greenbelt, and we are proud to do so.

1530

SALE OF LANDS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday you

defended York University's \$15.8-million shady land deal with developer Tribute Communities. This multi-million-dollar land deal was untendered. The land was sold for less than half of its commercial value. Joseph Sorbara, who brokered this land deal for the university, happens to be a close business associate of the developer-purchaser. You said that it's OK for the same people, the York University board of governors, who rubber-stamped this shady deal in the first place, to now decide if the deal is proper and acceptable.

This is about the public trust. This is about protecting the public purse. How can the same people who created this shady land deal in the first place be relied upon to do your job and protect the public purse?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I reject the characterization of my response yesterday offered by the leader of the NDP. What I said is that we should allow the process to unfold. I said that the board of governors had taken upon themselves to deliberate on the matter.

They've now specifically said, and I quote from a release put out yesterday, "Because of publicly expressed concerns, it has been agreed that we will forthwith ask an independent person to review all aspects of the transaction. The board and the university will co-operate fully with this independent person, whose report to the board will be made public."

I'm not sure what more my friend might be looking for in this regard. I believe that is a responsible, appropriate response made by the board of governors for York University.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, your process involves the same board that was responsible for this shady deal now going out and appointing someone to confirm their shady deal. I don't think that it's ever acceptable in our society to have someone pass judgment on their own conduct, but that's what you seem to be arguing for.

I can tell you, the students and the faculty at York University see it for what it is. They see it as a cover-up, and they've said it publicly. It was untendered, they did not receive fair market value, there was a conflict of interest on the face of the deal, and yet you seem to say that is perfectly acceptable. I said that the Provincial Auditor should look at this; someone independent, not connected with the deal in the first place, should look at it. Why are you opposed to having someone independent, like the Provincial Auditor, look at this shady deal?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it's very much apparent that the leader of the NDP has no confidence whatsoever in those who sit on the board of governors for York University. One of those individuals—I know the leader of the NDP will know him—is Mr. Justice Patrick LeSage. I could provide him with other names, but these are people of integrity and commitment, who understand the seriousness of this issue. I think that they've acted responsibly in the circumstances. The leader of the NDP refuses to understand that they've asked for an independent person to come in and take a look at what has happened, to prepare a written report and to make that

report public. Again, I think that is the appropriate response.

Mr. Hampton: It is a fundamental principle of our system of law that those people who were involved in a transaction should not then be involved in any way in deciding whether that transaction was appropriate or not. That's exactly what you've offered up. You are now saying that the very people who oversaw this shady deal from the beginning can now decide who will judge the deal. I think that that's wrong.

This is what you used to say: "We will give the auditor the power to scrutinize hospitals, universities, school boards and other major organizations funded by the people of Ontario so that you know whether your dollars are being well spent." To put it this way, Premier, there was no caveat in your statement saying, "unless you're the finance minister's brother."

So I'm asking you again. This is about the public trust. This is about protecting the public purse. This is your promise: You said the Provincial Auditor should look at these issues. Will you support the Provincial Auditor doing an independent examination, or is it still your position that—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I just cannot accept the characterization that the member opposite puts on it. He calls this a shady transaction because, I assume, it feeds the story. He does not allow a process of any kind to unfold. He makes a completely unfair connection between this Minister of Finance and one of his siblings. I have nine brothers and sisters; I cannot account for what they do, and it would be unfair to connect them to my actions. I think the leader of the NDP understands that. I think he should know better than that.

I think what we have in place now is a responsible, appropriate response being offered by the board of governors for York University. I think it's in everybody's interest here to allow cooler heads to prevail, to allow the process to unfold and to wait for the delivery of that public report.

HYDRO ONE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Premier: This is about an untendered contract, where land was sold at less than half its value by somebody who, on the face of it, was in a conflict of interest. I find it very interesting that the holier-than-thou McGuinty government, when it comes to investigating some of its own, says this is OK.

But I want to ask you about another bad deal: Last week, your energy minister announced a whopping 12% increase in hydro rates for Ontario industry. This increase is threatening many industrial jobs, especially in northern Ontario.

Today, we learn that your government has rubber-stamped a 35% pay hike for Tom Parkinson, the CEO of Hydro One. That's a \$750,000 base salary, a \$600,000

bonus and \$123,000 in other compensation. It also includes—get this—a \$125,000 mortgage subsidy and a \$2-million golden parachute, all to be paid by the hydro ratepayers of Ontario.

Premier, how do you defend a 35% pay hike for Hydro One's executive while you're hiking industrial power rates by 12% and killing jobs across—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): This was a decision that was taken by the Hydro One board of directors and not the government. That increase that the member references isn't an increase in base salary; a good portion of it is tied to performance. With respect to performance, under Mr. Parkinson's tenure Hydro One has increased operating efficiency and capital efficiency, and bond ratings have improved and continued the trend upward. The board took this under consideration, reviewed the salary and the bonus package in the context of other public utilities as well as comparable private organizations, and the board of directors undertook this contract with Mr. Parkinson.

Mr. Hampton: What I know is that thousands of industrial jobs are at risk across northern Ontario, and Liberals used to stand up and denounce this kind of thing. Where is Michael Bryant, who said of Eleanor Clitheroe and the former Conservative government, "Either you were asleep at the switch or you were the conductor of" the Clitheroe "gravy train," who also said, "You're the shareholder here. You represent the government. You can't tell me that the single shareholder of a company is uninterested in the compensation package of its CEO"? Where are those spokespersons? Now they're justifying a 35% pay increase, a \$2-million golden handshake severance package, while workers across northern Ontario are at risk of losing their jobs. Can you tell me, Minister: What is your answer to all those workers at risk of losing their jobs? Should they just pay up and forget about it?

1540

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Again, the characterization of the leader of the third party is wrong. First of all, Mr. Parkinson, as was pointed out in the Toronto Star today, is still making half of what his predecessor was making in 2001. All the measurable performance targets have been met. Let me take you through them: All financial targets were met in 2002, 2003 and 2004; there has been a 70% increase in safety; large-customer satisfaction is actually up 80%; corporate management structures have been streamlined; transmission and distribution reliability is ahead of OEB targets; employee pride and stakeholder confidence have been restored.

The board of directors has taken a look at this contract. They negotiate, as is their obligation. They made this the recommendation. We have concurred. We believe that in the circumstances, in spite of the difficulties the energy sector is experiencing as a result of past government practices, this is justifiable.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could I ask the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Trinity–Spadina to stop heckling across so I can hear the response.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Speaker, I'd appreciate it if you could get the Minister of Tourism to lower it, so I can hear myself think.

Minister, you promised to protect hydro ratepayers. You said you were giving an ironclad commitment to eliminate the Eleanor Clitheroe style of pay packages at Hydro One.

Here is what media across the north are saying about your pay hike. This is the Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal: "Province Fails to Generate Power Confidence."

This is the Timmins Daily Press: "Hydro Hikes Threaten Jobs."

"Local jobs could be lost after Ontario Energy Minister Dwight Duncan announced" a 12% hydro price increase.

The Kenora Miner and News: "Electricity Hike Another Jolt for Abitibi."

"Twelve per cent may close the mill."

After obviously failing in your promise not to allow these irrational pay increases, can you tell me what these workers are supposed to think? You've got lots of money for the executives, but for workers who are worried about high hydro rates, you seem to be saying, "We're just going to jack them up some more." What should those workers be thinking about?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: First of all, there was not a 12% increase. The leader simply mischaracterized that. You neglected to mention the support we received for this from Inco and Dofasco. You neglected to mention the fact that prices went up 43% under your watch. You neglected to mention the fact that 14 mills and hundreds of jobs were lost under your government—nowhere near that under this government.

Do you know what else the member opposite forgot to mention? The chair of the compensation committee at Hydro One is Bob Rae, the fellow who negotiated and recommended this contract.

There was never a less competent government than that on the Hydro file. The deals they negotiated failed. We're not buying rain forests; we're protecting jobs in the north and across—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Again, I'd ask members to direct their questions and responses through the Chair.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Premier. Ontario's farmers don't have \$10,000 per person to donate to the Ontario Liberal Party so they can talk to you. Maybe if they did, hundreds wouldn't be planning to protest on the front lawn of Queen's Park tomorrow.

I want to share some sobering facts with you, Premier. According to StatsCan, farmers in Ontario are facing a \$229-million collective loss this year, compared to a \$1-billion net income for farmers in the rest of Canada. That's a loss six times what farmers lost in Ontario last year.

Premier, the numbers don't lie. Let's hear what you have to say. How can you possibly justify turning your back on Ontario's farmers under these conditions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): There could be nothing further from the reality. We are not turning our backs on the farmers of this province. If anything, we've demonstrated very clearly that we're going to work with the farmers. The Premier demonstrated leadership by hosting the first-ever summit on agriculture and the agri-food industry. The Premier met with the agricultural leaders on February 22 to hear their concerns first-hand. He gave them commitments of where we could go on some short-term, medium-term and long-term commitments.

We very much welcome the opportunity that the farmers of Ontario are coming here to Queen's Park tomorrow, because one of the things they can clearly demonstrate is that we need to get a message out to urban Ontario about the important role farmers play in our lives on a daily basis. It's incumbent on all of us that we do our part to support Ontario farmers. One way consumers can do that is in their buying habits at the grocery store. Make that conscious decision to buy local, buy Canadian, buy Ontario. Go into a restaurant and ask if it's Canadian beef, ask if it's Ontario wine. I'd just ask the former minister to remember some words, and I'll get that in—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): You can get to it in a supplementary.

Mr. Hardeman: That would be good, Mr Speaker. I just want to reiterate, Mr. Premier, that the farmers are not coming because they want to talk to the urban people; they want to talk to you because they believe you've turned your back on them. Farmers from Niagara, Simcoe county, Brantford, Lindsay, Rodney, Zurich, Oxford county and Renfrew county, just to name a few, are heading here tomorrow en masse to say that you have turned your back on Ontario farmers.

According to StatsCan, from 1999 to 2003, under the governments of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, farm incomes in Ontario averaged \$310 million per year. Now, in the second year of the McGuinty Liberal government, farm incomes will turn to a \$229-million loss.

Premier, it's clear your Minister of Agriculture with his answer just doesn't have the pull necessary to defend Ontario's farmers. You have failed the farmers and your minister is failing the farmers. When will you finally put someone senior in the role and make agriculture a priority in your Liberal government, as you promised to do in the election in 2003?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I'll ask the former minister to judge his own record, and the revolving door of agriculture ministers.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean—Carleton): What about answering the question? You're the minister now.

Hon. Mr. Peters: Five agriculture ministers in five years. That is no commitment. I ask that honourable—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member from Nepean—Carleton.

Mr. Baird: I apologize.

Hon. Mr. Peters: Over the past five years of the Harris-Eves government, we lost an average of 1,000 farmers a year in this province. That's a record they should be extremely disappointed with. That's a former minister who closed agricultural offices all across the province, taking away extension services to farmers in this province. That's a government that cut over \$100 million from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food budget. So judge not. I just ask that the member remember words he used when he was in government, in going to Ottawa: that Ontario needs its fair share. We've passed a resolution. We have a \$23-billion shortfall. We need Ottawa to make sure Ontario gets its fair share.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is for the Minister of Health. Pediatricians across Ontario are meeting on Friday to protest what they describe as a growing crisis in children's health care. They say that your government is using financial incentives to attract graduating paediatricians into a hospital practice, that this drive to promote a hospital versus a community practice will mean longer waiting lists for children who need health services, and that there aren't enough paediatricians in the community now to meet the health care needs of Ontario's children, so this agenda will make the situation even worse.

The chief of paediatric medicine at the Ottawa-Carleton hospital, Dr. Stephen Grodinsky, summed it up by saying that the drive to lure new graduates into hospitals and away from the community "is extremely harmful to the health care needs of Ontario's children."

Minister, why are paediatricians saying that you're promoting a crisis in children's health, and where is your plan to respond to their concerns?

1550

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I had the opportunity in the last hour or so to read three pages of information put out with respect to Friday's session. Fifty of the province's 700 paediatricians are attending that session. It has long been in planning and isn't going to have any impact with respect to patient care on Friday.

I'm proud of the efforts that we've made. Dr. Rapin responded in one news story that I saw today, which indicated that there has been a very significant amount of compensation on the table for paediatricians operating in any session in the province. I think that, along with our

contribution to a universal vaccine program which has been well-heralded by paediatricians, and with my colleague minister's investment in children's mental health—the first such investment in quite a long time—really sends a strong message about the degree to which we value these health care professionals. We do see some increase in the number of paediatricians in practice in the province. I think these things, taken together, help to underscore that this important part of medicine is actually in much better shape than the honourable member would report.

Ms. Martel: Let me repeat what the chief of paediatric medicine had to say. Dr. Stephen Grodinsky said that your incentives to try to lure new graduates into hospitals and away from the community are “extremely harmful to the health care needs of Ontario's children.”

Here's the reality: You don't have a deal with Ontario doctors, and they sum up their concerns in a full-page ad in the *Globe and Mail* today; you have the president of the Ontario Nurses' Association, who said last week that nurses feel betrayed by your government because of your layoff of nurses; you've got the Ontario Hospital Association going public today with its concerns about your local integrated health networks and calling on you to delay implementation for a couple of years; and now you have Ontario paediatricians reported in the paper as saying they are meeting this Friday to protest your handling of children's health care.

Minister, it seems that some of your major health partners aren't onside. Where is your plan to deal with their health care concerns?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm very happy to respond and to tell the honourable member that there's lots of evidence of what our plan is with respect to improvements in pediatric health. I had the opportunity in my earlier answer to speak about new, free child vaccinations.

Let me quote Dr. Diane Sacks, president of the Canadian Paediatric Society: “As a paediatrician, I am relieved to see Ontario moving to make vaccines available to children quickly and free of charge to parents.... Making sure that all children are immunized against serious diseases, regardless of a family's personal financial situation, is a key step in ensuring the health of young Ontarians.”

This is just one example of our plan to improve the quality of care for children. In addition to the investments we've made in children's mental health, this underscores our commitment.

Of course, we're at the table working hard with the Ontario Medical Association on the new arrangement that will put Ontario's doctors in a very, very competitive position across the breadth of our country.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Rural Ontario has a proud tradition of strong agricultural communities. Generation

after generation has worked the land to provide Ontarians with, as Foodland Ontario says, food you know you'll love.

Our farmers are going through a rough patch. They've had to deal with BSE, low prices for their products and new regulations. The farmers need our support now more than ever. They are looking for help. I know that you and Premier McGuinty have met with farm organizations from across the province, and they all have suggestions as to what the government can be doing to help them with the challenges they face. What are we doing to move forward in these hard times?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): We started by sitting down and meeting with the leaders of general farm organizations and other commodity groups. We've made the commitment as well to move forward on some short- and long-term initiatives. Part of that is the agricultural policy framework, which will bring \$1.7 billion in assistance into Ontario. We are moving forward on the CAIS program and a review of the CAIS program.

As well, we're looking at the long term. We've invested \$7 million to increase slaughter capacity in this province, to kill 6,500 further animals a week. That's important. That's a long-term investment. We've invested an additional \$4 million in the deadstock industry, because there are many challenges facing rural Ontario and dealing with the issue of deadstock is one of them. We're working with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association for a long-term solution.

We came to the table with \$20 million to support the 1,200 largest agricultural operations in this province. Unlike the Tories, who were great at passing regulations and not bringing any money forward, we came to the table with money to assist our farmers. We fully support our farmers. We're going to continue to support our farmers. We have, and we will continue to do that into the future.

Mr. Crozier: Minister, I understand that over the next two days you will be meeting in Ottawa with your federal and provincial counterparts. What are your plans to ensure that the federal government understands the plight of Ontario farmers and that it does its part to help them?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I have to admit that I was torn as to where to be. Should I be in Ottawa representing Ontario farmers with the provincial ministers and the federal minister, or should I be here with Ontario farmers? I know where I stand, where my loyalty stands, and that's with Ontario farmers. I will be here tomorrow to meet with Ontario's farmers. I look forward to welcoming them here.

But I think, more importantly, it's an opportunity for every one of us to send a very clear message to Ottawa tomorrow. Yes, there are issues that we need to deal with provincially, but there are federal issues. The crisis in grains and oilseeds is a perfect example of where we need national leadership. I hope that I have the farmers of Ontario standing behind me tomorrow as I meet with my other provincial colleagues to send a very clear message

that there are challenges, that there are income crises within agriculture in this province. Ontario is prepared to step up to the plate to do our part. We need the support of the federal government with national policies.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): For the Minister of Agriculture: Last Tuesday, you and Premier McGuinty met with a number of farm organizations, including the tobacco board. It's now March 1, and farmers have to make a decision within the next week or two whether to seed their greenhouses.

The Premier has said that the problems have been turned over to you, and now you're leaving town. We just heard that you're leaving for Ottawa tomorrow. That's incredible.

Laughter.

Mr. Barrett: That's not a laughing matter. Thousands of farmers want you here tomorrow.

Your government jacked up tobacco taxes three times since being elected. When will you open up your purse and share the wealth? Don't skirt this question, Minister. Will you have a funding answer for tobacco farmers before they have to decide to seed their greenhouses and before they leave Queen's Park next week?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I'd love to know where the honourable member's loyalties lie, because quite honestly I believe that he is doing an extreme disservice to tobacco farmers in this province. He has been all over the board. He supports the tobacco board, he supports the tobacco farmers in crisis, and he is up advocating for the Lanark Landowners Association.

I know who I deal with. I deal with the duly elected body in this province, the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board. Those are the individuals whom we're going to continue to deal with, unlike this member on the opposite side who tries to divide and conquer. That's not an appropriate way to bring forward a unified voice on agriculture.

We're very committed to moving forward with a transition plan for growers and communities. We have said that, and we're committed to moving forward in that regard. Perhaps if the member could take the nutrients out of his ears and he would listen, he would have understood that I was going to be here in Queen's Park tomorrow to meet the farmers of this province.

The Speaker: It being 4 o'clock, it is required of me by the standing orders to call orders of the day.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent for question period to be completed.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent for the completion of question period? Agreed. We will continue question period for the remaining 22 minutes.

Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): My question today is also for the Minister of Agriculture and Food in respect of the crisis that Ontario's grain and oilseed producers are facing. I would like to remind the minister that corn and soybean prices are at 25-year lows.

Grain and oilseed producers are just one example of a sector that is suffering because of a government that doesn't have a plan. This government has turned its back on rural Ontario.

The Ontario Corn Producers' Association and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture are calling for an immediate cash payment to grain and oilseed farmers of \$300 million to help them survive the 2004 crop disaster prices.

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Joe Hickson, a farmer from my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, is helping to lead the rally tomorrow when it comes to Queen's Park. My concern is that when Ontario farmers come calling at Queen's Park, they won't find any Liberals home. Neither the Minister of Agriculture nor the Premier is going to be here. So for today, would the Minister of Agriculture and Food stand in his place and commit to the \$300 million needed to help those farmers survive the 2004 crop price disaster? Would you tell us that today?

Interjection: Now listen. He'll speak slow.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I will speak slow.

Perhaps with all the heckling, you could not hear. The Minister of Agriculture and Food had a choice to make: to be in Ottawa or be in Toronto. I'm going to be here in Toronto to meet with farmers tomorrow. I think, as well, it's very important to recognize—and if Mr. Hickson is the lead speaker tomorrow, perhaps the groups that are meeting will change their agenda. They have not extended an invitation for the Premier to speak and they have not extended an invitation for the Minister of Agriculture to speak to them tomorrow. But I will be there tomorrow to listen and talk to those farmers.

As far as the issue she raises with grains and oilseeds is concerned, I ask for your support. The crisis, the 25-year low in commodity prices, is a national issue. Traditionally, safety net programs in this country have been cost-shared on a 60-40 basis. I ask you to stand behind me, to go to Ottawa and advocate for Ottawa to stand up and make sure Ontario farmers get their fair share of money to ensure we are there to help grain and oilseeds farmers and all farmers in this province.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today UNICEF released a scathing report on child poverty in Canada, in which Canada ranked near the bottom of industrialized countries, coming 19th out of 26. What a disgrace for this country; what a disgrace for this province.

Before the election, you promised to do something about child poverty. You promised to stop clawing back the national child benefit supplement from Ontario's poorest children. But just last month in the finance committee, the McGuinty Liberals voted against our motion to end the clawback in your upcoming budget. Minister, ending the clawback would be the single best thing you

could do to eliminate child poverty in this province. Will you keep your promise to stop taking the baby bonus money out of the mouths of Ontario's poorest children?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I am happy to respond to this. I'm very pleased to say that in a year and a half, the McGuinty government has turned the Ministry of Community and Social Services around, from having been a punching bag of that last government here for the last 10 years to now standing up for Ontario's most vulnerable people.

In our first budget, despite a deficit that was left to us by the last government, we came back with a 3% increase for people who are our most poor, people on social assistance, either on Ontario disability or on Ontario welfare. We have come forward and eliminated some of the most punitive rules, like liens on homes in order to apply for welfare and the lifetime ban after fraud. Those were things that were a hallmark of the last government and that we eliminated. I have to say to the member opposite who serves as my critic, I know in our speaking publicly that this member appreciates that those gestures were not just symbolic but were an important part of showing dignity to the people who are our most vulnerable.

Mr. Prue: No, I don't accept them as anything except symbolism, because children in this province are still going hungry. Here is what nine- and 10-year-olds have to say about what it's like to go hungry and what it's like to be poor in this province. I quote them because they say it in very poignant words: "Being teased for the way you are dressed"; "Not getting to go on school trips"; "Feeling ashamed"; "Pretending that you forgot your lunch." Those are what little nine- and 10-year-old children say after you claw back their money.

Minister, you have the resources to end child poverty in Ontario; you just don't have a plan. If Manitoba can do it, if New Brunswick can do it—both have-not provinces—surely to God Ontario can do it as well. I'm asking you again on behalf of these children, will you keep the promise you made to them? Will you end the clawback today?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I'm happy to have our minister for children respond to these questions.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to add to my honourable colleague, the Minister of Community and Social Services, what we have done for children and their families to enhance their standard of living. For the first time in over a decade, we created new subsidized child care spaces. We're en route to creating 4,000 new spaces. We made more families eligible for child care subsidies by eliminating restrictions on RRSPs and RESPs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Member for Nickel Belt, come to order, please.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: We are investing \$8.3 million in additional—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm having difficulty—
Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm having difficulty hearing. The member for Nickel Belt keeps shouting across, and the member for Timmins—James Bay too. I can't even get my words out.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: We're also investing an additional \$8.3 million in Healthy Babies, Healthy Children; \$4.7 million in pre-school speech and language; the immunizations that the honourable member, the Minister of Health, talked about. We've invested \$4 million more in nutrition programs and, for the first time in over a decade, money for children's mental health. We've increased money for children's treatment centres; we've provided a 3% increase to these agencies as well, and we're stabilizing the child welfare system, which, by and large, does deal with children in poverty. We're doing a great deal in a coordinated fashion.

These problems weren't created overnight and they won't be solved overnight, but I'm confident we will address them in due course.

The Speaker: Before I ask the member for Algoma—Manitoulin, I thought we had unanimous consent to have question period, but it seems to me we have more heckling going on and I just can't hear the members at all. I'm going to start identifying those who are disrupting us constantly and then naming those members.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Michael A. Brown (Algoma—Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As you know, the northern Ontario heritage fund is an essential tool for providing our northern communities, including the communities in Algoma—Manitoulin, with much-needed funds to aid in economic development. This fund was established, as you know, in 1989. Over the last decade, it has lost much of its focus. I would ask the minister if he could outline the new direction of the northern Ontario heritage fund.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I am very pleased to announce that we have kept our commitment to refocus the northern Ontario heritage fund and return it to its original mandate of fostering job creation—something the previous Tory government failed to do.

Two weeks ago, in Sault Ste. Marie, I was joined by David Oraziotti, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, and I was delighted to announce the details of the six new targeted NOHFC programs. Whether it be the Enterprises North job creation program, the northern Ontario youth internship and co-op program, the northern Ontario young entrepreneur program, the small business energy conservation program, the emerging technologies program or the infrastructure and community development program, we are confident that these six new programs will help create the type of jobs we want in northern Ontario.

Mr. Brown: These programs are important and significant news for northern Ontario, but both you and I know, Minister, that we will need more resources to deal with the significant problem of youth out-migration in northern Ontario. Our young people have been forced to leave northern Ontario in great numbers. Do we have additional programs that would help our young people either stay or return to northern Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: My colleague raises a very serious issue for northern Ontario. Under the previous government's watch, northern Ontario experienced a 19% youth out-migration rate. In addition to the northern Ontario young entrepreneur program and the northern Ontario youth internship and co-op program, the northern Ontario grow bonds business loan program that I mentioned earlier will also be an important tool to help businesses grow and increase jobs.

I will also be asking the newly formed and recently announced northern development councils to further look at ways we can help stop the flow of our youth out of northern Ontario.

Our northern prosperity plan is working, and I look forward to sharing more positive results with this House in the very near future.

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HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Health. Some days ago, the government announced they would spend \$400 million to entice more gamblers to go to the Windsor casino. In this House, the Minister of Health has actually defended this expenditure, even as he has squeezed hospitals to the bone and ignored their legitimate requests for the operating funding they need to serve patients.

Last week the Toronto Star and the Kitchener-Waterloo Record both reported a story about Janice Fraser. Janice Fraser is my constituent. For months now she has endured excruciating pain that could be alleviated by surgery on her bladder and the installation of a neurostimulator, which would cost about \$7,500.

Janice has only one kidney. She lost her other kidney because of an infection five years ago. Her doctor has written that her condition is approaching a critical level. He fears that without this surgery she may lose her only remaining kidney. The Toronto Western Hospital can only perform 12 of these procedures a year and Janice is 32nd on the waiting list.

My question is this: Does the minister find it acceptable that Janice Fraser may have to wait more than two years for this surgery that she so desperately needs?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Firstly, the honourable member will know that it's not appropriate for the Minister of Health to have a discussion with respect to any individual case. With respect to the honourable member's assertion with respect to funding for hospitals, however, I think it's important to remind the member of two important facts.

The first is that, since coming to office 16 or 17 months ago, our government has invested more than \$1.7 billion of new resources in Ontario's hospitals, and secondly, our operating resources this year for Ontario's hospitals are fully \$700 million more than your very party's Magna budget proposed for hospitals this year.

I think this really does reflect, in addition, the broad investments we've made in the community sector and, likewise, that for the first time in a long time the people of Ontario have a government that is investing across the breadth of health care with a view toward making sure that all pieces work better together.

Mr. Arnott: This is not the first time I've raised Janice's condition with the minister. In fact, I've written the minister no less than six times asking him to intervene and help. He has ignored my letters, just as he has ignored Janice. I would ask him to show some compassion.

I have given the minister a copy of Janice's file again today and I would implore the minister to do what Ernie Eves would have done and respond today that he will look into Janice's case and commit to the House that he will ensure that the hospital has enough funding to eliminate the waiting list for all patients waiting for neurostimulators. Will he do that today?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member suggests that the Minister of Health should personally intervene in each individual case. Of course, across the breadth of the Ontario health care system, every single day there are 250,000 employees who are involved in making important decisions on behalf of patients. Ms. Fraser is no different than others. Her doctor, of course, has been involved in that circumstance.

The honourable member has corresponded on this subject.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: With all due respect, I'm working hard to answer your question. If you'd listen, what you would hear is that the ministry has been in communication with the hospital on this subject. We take all of these concerns that come across the way seriously, and across the breadth of government, of course, there are many of them. We're working hard to address all the health care needs of Ontarians. We've had a \$2.9-billion investment in health care this year, and I can confirm for the honourable member that we'll continue to work on Ms. Fraser's behalf to see that she gets the surgery as quickly as it can be provided.

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Chairman of the Management Board of Cabinet. You don't get many questions. I'd like to give you one today.

Minister Phillips, last October you killed a deal to move the Archives of Ontario into a facility that would have protected the province's irreplaceable historical records. At that time, you assured the people of Ontario

that you would work to protect those archives. Yet, as of today, nothing has been accomplished.

The Archives of Ontario have been valued at approximately \$250 million. Every year they lose about \$13 million of their value. But that's not the question. The important thing is that this is our history. This is what the people of Ontario want to preserve, and it is being degraded. I ask you, Minister Phillips, would you please share with this House your plan to save the Archives of Ontario from any more unnecessary decay?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): It's an important question. We're doing two things. One is, I spent, I think, an hour today with the chief archivist, reviewing with her and her staff all of the things that we need to be doing to preserve the integrity of our archives. I said to her, "Are we doing what's appropriate here? Should we be doing any more? Are we protecting the archives in terms of fire and mould and preservation?" I think we are doing, in the short term, all the things that she would recommend.

In the long term, of course, we need a new facility. We need a new facility that will be the facility for the next 50 years, or 100 years perhaps. What we're doing there is—I'm working with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. We are looking at the best long-term solution. We're working with the archives, and I expect over the next few months we will be proceeding with a proposal to provide a permanent new long-term facility for the archives.

So in the short term, I had a meeting today at noon for an hour dealing with the short-term problems, and I'm working with PIR for the long-term solution.

Mr. Prue: Minister, with the greatest of respect, since last October you have been saying the same exact words. Since last October in this province, we have lost many of our archives and the value of those archives. They continue to decay. It is not good enough, I would suggest to you, that you stand before this House today and say that all you're doing is studying it some more and that in a couple of more months you're going to have an answer. In the mere time of this question and your answer, we have lost some \$50 to \$100 worth of archives in this province. That's the reality of every minute: We lose \$24.72 while you dither.

I say to you again, we cannot replace many of these resources. Do you have a plan—that's what I have to ask—to save our history? Will you act to preserve these archives, and will you share with this House today what your plan is today and in two months' time?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I guess you wrote the question before you heard my answer. I repeat for the public, today at noon for perhaps an hour I met with the chief of our archives and her staff to review all of the things that we should be doing in the short term. It is going to take us probably a couple of years before we find a permanent long-term solution. The member wants to know what we are doing. I reviewed exactly what we are doing in terms of dealing with the short-term problems. In terms of the long term—and let's recognize that the public expects

that we will provide a permanent long-term solution, but we will do it in the most cost-effective manner. They expect that of us. That's why I've asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal to work with our ministry to find the best long-term solution. I think those are both things that the public would expect: the short-term solution and the long-term solution. Both of those things are well underway and, in my opinion, are being done in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Children's mental health is receiving more and more well-deserved attention in the media and in our communities. This issue is one that needs to be talked about and discussed, because we need to destigmatize mental illness in Ontario. As you are well aware, children's mental health funding has not kept pace with the demand. In my community, the result of the former government's inaction has been long wait lists and troubled children and youth not receiving the care they need. What are we doing to improve this situation, Minister?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The McQuinty government has provided the first significant increase in children's mental health in over 12 years: \$25 million for 2004-05 and \$38 million in 2005-06. As you know, half of this new funding went to a much-needed boost to retain and recruit staff, and the other half went to help create and expand more than 200 community programs, including investments in Ottawa that totalled over \$600,000. These programs will target young people with social and behavioural problems, mental health and psychiatric disorders and those already involved or at risk of being involved with youth justice and child protection systems. Whether it's bullying in schools or depression or anxiety disorders, this is a much-needed investment to tackle these problems that were ignored for a very long time.

1620

Mr. McNeely: What mechanisms have you put in place to identify priorities and ensure that the money goes to the highest priority? I know that our community was quite excited about a new rural outreach program run out of our Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario that will specialize in psychological services, but I know there are many needs still out there. Given the many needs and services under the children's mental health umbrella, what groups might have priority in getting a share of the funding?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: What we did for half of this new money is that we went to the communities and we asked them and parent representatives what the special children's mental health needs were in the communities. They came back with excellent proposals. The overarching goal of these new investments was to

strengthen the capacity of the sector to respond to existing and emerging needs, to enhance the sector's capacity to provide a continuum of mental health services, and to support children and youth with mental health needs as they move from one service to another. Coordination of services was the goal, and the communities came through.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 22, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 167, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last dealt with this issue, the member for Trinity–Spadina had the floor.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): It's 4:22, it's Tuesday afternoon, and I want to welcome the citizens of Ontario to this parliamentary channel. I know how much you love this channel, because most of you are happy and eager to participate, at least by viewing, to know what we have to say. I'm glad to share my knowledge with all of our citizens of Ontario.

I want to continue with my theme. The theme of my talk on Bill 167 was divided into two parts: where the minister makes reference to the whole idea of conferring respect to our education activists and our education workers; and another member who spoke, from Sault Ste. Marie, talked about a new approach, a new Liberal approach to the way we do business. These were the two themes. I want to elaborate on them, because I think it indeed speaks to the new Liberal *modus operandi* that I want to make reference to.

The new *modus operandi* of the Liberal Party unfolds something like this: The Minister of Education, in response to a Conservative question on transportation, had the temerity to stand up and say that all the boards across Ontario are getting a 2% increase, that every board is getting a 2% increase, and then he proceeds to say that some boards are even getting up to an 11% increase.

You understand, Speaker. I'm glad you have the chair again, because and you I were having this cozy discussion last week. The Minister of Education, you remember, has got a big education heart, right? He tells it like it is and he doesn't squirm at anything. He just talks straight: the reality versus appearances. There was a famous writer called Pirandello in the 1920s who wrote so very much about issues having to do with the themes of reality and appearances. Much of what he used to speak about is that things are not what they seem. So when you listen to the Minister of Education, remember

Pirandello, and remember that things are not what they seem.

Let me tell you the truth about what the Minister of Education didn't say versus what he said. Every board across the province indeed got a 2% increase, and some boards are going to get an increase but the reality is that 30 boards are getting a decrease, in the years 2005 and 2006. He didn't say that. He did not speak to the fact that this coming year, 30 boards will be losing money. Even though they got a 2% increase, 30 boards are going to get a decrease in the year 2005.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): It's the enrolment numbers.

Mr. Marchese: The enrolment numbers? This is novel. This is very novel, because we are going to get some Liberals to stand up in their two minutes and say, "The reason they're not getting transportation dollars is because of enrolment," meaning a drop in enrolment. Now, now, my friends.

The Minister of Education was going to do a review of transportation. All the boards expected more money, not a whole whopping 30 boards getting a decrease, some of them in the order of 50% or 60%. Can you believe that? And they don't flinch. You don't have the minister flinching. You don't have any of these Liberal members, the rump on the left of me, flinching at all. They are quite happy, in their own arrogant way, to say, "Oh, come on, this has got to do with enrolment numbers." It's unbelievable.

Most of the boards affected are Roman Catholic boards, and most of these boards are angry as hell. You don't know how angry they are. What surprises me is that these Liberals are not getting the letters from these Catholic boards who are infuriated by what is happening.

The government, through the Minister of Education, promised a review. The government said, "This is a draft," that the transportation funding is a draft. But I argued with him on many different occasions, "How could it be a draft if some boards are getting an increase and 30 boards are getting a decrease as of September?" Some boards are getting money this year for the increase they will get in 2005, and the rest will follow in 2005. But you've got the Minister of Education standing up and saying that everybody is getting an increase. He makes no reference to the fact that 30 boards, mostly Catholic, French-language and Catholic boards, are going to get whacked, and badly, to the extent that they are worried about their ability to hold on to many of their students.

How could many of these Liberals sit here and listen to me and not flinch at that or somehow explain it as if the Minister of Education is correct when he says they're all getting an increase? You understand, Speaker; that's the new Liberal approach: "We contrive, we often connive even, but we do contrive." That's the politics of the Liberal Party that I find so very distasteful.

The new Liberal approach to funding: whine for federal money. I have never seen a party whine more than they do. I thought the Tories whined about not getting enough federal dollars, but to see the Liberals

whine for more as the new Liberal approach to leadership? I find that so sorrowful, so pitiful. The new leadership quality of the Liberal Party is whining. First of all, flex your muscles, and if it doesn't work, whine some more. Do you find that a quality you can admire in the Liberal Party?

You remember, Speaker, when we were in government, in the worst recession we have seen since the Great Depression, we said to the federal Tories and Liberals, "How could you cut our transfer payments in the order of \$1 billion in the worst recession?" Poor Bob Rae was saying, "How could you cut money in a recession?" when our welfare payments went from \$3 billion or \$2 billion up to \$6 billion. They cut our transfer payments for social programs to half, and we didn't have any money. And do you know what Tories and Liberals used to say? Tories and Liberals used to say to the NDP, "You don't have a revenue problem; you have a spending problem." That's what Liberals used to say. That's what Tories used to say. Then the Tories get into government with a good economy and they whine like whimpering children, and now the Liberals, with a good economy, are whining like whimpering wimps for more money.

It's so distasteful, and what's so distasteful about what they are doing is that they have the economic tools to be able to raise the money, but because they are so afraid to break their promises, over and over again, of not increasing income taxes or taxes of any sort, because they are so afraid, they have waged a battle, a ferocious battle, with the federal government to get more money from the federal government. It's just so, so silly. When I see the Liberals doing this or expressing themselves with such strong leadership qualities such as whimpering and whining, I just don't see it.

1630

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Everything is fine with you, eh?

Mr. Marchese: Oh, everything is fine for me, Richard Patten from Ottawa Centre. I can't believe the member from Ottawa Centre could say, "Everything is fine, eh?" He's been around here for so many years, understands the politics of how we do things and knows that we have a good economy. He knows he's got the tools to be able to raise more, but he is saying, "No, we can't do it. We have to go to the feds for money."

So he says, "Everything is fine." Of course, everything is not fine. But you have a better economy than New Democrats did in 1990, 1991 and 1992, and you refuse to use your tools.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): The NDP wants a tax increase.

Mr. Marchese: Now we've got my friend from the rump, the member from Guelph, saying that the NDP wants a tax increase. No, the member from Guelph doesn't want a tax increase, but she would like money for universities and colleges, she wants the money for child care, she wants the money for the CAT scans. All of these dollars come from—guess who? The federal government. So what she's saying is, "We don't want to tax,

but we want the federal government to tax and give us the money."

What a silly, silly way to do politics. Either you are in politics to govern or you just get out of the way and let somebody else govern. If you don't want to use the tools that you have at your disposal to raise the money, get out of office. Just get out of office. That's what I say to the member from Guelph. If you don't want to use the tools that you've got, get out of office.

Mrs. Sandals: Rosie, you've changed your mind. You're waffling.

Mr. Marchese: Speaker, did you hear the member from Guelph? "Marchese is waffling." I love it when Liberals talk like that, because it's amusing. Nobody vacillates better, nobody sits on that fence better than Liberals—nobody does. So when they accuse the NDP of waffling, it's just so amusing. I'd like to hear more of it, in fact.

Mrs. Sandals: OK. You're the guys who voted against getting rid of the private school tax credit. There's a major waffle.

Mr. Marchese: The member from Guelph never ceases to amuse me. She will have two minutes, of course, to respond to my commentary.

Moving on to Bill 167, to the member from Ottawa Centre, just to help you out, and my buddy Jean-Marc from Glengarry, I think most of you understand that in 2001 the Tories dictated that all collective agreements in Ontario would expire August 31, 2004. Why would the Liberal government want to change that? Why would they want to change three-year agreements to two or four? Why would four-year agreements be better than three-year agreements? Does it make any sense to anybody watching this program that the Liberals have an interest in changing three-year agreements, instituted by the Tories, so that they can have either two or four? Why?

I will tell you the politics of it. The Conservative collective agreements would have expired August 31, 2004, smack in the middle of a provincial election. Understand this: The election is going to be in October. Collective agreements would expire August 31, 2004. The Liberals are frightened to death that they would have a collective agreement expiring before an election, where teachers would want to know what it is that the Liberal government has to offer by way of benefits, by way of class size, by way of salaries. So the Liberals cleverly and politically say, "How do we get out of such a political bind?" They get out of it by introducing Bill 167, which has two-year agreements. A two-year agreement would expire in 2006, a year before the provincial election, as a way of dealing with any eventual political problem that might arise, or 2008, if they have four-year agreements. Either way, they avoid the politics of having to negotiate with teachers before the election. That's what this bill is all about.

What's ironic and somewhat contradictory, I would say, is that Mr. Kennedy, when he was in opposition, said the following—and I quote, because I quoted him last week. This is what he said about the Tories trying to set

collective agreements so that they wouldn't coincide with political elections that would affect the Conservatives. Before the election, the Liberals slammed the Tories for trying to put off any potential teacher strikes until after the election, and Gerard chided them during the debate in 2001, saying, "Today, they'll say, 'We demand that there be a three-year contract. We demand that that happen so there are no untoward activities around the time of the next election.'"

You understand what he is saying. He knows exactly what he is doing with Bill 167. He attacked the Tories for doing what he is now doing with Bill 167. Most Liberals either don't have a clue, don't realize, and if you tell them, don't care. Why would they want to care? Why would they pretend to know or even not to know? They don't want to know that the intent of this bill is to avoid the politics of a contract expiring August 31, 2004. That is what this bill is all about.

Before the election, Liberals said that dictating the length of contracts was heavy-handed. That is what Gerard said. Gerard said that dictating the length of contracts was heavy-handed. So dictating a two-year contract or a four-year contract is not heavy-handed, but dictating a three-year contract is? Do you understand, rump, what this means? Do you understand what that means? It means that the Liberals are doing the same thing the Tories did before.

Here is his quote: "You think you're going to fix problems in education, many of them of your own making, by ordering people around. You're going to boss them, you're going to make them do things and, in this case, you're going to get three-year contracts just because you say so." That's what Gerard, your minister with a heart, your minister who says, "We are conferring respect to teachers," is saying. The same criticism that he levelled against the Tories, I level against him today, because he is no different than the Tories were in the past.

Included in this bill are other things that I believe are a bit heavy-handed. Teacher development accounts: He says that, where people negotiate agreements, they will be able to get teacher development money, and if they don't have an agreement, they will not get teacher development money. Now, why would you not provide teacher development for every teacher on the basis that it's pedagogically important and good versus, "We give teacher development money only to the boards that agreed to the terms that we set out in Bill 167"? How could Liberals live with that? If they read this bill, how could they live with this bill? How could they live with this measure that says, "Only boards that agree with me will get money for teacher development; the others will not"? How could any sensible, reasonable human being, including Liberals, say that? I just don't know. I just don't understand it.

They're also saying that there will be actual salary support and that, from now on, the above increases will be based on actual average salaries, ending a practice of artificially lower benchmarks. Here is the problem with that. He offers 2% to teachers, and he says that with that 2% we're going to end the practice of artificially lower

benchmarks. How does he do that when Rozanski, People for Education, and Hugh Mackenzie, as an economist, say that these contracts, money for teacher salaries, are short by approximately \$600 million? How could this 2% solve that benchmark problem that has been set so low since 1997?

Recognizing that the benchmarks were so low, the minister includes \$10 million to help them deal with those lower benchmarks. How does \$10 million deal with the fact that Dr. Rozanski, commissioned by the Tories, says that that fund for teachers is \$600 million short, as a result of which, whenever contracts were signed by boards and teachers, they had to dip into other program dollars to be able to pay for collective agreements? That problem continues today. Collective agreements have been signed not on the basis of what is in that teacher line but on the basis of taking money from other programs to give money for teacher contracts. That's wrong.

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The government recognizes that those benchmarks are low, and that money needs to be given to bring them up. But this government does not do that. It recognizes that they're low and introduces a little measure that says that \$10 million is going to be given to lift the benchmarks. But \$10 million is short by about 590 million bucks. Ten million bucks does nothing.

This bill, in my view, does very little to bring about the kind of peace we're looking at—very little. The two-year and four-year agreements, in my view, are no different politically than three-year agreements. There's no difference whatsoever. If boards or teachers refuse to have a 2% increase and opt for a 2.5% increase, the minister forces them to do a public accounting of where they're getting that extra half a per cent increase. If they negotiate more than a half per cent, they have to do a public accounting of where the money beyond 2% came from. He's going to shame boards by saying to them, "If you do more than the 2% I offer you, you're going to have to tell us where you have taken that money from."

He knows where they've taken the money from before. He knows where boards had to make up for those salary increases in some way because of the Tories' underfunding. He knows that. And knowing that, you'd think he would be a little more helpful.

This bill is no different from the previous Tory bill of three-year contracts. It's the same politics. I decry it now as I did then, and I think this new approach to doing politics is wrong.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Since our election, and indeed well before it while in opposition, those of us within our government have each formed a personal and special bond with our partners in education: teachers, parents, students and boards. Our government has worked hard to build an atmosphere of peace and stability in Ontario's education system. That means fostering and living within an atmosphere of respect and co-operation.

Bill 167 allows negotiations to take place in an atmosphere conducive to fair collective bargaining. Our record

as a government shows very strong increases to publicly funded education. We want boards to negotiate with teacher federations. We want them to work together on long-term planning and to focus on student achievement rather than on negotiating strategies.

It sounds, from the shifting focus of the stream-of-consciousness remarks of the member from Trinity–Spadina, that his intent is to suggest a negotiation model to Ontario's educators similar to that of the National Hockey League. The Minister of Education, however, is interested in the same thing as Ontario's hockey fans: stability for all parties, multi-year funding and fairness in the process.

The member for Trinity–Spadina must think that Ontario's taxpayers are little more than sponges to be squeezed for cash any time a stakeholder runs short of funds. This is a government committed to staying within its means, even as it reinvests in Ontario's public education system. Bill 167 fosters healthy working relationships among education stakeholders, and that's why I feel it deserves speedy passage and immediate implementation.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): I want to congratulate the member for Trinity–Spadina on once again giving a great speech. To be honest, I've heard him give better, but it was a good effort.

I was shocked that the member for Trinity–Spadina didn't talk about the transportation cuts being floated by the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty—the member for Lanark–Carleton knows full well; we met with the local school board the other day. They want to take the public school board from \$321 per student and cut it back to \$305, and they want to take the Catholic school board—listen to this, Speaker—from \$502 to \$276. The member for Lanark–Carleton and I asked a question in the House. All the Liberal members from Ottawa have been silent on this cloud of doom over our school system. They are the quiet ones who, if this had been the previous government, would have gone berserk.

But then they come up with this new option. The government says they'll come up with what they call scenario G. They want to take the Ottawa–Carleton Catholic school board from \$502 per student and only cut them back to \$419 per student. It's like they push them in front of an oncoming bus and then at the last minute say, "We'll pull half of you out of the way of the bus." Thanks. Thanks for nothing. I don't think—

Mr. Patten: How come it's more than the district board? It should be the same.

Mr. Baird: I think it should be the same. I think you should bring the public board up to the same as the Catholic board. You shouldn't be punishing students who attend our Catholic education system. And for the Premier not to have the gonads to answer the member from Lanark–Carleton's and my question is terrible and disgraceful.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Nepean–Carleton to withdraw that unparliamentary language.

Mr. Baird: "Gonads"? OK, I withdraw "gonads" and replace it with "guts."

The Acting Speaker: That's better.

Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Sandals: I would be delighted to reply to the comments from the member for Trinity–Spadina, and also for Nepean–Carleton, because we seem to have segued on to the transportation formula review. While that isn't the content of the bill, it certainly was the content of the remarks from the member, so I would like to talk about that.

What's the problem here? The problem here is that when the Tories brought in their new funding model, they didn't actually create a transportation funding model. They gave boards whatever they happened to be spending before. So what we had was each of 72 boards funded by the province at a different level of service, with no consistent provincial level of service.

If you happened to live, as I did, in Upper Grand, in Guelph, and to be a trustee there, what you would have found is that with the Tory level of funding for transportation, we were spending almost \$1 million a year extra above what the Tories gave us. You might think that's wasteful, but we could not, according to the Education Act, take a single student off the bus, and we could not give a lower level of service. It would have been illegal to give a lower level of service, yet we were \$1 million underfunded. Other boards were getting funding for a much higher level of service and running a surplus on transportation to boot.

So what Rozanski recommended was that we re-examine the funding model. The Tories did not have the intestinal fortitude to do that. Our government said, "There is a problem." We are fixing the problem. Does it cause some distress? Yes. But what we are doing is coming up with a consistent funding model for transportation in the province of Ontario for the first time.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question and comment.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to make a few comments on the member for Trinity–Spadina's leadoff speech. I heard part of it the other day, and then of course he finished off today. I have to remind everyone that he is someone who has done a very good job in his role as education critic for the third party, both with our party when we were in power and now of course with the new government.

One of the things I would like to react to very briefly is the fact that the member from Guelph–Wellington talks about the transportation formula, and yes, she is right: When we did the new funding formula in education, one piece of the student-focused funding pie was the transportation portion of that. I worked for a period of about two years as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, and that was always something we were very concerned about.

One of the things that happened at that time was that because there wasn't an actual formula in place, each year we would have to top it up. I can remember

specifically meeting with the school bus operators of the province. Every year they would go after \$20 million or \$25 million to buy new buses—the increased costs they were facing—and the government of the day would hand that money out to the different boards.

What I haven't found out, and I'd like to get this information from the Ministry of Education, is how much the government of the day is actually spending on transportation. That means school bus transportation in all the 72 boards in the province, and what the increase is since we were in government. I would like to get that information from someone, if they could give that out today.

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The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I will return to the member for Trinity–Spadina. You have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Marchese: I thank the four friends and foes who have spoken on this. I want to say to the member from Mississauga West, who uses very quiet, almost mellifluous tones from time to time, that I remind him that Kennedy attacked the Tories when they introduced their bill in 2001 and said that their bill for three-year contracts was very political. I accuse him of the same thing today with this Bill 167. It's the same thing. I don't know what he's getting at in terms of what I was saying about negotiations or contracts. I'm telling him that Kennedy was not happy when the Tories did what they did and I'm not happy with what he is doing with Bill 167, because it's done for political reasons.

On the issue of transportation, member from Guelph, you got it all wrong, my friend. The Tories never introduced a funding formula. The Liberals were going to introduce a new funding model, and they did. It's called Equitable Allocation Through a New Funding Model for Student Transportation, and this new equitable allocation is shafting, whacking, about 30 boards, some of whom are going to get 50%, 60% less as a result of this new formula that the member from Guelph is so proud of.

I'm telling you, no one is micromanaging better than Mr. Kennedy. He accused the Tories of micromanaging. He's doing it so, so well. "Boards will not have the money to cover the cost of salaries, and by forcing them to make detailed reports, Kennedy is hoping to shift the blame away from the Liberal government and on to school boards. Before the election, Liberals claimed this sort of micromanagement was bad. 'The Harris-Eves government tries to run 5,000 schools from Queen's Park. We will ensure that school boards have the resources and the flexibility in spending those resources to respond to local needs.'" OK, Gerard. "Now they're engaged in the same tactics as the Conservatives, creating time-consuming accountability measures that do little for students but shift political blame away from the government." That's what they're doing.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia–Lambton): I will be sharing my time with the member from Thornhill. I'm

pleased to rise this afternoon and speak to Bill 167. Bill 167 is simply a very small bill—as you can see, it's one page—and it allows for either a two- or four-year term for negotiating teacher agreements. Why did we come to the point that we have this legislation? After a lot of discussion—and we consulted quite widely. We consulted with teachers, parents and administrators, and they wanted to see a better, more consistent approach to bargaining. They also wanted to go to what we could consider long-term funding that's in place, so they have better planning and they can better manage the needs that are going to come up in a year or two.

Unfortunately, we have to change the act because right now you can have boards going into teachers' contracts after a year, after two years, after three years, and we don't have a consistent model. That's what this bill is all about.

I've heard some interesting interpretations before me here by some of the members of the opposition. Basically, all this bill does is try to achieve more stability in our schools. It tries to also achieve a consistent, clear pattern of negotiations that have to go on in the province. That's simply all it does.

We have put into place a number of areas of accountability, such as changing the Audit Act so that we now have a Provincial Auditor who can actually go in and see if we're getting value for money in our education system. We have a wonderful education system that's publicly funded. Unfortunately, sometimes we don't have the mechanism of checks and balances that I believe the 21st century requires because of the need and the cost of this system.

I am a little bit perplexed at the opposition members bringing in all different types of discussions in regard to this bill. One of the undertakings we have is to review and to re-examine the funding model, the whole issue of what the inequities are in our system. We have a lot of them because, when all of the dramatic changes were taking place under the previous administration, they didn't quite get it right and it created a lot of problems.

Some things they did get right. Many people are suggesting that the curriculum certainly is a good curriculum and there are aspects of it that are excellent. Unfortunately, the bulk of the way they modelled the funding formula created a great deal of distress throughout the system, and it doesn't do our education system any good to have constant battles with our educators. That's what we want to alleviate. We don't want that. We're in partnership, as a government, with our educators. We can agree to disagree with the members of the opposition when it comes to the details, because they obviously have their own interpretation. But I can certainly tell you that the intent of our government is to create a stronger education system, to make it more accountable to the public and to work hand in hand with the educators. Why? Because they are the ones who will inspire and maintain the standard of excellence in our system. Without our educators and the work they do, we would not have as good a system as we have, in spite of the problems of the past.

The need to progress our system of public education is truly, I believe, moved forward by this bill, because we now have a system that will allow for two to four years in negotiating, and then long-term funding.

Mr. Racco: The objective of Bill 167 is to promote co-operation and minimize or eliminate strikes. That's why I'm a little surprised at the comments from the opposition. In fact, under the Tories, kids in Ontario lost 25 million school days to strikes and labour disruptions. The Tory government practices also led to the closure of 650 schools. We cannot let our children down like the PCs did. In fact, many taxpayers from Thornhill and Concord lost working days to deal with the strikes that the Tories encouraged.

We are committed to improving student achievement and giving our children the tools they need to succeed. Creating stability in our schools is one way we can help create a supportive environment for both teachers and students. My colleague's bill, An Act to amend the Education Act, 2005, continues to build the atmosphere of peace and stability that our schools need.

1700

The previous government's legislation called for three-year terms for all teachers' agreements. Our legislation would allow for either two- or four-year terms, with strong encouragement for the latter. This allows negotiations to take place in an environment that is conducive to fair collective bargaining in a strong, funded education system. This approach will allow school boards and the government to do better long-term planning and to focus on improving student achievement rather than negotiations.

Bill 167, if it passes, would repeal and re-enact section 277.11 of the Education Act to provide that collective agreements with teacher bargaining units entered into on or after September 1, 2004, shall have two- or four-year terms and shall commence on September 1 of the year in which the previous collective agreement expires.

This legislation is a key step in supporting the significant efforts we already have underway to help sustain peace and stability in Ontario schools. This approach means that school boards and the government can better plan for costs. All parties will be better able to focus on improving student achievement, rather than being distracted by negotiations and strikes.

We have already announced new provincial initiatives that will support teacher negotiations, such as new supports through a change in benchmarks for funding salary increases and incentives for longer contracts and ones that meet provincial salary guidelines. We have initiated a new dialogue on provincial policies concerning workload issues to seek out long-term solutions.

Our plan includes guaranteeing multi-year funding for boards that enter into two- or four-year agreements. Even when faced with a deficit, this government is proposing to increase salary benchmarks by 2% for 2004-05, 2% for 2005-06, and for four-year agreements, 2.5% for 2006-07 and 3% for 2007-08. So there's a bonus if they go for four years. Increases will be based on actual average

salaries of teachers. This is why the government will be providing an additional \$10 million to supplement the 2% increase to salary benchmarks announced earlier this year. It's better than what the Tories did.

Our legislation would allow for either two- or four-year terms, ensuring that negotiations are undertaken in a depoliticized environment that is good for both collective bargaining and public education. We are respectful of the local collective bargaining process. We are not prohibiting or limiting local negotiations. We want to make progress in education, but not on the backs of teachers or other educators. Investments have been made to support students and teachers for the 2004-05 school year, including \$90 million as a first step in reducing primary class size, \$110 million in the student success program and \$44 million for intensive teacher development.

We are also prepared to look at long-term solutions to reduce elementary teacher workload by increasing the number of art, music and gym teachers. We have a constructive dialogue ongoing with secondary teachers to consider changes that are in the best interests of students.

Since our government came to power, we have worked to build a genuine partnership with the education community. We took the time to have lengthy discussions with people in the sector. They voiced their concerns; we listened and responded. Despite the significant financial difficulties facing the province of Ontario that the Tories left us with, we have invested heavily in public education. We share their aspirations to work and learn in a peaceful and stable environment. This stability should not be an aspiration; it should be a pillar. We are committed to working together to improve publicly funded education. Ultimately, longer term agreements mean more stability for students, parents, teachers and education workers.

We care about our children. We care about their education. This bill, along with the additional increased funding from the Ministry of Education, puts our money where our mouth is.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): This government wants to talk about democratic reform, and I'm the democratic reform critic. They've brought forward a number of bills. Most of them have been window dressing and really don't have a lot of impetus in terms of what's happening in this province in terms of trying to renew our forum here in the Legislative Assembly.

This bill leads to cynicism on the part of the electorate like no other bill does because basically what it says is this: You can have a collective agreement that terminates on September 1 or August 31, 2006, or you can have one that terminates on August 31, 2008, but you can't have one that terminates on August 31, 2007. Guess why? Because they have another bill in their great democratic reform package that says there's going to be an election on October 4, 2007. So the whole logic behind this bill is gerrymandering the legislation for their political advantage. This is what this is all about. This is gerrymandering the negotiations of a labour union and school

board in order to give themselves—the government, the Liberals—a political advantage.

This is so counter to the Premier's statements that "We want to have more people vote. We don't want people to be so cynical about elections." Talk about cynicism. That's what this bill should be entitled: An Act to increase cynicism in the education system rules of Ontario.

Mr. Marchese: I've heard the words "peace and stability" so many times from the members from Sarnia and Thornhill that I want to throw up. If they don't stop saying "peace and stability," one of these days I'm likely to vomit in this Legislature on the other side of the assembly. They really talk about what the intent of this bill is. It's to avoid a strike. That is what they say. They want long-term stability to avoid a strike.

When Gerard Kennedy spoke at the time the Tories had their bill for three-year contracts, he said that was bad. Now, why would it be bad for the Tories to seek peace and stability for three years, but if the Liberals want peace and stability in two or four years, that's good? Do you understand what I'm saying? Speaker, I know your wife would understand, as a teacher. It doesn't make any sense. These are presumed to be reasonable-minded people, possibly intelligent; I don't know. But if three-year contracts are bad, what makes four-year contracts better? You follow? If three-year contracts are bad, why are two-year contracts better? It makes absolutely no sense. They continue to stand up defending this notion of peace and stability, disregarding the fact that Kennedy opposed three-year contracts on the basis that that was politics. When Liberals do it—oh, no; Liberals don't engage in politics. Only Tories are evil, and New Democrats. But when Liberals do it, they've got a good heart.

Applause.

Mr. Marchese: And they clap for themselves. They really want to work together with teachers because they love them and they want peace and stability—throw-up kind of remarks. It's really tough. Then they say, "We want to give actual salaries." This is—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Marchese: We're running out of time so fast? We'll have another opportunity to do another two minutes.

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): It's my pleasure to make a couple of comments with respect to Bill 167. I want to thank my colleagues for their support on this particular piece of legislation.

It's interesting. I hear the opposition members here talk about the micromanaging of the Minister of Education. If they had taken some time to work with the teachers of this province over the last decade, maybe they would have had a better relationship with them. The NDP ripped up collective agreements in the early 1990s. I can tell you, I was one of those individuals working in a school who had my collective agreement ripped up. Minister Snobelen set out to create a crisis in education. That is not the kind of relationship that we are building with the teachers of this province.

1710

So I'm proud that Bill 167 is going to give more options for—go ahead, Mr. Marchese—

Mr. Marchese: For what?

Mr. Oraziotti: —for peace and stability in education: capping class sizes, school renewal funding, PLP elimination, reviewing the College of Teachers. We are putting more money into reviewing the funding formula.

Mr. Dunlop: You're blaming the feds. Fed-bashing.

Mr. Oraziotti: Mr. Dunlop, come on.

We are going to be putting more funding into education than Rozanski recommended. Some \$1.8 billion is missing from the education funding in this province. Over \$2 billion will find its way back into the education system because of the leadership of the Minister of Education, and because of our government and our leadership on the issues in education.

While the opposition members will accuse the minister of micromanaging, I'm going to commend the Minister of Education for his leadership in rebuilding the relationship with the teachers of this province, the trust and renewal of that relationship that is long overdue. The education system is certainly going to be much better off under our government, and so are the children of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: One last question and comment.

Mr. Baird: I see my friend from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Marchese: A good labour guy.

Mr. Baird: "A good labour guy," Rosario says. The head of his union, Donna Marie Kennedy, was at our convention. The teachers' federations were at the Conservative convention. They want to build bridges and open the relationship, because they see the disaster that this government has been in education.

I was shocked that neither of these two members talked about the transportation funding cuts that loom. People say it's not fair that the public board doesn't get the same as the Catholic board, and I agree. So I looked at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, where I was educated myself, and they were getting \$321 per student for transportation. Under the two options, one of them cuts them to \$305 and the other cuts them to \$318. Instead of bringing them up, they're cutting them both. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, even when this transportation equity formula comes out, is going to get whacked, but they're only going to get whacked a little bit. This hasn't even kept up with inflation for many years, and Dalton McGuinty is going to cut back the little children on the school buses. The Catholic board, they really get whacked.

I don't think this government understands the reality of Ottawa. The city of Ottawa is four and a half times the size of the city of Toronto. My own constituency, entirely in the city of Ottawa, is twice the size of Toronto. And this government is all about Toronto—by, for and about Toronto. We had one full minister from the 416 area code; these guys have eight. Toronto, under this minister's transportation funding formula, doesn't even use all of its transportation money, and they are going to get more. Will one of these two members stand up and tell me this isn't true?

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I will return to the member for Sarnia–Lambton. You have two minutes to reply.

Ms. Di Cocco: I want to thank the members from Trinity–Spadina, Sault Ste. Marie and Nepean–Carleton for their comments. This bill—we consulted, we listened and, ultimately, we're making some changes. That's what participatory democracy is: You consult, you listen and then you put it into action.

In the end, this bill is about improving student achievement. That's what it's about. In the end, it's about giving our children the tools they need to succeed.

Interjection.

Ms. Di Cocco: From the heckling I hear from the other side, there is obviously a *modus operandi* that the member opposite was used to, and that is, you take everything in education and make it a political football. They did that for eight years. That is the track record. I would suggest that the intent in the end—and I hope it's the intent of every member in this Legislature—is that we do this and we make changes to education to benefit the students. In the end, education is what shapes our civil society, and that's what these changes are intended to do, in spite of the comments I hear from members of the opposition.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and talk for my 20-minute rotation on Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act, or as we refer to it on this side of the House, the contracts not to expire in 2007 act. It's as simple as that; that's what it's all about. We all know that it's not about peace and stability or any of those terms the minister has tried to use.

Before we get into that, I want to say very briefly to every member in the House, thank you for the cooperation we received on the tribute to Ernie Eves. It's a nice day in this building when we can finally all agree on something. It was nice for that gesture to be made by all three political parties here this afternoon. With that, I'd like to make a few comments on Bill 167.

First, for a government that is so proud of its education policies, I can't understand why they don't want to spend more time speaking about their education policies, especially when we have 20-minute rotations. The last rotation only took 11 minutes. We're here to debate legislation. We're supposed to be using the time to put our points across. So I'd ask the government to at least try to use the 20-minute rotations and maybe shorten up the 10-minute times. If you're proud of the legislation, if you're proud of this peace and stability legislation, Bill 167, then I think we should debate it.

There are a number of things I'd like to bring forward, speaking on behalf of our caucus—I know a number of our members would like to speak to this bill. The bill and the method by which it was finally introduced in the House are the subject of a contempt of the Legislature motion by the member from Oak Ridges, Mr. Klees, which was dealt with by the Speaker when the House

resumed in February. School boards and unions had been instructed in a letter from the minister on November 29, 2004, that the government would guarantee funding for four-year collective agreements. The directive from the minister was given without the requisite legislative authority, thereby instructing them to conduct their business in a manner contrary to existing legislation and which presumed that legislation would be introduced.

The minister has already announced the terms of the pay increases that the government wants, and that hijacks any collective bargaining process that may occur at each individual board of education. So basically, he's centralizing all the negotiations. The cost for four-year contracts is very high, and the question of how the government is planning to pay for this could be asked. We know they don't want to talk about this in the year 2007 because, as we've said earlier, that's the year they plan to have the election. But the cost of the four-year contracts, from our mathematics, is that in year one, the 2% increase would be \$238 million; in year two, another 2%, making it \$480.76 million; in year three, 2.5%, which makes it a total of \$790.279 million; and in year four, 3%, making it \$1.17 billion. The total cost is \$2.68 billion more than the current year in which they're being paid.

The government is messaging this as bringing stability and peace to the education system. How can the government imply that they are bringing peace and stability to the education system when all they are really showing is broken promises and incompetence? Legislation already exists allowing for three-year contract terms. Hence, the claim by the government that the new legislation will confer added stability is simply not true. How can there be a difference? I go back again: It's simply that the government does not want the contracts to expire in the year 2007.

1720

Class sizes have not gone down, as promised, placing more work and strain on the remaining teachers. This is not bringing stability to the classroom. The OSSTF agrees that this bill will not bring stability to the education system. In fact, they have filed a complaint of unfair labour practices with the Ontario Labour Relations Board, claiming a serious breach of protocol by Kennedy for directly communicating with the local unions and bypassing their provincial executives.

The teachers do not agree that this bill will bring stability to the education system. Ontario's public high school teachers bristled at the province's offer a few weeks ago for peace and stability in education—we keep bringing that term up—saying the move is an attempt to take away bargaining power from local districts and school boards.

As of January 28, 2005, 13 boards that have so far conducted their strike votes have voted overwhelmingly to strike. Phillip Mack, president of the Thames Valley local of the Elementary Teachers' Federation says, "It was the local's strongest-ever strike vote. This is not an example of stability and peace in the education system."

Rural and small schools are in a crisis situation and in jeopardy of closing due to the government's incompet-

ence and inability to fulfill its election promises of investing \$177 million toward rural schools. We keep hearing a lot of fancy announcements, but I haven't heard that the boards are actually receiving the money to proceed with this. Jobs will be lost due to these school closures. Children will have to move to new schools and, in some cases, travel far distances to get to their new schools. This is not an example of bringing peace and stability to the education system.

Forcing students to stay in school until the age of 18 is not going to bring stability to the education system. In fact, many of these students who are being forced to stay in school may become disruptive in the classroom, causing strain and stress to the teachers and to their fellow students.

The purpose of the Education Amendment Act, 2004, is to amend section 277.11 of the Education Act, which prescribes that all collective agreements between school boards and bargaining agents for elementary and secondary schools must have a term of three years. The new rule will prescribe that the collective agreements may, at the parties' option, have either a two- or four-year term, and must commence on September 1 of the year in which the previous agreements expire. The rule also deems collective agreements with terms that do not comply with the rule as agreements that have either a two- or four-year term and that commence on September 1 of the year in which the previous agreement expired. If the term of the collective agreement is extended by virtue of this deeming provision, the terms and conditions that operated in the last year of the agreement are also deemed to operate during the year of the deemed extension.

The former Conservative government, our government, is responsible for introducing and passing the legislation allowing for three-year collective agreements. The Liberal government is claiming that this bill will bring stability to the education sector.

The bill repeals section 277.11 of the Education Act, which governs the length of collective agreements. Bill 167 provides for two- or four-year collective bargaining agreements. The current legislation, of course, provides for three-year collective agreements, and many of them, of course, would expire during 2007. Again, we know that the government does not want that to happen.

Minister Kennedy announced that the deal between the teachers' federations had responded to the plan. The letters he sent to the presidents of local teachers' unions that outlined his plan to fund salary increases over the next four years invited them to respond to him directly rather than through their union's head office. As a result, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation filed a complaint of unfair labour practice on Wednesday, December 15, with the Ontario Labour Relations Board claiming a serious breach of protocol by Minister Kennedy for directly communicating with the local union's presidents and bypassing their provincial executive

Again, we go back to peace and stability in the education system. That is why our education critic, Mr.

Frank Klees, introduced his act, An Act to amend the Education Act to remove political interference in collective bargaining and ensure flexibility at the local level. I believe that was bill number—I don't have it in front of me right now. It's Bill 172. It addresses the concerns of the English Catholic teachers, who would prefer a term of three years for collective agreements.

On February 22—and I want to read this into the record because I think it's important that I do that—OECTA did, in fact, put out a press release. I'd like to read into the record what they actually said concerning Mr. Klees's bill:

"Recipe for Peace: End Political Meddling in Bargaining, OECTA says

"The irony of the aptly named An Act to amend the Education Act to remove political interference in collective bargaining and ensure flexibility at the local level is not lost on Catholic Teachers, says Donna Marie Kennedy, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA). The private member's bill, introduced today"—that is, February 22—"by Frank Klees (PC Oak Ridges), would provide for a term of operation of two, three, or four years.

"Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act, currently before the Ontario Legislature, would force terms to be either two or four years if passed.

"The best way for government to ensure peace and stability in Ontario schools is to stop meddling in collective bargaining and allow local teachers and trustees to address local issues with as much versatility as possible," says Kennedy"—this is not Gerard Kennedy.

"Donna Marie Kennedy says that OECTA is encouraging the McGuinty government to permit local negotiators to craft innovative answers to local learning and working conditions that are raised during negotiations, including terms of various lengths.

"History shows that when Queen's Park micro-manages local education by interfering with bargaining, flexibility declines and peace and stability are compromised," Kennedy says.

"After the Harris government introduced Bill 160 that restricted the scope of bargaining in 1997, the number of days lost to disputes jumped dramatically." I thought I would put that non-partisan part in and read that all into the record.

What we're saying is that they don't want the interference of the government in the collective bargaining unit. We all know now that this bill has been put through for political purposes. We would ask that if the government is planning on passing Bill 167, that they take a serious look at Bill 172, which adds that third year in there, and would take what I would consider to be the partisan politics out of that particular piece of legislation.

While I've got the floor, I wanted to talk a little bit about the boards of education in the riding that I represent. I think that the boards over the years have been very well managed and, as far as I'm concerned, have done a good job. I want to talk for a moment about the Simcoe County District School Board, which is one of

the boards in the province that continues, even with the elimination of grade 13, to increase in student enrolment. Therefore, looking at school closures has not, in fact, been a major issue. There are still concerns about school closures, because some of the smaller rural communities aren't growing at the same rate. As we ask boards to do more and they need the staffing there—the secretarial staff, principals and vice-principals to work with all the legislation that is in place—the thought of school closures can, in fact, be a reality down the road.

But in my time as the MPP for Simcoe North, I believe that we've added a total of 11 major renovations and additions to rural schools in my riding. I think that speaks well for the board. They've had a staff who have looked at this very carefully. As a result, we don't have an awful lot of portables, particularly in our rural schools.

We do have some problems. We still have some of the older schools. I know that Minister Kennedy is looking at this. Of course, this is going to turn out to be billions of dollars when you look at these 100-year-old schools. But I think that we have about six of them in total that should be either renovated comprehensively or torn down and new schools built, perhaps in the same location. I would urge the government to make sure that for schools in rural parts of the province, we take a look at how they are actually being funded and look at how the construction costs can be handled effectively so that it doesn't become a detriment to the families. As you know, Mr. Speaker, most families, once they're set in a school that their parents and grandparents attended, like to keep those schools strong, and they like to keep them open. Of course, it has been a challenge for all the governments for the last 20 years to make sure we could go in that direction.

1730

I would also like to say that we talk about peace and stability in the education system. I can tell you that I attended the Orillia Winter Carnival three weekends ago. For some reason, you end up talking to a lot of different folks about different issues. I happened to talk to quite a few young people who were actually wanting to get jobs as teachers in my riding. They're people from Toronto. Some were from the north, some were from the York region board and some were just young teachers who want to teach. They want their first job. I was amazed at how professional some of these people were and how they really want to work in a county like the county of Simcoe. That says a lot for our part of the province. Obviously, as an MPP, I'm proud of my area. When I see young folks wanting to move to the area, wanting to raise families in that area, wanting to have teaching positions, wanting to have other jobs with their partners, I think it's important that I pay tribute to them today, because I think it is important that they get those jobs. I was just very proud that so many people wanted to come to our board.

I can say that, even with what we claim is the lack of peace and stability in the system, I'm happy that I don't really receive an awful lot of concerns and issues in my riding around my school boards. I would say, they do a

good job. I'd say, the staff at most of the schools do a good job.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): There are people from Owen Sound there too.

Mr. Dunlop: Yes, we have people from all over the province who would like to teach in Simcoe county and work in Simcoe county. Probably they want to be politicians in Simcoe county. Who knows? But the bottom line is that they—

Mr. Leal: Wow, let's not go down that road.

Mr. Dunlop: They may some day.

The bottom line is that I'm happy with the education system. I was happy under our government, and I'm happy under Dalton McGuinty and Gerard Kennedy. I haven't seen a tremendous number of complaints and concerns. For that reason, I try to work with the board whenever I can; I try to get the proper information.

As I've said in this House before, when I was the parliamentary assistant to Janet Ecker, I kept hearing these negative comments about the lack of peace and stability. But I'd go to the schools, and that wasn't what I was hearing from the teachers; that wasn't what I was hearing from the school councils. I felt that the bulk of the teachers were happy in their jobs, and I felt that the parents felt that their children were receiving a good education. That will be the challenge of the government as more money is required for salaries, as we grow the population and as we continue to build better and better schools and more innovative ideas in education.

I am coming to the end of my time. I've tried to use the full 20 minutes, and I'm hoping that my Liberal colleagues will follow me with 20-minute rotations as well.

I do say that we won't be supporting Mr. Kennedy's Bill 167, because we felt that he has tried to politicize it. If the government decided to add Bill 172 to that mixture and have an amendment where Frank Klees's legislation could be introduced, at that time our caucus would probably take a serious look at supporting Kennedy's bill. But at this time, we think it's not about peace and stability; it's about having contracts not expire in the year 2007. I think that's what we are hearing over and over again. That's what the OECTA is saying. That's what our critics are saying in this House, and that's what I'm trying to say here today, that we need to take a more serious look at a lot of other things in this House, as opposed to worrying about when a contract expires for political purposes. That's what this is really all about today.

Mr Speaker, I appreciate the fact that you've allowed me to speak today. I know you're getting up as though I should be sitting down any second. With that, I will take my seat and say again on behalf of our caucus that I won't be supporting this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: I would just like to remind all members of the House of one of our traditions, that being, if you're making reference to another MPP, you refer to him or her by their riding name or their ministry name.

I will turn to questions and comments.

Mr. Marchese: I remember when the now Minister of Education would attack the Tories in very tough terms. He was not pleasant in his language in his attacks on the Tories. But it appears that everything Liberals do, however, is OK. Nothing the Tories did was OK, but everything the Liberals do is fine. So the Liberals can cut special education by \$100 million, and that's OK. Why? Because Liberals have a heart. The Liberals can cut special transportation funding for 30 school boards, mostly Catholic, and that's OK. Not only that, but Mr. Kennedy, the Minister of Education, calls it equitable.

Another minister, like the Minister of Energy today, approves a contract for the Hydro One CEO of close to one million bucks and he says that's OK. It wasn't OK when the Tories approved a \$1-million contract for Clitheroe at the time, but it's OK for the Liberals to do it because when Liberals do it they know better and presumably they have a heart.

Do you understand what I'm getting at, citizens? What Liberals do is highly political and it needs to be attacked, and attacked strongly, by people like me. We expose the politics of the Minister of Education. When he attacked the Tories for their three-year contracts as being political, I attack Mr. Kennedy, the Minister of Education, for being as political as the Tories. It's not OK. It's equally political and wrong and reprehensible, and that's why I attack him and the Liberal Party for doing what they're doing.

I suppose the Liberals are a little more flexible because they create two-year or four-year contracts, and that by far must be better than three. Why? Because Liberals are introducing it and so, because they have a heart, it must be better.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): I was listening to those two people from Simcoe North and Trinity–Spadina. Let me tell you, I don't think those people have read this Bill 147. This bill continues to build an atmosphere of peace and stability in our schools. Since our government came to power, we have worked to build a genuine partnership within the education community. We have consulted with the teachers, parents and administrators, and we have listened to the people themselves all over Ontario.

We have in our party some competent people who really have a good background in education, such as Liz Sandals, the member from Guelph–Wellington, former president of the Ontario public school board. We also have Kathleen Wynne from Don Valley West, who is a former school board person.

For the last two years, since we got elected, we have had people going around to every school in Ontario. We have over 4,800 schools in Ontario. Two weeks ago we made a very important announcement. We recognized a need after we met the parents, schoolteachers and school boards, and we announced a \$4-billion project which, immediately this year, will have \$1.1 billion going to all the 72 school boards to repair the schools badly in need of repair that were left behind by the two parties previously in government.

We have a plan, and the people of this House should support Bill 167.

1740

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I listened with interest to the member for Simcoe North and how he discussed this bill and was able to put 20 minutes in, which is remarkable when the bill is only one page.

The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell said that maybe they hadn't read it. I think they could read this because, as I say, it's only one page. There's not much to this bill, as you look at it, and unfortunately it's for political reasons. This is where it's going to be tough for us to support it. The Liberals don't want unrest in 2007 because they've already set that as the date for the election.

I want to mention that the member for Simcoe North said he worked quite well with his boards of education. I've heard that before. I like to think that I try to work with my boards of education too: the Bluewater board and the Catholic board in my riding. We've had some very good meetings. As you know, when we were in government, they didn't particularly like what we did. But I think that education had to be turned around, and that's what we did.

Now, though, we don't want the Liberals messing this up. Unfortunately, with Bill 167, it is a little tough. If they were to adopt Frank Klees's bill as an amendment—it would not be a change for a government in power to take an amendment from the opposition—that would be something nice. If they'd even look at Bill 172—I think it's Mr. Klees's bill—and put that in with this one, maybe we could support it. Wouldn't that be something different, if we supported it with a recorded vote? It would be nice. I'm sure we'll record the vote on this one. At this point, we aren't able to support it. If we could have some amendments, maybe we'd be able to.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I was going to be nice and give the Liberals an opportunity to explain why they think this legislation is so necessary. Could it be that 2007 is a very auspicious date for this government? Come on, guys. This is all about you trying to dodge the bullet in an election year. You have a situation where teacher negotiations are going to come up in the year 2007, because right now, legislatively, that's when negotiations with teachers are going to happen. You guys are trying to dodge the bullet and trying to defer teacher negotiations outside the election year.

So I've got to say to myself that it's one of two things. It's really one of two things.

Interjections.

Mr. Bisson: It's pretty bad when you've got your own people heckling you.

It's either, number one, that you as a government are trying to dodge the bullet by not having negotiations during an election year. For what reason? That comes to number two, which is, what are you planning on doing when it comes to negotiations? Are you planning on supporting boards and their need to negotiate fair collective

agreements with teachers? That's going to be a question I speak to a little bit later, when I get an opportunity to speak in this debate.

The Acting Speaker: The time for questions and comments has expired. The member for Simcoe North has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Trinity–Spadina, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and Timmins–James Bay for making comments on my 20-minute rotation.

Mr. Speaker, 2007 is becoming a very interesting date around here. I looked last week at the press release from Mr. Cordiano, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, on the Windsor casino expansion announcement, the \$400 million that's been so controversial. Of course, I saw in the press release that it's going to open in 2007. I wonder if the official opening will be before October or after October. My bet is that it will be about August, right? I can see Minister Papatello and Minister Duncan cutting the ribbon around August 2007. You know one thing: It's sure not going to be in November, when the Tories are in power. You know that's not going to happen. Now we've got this bill, Bill 167, that basically does not allow contracts to expire in the year 2007, around election time. That's unfair, and it's for political purposes. It's as simple as that; we've said that before.

As I said earlier, I want to thank you for the opportunity this afternoon. Our caucus will not be supporting this unless you amend it to allow Bill 172, Frank Klees's bill, to proceed ahead. That, of course, would include a three-year contract, and that would allow them to expire in 2007 as well.

So thank you very much for this opportunity. I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Applause.

Mr. Bisson: My cheering section in the Tory caucus is much appreciated.

This is really an interesting debate, because you know what? This is like putting the VCR on rewind and getting to watch a debate that happened in this Legislature, what, about three years ago? Somewhere around there.

I remember very well. Back then, we had a Conservative government, and the Liberals and New Democrats were in opposition. I remember being on the same side with the Liberals. I do remember this. We were on the same side with the Liberals when we debated a bill in this House previously that dealt with the issue of setting how long collective agreements have to be when it comes to negotiation between teachers and their particular school boards.

I remember that at that time—I remember it well—the Liberals were in sync with the then New Democrat opposition in saying we should allow school boards to determine how long their collective agreements should be. If a school board and a teacher's bargaining unit says, "We want a two-year collective agreement," well, that's

up to the bargaining agents. If it's a three- or four- or five-year agreement, it's entirely up to them.

If you take a look out there, when it comes to negotiations across this province, in the private sector and, by and large, in the public sector, most parties are able to come to terms with how long a collective agreement should be. That's one of the final items that's normally left on the table in negotiations, and normally parties are able to come to a pretty good agreement.

How many cases do you know—I just want to ask you this question—where the workers have gone out on strike because of a collective agreement being two or three years? Not too many. Why? Because most workers and most employers can come to an agreement on those issues, based on the circumstances by which they find themselves either within the business or within the collective agreement and the issues that rise out of negotiations.

So by and large, up to now, the province has always taken the view in the private sector that it's entirely up to the bargaining agent, being the union, and the members, along with the employer, to decide how long collective bargaining agreements should be for. We have examples where people have signed agreements that are anywhere from—I've seen them as low as one year; I have seen them as long as 10 years. I don't advocate 10-year agreements; I think that's a little bit too long for somebody to lock themselves into, but I have seen very long ones. For example, I think Abitibi-Price—and my leader might correct me on this, but it seems to me the last negotiations they had were for seven years, if I remember correctly.

My point is, there's all kinds of evidence out there where people go out and bargain collective agreements; where employers and unions, for whatever reason, come to an agreement about how long a collective agreement is supposed to be for.

I remember the Liberals making those arguments while they were in opposition. They stood here—I remember the then leader of the Liberal opposition, Mr. McGuinty—along with the labour critic, I think it was Mr. Agostino at the time, and others—stood up in this House and said the government shouldn't be monkeying around with one of the basic things when it comes to bargaining, and that is determining how long a collective agreement should last, once negotiated. The Liberal opposition at that time railed against the Conservatives for trying to say how long a collective agreement should be in force for, and that government should not impose those kinds of conditions on either the bargaining agent for the teachers or on the employer, the school boards.

Well, something happened. All of a sudden, the Liberals got themselves elected, they're on the other side of the aisle, and now they're flip-flopping again like they've been able to determine—

Mr. Baird: Like fish.

Mr. Bisson: I'm telling you, they're worse than a fish. If a fish was to flop as often as these guys, the fish would beat itself to death, I swear to God. Like you've seen

since this government has been elected, every opportunity they have to either break a promise or flip on the flop, they take it. You say to yourself, “Why are they doing this?”

What’s worse, in this one they’re legislating it. I say to my friends across the way, and those who are, for whatever reason, in the rump—there’s lots of room on the other side, if you guys want to go back there—that basically, quite frankly, you guys are legislating something that you’ve railed against in opposition. So you’ve obviously changed your minds.

1750

You have to ask yourself the question, why is the Liberal government and why is Dalton McGuinty and why is Gerard Kennedy, as the Minister of Education, making this move? Could it be that the three-year collective agreement, the length of agreement that has been imposed by the previous government, happens to end in 2007? Could it be that, and that there happens to be another piece of legislation in this House, should it pass, that would fix election dates such that our next provincial election would be October 6 or 7—I forget the date—of the year 2007, and it would just happen to coincide that we would be bargaining with teachers in an election year? And could it be—now, here is what I think is really interesting. I think this tips teachers off to what they can expect in negotiations as a result of this government’s actions. If the government is saying they don’t want to have collective agreements end in August 2007, and we know that there is an election in October 2007, could it be that they are expecting the teachers to be unhappy about what settlements may be put forward by boards because the government is unprepared to fund school boards to the degree it needs to, and that they are worried that teachers may be upset in an election year?

I think that is exactly what is going on, and I’m just saying the Liberals should be doing what they advocated while they were in opposition. They should be consistent. They should take the position, as we do as New Democrats, that we should allow bargaining agents—the employer, the members of those bargaining units—to decide themselves how long a collective agreement should last.

Ça fait pleinement de bon sens, quand ça vient aux négociations, que les personnes qui sont à la table comprennent très bien les enjeux des négociations et comprennent très bien ce qui est important quand ça vient aux priorités qu’ils mettent à leurs négociations. Une des dernières affaires qu’ils vont négocier, comme le sait très bien M^{me} Meilleur, c’est la date à laquelle la convention collective va finir. C’est d’habitude une des affaires, un point de discussion très difficile pour les agents qui font les négociations. Pourquoi prend-on en Ontario la position que le gouvernement va exiger que les syndicats des enseignants et des enseignantes et les conseils d’éducation aient besoin de finir leurs négociations pour que cela n’arrive pas en 2007? Moi, je pense que c’est un peu ridicule, puis je pense que ça montre que le gouvernement sait très bien qu’il va y avoir des problèmes de négociation avec les profs la prochaine

fois, puis ils ne veulent pas avoir, M^{me} Meilleur, des négociations avec les profs pendant une élection. Mon cher monsieur Lalonde, vous le savez très bien.

J’arrive au deuxième point dans ce projet de loi que je pense est un problème. Si on le regarde, le gouvernement dit qu’ils vont exiger que les conseils scolaires ne donnent pas plus que 2 % dans l’année un et l’année deux d’une convention collective. C’est seulement si les conseils et les syndicats signent une entente de quatre ans qu’ils vont allouer, aux dernières années de la convention collective, jusqu’à 3 %. Mais je dis, écoute, il y a un problème. Je sais que le concept de négociation, pour certains, est un peu difficile à comprendre, mais dans une démocratie, il y a quelque chose qui est bien de base. C’est que les travailleurs ont droit de former un syndicat et de choisir le syndicat qui va les représenter. C’est une forme de démocratie la plus pure. Les travailleurs disent, « Nous, on veut avoir un syndicat en vue de négocier avec notre employeur. » Il y a des fois que les employeurs vont faire des exigences dans les négociations qui sont très difficiles pour les employés, et parfois les employés ont besoin d’accepter certaines conditions parce qu’ils pensent qu’ils n’ont pas trop de choix, et ils les acceptent.

Mais la même chose est vraie pour les employeurs. Il y a des fois en négociations que l’employeur n’aime pas les demandes. Ce qui arrive dans ces cas, avec cette législation, c’est que les syndicats des professeurs arrivent, puis ils disent, « On veut avoir 2,5 % » ou « On veut avoir 3 % chaque année dans une convention collective de deux ans. » La législation dit que, si tu le fais, le ministre de l’Éducation va pénaliser les commissions scolaires pour l’avoir fait. » C’est à dire aux commissions scolaires, « Allez négocier vos conventions collectives, puis attachez vos mains en arrière de votre dos, parce que je vous dis, si vous rentrez faire les négociations puis vous donnez plus que 2 % dans l’année un et l’année deux d’une convention collective, nous autres, la province, allons vous pénaliser. »

Mais ce que les conseils vont faire—they sont vraiment poignés. Ce qui arrive—je ne dis pas que ça va arriver, mais ce qui arrive, c’est que mon ami Paul Taillefer de l’AÉFO arrive avec son syndicat pour négocier avec les conseils, ou un autre syndicat comme le OSSTF, et ils disent, « On veut avoir 2,5 %, on veut avoir 3 %. » Ça met le conseil scolaire dans une situation très difficile parce qu’ils savent que, « Même si on peut le payer et on le leur donne, le gouvernement va nous pénaliser puis nous ôter de l’argent d’une autre partie de notre budget quand ça vient au développement des professeurs, » ou on va pénaliser le conseil scolaire dans d’autres exigences.

Je vous dis, mes deux amis de l’autre bord, que si vous étiez en opposition et les Conservateurs ou le NPD avaient proposé un tel projet de loi, vous seriez ici, sur ce bord de la Chambre, en train de vous opposer à ce que vous voyez comme un morceau de législation qui est négatif.

I say to my friends across the way that you can’t have it both ways. It’s a really dangerous thing. What you’re

doing in this legislation is not only trying to duck out of the year 2007; the other issue is that you're saying to school boards, "You're only allowed to settle a collective agreement, if it's two years, for 2% and 2% wage increases." The government is saying, by way of this legislation, "If you settle at 2.5% and 2.5%, we're going to penalize the school board." How does the school board negotiate a fair collective agreement with their teachers if they're handcuffed, with their hands behind their backs, and told, "If you go above 2% and 2%, we're going to penalize you by taking away money for teacher development or we're going to penalize you," I would say, by other regressive parts of this bill that deal with how you are going to deal with school boards. I don't think that's a good idea.

There is a principle in democracy, and that principle is people have the right to choose if they want to belong to a union. With that right, once they are lucky enough to be certified, they have the right to negotiate with their employer what they think the conditions of work are that they should be working for.

Bargaining is never easy. Speaker, you know. You've lived in this province, as have all of us. Anywhere that you have bargaining, there has to be some give and take. At times, the employer will ask for concessions from

employees; at times, employees will ask for benefits from their employer. Negotiations will bring them somewhere in between everybody's position to make an agreement. But if the government gets in the middle and says, "I'm going to limit what you can negotiate," I think it's a really bad principle to go on.

I'm going to have an opportunity to finish this speech the next day this comes by, because I realize it's almost 6 of the clock, but I want the government to reflect on what they're doing. You railed against this while in opposition. You should be railing against it in government. You should never have proposed it. This is all about your trying to duck and be out of teacher negotiations come the next round of negotiations, which will be expected in 2007, the year of the election. At the same time, you're handcuffing the ability of the boards to negotiate fair collective agreements with their employees.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would ask for adjournment of the debate. We'll pick up this debate the next time it's called up on the order paper.

The Acting Speaker: You don't have to ask, because it's 6 of the clock. This House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1758.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
110A	5334	2	52	property. I, among others, urged the government to include

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