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Thursday 12 May 2005

Jeudi 12 mai 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 12 May 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 12 mai 2005

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

BREAST IMPLANT REGISTRY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE REGISTRE
DES IMPLANTS MAMMAIRES

Ms. Churley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 192, An Act to establish and maintain a provincial Breast Implant Registry / Projet de loi 192, Loi prévoyant l'établissement et la tenue d'un registre provincial des implants mammaires.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Churley has moved ballot item number 67. Pursuant to standing order 96, Ms. Churley, you have up to 10 minutes.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I find it fitting that this may be perhaps my last private member's bill in this place, looking at what's going on in Ottawa. As you know, I will be leaving this place to throw my hat in the ring federally. It's very fitting, I believe, that I'm bringing forward today a very important, and long overdue, serious women's health issue.

Before I explain it a little more, I want to acknowledge Joyce Attis, who joined me in a press conference the other day and who is with us. She is an implant survivor, a women's health advocate and founder of the Breast Implant Line of Canada. I thank her for all the incredible hard work she has done to make people aware of the risks associated with breast implants.

I also want to acknowledge the work of Madeline Boscoe and Kathleen O'Grady of the Canadian Women's Health Network; Ann Pederson, BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health Network; Ann Pederson, BC Centre for Excellence in Women's Health; Aleina Tweed, epidemiologist, BC Centre for Disease Control; Anne Rochon Ford, coordinator, Women and Health Protection; Judy Wasylycia-Leis, federal NDP MP and long-time women's health advocate; and Audrey McLaughlin, former leader of the Canadian NDP. They have all done tremendous work in this area.

This registry is a long overdue measure to protect women's health. Such registries have existed for a long time, and quite successfully, in the UK, Denmark and

other jurisdictions. In Canada, leading authorities and advocates in the women's health field have been calling for this measure for over a decade, but to no avail.

There is a tendency among some to trivialize this, rather than seeing it as health protection issue. As we all know, this is a health issue and a cultural issue. Implants have become increasingly popular and at some level have gained really wide, bizarre acceptance, i.e., becoming prizes in radio contests. Some parents are giving their daughters breast implants for graduation. The whole body ideal for young girls these days is making more and more young women proceed with acceptance of this kind of procedure without really knowing or questioning the possible health risks. The problem is those health risks are very sketchy. Despite repeated problems associated with implants and the body of research suggesting possible links between implants and different health problems, very serious health problems, there is still no adequate infrastructure to comprehensively monitor for, and respond to, adverse reactions to implants.

I must tell you that this is a very serious issue that is not being addressed, because now we have an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 women in Canada who have had this surgery: 20% of those were for reconstruction after mastectomy while the remaining 80% were for cosmetic augmentation. As I said, the latter seems to be rising, particularly among younger women. Some would say "Buyer beware" should apply when it comes to people who opt for this as an elective procedure, but how can women possibly be clear on that when there is a lack of information about the true nature of the risks involved? Information presupposes viable informed consent, and that is not what is happening. A growing body of research raises questions that need to be answered: What is the exact nature of the relationship between implants and the onset of serious health problems? What is the exact rate of rupture and removal? Are some women more likely than others to experience problems?

A registry like this could facilitate the long-term independent research needed to answer these question so women can make informed decisions about the procedure. Last week, I held a press conference about this issue where experts underscored how a government registry could help collect the data needed to get such answers.

Anne Rochon Ford, co-ordinator of Women and Health Protection, said last Friday that there is no public record of even the number of surgeries performed to insert breast implants, let alone a record of the health outcomes: "Women are participating in a huge experi-

ment with a device for which we do not have long-term safety data. A registry for breast implants in Ontario would go a long way to improve our understanding of health outcomes of these devices for women.”

It is very timely that this is coming before us today, because the silicone implant debate has been raised again. As you know, silicone implants had been withdrawn from the market some years ago because of safety concerns, and now there is a lot of pressure by the manufacturers to bring them back on the market, and Health Canada and the federal government are considering doing just that.

We know that pre-market reviews of implants are inadequate measures of safety. That is mostly what is happening now in terms of research. These reviews depend upon on studying reactions in a small group for a limited period of time. Adverse reactions have been shown to surface sometime after implant, six to 10 years later. This is reflected in the research that we have. Some studies dating from 1990 find that silicone gel implants do not increase women’s risk for autoimmune disorders and possible disease, while most recent studies involving study groups who had implants for a longer period of time suggest an increased risk.

1010

At recent FDA hearings considering manufacturers’ requests to reintroduce the silicone breast implants, the American College of Women’s Health Physicians contested approving their return because adequate long-term research has not been done to figure out the relationship between silicone implants and subsequent health problems experienced by recipients.

There are some who might say, and I tend to agree in some ways, that this should be done as a national registry. There has been some attempt to get that done over the years by my NDP colleagues in Ottawa; in fact, Audrey McLaughlin was able to get all-party support some years ago to move forward. But I must say that we can’t wait. Ontario has been a trailblazer in so many areas and could be again. We could send a signal today that we are ready and willing, here in Ontario, to get the whole process started, that we can be a trailblazer in this area. If there are 100,000 to 200,000 women involved across Canada, given the size and population of our Ontario, you can imagine that a large proportion of those women live in our province and are not being protected. Their health is not being protected, they are not getting the information beforehand, and if problems arise, as they often do, there is no way for a quick response to inform the women of the problems.

A registry would address in two ways the vacuum that now exists: It would serve as an emergency quick-response system to contact women whose implants may pose a health risk. Physicians would submit the information about the type of implant used and contact information about patients to the registrar, who would be appointed by the minister, in accordance with the Personal Health Information Protection Act, which already exists and protects patients who allow their personal data,

without identifying information, to be used for research purposes.

I believe that this is a very important bill to pass today. I know that there may be some concerns expressed about privacy, and I want to make it absolutely clear that if you talk to the people who have had, and are living with, serious health risks because of their not being given adequate information, not knowing the risks associated with implants, had they known that these serious health impacts would happen to them, and if you speak to some of the implant survivors who have had to have them removed, who will suffer serious health impacts for the rest of their lives, I believe they will tell you loudly and clearly—they did recently in the press conference I had here—that they very, very much want this bill passed today so it can move forward and Ontario can be first in Canada to set up a such registry.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I am pleased to rise to speak to this bill. Just before I get started on that, I want to make reference to the fact that the member who is introducing this bill is going to be leaving us soon to run federally. I have been working alongside her for about a year and a half now and have admired her work very much, especially in committee. She is a strong parliamentarian, and I wish her much success.

This is just an example of the kind of thorough and considerate work she has done. It is very thoughtful. This is, as she has pointed out, an issue that can be trivialized, and has been, but it’s a serious issue, not just from health standpoint, but, as she has already pointed out, from a cultural standpoint. I just want to talk a little bit about the culture—the culture of the breast, if you will—because it’s quite potent on a number of fronts.

First of all, we’ll just deal with the fashion industry. You look at fashion magazines and you have these emaciated-looking models showing off clothes, and this is seen as a model. This is what you’re supposed to strive for, and on top of that, you should have a fairly hefty chest. So you have to get this surgery in order to have it. I find it shocking that parents are giving this surgery to their children as a gift. There’s a madness in that, the madness of our society, of our culture, that that sort of thing happens, because of the health implications, but also the self-esteem issue. We really have a problem around the way we view ourselves and our bodies, and this is a really tragic example of it.

I was looking one day at our daily newspapers, one of the large ones, and above the fold there was a picture of Britney Spears. She was in a bathing suit, a bikini, and she looked pretty great to me. She looked good. Underneath it was, “Mom-to-be Should Eat Fewer French Fries.” I could not believe it. Here was a young woman who looked to be in the absolute perfect peak of health, expectant—so she had a tiny belly where the baby was—and they were suggesting that she should not be eating so many French fries. This is in a national newspaper, front page, above the fold. That’s the kind of message going

out to people. It's unhealthy, I say it's a madness, and this is part of it.

So we have women who are going out there and getting surgeries. It's a money-making industry, and I think we do need some very serious controls around it. "Buyer beware" is not enough. This is something where you're doing a surgery. Something is going into somebody's body and it's a health issue.

The other thing about it is that it's not just a fashion issue. We get to the issue of breast cancer and when women have to lose a breast to breast cancer. This is a really traumatic event for women, psychologically as well as physically, because the breast is a potent icon, not just from a fashion sense but from a life-giving sense, from the feminine sense. It is what gives life, period. That's how most of us started on this planet. No matter what species you are, it is the life-giving icon. To lose that is really very traumatic for women. The breast implant offers something positive to women who have to undergo reconstructive surgery after a mastectomy, and it can restore some self-esteem, which is a positive thing. But even more important, then, is that we have some serious controls around that, especially because it is a money-making industry.

I'm going to digress just for a moment on the breast cancer issue, because my sister just went through this recently. What you have to go through with breast cancer is a range, and she's doing very well, thankfully. But the northern shore of Lake Ontario is one of the hot spots in the world for breast cancer. We have a high incidence of that in Ontario. I think it's second only to the San Francisco Bay area. Most people don't know that. The northern shore of Lake Ontario is second only to San Francisco Bay for the highest incidence of breast cancer in the world. They're not sure why that is. We can stand here and guess, but that's probably not a good idea. She lived in that area and contracted breast cancer, and went through all that you have to go through when you are told you have cancer, and then to have to recover from that in all the areas.

On the one hand, the implants can provide a tremendous amount of hope and psychological support. On the other hand, the concept of them is a negative; I think it's a negative in our society and in our world.

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Some of the information has already been presented by Ms. Churley, but I just wanted to go over the current status so that people understand. At the moment, most breast implants are performed in private health clinics, and they are not captured in the ministry administrative databases. So right now, a lot of data is lacking in terms of the exact number of implants being performed in Ontario and Canada and on the long-term health effects of the breast implantation. That's something that, given the experience with the silicone gel implants, is really needed at this point.

The breast implant registry could help protect the health of women by monitoring the implantation and allowing notification of implant recipients in case of any

safety concerns. It would also enable the scientific research needed to make evidence-based safety decisions.

Health Canada is currently reviewing the reintroduction of silicone gel implants. As mentioned, they were removed in 1992. The fact that it's being reviewed now that they're coming back really does speak to the fact that there has to be some serious control put around this issue.

If we're going to move forward at all as a society one day, it would be very nice to think that we didn't have to go to such tragic or extreme lengths to change our bodies one way or another just to satisfy some made-up ideal.

I think it's an important thing that the member has brought forward today and that it should be taken quite seriously. I applaud her for bringing it forward.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to be able to rise today. I'm going to be speaking to a couple of bills this morning, Bill 192 and Bill 191 as well.

First of all, on Bill 192, the Breast Implant Registry Act, I want to speak for a few moments on the member from Toronto-Danforth. I echo the comments made by the member from Stoney Creek on her moving on to federal politics. I will say to Marilyn Churley that although we don't have the same ideals in our provincial party, the Progressive Conservative Party, I have really enjoyed working in the House with all members of the House but particularly members of the New Democratic Party in opposition.

In some cases, when you start out in politics, you tend to have straightforward thinking. What really changes that, in a lot of cases—I do a lot of appointments with constituents in my office, so you end up with much more of a social conscience as you listen to their stories and try to think how we can resolve some of the problems. I looked for some of those yesterday in the budget, some of the resolutions I was expecting.

The loss of Ms. Churley will be the federal party's gain. I talked just a week ago to Ms. Churley's opponent in the last provincial election, a fellow by the name of George Sardelis, who says he will never, ever again run in that riding for our party. George is actually currently working for Helena Guergis, the MP for Simcoe-Grey. He is a very nice person. He ran in Toronto-Danforth in the last provincial election and didn't do very well against Ms. Churley, so I know she is very well respected. Her loss from this House will be somewhat similar to when Frances Lankin left. I thought that was a great loss as well.

It's disappointing when we as politicians lose members, in any political party. I'm sorry to see Jim Flaherty and John Baird leave as well. Obviously, they want to move on to some other challenges in their lives. I think we have to re-evaluate some of the things we do in this House and maybe the way we're compensated so we don't lose people quite as easily as we have. We're losing some excellent members in this particular round. I wanted to put that on the record.

The registry: Ms. Churley's office passed around a lot of background on this legislation. I never dreamt on

God's green earth that I'd be talking about a breast implant registry, but this is an interesting topic. I had no idea of the kind of numbers they're talking about.

Just as recently as this week, May 9, there was an article by Heather Sokoloff in the National Post, which Ms. Churley's office sent around. I want to quote part of it: "With anywhere from 100,000 to 200,000 women in Canada having undergone implant surgery, about 20% following a mastectomy and the remaining 80% for cosmetic augmentation, Ms. Tweed felt women were entitled to answers."

I had no idea. I think it's important to note that there's such a wide variety in the numbers. There are so many areas of this particular issue that are unknown. I only got a copy of the bill in the last little while, but the question I want to ask Ms. Churley and the members of this House zeroes in on two areas: confidentiality and what is actually voluntary.

My understanding, reading the National Post article and part of the bill, is that we are talking about an issue that would be voluntary for women who wanted to provide that information to a certain registry. I'll ask Ms. Churley, and maybe Mr. Prue or Ms. Churley can address that in some of their statements. I'm talking about confidentiality and just who would have access to this registry. I wouldn't want to think it was something that everyone could tap into somehow. I'd want to make sure it was only physicians or people in research, that type of thing. Second, just what is voluntary? I'm certain that many, many women who have gone through this process would want it to always be confidential.

However, that being said, it's safe to say, particularly in the area of the 20% following a mastectomy, that it's really important that we treat it as a health and safety issue and an issue involving our health system.

Breast cancer research and the attention that is paid to that across our province and across our country is overwhelming, and I can't think of anything more traumatic to affect a female's life than to lose a breast due to a mastectomy for breast cancer.

In our area, and I think across the province, the pink ribbon symbolizes breast cancer awareness and research. My wife and daughter are involved in a golf tournament in a couple of weeks to raise funds for breast cancer research. It's a females-only golf tournament that's going to be up in Hawk Ridge on June 6. I think it will be well attended and, hopefully, it will raise quite a bit of money locally for that.

I can also tell you that we have a serious problem in Simcoe county with awareness of breast cancer and of cancer in general. It involves our ongoing lobbying for a Cancer Care Ontario unit to be built at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie. Just a week ago, a bunch of the radio stations in the Barrie area got together. They had a fundraising telethon. A lot of politicians, doctors, nurses and people who have a serious concern about whether or not we should have that Cancer Care Ontario unit in Barrie got together and raised a lot of money just to bring awareness of that. I was part of that. I enjoyed being with

the radio stations and discussing this and trying to bring awareness, because cancer is a disease that seems to be more prevalent now than ever before. We seem to be hearing of more cases of it, and of course breast cancer is one of the leading areas of that. We need to make sure that in Simcoe county, in central Ontario, we have access to that Cancer Care Ontario unit, and not five or 10 years from now.

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The folks up at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie, as we speak today, are drawing up plans. They're prepared to go; they're prepared to start construction. We just need the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to support this endeavour. Simcoe county is ready for it. The hospital has been out talking to the city of Barrie, talking to the county of Simcoe, talking to all the stakeholders. They're looking for a massive campaign. It will help many women who may or may not have problems with breast cancer.

I want to acknowledge for a second that we had a very difficult time in our caucus last year when Mrs. Munro, the person who sits right beside me, the member from York North, came across breast cancer. She had a very difficult time with chemotherapy and radiation and all those sorts of things. She fought hard and she won, and we're so pleased that happened. I know it was a very traumatic experience not only for Mrs. Munro but for all our caucus members and probably all the members of this House. We can play our political games here, but when someone's health is at risk, everyone is there trying to back them up.

As I continue, you do get a bit of a social conscience as an MPP. You come into this area not knowing all the different issues when you become a brand new member of Parliament, and you learn very quickly. I've listened to the New Democratic member from Nickel Belt, who is relentless in her pursuit of help for autistic children. A week ago, a grandfather came in to see me in my office in Orillia. He has autistic grandsons. They're three years old. He can't get them into any IBI treatment. At one time, this gentleman had his house paid for. Now he is mortgaging his future, and this man is already in his late 60s, to provide, on his own, IBI treatment for three-year-olds. They can't get into the program. What do we say to someone like that? What do we say?

I looked for it in the budget yesterday. I looked for the word "autism" to be used once. I looked in the background. I looked in Mr. Sorbara's speech: "Investing in People, Strengthening our Economy." I thought the word "autism" would have been used once. It wasn't. I actually encouraged the grandfather last week to look forward to the budget, because something must be coming. With all this new federal money and the health premium tax we have today, surely there'd be something for autistic children. It wasn't there, nothing was there, so now I've got to call the guy on the weekend and try to find out how we can possibly help him. This guy will go bankrupt, as a person in his late 60s, trying to help his son. His son has no financial resources, so the grandfather is

mortgaging his house to try his best to help his autistic grandsons. That's a sad story, and it's one of the reasons—as I said earlier, you tend to think you're a hard-line Conservative or a hard-line Liberal or whatever it is, but everybody who has a social conscience has to be responsible and think about all the unfortunate people in our lives.

I'm going to wrap it up right there. I just want to acknowledge the fact that I personally will support this registry. As long as there is confidentiality and it is voluntary, I can't see how this could possibly hurt any women in our country, and I think it would show the leadership role that Ms. Churley and the province of Ontario are taking.

I want to leave a couple of minutes for my colleague from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. She'd like to wrap up and make a few comments as well.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): It is a privilege and an honour to stand today to comment on the member from Toronto–Danforth's bill.

The other day in the House, I had a member's statement, and—following my discovery, and at first my dismay, that my colleague was going to leave me—I gave my whole statement about her. As a recent newspaper so aptly put it—I'd just like to read this line from Canada.com, because it's really good about this registry. It says, "But the idea of a registry got a new shot of life last week when Marilyn Churley, a flamboyant NDP member of Ontario Legislature, proposed the creation of a registry in a private member's bill endorsed by high-profile women's health researchers and activists across the country."

It's the word "flamboyant" that I want to talk about, because I think that is exactly the best adjective I have ever seen to describe Ms. Churley. I have had the pleasure of working with her in this House for four years, but also the pleasure of working with her for many years when I was mayor of East York. As you are well aware, a large portion of Toronto–Danforth is in East York, and we would often work collaboratively together.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Yes, and from time to time we would even celebrate great events.

I'm going to miss her very much here, but I want to tell you, the people of Beaches–East York, those I have contacted in the days since she announced she will be running federally in what, for all intents and purposes, is my provincial riding—the federal riding has shifted very slightly with the new boundaries, but for all intents and purposes, it is 95% the same—are overjoyed at the prospect of having a federal representative who is flamboyant, who is so hard-working, who has, as was described, a social conscience. As much as we may miss her here, I know that the people in my riding are so excited about having such a champion on the federal level.

Having said that, just a few words, because I believe my colleague from Hamilton East also wants to speak to this.

When we look at what necessitates this bill, primarily it is driven by cosmetic surgery. We would all acknowledge and appreciate the necessity or the desire of women who have had mastectomies to have reconstructive surgery, and we can understand that with any surgery comes risk. But most of the people who put themselves at risk are doing so not for reconstructive reasons but simply for cosmetic reasons.

In this day and age, I have to tell you, as a feminist—I consider myself a feminist, because you do not have to be feminine to be a feminist. To be a feminist is to believe that women have equality, to believe that women have a place, to believe that women's views matter. Being a feminist, I am surprised that the number of cosmetic surgeries being done today is increasing exponentially. It wasn't all that many years ago, reading authors like Germaine Greer and others, that I really thought that women had overthrown and gone beyond some of this need that, historically, had been pressed upon them. But that appears not to be case.

It is not surprising, I guess, when you look at the long history of how women have been forced to beautify themselves, often against their will, and what happens to women even today to meet this feminine ideal. Being a bit of historian, I look back in history. In the Middle Ages and through the Renaissance, women were bled. Their veins were opened and they were bled so they would have pale complexions. It was believed that by siphoning off a litre or two of blood in advance of some kind of party or event, the woman would look pale and wan. That was something that was desired, so women allowed themselves to be bled.

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We can look at some of the fashions where women had to wear bodices that were pulled with tight strings to the point that suffocation often resulted. They did that in order to have what appeared to be tiny little wasp-like waists. We can look to the Chinese culture where they bound young girls' feet. They bound them when they were five or six years old with tight bandages, so that by the time a young girl became a young woman or a woman of mature age, the feet were so tiny that it was almost impossible to walk, because having little tiny feet was considered a thing of beauty. We also look at what constitutes beauty in other times and, frankly, women have been forced to sort of try to go along with that and to do things to their bodies that are really quite unnatural. This is just an extension of all that.

We support the idea of the registry. We think that it is going to do two very good things: One is there is a quick-response contact so that women will be able to learn very fast if something has gone wrong with a product or a procedure. The second one is there will be an opportunity to study whether or not this is safe. I would suggest it is not safe, because we know some of the problems that have surfaced already. We know from research that is extant at this time that women with implants are four times more likely to be hospitalized than woman without implants. We know that they can rupture, they can

deflate, and they can leak. We know that complication like pain and numbness and scar tissue proliferate and often result in having to have more and more surgeries to get rid of it. We know such diseases as fibromyalgia and thyroid disorders result.

But I think the strongest thing I can do—and I'd like to spend a minute or so doing that—is to quote Joyce Attis. She is here today, and she is a very brave woman. She went on the air, and I don't know whether it was live or taped, but she went on television and she told her story, and I have it here. It's going to take about a minute to read, but I think it is poignant and says why this is necessary. I quote it in its entirety:

"I had a silicone gel breast implant placed in my right breast because it had not developed. I had a condition known as Poland's syndrome. I was 21 years old and a university student. From the age of 13, I wore an external prosthesis. I just wanted to wear clothes properly and not have to worry about the external prosthesis slipping around or out of my bra. I now wear an external prosthesis again. Believe me, if I had known how my health and life would be so negatively impacted by that one implant, I would never have had it placed in my body.

"For the first five years, I was very happy and healthy. Soon after, I had a very hard misshaped right breast that I refer to as a cement ball. Having only one silicone gel breast implant and not knowing anyone else with breast implants, I had nothing with which to compare my right breast. Each physician I asked about it told me not to worry, that everything was okay. But it wasn't. That breast hurt. I had constant pain and it was very sensitive to touch—and still is.

"My good health began to fade and I was told I had developed some type of connective tissue disease. My rheumatologist, at that time, also said I had symptoms of lupus and rheumatoid arthritis. I was fatigued most of the time.

"About seven years after the implant was put in, I developed horrible ribcage and spinal pain that sent me on a whirlwind of visits for four years to many different physicians. I have seen almost every 'ologist' there is.

"I was run through batteries of tests, to ascertain if the problems were psychosomatic or systemic. An orthopedic surgeon deduced from tests that the problem was indeed systemic and then fused five levels of my thoracic spine (1982). The thoracic spine is a part of the spine that is rarely fused. I now have metal rods and wires on both sides of and around my spine. The metal and the fusion have of course caused other health complications.

"I dealt with many other health issues and didn't make a connection to that one silicone gel breast implant until 1991 when again I spoke with my then rheumatologist who agreed with me that I should have the implant removed.

"Imagine how many health care dollars would not have been spent had Ontario had a breast implant registry. It is a tremendous burden to OHIP and the residents of Ontario to cover costs finding out what is wrong and how to make one better because of a failed medical

device. This is even more difficult when there is a community of physicians who, because it could be a major part of their livelihood, continue to loudly vocalize that breast implants do not cause problems.

"With a breast implant registry, we will know the truth!

"With a breast implant registry, I could have been notified years earlier about this failed medical device, and I would never have developed the health complications I now live with daily.

"With a breast implant registry I would have never needed to see so many doctors nor would I have been hospitalized as many times as I was."

That is one woman's story. She is here today. I hope all members will recognize what she has gone through and do whatever is necessary so that it does not happen to others.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 192, the Breast Implant Registry Act. One of the things I would like to talk about is the actual background that this private member has brought forward. The bill would require the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to appoint a registrar to establish, maintain and operate the registry. The bill sets out a framework for the registry; reporting requirements for health care practitioners; requirements for manufacturers, importers and distributors of breast implants to notify the registry of health risks for users of the implants; obligations for the registry to notify users and health care practitioners of health risks of breast implants; reporting obligations of researchers that use the information from the registry for research; and offences and penalties for failing to fulfill the bill's reporting requirements. The bill provides that information contained in the registry that is not personal health information may be disclosed by the registrar, as prescribed by regulation.

I'd just like to take a moment to talk about what we have in Canada right now. Most breast implants are performed in private health clinics and they are therefore not captured within the ministry administrative databases. Consequently, the data are lacking on the exact number of implants that are actually performed in Ontario and in Canada, and the long-term health effects of breast implantation.

The registry would go forward a great distance, I believe, to protect the health of women by monitoring the implantation and explantation procedures; allowing notification to the recipients in case there are some safety concerns that arise from the implants; and enabling the scientific research that's needed for evidence-based safety decisions.

Health Canada is currently reviewing the reintroduction of silicone gel implants. History lesson: They were removed from the Canadian market in 1992 due to safety concerns. We think about that time and how much easier it would have made it for all the people who were affected if a database had been available at that time. The worry and the stress about not knowing what is put within your body and how it affects your overall health—

you can only begin to imagine what that would feel like if you were a recipient or an individual who was affected by that.

So what can we do within our role to make the lives of women in Ontario—and certainly, I am sure, Ontario leading by example, the rest of the Canadians will see what we have done here today.

I think about some of the things that we have done in the past as women, which I'm going to talk about for a minute, some of the silly things—I'm sure they weren't silly at that time—we have done for the sake of fashion, and I guess you could say self-image. I'm not sure whether it's self-image or a perceived self-image, a self-image that you would wish to project.

1050

One of things that I always felt was probably one of most barbaric customs we had was when corsets first came into place. They were made at that time with steel or iron. At that time, the perfect waist was 16 or 17 inches. Certainly, I can say I'm a long way from that. But at that time, they kept pushing and pushing, and if, by chance, the ribcage got in the way of what the woman wanted to look like, then the ribs were broken, so that we could continue to bring the perfect waist in at 16 inches.

I know that it's a different case if it's reconstructive surgery or if it's cosmetic. We can't lose sight of that, but in my mind, it's about perceived self-image and it's about the image we want to present to the public as a whole.

What we can do as legislators is to ensure that when a decision is made to move forward, be it for reconstructive or cosmetic surgery, the women making those decisions have all the information they need to make the best decision they possibly can, and then do what we can as a government to ensure that that information remains current and the scientific research and database go forward with their decisions, if there is a change in any of the science-based reconstructive surgery or the devices that were used.

When I stand today, I rise to support Bill 192, with the proviso that I believe that it should go forward on a voluntary basis, which may not be reflective of what is going forward today. I do say this to the member, that I will support the bill, with the proviso that you know what my concerns are. I feel it should be on a voluntary basis. I do believe, in the long-run, that we should work toward mandatory reporting, but at this time, I think that it should be voluntary. We can work toward that so that people can move forward and women can feel comfortable that the database has information that they want to be entered into it. But that is not what is presented. So with that being said, I still will support the bill.

I congratulate the private member for bringing forward something that I'm sure will make a difference in the lives of women who have to face a very difficult decision when they are going through reconstructive surgery. It must be a very traumatic and very difficult decision to make; for women too, who make the decision based on cosmetic reasons, on whether or not to go

forward with that decision. They can make that decision knowing that the database will protect their interests, knowing the science is there and, as well, if anything moves forward, that information will be able to go forward with them. So my congratulations to the private member and my congratulations on the future of the private member.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): It is a pleasure to rise today and thank the member for Toronto–Danforth for introducing Bill 192, the Breast Implant Registry Act, 2005, and to thank her for all her past work in the Legislature, for bringing attention to such matters and to wish her all best in the future.

There is certainly a need, with an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 women in Canada having implant surgery, 20% due to reconstruction after mastectomy while the remaining 80% were for cosmetic augmentation. The member from Stoney Creek talked about the imaging in younger women and how breast augmentation is on the rise. There was even a radio station in Ottawa that recently held a contest where the prize was a breast augmentation, and their lines were deluged. I think, as a society, we have to look at influences on our young people.

I want to make mention of a breast cancer luncheon I was at in Lindsay recently with over 200 women. Sharon Chambers has organized that luncheon for the past five years. It raises money for development for breast cancer research and all the work that they have done in that field. I think that a registry is certainly long overdue and it would facilitate some long-term independent research needed to answer the questions and make women more informed on the important decisions they have to make.

In the early days, I think that upholstery fill was used for breast implantation, so we are way beyond those days.

We need to have a tracking system and more information out there for women to make these decisions.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to enter into the debate on Bill 192, the Breast Implant Registry Act, brought forward by my colleague, who has come to be a friend, Marilyn Churley. I'm going to be missing her as she moves on to different parts of her political career. I think this bill really indicates the effectiveness of this member, not only today but in what she has been able to do in her history here and what I know she'll continue to do as she moves into other areas of her political career.

I made an effort to get here to speak to this issue. I listened to many of the comments before I was in the House and since I got here. There are a couple of things that I find really ironic. The first piece is how long it has been for women to be able to get the kind of recognition and access to women-centred health care around the world, quite frankly, but really in our communities and in Canada. When you look at the way the medical profession has, over time, not dealt with women's health issues in a serious way, right up until recent decades, when in fact you could rarely even obtain a woman physician, then certainly coming to this debate now and talking

about having a registry for breast implants shows that we've come a long way, but not long enough.

I think it's interesting that some of the debate has centred around whether this particular registry should be mandatory or optional. It's ironic that the very 80% of women who choose breast augmentation as a cosmetic choice—again, I'm not going to judge those women. I have my own perspectives on that as a feminist and as a woman. However, I think it's interesting that on the one hand we say that we should make this an optional thing because people might be embarrassed, there might be some ostracism, there's a privacy issue—it's a bit ironic, though, that all of the trappings of our modern society that lead women into this position where they feel that they have to get breast augmentation to somehow be acceptable or to be more beautiful or to have a figure that is more reflective of what we see in commercials and in our daily drivel of media representations are the same trappings that would then make them embarrassed to be put on to a registry. That's a sad situation.

I strongly support this bill. I think it's long past due that this registry be put in place not only in Ontario and in Canada, but worldwide, because unfortunately the number of women who are choosing to go this route is growing. That's an unfortunate statement on where we've come as a society.

Nonetheless, I still don't believe that the medical profession takes women's health issues seriously. This is one way to make sure that that is forced in this particular area. I think we have long seen very intrusive medical responses to women's health issues. We have seen medical responses that have not adequately and appropriately given credit to women who are describing what's happening to their own bodies. Even in mental health, it has been problematic for women to get the attention that they require and that they deserve in an equitable health system.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms. Churley, you have two minutes to reply.

Ms. Churley: This was a really good debate. I appreciate the comments made by the members from Stoney Creek, Simcoe North, Beaches—East York, Huron—Bruce, Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, and of course my dear friend and colleague from Hamilton East. I heard some of the concerns expressed, although I was quite gratified—and Joyce, I'm sure you were as well—to hear the support for this bill today.

Some of the concerns around privacy: I must say that I want to underscore that the role the registry would play in research would be in keeping with the rules already set out by the Personal Health Information Protection Act. The act has sections that would apply to research, and this bill follows that to the letter in terms of confidentiality. People can sign consent forms, should they choose, to allow their personal information to be attached for research purposes, but that is within the bill.

1100

I want to quote, or at least paraphrase, Joyce, who said that with a breast implant registry, we will save money for the public health care system.

We didn't talk about that a lot today, but of course what we have talked about are the serious health problems and hospitalizations and surgery that follow frequently, after many years in some cases, and that of course costs our public health care system a lot of money. That's another aspect we should look at here.

I would suggest that we send this bill to committee, and I know that all my colleagues here will pick up on it, should the government proceed with the registry and have it come back for third reading and a final vote in this House. I want to thank everybody for their tremendous support today.

APPRENTICESHIP AND CERTIFICATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE ET LA RECONNAISSANCE PROFESSIONNELLE

Ms. Scott moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 191, An Act to amend the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 191, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'apprentissage et la reconnaissance professionnelle.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Ms. Scott, you have up to 10 minutes.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock): This bill will begin the process of developing a new apprenticeship for people working in the fuel industry. Bill 191 creates an industry committee that would be known as the fuel industry technician advisory committee. This industry committee would act as a voice and representative for gas and oil burner fitters and fuel technicians. These trades are those that require the obtaining of fuel industry certificates, as required by the Technical Standards and Safety Authority in regulation 215/01 of the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000.

The bill addresses concerns raised by average Ontarians about trades in the fuel industry. There is a need for trades in this industry to have a secure position with our province's apprenticeship training system. The bill also serves as a reminder that our education system needs to constantly respond to gaps in the labour market and to our province's changing needs. Apprenticeship training and labour market shortages are usually not fiercely discussed items in our public agenda. Unless you know someone who works in the particular trade, the needs and difficulties experienced are relatively invisible to most people, and even to those of us who stand as elected representatives.

Before I deal with the specifics of the bill, I will spend some time talking about the nature and worth of apprenticeship training. Originally, the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act guided the development and place of skilled trades in Ontario. The previous government sought to renew Ontario's system of apprenticeship train-

ing. In 1998, they introduced the Apprenticeship and Certification Act. This act instituted different learning styles and planned for gaps in our skilled workforce. The act has done a good job of achieving these objectives.

In particular, a member of the caucus from Simcoe North, who will speak shortly on this bill, raised the profile of skilled trades and why technology in education and apprenticeship training is valuable. In his role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, Garfield Dunlop conducted a number of stakeholder consultations. He examined the state of technology education in Ontario and how many more young adults could be attracted to skilled trades. A report based on these consultations was submitted to the minister. It outlined recommendations for strengthening technology in education and apprenticeship training. It also expressed serious concerns about shortages in skilled workers. It also noted that programming is needed for students and young adults to access the training required to work in skilled trades.

Four years later, discussions about the skilled trades have not changed that much. Similar concerns are still out there. We need to move forward and support the development of skilled trades and apprenticeship training. There is currently no apprenticeship training in place for people who work or who are planning to work as field technicians. This is quite surprising.

The use of natural gas is growing. The number of jobs in this sector is growing. Fully 200 million homes, businesses and industries in Ontario use natural gas appliances on a daily basis. In Ontario alone, 4,000 employers hire a variety of tradespeople to heat, vent, cool, freeze and conduct and make sure that air does not escape from our homes and businesses.

Fuel technicians do not perform one standard job or service. They work in a variety of areas. Fuel technicians work with natural gas and oil-fuelled furnaces. They install them, repair them and remove them. They also work with air conditioners and ventilation systems. They enter our homes, schools and businesses and provide important services to all of us. The fuel technician trade straddles a number of occupations. These people also work as sheet metal fitters, plumbers and refrigeration mechanics.

Trades in the fuel industry do not exist in a vacuum. They overlap with a number of different sectors. There is a common feature between all of these trades and jobs: Most people working in any of these trades or jobs are required to meet particular training and certification standards as specified by the delegated administrative authority, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority.

People who work in the fuel industry are governed by strict and constantly beefed-up safety standards. The occurrence of tragic fuel explosions in Ontario has resulted in rigorous safety standards. In 2002, 4,691 fuel-related accidents were reported in Ontario; 91% of these accidents involved natural gas pipelines. Investigations showed that natural gas pipeline accidents were caused by a failure to follow safety guidelines when working

near buried natural gas pipelines and to properly locate buried natural gas pipelines before conducting excavation work.

The materials that fuel technicians work with require them to be highly trained individuals. People who work in the fuel industry are required to complete particular training and to hold particular certifications in order to work. Working as a fuel technician is a multi-step certification process. Obtainment of certification, along with hands-on training with an expert in the field, is required to proceed to higher levels of certification.

Small business owners in my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock who work with heating and cooling systems brought this to my attention. Speaking with them, I learned that getting the required training certification to work as a fuel technician is a challenge. In some cases, accessing training is in fact an impossibility. People working in the field often have to quit their jobs to return to school to upgrade their certifications or to complete base training requirements. In some cases, where people do not have to quit their jobs, there are still many challenges. How does someone supporting a family and reliant on a steady income return to school without financial assistance? How does someone even afford tuition to attend?

The place of these trades within our apprentice system is not only an issue of accessibility but also an issue about how we ensure that our labour force is ready to meet the demands of our citizens and how we as a government support high public safety standards.

The government has put forward an agenda that is committed to ensuring that Ontario has a stable and well-trained skilled workforce. Their plan is to “build an economy based on high skills and high standards” by “strengthening our greatest competitive advantage: the skills and expertise of Ontario’s workers.” This government has said that they are working toward reducing a reported shortage in 41% of Ontario’s skilled trades over the next five years. This bill complements these initiatives. It is a bill that I hope will be applauded by all members of the Legislature.

The bill is also about meeting the future needs of our workforce. The demand for skilled workers in the fuel industry is very real. Apprenticeship training would help meet this need. The demand for natural gas in Ontario and throughout Canada is steadily increasing. We need to ensure that there is a steady stream of well-trained and qualified individuals ready to work in this area.

The Propane Gas Association of Canada commented, “The issue of a shortage in trained and skilled technicians in the gas field for both natural gas and propane is not unique to one province or even one region in Canada. It is widespread and will become more acute in a short period of time.” We need to respond to this reality.

1110

Industry representatives in the heating, ventilation and air conditioning industry are supportive of apprenticeship training. They have stated that some sort of apprenticeship training would give a much-needed face to the trade.

Apprenticeship training would ensure that recruitment into the industry is stable. Eighty-two per cent of the refrigeration and air conditioning contractors association members support apprenticeship training.

Colleges in Ontario are supportive of working toward a new apprenticeship program. Directors of various apprenticeship departments in Ontario colleges have emphasized that fuel technician training is a natural fit with the apprenticeship model. In my riding, Fleming College, a training provider for fuel technician courses, has told me this trade needs to be supported by apprenticeship training. More courses need to be offered to meet the number of people wanting to enrol. Training facilities need to be upgraded to ensure that safety standards are met.

Contractors, like Jerry Walker of Walker's Heating and Cooling Systems from Haliburton, support this bill and first introduced me to the need. Industry stakeholders representing the natural gas, liquid propane, fuel oil and heating ventilation and air conditioning sectors support this bill. The Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario supports this bill. Individual workers, educators and industry representatives want to see this initiative moved forward.

This bill is about how our education system provides training for skilled workers. It is also about preparing for future demands in our workforce. It is about public safety and how we help ensure that safety standards are put into practice.

Bill 191 simply requires that workers, educators and industry be brought to the table to develop a new apprenticeship program. Interest is out there. The heating, refrigeration and air conditioning association is ready to move this initiative forward. The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada is eager to move this forward. The Ontario Propane Association wants to move ahead with this process and be part of it. The Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology wants to move forward and have a seat at the table. Scott Andison, president of the Canadian Oil Heat Association, is sitting in the gallery today and supports developing a new apprenticeship program. Scott, thank you for being here with us today.

Let's provide them with the tools to do this. We need to increase the number of fully trained and qualified fuel technicians in Ontario and develop a new apprenticeship program under the umbrella of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's indeed a pleasure for me this morning to speak on Bill 191, An Act to amend the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998. I must say it is our intention—my intention—to support this private member's bill.

At the outset, I want to state the high regard I have for the member from Haliburton—Victoria—Brock. I had the pleasure, during my time on council in Peterborough, to get to know her father, the late Bill Scott, who very ably represented that riding federally from 1965 to 1993. He was a very distinguished parliamentarian. From time to

time our paths crossed, and I always enjoyed my discussions with Mr. Scott about the workings of the federal Parliament.

We feel this is a very important private member's bill. I had the opportunity to chat with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Honourable Mary Anne Chambers, who, I might add, showed enormous leadership, working with the Premier and the finance minister to put some \$6.2 billion of new money into colleges, training and universities over the next five years. As my good friend the president of Trent University in Peterborough said to me after the budget presentation yesterday, it's the first significant investment in post-secondary education Ontario in the last 24 years. Indeed, that's being well received, from Cochrane to Kenora, from Windsor to Peterborough to Stratford and all across the province. But I don't want to digress too far, Speaker. I'll get back to what we're talking about here this morning.

We've been working in the ministry with the Technical Standards and Safety Authority in the province of Ontario. We've asked that particular group to help us come up with solutions for training in the fuel industry. The trades and fuel industry standards are set by the TSSA, and training is provided through colleges and private deliveries for the standards in the province. Currently, colleges offering the program include Algonquin, Humber, Mohawk, George Brown and Cambrian. There are also several private deliverers in this area, including Direct Energy. There is a wide range of classroom-delivered training programs in the fuel sector, and typical durations last from eight to 24 weeks. Durations for the on-the-job training portion range from two to four years and include between 4,000 and 8,000 hours of training.

Support from the industry for this apprenticeship program has existed but has been somewhat inconsistent. Some in industry believe an Ontario apprenticeship program would be redundant, while others think it certainly is the way to go, and I appreciate the member's initiative this morning.

I want to add that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has been working with the TSSA over the last number of years to develop an apprenticeship program in the fuel industry. This has been ongoing and we're working diligently in this area because we certainly recognize the need for this particular skill.

One of the things we're trying to emphasize in Ontario today is that for those individuals who are entering an apprenticeship training program, these are really gold-collar occupations because the potential to earn in these areas and to explore new areas is unlimited. We have witnessed in the last number of years that the last great immigration flow to Ontario, which came principally from Europe in 1959-60, is now retiring. Indeed, a number of economists have indicated that one of the potential difficulties with the Ontario economy going forward is a shortage of skilled tradespeople. That's why we like to refer to them now as gold-collar occupations: a chance for young people, people who perhaps have been out of

school for a while or those individuals who have gone on to community college, an opportunity to have the potential—it's unlimited with the kinds of skills we have today.

Just recently, I talked to an individual in Toronto who is very involved in the rehabilitation of brownfield sites who indicated to me that you can't find good drywallers. I know there's a shortage of toolmakers and machinists. The member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock has also identified an area within the fuel industry where there's a need to develop an apprenticeship training program.

We on our side find this a very exciting opportunity. Indeed, as the parliamentary assistant to the minister, we look forward to supporting this initiative.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to be able to rise today to speak for a few moments on Bill 191, the Apprenticeship and Certification Amendment Act, 2005, from my colleague Ms. Scott, the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. This bill is very timely. I can tell you as someone who spent 25 years in the skilled trades area—I'll tell you a little bit about some of these particular licences in a few moments—it's an area the province should pay more attention to.

There's no question in my mind that this bill is more about public safety than it is actually about certification. I'll give you a little bit of background. When I got out of college, the first technician's licence I got was an oil burner licence. All I really had to do was pass an exam. I wrote the exam. There was no background other than I worked in our family business. I was able to take that licence and go out and immediately start work on oil burners. I got my natural gas licence when I was in my apprenticeship for plumbing. I did that just on the side because I didn't have a lot of trouble with the plumbing apprenticeship courses, and at Humber College I was allowed to write the gasfitter 2 licence. I got that with no background whatsoever, and I was able to go out and work on equipment.

This is the problem: Even 20 years ago, the equipment was much more simplified. We never had near the efficiencies in the equipment, and we didn't have the electronic equipment on furnaces and air conditioners etc. that we have today. There are all kinds of safety features. I don't think there's a furnace made today with a pilot light on it. Everything is electronic ignition. When a person is out repairing these furnaces in the middle of the night or on a weekend, they have to be able to follow a very complicated process to work on the equipment.

1120

There are the three fuels: oil, natural gas and propane. The equipment that we supply today that is manufactured not only here in Ontario but in the United States, as well as in Europe, comes into Canada and gets CSA approval and ULC approval, in most cases, is very technical, and you need a lot of experience to work on not only the equipment that comes in but all the different models. For that reason, we need to address this in a more responsible manner as government, because we need to know that when you're dealing with propane, natural gas or oil,

these are fuels that can actually cause a fire. They can cause your fire department to be called in the middle of the night, your smoke detectors to go off, or an explosion. I have no problem at all making sure that we have a fuel oil technician's licence or some kind of an apprenticeship program based on those three fuels. I think it's very important that we do that.

There's one other thing that would occur with that. It would allow this new apprenticeship to actually fall into line for the apprenticeship tax credit, for which I gave credit to the government before. I'm a real believer in the apprenticeship tax credit. I've said that a number of times in this House. I believe it could and should be expanded. Even if you don't call this an "apprenticeship," it should be expanded into this particular area because we need to get young men and women involved in this trade.

It's not an easy trade. When people wake up in the middle of the night in rural Ontario or even in large urban areas and they have no heat and there's no supplementary type of heat in the house, they need to know that they can call someone who can come out on an emergency basis, and when they come out on an emergency basis, they need a truckload of equipment and parts to fix all these different models of furnaces and units we use to keep our homes and buildings warm.

So I think it's really important that more attention be paid to this particular area. I think, even today, the folks in this area are very well paid because they're in short supply. Two of my constituents, and good friends of mine, Calvin Bell and his wife, Patty, have an oil burner service up in Orillia. He was in to see me a week ago saying, "What am I going to do for help?" He started teaching the oil burner class at Georgian College, trying to get people who would take the course and become licensed. I told him about Laurie Scott's bill. I said, "This is what I think should happen. I think it should be a full apprenticeship." Surely with the technical knowledge that's required in this particular area, not only your skills in working with oil, natural gas and propane but working with electronics—it's unbelievable. Most people wouldn't understand just how many parts are safety features on this equipment that is being installed today. It's not something where you can go out like in the old days and change a gas valve and the furnace starts up again. There are a number of parts and safety features that have to be checked out. I think it's important that the government and the ministry take a responsible role in making sure that this type of certification or apprenticeship takes place.

I commend Ms. Scott for doing this. I think she's showing real leadership in this area. Obviously she's been talking to some constituents in her riding who have probably brought this to the forefront because they've got concerns. In a large rural riding like Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, you're going to find literally thousands of homes heated by oil, propane or natural gas. They're spread out over hundreds and hundreds of miles, and we need to know that in all of these communities, especially in a climate like Ontario's, we have the expertise avail-

able across the province to actually have those folks available to go out and repair our furnaces and our air conditioners etc. when they break down. There is no question that there is a shortage today, and I think it's because we don't have the credentials of an apprenticeship behind their name. It's a step in the positive direction. This is a private member's bill that should pass. There are a number of them in this House, and I've said over and over again that in a lot of cases the best legislation we have in Parliament comes from private members' hour. This is one of the bills that I think should be supported by the minister, should be supported by all the stakeholders in the fuel oil industry, and as we move forward, it could help create jobs and it would expand a very valuable service in Ontario. So I applaud her.

I also wanted to pay recognition today to Scott Anderson, who is here and used to work at one point with Ms. Janet Ecker when I did the study on apprenticeship training, vocational and technical training in Ontario. It was Scott that helped me out a lot with it. It was nice to see him move on to another field, and I'm glad he's here today to support this piece of legislation, because I think it's important that we carry on with it.

Just to sum up, because I'm going to leave a few moments for Mr. Arnott, who wants to speak to this bill, it is important as a safety issue here. Jobs are one thing, but when we're dealing with the kind of equipment that is heating our homes today, we need to know that the people who are repairing the equipment in the middle of the night and on weekends—they have a tremendous amount of money invested in their trucks and parts that are on those trucks—are properly qualified. Not only that, but when you have the apprenticeship program, it allows them to take on a partner and train them as they go. That's so important: for a 50- or 55-year-old guy to have a partner with them, to be able to train that person on oil burners, on natural gas, on propane, and then to have proper schooling, to go seven or eight weeks a year, three separate times, that's important as well.

This is a win-win bill for the whole industry, it's a win-win bill for the citizens of our province and it's a win-win bill for Ms. Scott, who I think deserves a lot of credit for bringing this bill forward, and I appreciate this opportunity today.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I must admit that in preparing for this debate on Bill 191, I had to acknowledge the fact that this is an area I don't know very much about. One of my most serious incidents when it came to these kinds of issues was about 15 years ago when I bought my first home. It had been a duplex, and my sister was going to live in one section of it and myself and family were going to live in the other.

We moved in and were getting boxes moved around, and different things were happening. In the kitchen we had some things piled up in a corner, going through the process of unpacking boxes, and these ones were near the end. They were in this corner, and I didn't notice, but there was a pipe sticking up from the floor. I noticed it there, but I didn't think anything about it. I figured it's a

pipe sticking up from the floor, it's an older home and maybe wherever the renovations had been done in the past that pipe just didn't get dealt with appropriately.

Well, little did I know that it was a live gas pipe that hadn't been capped off. We found out about three months later when everything was moved away and this area became a place where we would put our shoes, coming in from the back door into the kitchen. I guess someone's boot had hit the valve and the gas started leaking out. I had no idea it was a live gas pipe, I had no idea this was a problem, and of course, all of a sudden, one evening we started to notice this odour in the kitchen. I thought, "Where is that coming from? We don't have a gas stove." It was an electric stove. I'm looking around thinking, "It doesn't make sense. It's crazy. The furnace room is downstairs where the furnaces are. I don't understand why there would be gas in the kitchen." Sure enough, it took me about 20 minutes to discover that this was a live gas pipe, and at that time I was a smoker—I'm no longer a smoker. My hubby was a smoker; he unfortunately still is a smoker. It was just by the grace of God that we didn't have a serious, serious problem. When I called the gas company to come and deal with this issue, they were shocked that it hadn't been addressed, that this live gas pipe had been sitting there in a corner not capped off, Lord knows for how long. I would surmise that the unit I was living in, the building, had been owned by a landlord who was renting out to tenants for I don't know how long. I would suspect that the previous tenants had no idea there was a live gas line there.

1130

I think that story reflects the need for this bill that was brought forward today by the member from Haliburton—Victoria—Brock. I have to congratulate her because she provided members with quite an extensive package of information to help us get an understanding of the importance of this bill and what was motivating her to bring it forward. As someone coming into this debate, not having a lot of background in the area, it wasn't difficult to get up to speed fairly quickly, because she provided this excellent package and an excellent outline of the current system, the problems with it and how Bill 191 provides a solution by taking a patchwork system of training, a patchwork system of technical certificates, through the safety system, the safety association, and bringing all of those pieces together for a more systemic approach to this particular area.

When you look at the divergent types of support that the member has been able to obtain for this bill, it shows that not only has she done her homework, but she's prepared a bill that addresses not only small business and small entrepreneurs within HVAC or within the fuel oil industries, but also the larger players, the individuals, the students, the unions, and further to that, the support of the colleges. To that end, I did have an opportunity to meet not too long ago with the college in my local area, Mohawk College, the leadership there, and spent some time talking about the lack of attention the provincial government is giving to the whole field of apprenticeship

and how trades need to be more specifically targeted by government. Apprenticeship programs need to get more support and more recognition as a niche that we need to fill in terms of the educational continuum.

I'm pleased that I had a chance to be here to speak to this bill. I think it is important to recognize that it's not just a matter of taking that patchwork and coalescing it into a reasonable and recognized apprenticeship program that will benefit all, but it's also a matter of making sure that the pieces that relate to public safety are organized, that they are much more stringently put in place through a blanket apprenticeship program as opposed to the way things are currently done through the achieving of various licences and certificates. With a patchwork it is easier to fall through the cracks. As Mr. Dunlop was indicating, that's how mistakes happen. If there are assumptions that people have certain amounts of information or certain skills or ability or training when they are going to get one certificate or another, and lo and behold, they're faced with a situation where they really don't have what they need in their pocket to address it, but because they have these other pieces, perhaps they're going to undertake a job or a piece of work that is not really in their field or in their expertise. That is a problem that will be solved by this particular bill—not just the bill, of course, but the implementation of a program for apprenticeship training in this particular field.

I have to say that there has been some discussion about the extent to which there is a skilled trade shortage, and I think that there is a bit of a disagreement in the industry, depending on whom you're talking to, as to whether or not there is a skilled trade shortage or in which areas of skilled trades a shortage may or may not exist. I'm glad to hear that the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada is supportive of this initiative. Again, it shows the breadth of consultation that was done by the member who introduced the bill. But I have to say that I've attended some meetings of our local building trades council, the Hamilton-Brantford Building and Construction Trades Council—in fact, every year I attend their district executive meetings—and I have found that there is some concern in the trades as to whether or not a massive shortage of skilled trades actually exists. They would say that it doesn't. They would say that for the most part there are many, many skilled trades workers out there, and they have some concerns about overstating the shortage issue and perhaps leading to a glut in their market and a downward pressure on their wages. That would be one of the concerns that was raised with me by the Hamilton-Brantford Building and Construction Trades Council in regard to whether or not a trade shortage exists.

That aside, the fact that this particular piece of legislation provides an opportunity to ensure that workers or apprentices or people who want to get into the area of fuel oil, of HVAC systems—all of that—have an ability to do that in a recognized and methodical way that gives them the supports and the required body of not only technical information but safety information, is invaluable. I

will be supporting this bill because I think it's definitely the right way to go. I would only caution that it's not just a matter of a shortage in trades; it's a matter of making sure that the opportunities are available in a way that is seamless but also in a way that emphasizes safety, not only for the public but for workers who get into these trades and workers who are working alongside each other. I think it's extremely important.

With those comments, I wanted to congratulate the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock for bringing this bill forward, for providing such an extensive package of information for members to be able to get up to speed, and for doing the homework that needed to be done to make sure that not only small business but larger industry representatives, colleges, unions and people interested in the safety aspects of the industry are all on side. Congratulations to the member on that, and I look forward to the passage of this piece of legislation.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I'm pleased to also join in debate today. I want to echo the comments of other members of our caucus, particularly the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the member from Peterborough, who stated that he and the minister and of course all of our caucus are in support of this great piece of legislation, this private member's bill that's been brought forward by our colleague Laurie Scott, the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. I would echo what we have been saying about how we appreciate the fact that you have brought this forward for us to debate today.

I must admit that what goes around comes around. I know that the good member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock supported my private member's bill, which is now law, in regard to protecting firefighters, paramedics and police officers. I appreciated her support, and the mere fact that she came to me and asked for my support told me it would be a good bill. We look forward to supporting it this morning.

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The thing I want to talk about is that I had very little understanding of apprenticeships and training when I came here 19 months ago. My background is more financial. I tell people that I come from a long line of pen pushers. I was never one who was handy; I was never one who understood the great joy that people have in the vocation they have to be in the trades. The only thing I've learned is this tremendous shortage that we have in skilled trades, as the member from Peterborough was alluding to. So how do we change that? What we have to do—and I give credit to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities—is invest in our young people, open up those possibilities, and also continue through in the whole post-secondary world, which includes training and apprenticeships and colleges and universities.

I want to talk about something called OYAP, the Ontario youth apprenticeship program. It's a remarkable program that I was exposed to, along with Minister

Kennedy, our Minister of Education, when he came to visit Stratford. This is a program that exposes our elementary students from grades 6 through 8 to the trades. It's a mobile program. It's in a great big kind of U-Haul truck that is moved from site to site, from school to school. It's set up within the school and the kids are able to see, touch and do things that people do in the trades. Whether it's to solder or to saw, whether it's to do computer-assisted design, all of these things are there, and what we have to do—and I agree with the member from Peterborough—is explain to our young people that there are gold-collar jobs in training and in the apprenticeship program, which is how one becomes a skilled tradesperson in this province.

How do we expose that? To be fair, and speaking as a parent, we've allowed a culture to develop where somehow it's just the university track that we want our children to be on. But we know that there are great-paying jobs for people, for all types of people. How do we do that? We obviously have to expose children to the trades and we have to let them know that there's a career for them if it is their vocation, if it is their calling. We can't dismiss that. There are so many great tradespeople, and for hundreds of years, if not for the last millennia, what has developed in the trades is the whole idea of the master training the apprentice, one on one. That's how these great traditions are passed on from generation to generation. Somehow, in this country and in this province, I think we've lost some of that focus, and we need to bring that back.

It's not just a matter of money. It's a matter of changing culture, but money is important as well. I'm proud to be part of a government that has raised the profile but also has raised the financial allocation that we give to training. I know that we were particularly proud, of course, yesterday that the Minister of Finance announced in this House that, despite all the money that we have earmarked and are moving toward training and apprenticeship, there is an additional \$17.5 million that we'll be flowing through to 2007-08. Again, to make sure that these opportunities are there, our economy depends on skilled tradespeople. It depends on them. We used to have them come in by way of immigration. That isn't happening in the numbers required to build a strong and prosperous economy.

I am proud to support Bill 191 and my friend from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. I think our caucus and all caucuses are looking forward to supporting this bill as it wends its way through the legislative process.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity this morning to speak in support of Bill 191, An Act to amend the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998, that has been brought forward by the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

First of all, I want to congratulate and commend the member for this exciting initiative, which is her first private member's ballot item. I think it shows the thoughtfulness that she brings to her responsibilities as an MPP. She walked into this place in 2003 as one of two new

members of our caucus, and that was no small victory because that was a challenging election for us, as members will recall, in 2003. To have two new members come in to join our fold was very, very exciting for us. She's done an extraordinary job.

She and I have something in common. When I came in here in 1990, I had huge shoes to fill, because I was following behind a member who was widely respected, and I would say that his constituents thought of him with a great deal of affection. That was Jack Johnson. I had worked for Jack, and I knew that I had huge shoes to fill. She came in here, following well-respected MPP Chris Hodgson, and of course following in the distinguished service of her father, Bill Scott, who was a member of Parliament for many, many years too. So she's done a great job and has been a great addition to our caucus. I think this bill she brings forward today, which is intended to establish a committee "known as the fuel industry technician advisory committee for the group of trades or occupations consisting of the activities for which a person is required to have a certificate under Ontario regulation 215/01 made under the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, in order to carry on those activities. The committee has functions that are similar to those of committees that the minister is allowed to establish under section 5 of the Apprenticeship and Certification Act."

In English, that means she is seeking to establish an advisory committee that will allow for a new apprenticeship program for people working in the fuel industry. I think she is motivated by reasons of safety, and also following through on ideas that have been brought to her attention by her constituents.

I know this bill is needed and that most members of this House support it. It's interesting. When you look at the way people heat their homes and cool their homes, there are a number of options. Recently I had the opportunity as the MPP for Waterloo–Wellington to attend the opening of NextEnergy's geothermal facility in Elmira. I'm pleased the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy is here in the House right now. She was there, present as well. I want to congratulate NextEnergy for their new facility, 25,000 square feet. Their building is a zero-emissions structure because it generates its heat and cooling from the ground, from geothermal technology. It's a very exciting new business in our area.

I want to take a moment to talk about the provincial budget, because we're meeting today and this is the first session of the Legislature after the provincial budget. Clearly the government wanted, as much as possible, to present a good-news budget leading up to the federal election. Last year, of course, they brought forward a new health tax, contrary to their campaign promise, which absolutely hobbled their federal counterparts going into the federal election. That budget last year was responsible for the loss of a significant number of federal seats for the Liberal Party, and arguably was responsible for the creation of a minority government. This time, I'm sure the Minister of Finance wanted to avoid that particular outcome.

The government wants to be seen to be enthusiastic and excited about post-secondary education, infrastructure and health, but we also saw very bad news for our rural communities, the Ministry of Agriculture's budget being slashed considerably. I think most farm families in my constituency of Waterloo–Wellington will feel like they've been kicked in the teeth when they read the papers today about the lack of support for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

It's quite clear that the government has written off rural Ontario, is going to focus on an urban agenda for the next two and a half years, and is not going to be seen as advocating for rural Ontario at all. Certainly, in two-and-a-half years, assuming we form the government, we'll have a lot of work to do in that respect.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I'm pleased to make a few comments on the bill presented today by Laurie Scott, the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, and to congratulate her for bringing it forward.

I noted that she really did her homework on this. In the package she sent, she had letters from various sectors in the industry. I understand that CEP is supportive, and it is absolutely critical. Some of us perhaps might learn the hard way, from time to time, that when you get a good idea and come forward with it without consulting with all the stakeholders, it can get you into more trouble than you can imagine. I see that Ms. Scott did that, and that is very important.

I also will read from the letter Ms. Scott sent to members, asking for our support. I found this very interesting: "A newspaper columnist in my riding commented that Bill 191 contains 'a very straightforward practical sort of idea but is not very sensational' and wondered if we, the elected representatives, would find time to consider its provisions." It goes on to say, "This bill asks us to look at a perennial problem faced by skilled workers who cannot clearly access the training they are required to have, in order to work in their chosen field, and for us to take adequate steps to correct this problem."

Well, I will say kudos to Ms. Scott for bringing it forward, and to us for debating it quite seriously today, because it may sound boring and mundane to some, but this is a very critical bill for a couple of reasons. Access to the necessary apprenticeship and training is critical for those who are seeking work in their field. They're often shut out now because this program isn't there. We hear about that bigger problem in all kinds of professions.

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I was recently at a meeting in East York where we talked with people from different ethnic groups who came over here being promised all kinds of opportunities and with all kinds of skills, from these kinds of skills on through to doctors, lawyers, accountants, whatever. They come over here and are unable to find work in their chosen field. This goes a small step toward correcting that problem for some of those professionals, and it's really critical.

Originally, I was the minister for what was then known as the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations and was responsible for technical standards. During that time, I was certainly made aware of the safety and consumer concerns when it comes to these kinds of issues.

On the one hand, what this bill does is make sure that those who already have the skills and the training can quickly get into a certified apprenticeship program and get to work in a field where we need these skilled workers, but also the public can be assured and reassured that all those who are working in these kinds of fields, where there can be very serious safety concerns involved, actually have the proper safety training and know what they're doing.

I would also, because we're talking a little bit about fuels here, use this opportunity to brag just a tiny bit, because so few people know this—it's only vaguely related to the bill. When I was Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, I brought in the toughest standards for underground fuel storage tanks in North America, to protect our water. It was a source protection water regulation that I brought in. It was known as LUST, actually. People used to make fun of me a lot over that. There were serious problems with leaking underground storage tanks. I worked on that with some from the environmental community, and we brought in very strong regulations around underground storage tanks.

Having said that and getting that on the record, because of course everybody forgets about it by now, I want to again congratulate Ms. Scott for bringing this forward today.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I'm pleased to join the debate and to affirm the initiative of the wonderful member who is concerned about apprenticeship programs.

On Saturday night, I was with Brother Grimshaw and my friends at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. I go every year to their banquet and awards ceremony for years of service. The highlight of that for those who stay to the end is the presentation for the apprentices and the programs they're part of.

Governments can't be everything to everybody. I think our role is to set the table to be able to seize opportunities to build the kind of strong, healthy, vibrant communities we want. In order to do that, we've got to do some effective planning, certainly in this particular area. I think the member opposite has recognized that our progress as a nation and as a province can be no swifter than our progress in education in the broadest sense.

One of the other members was talking about his concern about his furnace. My gas fireplace went out a couple of weeks ago. I read the instructions, and when I got to the part about, "Be really careful, because if you do this the wrong way, you're going to blow your house up," I knew it was time to call skilled tradespeople.

We're not doing enough historically to ensure that our young people have the opportunities to seize a trade and the skills they need to make the contribution.

My brother went through an electrical apprenticeship program. He always kids about how little money I make. He does some overtime and does really quite well. He contrasts that to some of the bright young people who graduate from law school and article down on Bay Street for a \$26,000- or \$30,000-a-year job, whereas if you're in auto mechanics or one of the skilled trades, you're bringing home \$120,000 or \$130,000.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Especially if you're unionized.

Mr. McMeekin: The brothers and sisters who are unionized of course—

Mr. Kormos: But non-unionized tradespeople don't do as well, do they, Ted?

Mr. McMeekin: I think that's an excellent point that my friend opposite raises.

The other thing I want to say is that we on this side of the House believe that the best time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining. We know that right now, and I think the member opposite also knows, that the sun is shining in Ontario. We're creating all kinds of new opportunities, and now's the time to seize the initiative because, when all is said and done, when the others tell you what they want to do, I think it's really important to ask them to show you what they've done.

In that context, I'm proud to be able to stand in my place as one elected to this House, who has seen the wonderful potential that finds expression as these young men and women graduate in apprenticeship programs, to say proudly that I'm part of a government that gets it. We're moving forward with a plan to promote future prosperity. We're investing \$37 million to ensure employers have a skilled workforce; another \$20 million to update facilities and equipment at community colleges; \$6 million for pre-apprenticeship programs to assist individuals; another \$6 million to expand co-op diploma apprenticeship programs; and \$5 million to update curriculum standards.

All of the important educational infrastructure work that needs to be done is being done by this government. In fact, it's our intent to add some 7,000 new apprenticeship programs by 2007-08. We're doing that because we know it's important and, from this perspective, we're doing it in a wonderful way because we're working with our partners, particularly the unionized workers, to make sure these programs get off the ground and are successful.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms. Scott, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Scott: I would like to thank all my colleagues today who have spoken to the issue of apprenticeship training for the people in the fuel industry: the members from Peterborough, Simcoe North, Waterloo-Wellington, Perth-Middlesex, Hamilton East, Toronto-Danforth and Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

I'd also like to thank all the people who have been instrumental in bringing this issue to my attention in the development of the bill, such as small-business owner

Jerry Walker from Walker's Heating and Cooling Systems in Haliburton.

The HRSDC office in Peterborough laid the groundwork for my introduction of this bill. They highlighted the lack of apprenticeship training in our education system for people working as fuel technicians and requiring fuel industry certificates to work. They carefully described the complex certification process required of people who service natural gas, liquid propane and oil fuel appliances. They talked to me about the difficulty of having employees properly trained and certified to work in this field and how access to training is critical for high safety standards.

Various industry representatives were also helpful and supportive throughout the development of this bill, and I'd like to thank them for their time, advice and support. I mention Scott Andison again.

Second reading of the bill has occurred at a convenient time. Direct Energy actually graduated its first heating-ventilation-air conditioning apprenticeship program with 10 apprenticeship applications. They predict that a potential shortfall of one million skilled workers by 2020 has been forecasted. So this program that we've initiated is a positive step forward, but it should act as an impetus for our public system. I know that the budget came out yesterday, so I'm hopeful that the apprenticeship sector will look favourably on this bill that I've brought forward.

A special thank you to my parliamentary intern, Bec Sciarra—Bec, stand up in the gallery—for all her hard work on this bill. Thank you very much, Bec.

I look forward to all my colleagues supporting this bill.

BREAST IMPLANT REGISTRY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE REGISTRE DES IMPLANTS MAMMAIRES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time allowed for private members' public business has expired. We shall first deal with ballot item number 67 standing in the name of Ms. Churley. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I would like to refer it to the social development committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Shall the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy? Agreed.

APPRENTICESHIP AND CERTIFICATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE ET LA RECONNAISSANCE PROFESSIONNELLE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 68 standing in the name of Ms. Scott. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I would request that the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Shall the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Let me say for the record how truly disappointed I am that the words "police" and "firefighter" were not even mentioned in yesterday's budget speech. I can read between the lines. This lack of even a single mention of either of these two important stakeholder groups sends a clear signal that law and order is definitely not a priority for the McGuinty government.

Yesterday was the perfect opportunity for the government to act on its promise to put 1,000 new police officers on the streets for community policing. But they blew it—and, strangely, on the same day that clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 128, the grow-ops bill, mysteriously was cut short by the government after only 20 minutes.

This government keeps asking police to do more with less. Bill 128 is a perfect example. The McGuinty government want cops to bust more grow-ops but won't give them the resources they need to enforce the bill.

So I ask again: Where are the 1,000 new officers that this government promised and repromised to fight grow-ops and organized crime, to fight Internet luring and child pornography, to fight guns and gangs, to fight youth crime, and to just plain keep our communities safer?

What kind of a joke of an announcement can we soon expect from the McGuinty government to counteract the damage done to the policing community with this budget? Clearly, the police have lost confidence and respect for Dalton McGuinty and his government. The broken promise on policing continues into the third year of this government. Obviously, our men and women on the front lines deserve much better.

John Tory and the PC caucus will continue to fight for those who protect our communities. We will fight to make Dalton McGuinty keep his election promises.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I rise today to talk about some of the overwhelmingly positive reaction to the good news shared by Finance Minister Greg Sorbara yesterday with the House in regard to the McGuinty government investing \$6.2 billion in post-

secondary education over the next five years. This government has earmarked \$95 million alone to expand first-year spaces in medical schools. That's up 15%.

This is very welcome news for the college and university students, administrators and educators in and around my riding of Stoney Creek and across the province. Hamilton is a student mecca, and in particular, a mecca for medical students. Hamilton is renowned for its world-class educational institutions in medicine, namely, McMaster University, Mohawk College, the Juravinski Cancer Centre, Chedoke, St. Joseph's and St. Peter's hospitals and West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby, which is also in my riding.

Dr. John Kelton, dean of McMaster's Michael G. DeGroot school of medicine, has said that this funding, along with the proposed school of biomedical engineering and medicine, could really change the face of Hamilton. He also estimates the increased funding will translate into 120 more spaces at McMaster.

Dr. Greg Flynn, president of the Ontario Medical Association, has also recognized and praised the McGuinty government for investing to train more doctors. The social and physical well-being of the constituents of my riding and this province will improve from the sound investments and firm commitments to future nurses, doctors and post-secondary students in Ontario.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): This year, farmers and other rural residents brought their tractors to Queen's Park twice, and three times over have shut down the 401. Rural Ontario fought back against a government that was breaking its back.

But look at yesterday's budget, this government's underwhelming response. In 2004-05, the ag expenditures totalled \$444 million in extraordinary costs, plus \$733 million in the OMAF budget. Yesterday, we found out that the total is dropping by an overall 52% to \$564 million in 2005-06, with zero new spending planned. The bottom line is this government is cutting spending by \$613 million to Ontario's farmers.

You don't need a degree in agricultural economics to know that \$613 million fewer dollars will reap disastrous results. Think of beef farmers, think of tobacco farmers, think of the cash crop and hort. growers. All have been ignored in the budget. These farmers have to plan. Their banks have to plan.

Why is this government not presenting a plan? The agriculture minister is quoted as saying, "We will be there for farmers." Where were you when the budget was drawn up? You are at the cabinet table; your job is to defend our farmers. Why have they been abandoned? The only thing renewed in this budget is this government's dedication to shut out farmers, to shut out rural Ontarians from the support they deserve.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): After years of neglect, post-secondary education is getting its biggest funding increase in 40 years: \$6.2 billion. What a great day for higher learning. This funding will not only help students get better access to post-secondary education; it will also ensure that when they get there, they will have smaller classes because of this government's vision and leadership.

Yesterday's budget means more resources for our universities and colleges. It includes an increase in faculty at colleges and universities to accommodate higher enrolment. This will mean that our students will get more face time with their professors, which will help improve student success. The Premier has always said that our people are our best asset. By facilitating better student-faculty interaction, we are improving the student experience and learning support systems.

This is an exciting time, not only for us here in this House, but for the people beyond these doors who work hard each and every day to educate Ontario students. I would like to share this quotation with you: "My colleagues and I are anxious to start training the next generation of doctors, nurses, teachers and entrepreneurs.... This is a very optimistic day for colleges and universities." That is from Michael Doucet, president of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations.

Ontario's economy is dependent on a skilled labour force and an educated public. Yesterday's commitment to post-secondary education will ensure that Ontario's economy remains strong. Moving forward, these commitments will ensure that Ontario has a strong workforce that is second to none.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Yesterday's budget was a devastating blow to rural and small-town Ontario, and a testament to the failure of the Minister of Agriculture to adequately represent this critically important segment of Ontario. Many parts of rural Ontario are now in crisis. The continued closure of the US border has impacted not only beef farmers but virtually everyone in rural Ontario: dairy and cash crop farmers, feed and implement dealers, small business owners and on and on.

Our agriculture minister promised leadership in providing stability to the farming industry, but instead of providing leadership he has furnished failure and surrender. A 23% budget cut in a time of crisis is not only difficult to fathom, it's impossible. I bear no ill will toward Minister Peters—I like him personally—but he has failed to do his job. He sat by while two of his Liberal cabinet colleagues secured \$400 million for a casino in Windsor—almost 80% of the agriculture budget—and then allowed his same cabinet colleagues to gut his budget to

the detriment of thousands of rural Ontario families. The minister must step down.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Last night, I attended a public meeting hosted by Paula Fletcher, councillor for Toronto-Danforth, ward 30, and Deputy Mayor Sandra Bussin, councillor for East York, ward 32, where Toronto Public Health reported on the results of a comprehensive health study done in south Riverdale and the Beaches. The results were based on mortality data from 1979 to 1990, cancer cases from 1985 to 1999 and hospital admissions from 1985 to 1998.

Here are some of the things they found. Overall mortality rates were higher in south Riverdale and the Beaches, compared to their respective comparison neighbourhoods. South Riverdale had higher rates of mortality from circulatory and respiratory illnesses than the comparison communities. The Beaches had higher rates of mortality and hospital admissions from circulatory and respiratory illnesses.

These studies were done at a time when the Ashbridges sewage treatment plant was up and running and the garbage incinerator was up and running, as well as other polluting industries.

One of the main recommendations from these results is: "It is recommended that the Ontario Minister of the Environment consider cumulative impacts from new emission sources that add to existing ambient pollution levels before issuing a certificate of approval for new or expanded industrial facilities...."

I would tell the government: Do not bring in the proposed PEC big gas plant; do not allow the burning of garbage, whether it's gasification or any other form. This study speaks loud and clear, and I would ask the government to respect it.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the tremendous and historic investment the McGuinty government has made in post-secondary education in this province.

I couldn't be happier that students at Centennial College in my riding, at the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus just next door in the minister's riding, and around Ontario will now have far more opportunities and far fewer burdens as they pursue their programs of choice.

Our government understands that an investment in post-secondary education today is an investment in jobs tomorrow, which is why we're making the largest multi-year investment in post-secondary education and training in 40 years through Reaching Higher: the McGuinty government plan for post-secondary education. Over the next five years, we will be investing \$6.2 billion more in post-secondary education and training. This \$6.2-billion in-

vestment will mean more access, higher quality and better accountability in post-secondary education in Ontario.

It's clear that colleges and universities around the province agree that, considering the massive cuts to post-secondary education and massive tuition hikes that occurred under the previous Conservative and NDP governments, the McGuinty government's budget provides exactly the support they now need.

I was delighted to hear that Dr. Rick Miner, chair of the committee of presidents of the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario, the association that represents Centennial College and other colleges around the province, had this to say about our investment: "We are certainly pleased to see funding improvements that have been provided by the government. This budget is a major step forward as Ontario colleges strive to produce greater numbers of skilled and highly trained graduates in order to bolster Ontario's economy."

We are very proud of this budget, and we're proud of the investment this budget makes in post-secondary education.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Speaker, \$6.2 billion—I said "billion"—the best in 40 years. No wonder Alison Forbes, chair of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, says, "We're absolutely ecstatic at what they've done for both quality and affordability at the same time," and she's right.

The McGuinty government said education was one of our priorities. Today, the day after the budget, we've proven all those naysayers wrong. After 40 years—30 under the Progressive Conservative Party—we have a government which knows that to ensure economic security for our province, we must invest in education to produce a skilled workforce that can compete and will compete.

To Mr. Tory I say, join with the Canadian Federation of Students, who praised this government for putting money into post-secondary education and operating grants.

Mr. Tory, you said we missed an opportunity. We don't take opportunities like your party. We don't send out \$200 cheques and leave the province with a huge deficit. We manage our resources and invest in the most important resource of all: our children, our youth, our future workforce.

Mr. Tory, please listen to what people are saying and get in touch with Ontarians. Missed opportunity? Pay down credit card debt? That's what you say, Mr. Tory. I'm here to tell you that the budget is giving opportunity to Ontarians. We are paying down the credit card debt that your party left behind. Just sit back and watch the ride, Mr. Tory.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I rise today to speak about the historic budget that the Minister of Finance delivered in this House yesterday.

The budget marked a turning point for Ontario. Post-secondary education, health care and infrastructure had suffered through years of government neglect in this province, a fact confirmed by the departing member for Whitby–Ajax last night on Studio 2. The budget extolled Liberal values. We believe in quality education that is accessible to everyone. We believe in medicare as part of the foundation of what it means to be Canadian. We believe in and practise fiscal responsibility every day. The budget reflected all of that, and we're proud of it.

In fact, not only are we proud of it, the leader of the official opposition endorsed our budget yesterday, and I wanted to thank him for it. But it seems that it took him until this morning to decide he was opposed to what he said last night on CBC TV.

I've never heard a politician talk so much and say so little. I think the visiting member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Southgate will speak to the budget this afternoon and clarify for us all the evolution of his multiple positions.

I think John Tory finally understands that Ontarians don't want to see slash and burn; they want a balanced approach. We're moving Ontario forward, and while he may be a little bit tentative as he jumps on and off our bandwagon, I'm glad he finally has, I think. This government is building a better future for our citizens. We know that the balanced approach we're taking is the right one. John Tory knows that as well, I think. I look forward to the Tory caucus helping us pass the budget legislation just as soon as possible, I think.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent, as requested by the government House leader? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I move that in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to meet on Monday, May 16, 2005, for the purpose of considering Bill 133, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act in respect of enforcement and other matters.

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

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): Welcome to a new era for post-secondary education in Ontario. After well over a decade of neglect, we are turning the corner and Reaching Higher by investing in the skills and potential of our people.

Reaching Higher: the McGuinty government plan for post-secondary education represents \$6.2 billion in new investments. It is the largest multi-year investment in 40 years for Ontario's higher education system.

Our plan will mean improved financial assistance for 135,000 college and university students, through the most significant improvements to student aid since the Ontario student assistance program was established in 1978.

It will mean tuition grants for 32,000 students from low-income families who are in their first or second year of study at a college or university. It will mean more higher education opportunities for traditionally under-represented groups. This includes aboriginal students, students with disabilities, francophone students and students who are the first in their family to attend a college or university.

We will create 7,000 new apprenticeship opportunities every year by 2007-08. There will be more opportunities for new Canadians to contribute fully to the success of our province, thereby maximizing Ontario's economic prosperity.

Our plan will mean that by 2009-10, 14,000 more Ontarians will be able to pursue graduate education each year. It will mean more affordable and accessible graduate education through the creation of a \$100-million graduate fellowship endowment. It will also mean a better educational experience for graduate students through the establishment of new university faculty chairs for research.

Students will have more interaction with professors and instructors, improving their overall post-secondary experience through the addition of 3,300 new faculty members. Students will enjoy a safe and healthier learning environment through an immediate \$200-million investment to better repair and maintain college and university campus buildings. College students and apprentices will have an enhanced learning experience through a \$50-million investment in new equipment. Pathways for students will be improved through increased collaboration between Ontario's colleges and universities.

The proposed new Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario would undertake research in areas such as access and quality, track performance in the post-secondary education system and advise the government on how we can achieve better results.

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There will be greater openness and transparency through the proposed inclusion of universities under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the proposed Private Career Colleges Act would strengthen the private career colleges sector and provide better protection for its 38,000 students.

This historic investment our government is making in Ontario's future prosperity is even more significant when it is considered within the context of the fiscal challenges we face as a result of the legacy of the previous government.

With our plan to reach higher, we are charting a much different course for post-secondary education than the one chosen by the previous Conservative and NDP governments. They failed to recognize that the future prosperity of the province of Ontario depends on the skills and knowledge of our people. They cut operating funding, leading to fewer faculty and larger classes. They put a greater share of the cost of post-secondary education on the backs of students. Over the 13 years of Tory and NDP rule, tuition fees in Ontario nearly tripled, while student assistance became less accessible.

Last year, the McGuinty government made history in Ontario by freezing tuition fees for two years. And we will sit down with our students, our colleges and our universities to develop a longer-term tuition policy framework for implementation in September 2006.

This historic investment in postsecondary education is essential to the future prosperity of our province. We know that it is a knowledge-based economy, and it is our greatest strength that we are supporting: our people.

With Reaching Higher, the McGuinty government plan for post-secondary education, our students win, their families win and Ontario's economy wins.

EDUCATION FUNDING

SUBVENTIONS DESTINÉES À L'ÉDUCATION

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): The McGuinty government has demonstrated throughout our mandate to date that we not only support our publicly funded education system; we stand for it. Our Premier is working hard to be the education Premier. We believe that our government and our province can only be successful if students are successful first. That is why yesterday's budget included another significant investment in publicly funded education, even in a time of significant fiscal pressure. Within the next school year, we will have met 100% of the value of funding improvements that Dr. Rozanski called for during the last government.

Those dollars were hard to find, but Ontario's publicly funded education system has been at a crossroads. After years of cuts by the previous government, we are making the tough decisions needed to ensure that we can invest

in our students and our schools once again. And we are investing wisely.

Après les dernières années de coupures effectuées par le gouvernement précédent, nous prenons les décisions difficiles qui s'imposent pour pouvoir investir une nouvelle fois dans nos élèves et nos écoles, et nous investissons sagement.

The budget includes new money to keep reducing class sizes in the early years so our youngest students don't get lost in the crowd; to hire new specialist teachers for music, the arts and physical education; and to provide more training and resources for our elementary teachers so they can help students improve in reading, writing and math.

Our ongoing education investment also means that all high school students, particularly those who are struggling, will get the help they need: more teachers to work with students who need extra assistance; student success leaders in every school board; lowered class sizes; more flexibility so the system can adapt to meet students' needs; more innovative projects to improve graduation rates and reduce dropout rates; and expanded technological education programs.

We have an obligation to ensure that all Ontario students, particularly those in small rural communities, have an equal opportunity for a quality education. We have set aside money in this year's budget to help keep small schools open and more to help them to flourish.

We also know that students can't learn in crumbling schools. We are providing school boards with the funding they need to repair, expand and replace schools.

But the progress of all our initiatives that I've just described hinges on one thing: peace and stability in our schools. For the first time in a long time, Ontarians have a provincial government that is working in partnership with teachers, education workers, school boards and all those who are part of the education sector.

This approach has led to a framework to assist successful local agreements between the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association.

We also have an agreement on a provincial policy that provides a framework to assist successful local bargaining between school boards and public English-language high school teachers. The framework provides for fair and reasonable salary increases and four-year contracts. More importantly, it promotes a shared agenda of improvements and stability for students.

There is much more to do. A strong, publicly funded education system is the key to unlocking potential and building an even brighter future for our students.

Un système d'éducation financé par les deniers publics est la clé pour développer le potentiel des élèves et à bâtir un avenir encore plus brillant pour eux.

The budget confirms the commitment of our Premier and our government to an Ontario education advantage. It continues to be this government's first priority.

Je vous remercie.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It is with great pride that I rise in my place today to say a few words about the budget that my colleague Finance Minister Sorbara delivered yesterday and the impact that it will have on health care in this province.

Let me start by saying what is obvious: It was a great budget, and it will do a very great deal to improve health care.

We, on this side of the House, share a vision with the people of Ontario of a great health care system, one that helps keep Ontarians healthier, delivers good care to them when they get sick, and will be there for their children and for their grandchildren. The budget my friend delivered yesterday is going to help make that vision a reality.

Our plan for health care operates on three fronts, three deliverables, if you will, by which we and the people of this province can measure its success: healthier Ontarians, better access to nurses and doctors, and reduced wait times.

The budget contains many investments that will help make Ontarians healthier.

We're making a record investment in home care so that Ontarians can receive the dedicated, compassionate care that they need and deserve in the comfort of their own homes. Our funding this year will help an additional 45,000 acute care clients who would otherwise have had to receive care in a hospital.

We're making a 20% increase in funding for community mental health services, a critical part of our health care system and one that was all too frequently overlooked by previous governments. Our investments this year will help an additional 34,000 patients.

We're continuing the revolution in long-term care with a 10% increase to fund 700 new beds and the continued hiring of new staff that was begun last year.

We've made great progress in the past 19 months in improving the access Ontarians have to nurses and to doctors. Yesterday's budget certainly continues that trend.

We're increasing medical school enrolment by a further 15% over the next four years. That's 104 new undergraduate positions by 2008-09.

We're also investing more than \$16 million this year to increase family residency positions. By 2007-08, we will have trained 340 more family doctors in Ontario who will provide care to some 400,000 Ontarians.

We're creating seven new community health centres and five new satellite community health centres this year, and we're going to continue with the creation of 150 family health teams that we began last month. These groups of doctors, nurses and other health professionals are going to deliver the best kind of comprehensive care to thousands and thousands of Ontarians, many of whom might previously not have had access to a family doctor. We have increased funding for our hospitals by 4.7%, or

more than half a billion dollars. More importantly, perhaps, we have for the very first time introduced multi-year funding, something hospitals have told us for decades that they need.

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All of these investments—in hospitals, in family health teams and community health centres, as well as in community mental health and home care—will result in more jobs for nurses as we continue to build on the 3,052 full-time nursing jobs that we funded last year, 2,402 of which have already been created. We're still waiting to hear back on the 600 long-term-care jobs and 50 community health positions that we have funded.

Last year, we launched our wait times strategy, intended specifically to reduce wait times in five key areas: cancer care, cardiac procedures, cataract surgery, hip and knee replacements, and access to MRI and CT exams. This year's budget continues this strategy with funding for a total of 81,400 new procedures—more than a 10% increase in these areas.

By the end of 2006, our wait times Web site will have complete and regularly updated information on wait times across our province, giving Ontarians a clear sense of how long they have to wait and, more importantly, how long it is acceptable for them to have to wait for these procedures—building a wait times strategy that previous governments failed to do.

The changes we're making in health care—the improvements we're making, the system we're building—are not going to happen overnight. But we are making clear and dramatic progress, progress Ontarians can track and can measure. The budget we introduced yesterday is going to allow us to continue to do so, and I am very proud of that.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Today I rise to inform the House about our government's exciting plans to launch a renaissance in public infrastructure, to strengthen the people of the province of Ontario by investing in their skills, their health and their prosperity. My colleague Minister Sorbara highlighted this unprecedented initiative in his budget yesterday. Now I intend to outline the next steps we will take to the members of this House and to the people we all have the honour to serve.

I've spoken in this place before about the urgent need to renew our public infrastructure across all parts of our province. For many years, of course, past governments have neglected this critical element of our society. Roads and bridges are crumbling, universities and colleges must improvise to accommodate the crush of new students, water and sewer systems need to be modernized, and many of our hospitals and health care facilities are out of date or overcrowded. We must now prepare to accommodate the millions of new people who will settle in Ontario over the next quarter century.

We know that massive investments will be required to meet these needs, and the status quo is simply not an option. Our government is prepared to make those investments, using a made-in-Ontario approach that puts the public interest first. Yesterday's budget showed the initial steps that we're taking.

Over the next five years, more than \$30 billion will be invested in public infrastructure in Ontario by the government and its partners. These investments will reflect our key priorities in health care, in education and in the infrastructure that supports and sustains our economy. All of the \$30 billion worth of infrastructure will be paid for with public dollars. The financing of some large projects will come from the private sector, but all of that financing will be repaid from public funds over time. It makes good public policy and fiscal sense to pay for our infrastructure as we use it over its useful life. All major projects delivered through alternative financing procurement models will be subject to the principles and the rigour of our infrastructure policy framework: Building a Better Tomorrow.

What is the makeup of the \$30-billion investment plan for the next five years? The largest component is the province's own gross capital investment. This represents some \$18 billion and will be invested in key government priorities. It will include renewing and modernizing hospitals, upgrading and expanding our highways and transit systems, new affordable housing, support for key infrastructure in northern Ontario, and municipal water systems, bridges and roads right across the province. It also recognizes the federal government's partnership-based investments that flow through the province's books, which we expect to total some \$2 billion over the next five years.

The government also supports infrastructure renewal and expansion through operating grants to transfer partners, such as school boards and long-term-care facilities. This represents an additional \$5.4 billion. The government will also provide financial support for the Places to Learn initiative and undergraduate, medical and graduate school expansion at the universities. This will support investment of up to \$4.8 billion. Our commitment to provide municipalities with gas tax revenue intended for public transit infrastructure to improve service and increase ridership adds an estimated \$1.4 billion. We estimate major alternative financing and procurement projects investment in the order of \$2.3 billion. This will bolster our investment for infrastructure improvements to large-scale hospital, justice and other projects.

This totals more than \$30 billion. And as the budget said, we are reviewing major government assets. We are committed to directing any net proceeds generated from asset sales to infrastructure as a first priority.

For the first time in our history, this government will soon be releasing a detailed plan, reaching to the year 2010, that shows how and where we will build the public infrastructure that sustains Ontario's economic success and, importantly, how we will pay for it.

I will say more about the government's five-year infrastructure plan in future statements. It implements important reforms in the methods we use to plan, build, finance and operate public infrastructure. It extends the processes described in Building a Better Tomorrow, the financing and procurement framework I released last summer. It encourages participation by the private sector—financial institutions and pension plans—in the financing and delivery of public infrastructure under the proper conditions and, of course, subject to the appropriate controls.

In the past, we have been stuck with the traditional view that government, and only government, finances and delivers infrastructure using current revenue, and that's part of the reason the infrastructure deficit has grown. We intend to vigorously pursue alternative financing and procurement strategies. These strategies will allow us to take advantage of private sector capital, such as pension funds, expertise and efficiencies, to do far more in the next few years than we have in the past, and to do it on time and on budget.

Design innovation, quicker and higher quality construction, operational efficiencies and the risk of the private sector suing for cost overruns and late delivery can more than make up for the higher interest rates. The end result is that the private sector can often deliver projects that represent better value for the province, and that is what we are most concerned with: better value for taxpayers, not just lower rates.

Research done by the UK Treasury revealed that 88% of projects using alternative financing methods came in on time and on budget or early.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to respond to the statement made by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, as well as the statement by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

The budget's announcement of more resources for the post-secondary sector is a welcome investment, but the previous government, we have to say, launched the largest expansion in colleges and universities in the history of Ontario, with 135,000 spaces being added. The minister's statement still falls short of the recommendations the Rae report gave, and I know student groups are anxious to see what's coming next on their tuition and how to fix the student aid system.

As with many of the financial announcements made by this government, this one is back-end loaded. This means you do not have to find the financial resources until some date further down the road. This should cause some small amount of concern, because your government can easily change its plans three or four times, as we've seen with your deficit reduction plan. You have really provided only a hint of future plans. There's no indication of how you plan to measure the implementation.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I know my colleague from Erie–Lincoln would have liked to have been here today to respond to the statement by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. If he were here today, I'm sure he would have been amused to hear the government's current support of P3s. It was not long ago the Premier himself said, "I'm calling on Mr. Eves to halt any contract signing when it comes to P3," private-public partnerships, "in the province of Ontario." He couldn't have been clearer about where he stood. Even the Liberal campaign material said, "We will end the Harris-Eves agenda of creeping privatization."

Not that we think it's a bad thing that the government has finally recognized the need for—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Stop the clock, please. There were four statements by ministers, in quite a good time. The opposition has four minutes in which to respond. I would like for that response to be respected as much as the ministers' statements were respected in the required time.

Ms. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will just finish up by saying, here we have again no money, no timetable and no commitment from this government.

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EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): In response to the statement made by the Minister of Education, much has been said regarding investment in infrastructure in our education system. Much has been said about providing billions of dollars for salary settlements.

What I'm disappointed in is what I didn't hear, and many Ontarians will be disappointed in that. We heard the minister refer to the Premier as the education Premier. What was not contained in this budget was a commitment to stand behind the promise that this Premier made when he was campaigning for votes. That is that he would provide support for autistic children beyond the age of six. We can talk about infrastructure; we can talk about bricks and mortar; we can talk about providing money to satisfy collective agreements. But until this government meets its obligations to the children of this province and indeed supports their commitment to supply and provide an education equally for all children in the province and that they should include children with autism in that commitment—until that day is here in Ontario, this government has no credibility.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): I'm rising in response to the comments made by the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health talked about what a great budget yesterday was for health. I looked at the two institutions closest to my constituency with respect to

health care, that is both with respect to the Queensway Carleton Hospital and the Ottawa Hospital and the looming cuts at those hospitals. The Ontario Hospital Association came out and put the truth to this minister's comments when they said it was disturbing and it was appalling with respect to this announcement for hospitals.

In a budget that almost reached \$80 billion, there was only \$100 million of new money for hospitals. What will that mean for the average nurse working at the Queensway Carleton Hospital? It will mean that they will be further stretched, they will face further workloads, and that will affect patient care.

In fact Hilary Short, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, was concerned most about the patients and patient care. This minister personally signed the pink slips for 757 nurses this past year—757 nurses who had their positions eliminated and who were on the unemployment line. I talked to the Ontario Nurses' Association, and they said this minister broke faith with his word and commitment. If I have a choice between believing the Ontario Nurses' Association or George Smitherman, my money will be with the nurses 10 times out of 10. We had hoped that this minister would announce and make hospitals a greater priority. Regrettably, he did not. Shame on him.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I will remind the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities that Ontario, the richest province in Canada, is ranked 10th in funding for colleges and universities. That's not a great record for us. We need \$1.3 billion to get to the national average, let alone be on top. To get to the national average, we need \$1.3 billion. So while you boast about your \$578 million as a big deal, in my view it is the least you could be doing to help those struggling institutions, colleges and universities, so that we are helped by this investment and so that the economy that so desperately needs these institutions gets the money it needs.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): As it relates to the Minister of Education, I would quote Gay Stephenson, the research coordinator for People for Education, who said the following:

"There is funding for new initiatives, but the new programs are being added to a shaky foundation. There is little in the budget to help the 14,000 students in schools slated to close; the funding gap between actual costs and the benchmarks set in the formula has not been addressed; and the number one recommendation from the Rozanski report has yet to be implemented." I will leave it at that.

I want to speak to something else. Where are the big winners in this government that are getting whacked by McGuinty and Minister Sorbara? Why aren't they stand-

ing up to talk about their great winnings? Here is one of them: The Minister of Agriculture and Food is about to lose \$200 million. They are going to get a 23% cut. Why isn't he standing up here to talk about this great whacking they are getting? Why isn't the Minister of Culture standing up as the big winner who is going to lose 11% of her budget? Why are the other ministers standing up and not her, saying how proud she is to get whacked by an 11% cut? The minister of native affairs is going to get whacked as well by a 22% cut, and the Minister of Tourism and Recreation by another 11% cut. Why aren't these big winners standing up today to talk about how good it is to get whacked?

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My comments are directed to the minister of infrastructure. Last night I had an opportunity to debate your colleague, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade on TVO. He had a very hard time explaining your policy on how you are going to get the money. He had an even harder time trying to defend it, because he agreed that it's going to cost more money.

Today I listened to your statement, and you have admitted that it's going to cost more money to borrow through private governments. You have also admitted that, over time, the public is going to have to pay back those private institutional lenders even more money than you are getting from them, the \$2 billion up front, because by the time you factor in those charges it is going to whack taxpayers immensely.

Really, admit what you are doing: You are shovelling the money to Bay Street instead of giving it to the people on Main Street.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments made by the Minister of Health, I thought it was important to put on the record some of the responses to the budget from some of those health care stakeholders.

Here is a response from the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, whose president, Joan Lesmond, said that "today's budget is sadly short on specifics about how new public dollars will translate into better access to health care services and professionals.... 'Nurses and the public they serve need to know in human terms how today's budget will continue to strengthen nursing and thus, the health of the public. In particular, we are concerned about the government's silence on its next step in reaching its promised 8,000 full-time new nursing positions by 2007,' said Lesmond."

What did the RAO have to say about private financing of child care, of health care? They said that they remain very "concerned about any increased private sector involvement in child care or health care. 'Because

nurses know that the sustainability of health care and medicare is essential, they are concerned about the additional costs resulting from private financing of public assets like hospitals,' said Lesmond."

Joan should also be worried about how many more nurses might get layoff notices as a result of the inadequate funding to the hospital sector, because Hilary Short yesterday said that hospitals and patients will face another difficult year, that they are very disappointed, that "many hospitals could receive an even smaller funding increase than ... last year," and that in the next couple of weeks a number of hospitals could "be required to plan reductions to ... patient services and for the elimination up to 4,000 ... positions." I bet you there will be a lot of nurses in that 4,000 job loss.

VISITORS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know you and my colleagues will want to join me in welcoming the young men and women from Riverside Secondary School who have travelled all the way from Windsor to be with us here today.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I appreciate your indulgence. I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the Minister of Agriculture to make a statement with respect to the 23% cutback on rural Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I hear a no. There's no unanimous consent.

I have some good news. Yesterday the pages delivered the budget in an outstanding 27.06 seconds. It's a new record.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, according to page 7 of your minister's budget speech, you say you're providing funding for more than 3,000 nursing positions. Last night on CBC News, Linda Haslam-Stroud of the Ontario Nurses' Association said: "There will be layoffs. We don't believe that the ministry money that's being put out is actually being spent on nurses on the front line."

Last year, your government spent almost \$100 million laying off 800 nurses. Premier, who should we believe, your smoke-and-mirrors budget or Ontario's nurses?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Well, it's not surprising that the leader of the official opposition is quoting somebody else with respect to their perspective on this budget, because we cannot, for the life of us, figure out where he stands on this budget or anything.

He may not like this plan, but I can tell you something: Through this plan, we are making the single biggest investment in post-secondary education in the past 40 years. It's about smaller classes, more teachers and higher test scores. It's about shorter waits for our patients. It's about more doctors and more nurses. It's about cleaner air and better protections for our water. It's about protecting green space that they would dismantle. That's where we stand.

I think what the people of Ontario want to know today—I think what the members of this gentleman's caucus want to know today—is where does he stand when it comes to the positions we put forward through this plan?

Mr. Tory: I will get up, even though he'll have a chance in due course to ask me questions, and give him a lot more answers than he gives me. When it comes to whether the budget should be balanced for sure by 2007, yes, I'm in favour of that. When it comes to whether or not your government should have given back to the hard-working taxpayers some of the \$2.6 billion that washed over your government, yes, I'm in favour of that. So there are two things that I'll tell you I'm in favour of right now.

The Premier's government's budget says that hospitals are getting a \$600-million increase, but the hospitals say the real amount after you factor out one-time funding is only a 1% increase. The Ontario Hospital Association said: "Within weeks, hospitals will be required to plan reductions to core patient services for the elimination of up to 4,000 staff." Premier, who is right, the Ontario Hospital Association or your smoke-and-mirrors budget?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: How much comfort is the leader of the official opposition lending to the health community in Ontario when he says that he is absolutely determined to take \$2.4 billion out of our health care system? We continue year over year to invest more money in the priorities of the people of Ontario, whether that's post-secondary education for our young people, whether it's through our public school system or through our public health care system. That is our priority because of the priorities of the people of Ontario.

I say again to my friend opposite, how can he stand there and pretend that he's going to defend the interests of those people who are committed to public health care when he wants to take \$2.4 billion out of Ontario's health care system?

Mr. Tory: I can only say—and I'm answering more questions than the Premier, because he's answered zero today—I would have, if I was leading a government that was awash in \$2.6 billion in extra revenue, given a tiny bit back, 10% of the health tax you illegally imposed on those people, to those hard-pressed taxpayers. That's what I would have done.

In your minister's infrastructure statement here today, he—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. There's heckling on both sides. I'd like to hear the leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Tory: Premier, in your minister's infrastructure statement here today, he tried to convince us that your government really does have a plan for infrastructure. The reality is, on page 71 of your own budget, your government has allocated only \$11.5 billion for capital, at best, over the next five years. Your minister said that he will have more to say about your plans in the future—proving that you have absolutely no plan.

I will send across one of these napkins so that you can draw up a plan, but in the meantime, can you tell us, Premier, which page of your budget has the specific details as to the amount you're committed to spend on infrastructure this year? Which page of the budget shows us how much you're going to spend?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Well, it's got the logo of the Albany Club on the corner here. That may be the first time the member opposite has touched a paper napkin.

Let me say this: It is very difficult for the people of Ontario to understand where the leader of the official opposition is coming from. We made it very clear where we stand; you can find it all in the budget. If you're interested in more details with respect to infrastructure, I'd advise you to read the minister's statement that he gave just a few moments ago.

Yesterday, the leader of the official opposition said that we should spend more, and then he said that we should spend less. He said that we should balance sooner, but then we shouldn't balance just right now. He said that we should cut taxes even though we are running a deficit, which seems to me is how we got into this mess in the first place. We are putting forward a balanced, responsible, prudent financial plan that breathes life into the priorities of the people of Ontario. It's for better schools, better health care, better post-secondary education and a stronger economy. That's where we stand on this budget.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Minister, I have a very—

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): John Tory, SQ.

Mr. Tory: Well, I'd rather be John Tory, SQ, than George Smitherman, BS, that's for sure. That's absolutely for sure. I have a very—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I feel when I say "order," the ministers don't believe that it means they must come to order. And of course, the leader of the official opposition would like to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Tory: If I said anything unparliamentary, of course I withdraw it.

My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. I have very a specific question and I would appreciate a direct answer. Can the minister confirm that the actual spending by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food for last year was \$733 million, as per page 29 of the budget, yes or no?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): It's a pleasure to be here and talk to a member who obviously does not have a clear position as to where he stands. On one hand he's advocating that we're spending too much money, but on the other hand we should be paying down the deficit. Then he's talking about tax cuts.

Do you know what we did last year, because we recognized the challenges that farmers were facing in this province? We made an unprecedented investment in support of the farmers in this province, be it through BSE, grains and oilseeds or tobacco. I would encourage the honourable member to have a look at the budget. The spending in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food last year and through Agricorp, our arm's-length agency that helps deliver our safety net programs, was in excess of \$1 billion. Obviously, you still don't know how to read the budget and I'm very disappointed. I would welcome the opportunity for you to come on over to 77 Grenville, sit down and give you a lesson on how to read a budget, because obviously you haven't learned anything yet.

Mr. Tory: Page 29 of yesterday's budget does in fact show actual spending by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The interim report shows \$733 million, and I take it from your answer that you agree with that figure. Minister, can you confirm that the—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. If both the member from Nepean–Carleton and the Minister of Community and Social Services would like to have these loud discussions, they can take place outside. Don't let me have to warn you again.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): No thank you, Speaker.

Mr. Tory: No comment. Minister, can you confirm that the planned spending by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food for this year, 2005-06, is \$564 million, as per page 29 of the budget, 23% less than last year? Can you confirm that?

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Hon. Mr. Peters: I'll continue on with my education of the honourable leader. Perhaps he should sit down and talk to a former finance minister or a former agriculture minister about how to read a budget. If you look at last year's budget for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, we budgeted \$549 million—page 71 of the budget last year. If you read the budget for this year, page 74, you'll see that the budget is \$564 million. We've recognized that there are investments that we need to make within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. There is a \$15-million increase in the budget. So, obviously you have not learned how to read a budget yet. I would welcome that opportunity for you to come over to 77 Grenville, because you prefer tax cuts instead of helping farmers.

We don't believe in what you believe in; we stand behind our farmers. That's what we did.

Mr. Tory: The figures showing the dramatic reduction are from page 29 of this year's budget. I want to know from you, Minister, why two MPPs from Windsor, sitting at the same cabinet table as you, can get \$400 million for a casino expansion while you end up with a 23% cut for farmers? This is the second year in a row that you've sat silent while this government withdrew its support for farmers. Why don't you break yourself free of the confines of cabinet solidarity and the shackles of the Premier's office and stand up and fight with us for the farmers of Ontario? Why don't you do it?

Hon. Mr. Peters: We saw how all over the board the member was yesterday. If he were standing up for farmers of Ontario, they would not have received an additional nickel of support, and that's very disappointing. We directed, last year alone, in excess of \$375 million in direct support for farmers in this province. We recognize the challenges as a result of BSE. That's why we made unprecedented investments to support the beef, dairy and cattle industry. The grains and oilseeds, record low commodity prices—we recognized that.

You can stand up and talk about cabinet colleagues not being supportive. I think it shows very clearly the support of this government. When you have a budget of \$549 million and we spend over \$1 billion through AgriCorp and the Ministry of Agriculture—how can you say we don't support farmers? I think it clearly demonstrates that you don't support farmers and that this is a government that believes in agriculture and is there to stand up for the agricultural community and come to the table—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Premier. Yesterday Ontarians learned of your new privatization-by-stealth budget. They learned that all of the sewer, road, transit and other vital projects may be built using private money instead of public money, and they learned today from your own minister of infrastructure where he admitted that it's going to cost more in borrowing costs from private lenders instead of public ones. Why have you and your Minister of Finance chosen to take the more expensive route? Why are you selling out to Bay Street instead of doing what is right for the taxpayers of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know that the minister is going to want to speak to this shortly, but let me say—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: He's very eager.

But I can tell you this: The NDP continues to traffic in fictions when it comes to this particular issue. We have been very clear from the outset about our plan to ensure

that we protect the public interest when it comes to investing in the desperately needed infrastructure.

Again I say to the member opposite that the people of Ontario are very, very interested in learning where the NDP stands, particularly when it comes to our plan to increase student support for 135,000 more students this year alone. For the first time in 10 years, we are going to be giving grants that will benefit 32,000 students in Ontario. Those are students who could otherwise be deprived of the opportunity of pursuing post-secondary studies. What Ontarians want to know today is, does the NDP support our budget insofar as the investments we are making in student assistance in Ontario?

Mr. Prue: My question is not about the students; we'll get to that later. My question is about the cost of financing your promises. The Bay Street economists in today's papers all agree that P3 borrowing rates are higher than provincial government borrowing rates. Your own minister has admitted that. The province can borrow at 5%, but we know that you're going to have to pay 10% for some borrowings on Bay Street, and that difference will mean a cost, potentially, in the billions of dollars over a 30-year debenture.

Premier, is the reason you are spending billions through the private sector an attempt to hide the real cost of the infrastructure in this budget?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I must admit that I'm really mystified by the member's assertions. I want to familiarize the member with Bill 17, the Capital Investment Plan Act, 1993. The purpose of the act, which was introduced by Treasurer Floyd Laughren, of the New Democratic Party, says: "Government, municipalities, other public bodies and the private sector will work together to make significant investments in the province's infrastructure."

I see the member is talking to his mate Mr. Bisson. I would like to read the list of members who voted for Bill 17: Abel, Akande, Allen, Bisson, Boyd, Buchanan, Callahan, Caplan, Carter, Charlton, Christopherson, Churley, Cooper, Coppen, Curling—you, Speaker, too. I'll fast-forward a little bit to Klopp, Kormos, Lankin, Laughren, Lessard. Let me fast-forward a little bit more: Mammoliti, Marchese, Martin, Perruzza.

The NDP says one thing; they do another. Clearly, it is important that we get more investment in infrastructure. We reject all—

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

Mr. Prue: I think the honourable member just got an F in history, because it was about rolling stock and none of it was ever used. The honourable member obviously doesn't know what he's talking about.

Back to the Premier: There was a certain opposition leader who stood four-square against public-private partnerships. That certain opposition member was you, and I quote you, just a few months ago: "I'm calling on Mr. Eves to halt any contract signings when it comes to P3s. I

stand against the Americanization of our hospitals”—September 26, 2003, your own statement.

The argument against P3s is even stronger today than it was then, because it has been better documented what a bad deal they are. Your confusion on this issue is confusing Ontarians too. Will the real Dalton McGuinty please stand up and tell us where he stands?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The member may now oppose the position of Bisson, Hampton, Martel, Kormos, Churley and Marchese et al., but I'd like to quote as well from former Minister of Transportation Mike Farnan, November 30, 1994, right in this House: “This international model is used everywhere—in Germany, the USA and many other parts of the world. By allowing partnerships with the private sector and changing the way we build highways, we are positioning our industries to be the world leaders and at the same time we are getting the job done faster and”—get this—“we are saving the taxpayers a lot of money.”

I do agree with Mr. Farnan, of course, but I would have recommended to Mr. Farnan that he choose our principle-based approach that public interest is paramount, that you must be able to demonstrate value for dollars, that there be accountability, that there be appropriate control and ownership. These are the principles that—

The Speaker: Thank you. Is this a final supplementary?

Mr. Prue: I believe it's a new question, Mr. Speaker.
Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I can't even hear myself think. New question.

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SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): My question is again to the Premier. Premier, your government betrayed and abandoned disabled people and poor families yesterday. Your budget is completely silent on issues of poverty. In the past, you promised annual increases for disabled people and families on social assistance, but nothing was in your budget for them yesterday. You promised to end the clawback of the baby bonus for Ontario's poorest children, but it's not there either. You promised money for social housing, but you're spending just 10% of what you promised two weeks ago. This is hardly something to be proud of, as we celebrate 75 years of social services in Ontario. Premier, why does this budget break all of the promises you have made and leave so many poor people behind?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Maybe the member opposite didn't notice these things, but let me tell you what we have done through this particular budget when it comes to helping Ontario's most vulnerable people.

Our Best Start program will mean significantly more child care spaces.

We're building 15,000 affordable housing units.

We are flowing increases in the national child care benefit once again to Ontario's families.

We're increasing grants to and improving access to post-secondary education for low-income students, and we're improving access for our disabled students.

We are improving community support services to seniors, our frail elderly and the disabled.

We are expanding the mental health system's capacity to provide counselling, crisis response and early interventions for almost 79,000 more people.

We're making sure that those on social assistance receive the dental care they need.

We have renewed the \$2-million energy assistance fund for low-income Ontarians.

If this member is saying that somehow this represents abandoning Ontario's most vulnerable, then he does not know what he's talking about.

Mr. Prue: Quite the contrary; I think the Premier doesn't know what he's talking about or he doesn't remember what he said in the past.

Mr. Premier, after inflation, Ontario's poorest families are worse off today than they were in the dark days of Mike Harris.

Before the election, you said, “We will implement a cost-of-living adjustment to both OW and ODSP and this will occur on an annual basis.” There is nothing in your budget that does anything of the sort. These are the poorest of the poor families in Ontario.

Last year, the Minister of Community and Social Services said, “Our government refuses to balance its books on the backs of the poor.” But that is exactly what you did yesterday.

Premier, hundreds of thousands of Ontarians are living in desperate poverty. They believed you. You should be ashamed. Why did you break your promise to the poorest of the poor in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): We have to make it very clear that in the darkest days of Ontario's history, when an NDP government actually cut social services through the social contract, they, in one fell swoop, cut more funding to social services than even the last government over their 10 years. I find it appalling now that they would stand up and ask us questions about poverty issues.

Let me tell you that one of the most significant items in that bill that was introduced yesterday, our budget, was a quadrupling of the amount over last year that we are leaving with Ontario families, from \$7 million growing to \$38 million, four times more than last year. That is a significant number. Only the NDP could think that \$38 million is not a lot of money.

Mr. Prue: It is not a lot of money when you keep \$250 million from those same poor children. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Madam Minister, before the election you promised to end the entire clawback of baby bonus for our poorest

children. Now you're all the way up to 6% after two budgets. You said, and the Premier said, "The clawback is wrong and we will end it." But there is no end to the clawback in your budget.

Thousands of postcards have been sent to you and to the Premier begging you to keep your promises, but you didn't even bother to read them.

Madam Minister, I saw the faces of the poor families, and you must have seen them yesterday too. They were so disappointed in what was an atrocious and horrible budget for them.

Premier, I ask you, I ask the minister, I ask anyone who wants to answer it, why did you break your promise? Why are you leaving these poor children behind?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: It's going to take a supreme level of patience with the NDP. Only the NDP could think that millions of new dollars in child care is a bad thing for Ontario families. Only the NDP could think that leaving \$508 more through the national child benefit with families who are on social assistance—they don't believe that's a lot of money.

We believe, on the other hand, that we need to move forward in the right direction and do more and more for families, in particular those who live in poverty, and that's what we're doing. But we also recognize that we need to do it in a time frame that is actually affordable. We don't make any bones about that; we've said that from the very beginning. We don't have all the money we want to do all that we want. So the things we choose are the things that will help families the most. That means child care, that means leaving four times the amount that we left last year, and we will continue on that track.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Yesterday's budget was oh so clear that agriculture simply isn't a priority for this government any more. The second-largest industry in this province remains in crisis. What programs are you going to be cutting as a result of the 23% cut to your budget?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'll use this as an opportunity to talk a little bit about our budget. The simple answer is, no programs. There's not a single program that is being cut from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Included in this budget was a program that was cut last year that, upon review, we reinstated: There's full funding in this budget for the municipal outlet drainage program.

Again, as I said to the leader of the third party, look at the budget of last year. The budget was \$549 million. This year, the budget is \$565 million, an addition of \$15 million. Included in that addition, beyond the restoration of the municipal outlet drainage program, is a \$3-million investment in the University of Guelph so that we can look at the long term for agriculture. We're going to

invest in bio-agricultural research. We've created a chair for bio-agricultural research.

Included in this budget as well is a \$7-million investment in food safety, because food safety instills consumer confidence, and when consumers are confident, they're going to have confidence in their food supply.

This is a positive, good-news budget for the Ministry of Agriculture. Is the crisis over in agriculture? The crisis is not over, and this government demonstrated last year that we're there to secure farmers—

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

Mr. Kormos: Page 29 of the government's own budget paper brags about the spending cuts of this government. They highlight the ministries that are undergoing dramatic spending cuts. First on their list is agriculture and food, a 23% spending cut. The government calls this "spending held in check."

So the question to you once again, Minister, is, what programs are going to be cut? And when you're on your feet, perhaps tell us, where is the long-term income stabilization plan that Ontario farmers so desperately need and want to survive?

Hon. Mr. Peters: To reiterate to the honourable member, there are no programs that are being cut in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. When the budget went from \$549 million that had been allocated and approved within this Legislature last year—as the year unfolded, the government recognized very clearly the challenges that farmers were facing in this province. That's why we came to the table with an investment of \$79 million in support of the grain and oilseed sector. That \$79 million was not in the budget. Add that to the \$549 million.

Included in last year's investments as well were \$50 million in support for the tobacco industry: \$35 million for growers and \$15 million for the communities. That \$50 million was not in the \$549 million. So we've added \$129 million into this now.

I could go on and on and talk about the additional investments we made to support agriculture. We were there to support farmers in a time of crisis. We will continue to be there to support our farmers in a time of crisis.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Yesterday our government made an historic landmark investment in post-secondary education: a \$6.2-billion increase in post-secondary funding, the largest multi-year investment in 40 years for Ontario's post-secondary education system.

Minister, students and faculty at Ontario's newest university, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Durham region are thrilled by this commitment. The president of both UOIT and Durham College, Dr. Gary Polonsky, is very excited about the future for his students.

Included in that investment was an investment for graduate students. I know that many students in my riding aspire to advance their knowledge beyond an undergraduate degree. They tell me that to compete in our high-knowledge economy; they want to advance their skills as much as possible. What will this investment in graduate education mean for the students, and why is this investment so crucial to our province's future?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank my colleague the member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge. He's right to be so supportive of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. They're doing great work out there.

Our \$6.2-billion investment includes significant support for graduate education. To date, Ontario's output in terms of master's and Ph.D. students per capita has fallen well below our paired jurisdictions in the US. We have to put an end to that. By the year 2007-08, we'll have 12,000 more graduate students in Ontario, and by 2009-10, we will have 14,000 more graduate students. We have invested \$100 million in creating endowments at universities to help fund graduate education, and we have also invested \$25 million to fund chairs in research for graduate students.

Mr. Arthurs: Minister, that's very good news for students and families throughout Ontario. More graduate students receiving a higher-quality education will mean that our local communities will thrive off the skills and knowledge they bring to our economy.

I've also had students tell me that their student experience has been deteriorating. The classes are larger and it is more difficult for them to get time to meet with the professor because their professors are busy. This is a result of our post-secondary institutions being neglected for so long. Both opposition parties when in government decimated the post-secondary institutions. Minister, we know that a high-quality education requires a high-quality student experience. Will this investment help to improve that student experience?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: There are different ways of measuring student experience, and certainly the national survey on student experience, which is conducted in North America—in the US and Canada—has demonstrated some of the ill effects of the neglect of post-secondary education over the past decade. So with this additional investment of \$6.2 billion in higher education through the Reaching Higher plan, the McGuinty government plan for post-secondary education, we expect to see 3,300 more faculty and instructors hired in universities and colleges, which will improve the student-faculty ratio, enhancing the quality of the student experience.

You know, student experience is also attributed to the kind of environment they study in. So infrastructure investment, an immediate investment of \$200 million, is being made to address maintenance and to help make the places of study safer.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. The farmers I represent are very concerned about your inability to defend the agriculture budget at the cabinet table. Now, you tell us in the House today in answer to our leader's question that, in fact, you spent over \$1 billion to help our farmers in the past year. The question becomes, of course, that that's not what's in the budget papers. What's in the budget papers on page 29, as the Minister of Finance—we're going to assume that we can believe what the Minister of Finance put in his document paper, although we don't always see the proof of that—that the budget was \$733 million and that the plan for this year is \$564 million. Of course, that's a 23% decrease.

I know the money was all spent, the \$733 million was spent. I would like to know what the minister would suggest has changed in our farming community to suggest that the farmers don't need at least the \$733 million to support them as opposed to the billion dollars you said you spent last year to support the farmers—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I am so surprised. I can understand the rookie leader who is here who doesn't comprehend a budget, but I am just blown away that a former Minister of Agriculture and Food, after 10 years of service in this Legislature, still does not know how to read a budget. And that really scares me. If he doesn't know how to read a budget now, what was he doing when he was a minister? We saw what happened at Agricorp when he was minister as they day traded at Agricorp. We didn't allow, and we do not allow, Agricorp to day trade.

I reiterate, and I'll speak slowly for the honourable member. Last year's budget said that the Ministry of Ag and Food would spend \$549 million. This year's budget said \$564 million, an increase of \$15 million. We recognized through the year that there were many crises facing the agricultural community. This government—

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Hardeman: Minister, I'm not the only one who's shocked by the lack of support for our farmers. Let me quote Ron Bonnett, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture: "... a huge disappointment for Ontario's farmers working in Ontario's second-largest industry.... Now we need to be concerned with where Steve Peters, Minister of Agriculture and Food, will be making cuts within his ministry. With another \$169 million cut from OMAF's operating budget something's going to suffer."

Minister, how does slashing 23% of the budget show your support for the hard-working farmers as you promised? As the OFA release states, it's what's not in the budget that counts. Minister, you obviously don't have the support of your cabinet colleagues. Agriculture isn't considered a priority in a Liberal government. The

farmers who have spoken to me have it right: You are obviously not up to the job.

Hon. Mr. Peters: If we want to talk about cutting budgets and not supporting agriculture and governments not being up to the job, I think the true government that did that, the poster child for that, is the Tory party in this province of Ontario. Within this budget here, there are no cuts to the Ministry of Agriculture programming. The additional dollars that cabinet came to the table with in support of the farmers of this province were direct cash dollars in support of the farmers in this province. Unlike Tory budgets, you will not find cuts and the closure of the Brighton veterinary laboratory, cuts to the Foodland Ontario program. He spoke in favour of it last week, and his government cut \$1 million from Foodland Ontario, cut the dairy audit program, cancelled the Niagara tender fruit lands program. The ag investment strategy, the very thing we need to do to look ahead to move to the future, to add value to what we do in agriculture, they cut that budget by a million and a half dollars. We're investing in the future by the University of Guelph—

The Speaker: New question.

NURSES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Minister, the media reported today that the budget includes money to create 3,000 new nursing positions, but nowhere in the budget is there any reference to new money for nurses this year. Can you confirm that the 3,000 nursing positions that were referenced in the budget are actually the same 3,000 positions you announced last year that aren't filled yet?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): What I can confirm to my friend is that the budget I presented yesterday makes historic new advances in the area of health care. We are moving resolutely toward providing a more community-based system of health care. My friend the Minister of Health has made major advances in ensuring that our hospitals are responsive. The fact that we are opening a new medical school and, in respect of nursing positions, a new northern medical program for nurses reinforces our commitment to health care not just in the south but in the north. So right across the spectrum we're making great advances. I simply can tell her that the provisions we've made in our budget provide for an expansion of nursing programs and positions in every single year of our plan.

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Ms. Martel: Minister, I looked very carefully at the budget. I looked for new money for new nursing positions and I couldn't find it. That's why I'm asking the question, and it's not a trick question.

I believe that the 3,000 nursing positions that were referenced in the budget are the same 3,000 nursing positions that you announced last year that haven't been filled yet. I want confirmation from you today that that is the case. Is it true that there is no new money for new nursing positions this year, and that the 3,000 positions

referenced in the budget are the same 3,000 positions announced last year that haven't been filled yet? Is that the case?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I know my colleague the Minister of Health is interested in answering that question.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): We're very proud to say—and I think that page 61 from the budget documents provides us with a good direction—that our \$504-million new investment in hospitals will certainly enhance opportunities for nurses; that our ongoing commitment to home care, with \$292 million in new investments in community-based mental health services, will involve the creation of significant new employment for nurses; that the \$264-million investment in long-term-care homes—yes, I can confirm—will enhance employment for nurses; that the \$122 million we're investing in public health will enhance the number of positions for nurses, building on the progress that we made in our first full year of government, when we created 3,052 new full-time-funded positions for nurses in Ontario.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. First of all, I want to congratulate you and the Minister of Finance for infusing \$15 million of new money into Ontario's agriculture.

As you know, our farmers, like the ones in my riding, have been in dire straits for some time. In fact, this spring farm organizations came to Queen's Park to have their voices heard. They had to deal with BSE, low commodity prices and other challenges. We must do what we can to help Ontario's farmers because they ensure that we have good quality food to eat.

Minister, your investment shows that this government is listening. I understand that core funding for agriculture actually rose in this budget from \$549 million last year to \$564 million this year. Can you explain why there has been some confusion regarding this investment, as presented in our budget?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'm very pleased with the interest in agriculture here today, because every one of us in this room should be concerned about this industry.

What amazes me—and I think it just demonstrates very clearly the fly-by-night fiscal plan that the previous government put forward—is that after all those years in office they tried to hoodwink the citizens of Ontario with their budgets. Obviously, after all those years in office they still don't know how to read a budget. It just amazes me.

We are making an increase in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's budget, a \$15-million increase that's going to help support food safety and bio-agricultural research at the University of Guelph. As well, we recognize, because of the hard work of rural members, like the one who has just spoken, that there were chal-

lenges facing rural areas in Ontario. That's why we came to the table for grains and oilseeds, BSE, tobacco—and many other farmers.

Mr. Hoy: We thank you for the new investment, Minister. I know that farmers across Ontario are pleased that we are taking their concerns seriously. As you know, the Tories slashed \$80 million from the 1996-97 budget. It was the Tories who cut tens of millions of dollars from farm finance, research and industry development. The Tories put agriculture at risk and tore money away from an industry already in jeopardy.

It's typical for the opposition to talk out of both sides of their mouths. I am amazed that the Leader of the Opposition would criticize an increase in investment for agriculture and our ongoing support for our farmers.

Minister, can you explain why the Tories are attacking our continued support for the agricultural community?

Hon. Mr. Peters: Of course I can explain it. I think they clearly demonstrated that in 1995 when Mike Harris stood up and said, "There will be no cuts to agriculture." What's the first thing they did after they took office? They cut over \$14 million out of that budget, and they continued to cut and cut in excess of \$100 million.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Wrong, wrong.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I can hear heckling from the other side by a former ag minister saying, "Wrong." He was the ag minister who put the final nail in the coffin of regional offices in this province. He's the one who closed down the last of the agricultural offices in December 1999.

We recognize very clearly that this is an industry that's of extreme importance to this province. It's an industry that is facing challenges. It faced a crisis. We came to the table in support. That crisis is still in existence. The crops are just being planted. We have to see, once they're harvested and marketed, if that crisis continues. The government's been there in the past, and I can assure you the government will be there in the future.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby–Ajax): My question is for the Premier and it's about budget assumptions and spending controls in the government of Ontario. Forty-six per cent of program spending is now health care. Health care expenses, according to the budget, will rise 8.2% per annum on average over the course of the next five years. The spending increase for hospitals is 5.2% in this budget. We know that means layoffs. The president of the Ontario Hospital Association says that (hospitals "don't have the money to" balance their books "without reducing programs and services and without reducing staff. We are extremely worried and very disappointed.")

There's no plan here to match the reductions. Health care spending this past year was 11.1%; next year, it will be 5.8%; the year after that, 5.2%; and the year after that, 3.8%. What is the plan that is going to reduce the increase in health care spending over the next three years to the 3.8% level?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): One of the things that gave me the greatest amount of pleasure when we presented the budget yesterday was what we can achieve in our second full year in health care. We're providing a 6% increase, notwithstanding that the rate of the economy is growing at about 2.2% at this time. We were also able to acknowledge where we needed to spend in health care. We're moving more quickly to community-based care. We're providing support in hospitals of the kind that is necessary to help hospitals adjust.

I just want to point out to my friend that he has made some significant errors in the presentation he's made in his question. Health care funding has grown at an average rate of 8.2% over the past five years. I want to point out to him that it's our collective obligation—and he knows this—to make sure that, as we are transforming and improving health care, we're also able to manage down expenses so that they more or less equate to the rate of growth of the economy

Mr. Flaherty: The problem, Minister, is this—and we saw it in the past year, particularly in our community hospitals like Lakeridge Health Corp. in the 905, with rapid growth: Their base costs are growing at 8% a year. That's why health care funding has been going up 8.2% on average per year. So now what it means is, when you reduce that funding even further, they're going to have to lay off more nurses, more technologists, more people in the community hospitals. These are our large community hospitals in the province of Ontario that need adequate funding, and you can't do it at 5% or, even worse, 3.8% three years from now. Will the minister then admit that this is an inadequate level of funding that is going to result in pink slips for nurses in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I have listened to the member from Whitby–Ajax for a number of years now and I still can't figure out where he's coming from. Sometimes he stands in his place and argues that the government is spending too much. Sometimes his leader stands in his place and argues that we need to cut \$2.5 billion out of the health care system. Sometimes Mr. Flaherty stands up and argues that the government should get out of just about everything they're in. Now he's arguing that we're not spending enough money on health care. I simply want to tell him that a year ago we presented a plan to transform this health care system in this province, to make it more responsive, to reduce wait times, to have more community-based care, and most importantly, to give him comfort to have a health care system that is sustainable for generations to come.

1510

HIGHWAY 69

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, earlier today in Sudbury you announced

full funding for the construction of Highway 69, four lanes, from Parry Sound all the way to Sudbury, and minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order.

Mr. Bisson: I'm glad to see the Liberals are all excited this afternoon, but I want to look in the budget with the minister and I would like him to point out where in this budget the money is to fully construct that highway from Parry Sound to Sudbury, the billions of dollars necessary. Can you tell me on what page in this budget that will be found?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I want to tell the member how pleased the community was this morning. We attended the Rotary Sunrisers breakfast and we announced the good news of the budget. We announced post-secondary education funding. We announced paying down the deficit. But I did announce that finally, after 13 years of inaction by previous governments, be they NDP or Tory governments, we finally in Ontario have a government that is committed to four-laning Highway 69 from Sudbury to Parry Sound. It's a fully committed, 12-year action plan that will see, for the first time ever, a government committed to four-laning Highway 69, from Sudbury to Parry Sound. Finally, at the end of those 12 years, we will have realized a dream that no other government ever attempted.

Mr. Bisson: I look at the budget and there is no page, no mention of where the billions of dollars are going to come from to pay for the highway construction of four-laning from Parry Sound up to Sudbury. I remember this government in opposition, with Mr. Bartolucci, the member from Sudbury, standing on his feet and saying: "After the election, six months, we're going to put in place a northern Ontario highway strategy fund that is going to put in place the \$2.2 billion necessary in order to build this highway." Well, minister, here we are almost two years after the election. You're now into your second budget. Tell me where the \$2.2 billion is in this budget that you promised before the last election to fund Highway 69. Is this another Liberal broken promise, or is it a whole bunch of opportunity to say: "It's coming; wait; sometime soon," at a channel you select, who knows where?

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: Obviously the member from Timmins–James Bay hasn't read the budget. It's on page 75, all right? If you would read it, you would probably find the commitment to four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound. But I don't want to play politics with this. I want to repeat what I heard this morning from Rita Pulice, who lost a son on Highway 69, who lives in the Nickel Belt riding, and who said, "I'm excited. It's long overdue."

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: The member from Nickel Belt likes to rant and rave, but I would think she would want to hear from her constituent when she says, "Finally, you see what happens when community and government

come together." But let's listen to what Ron Henderson has to say—

The Speaker: I hope that you would add another supplementary for that one, but it's not there. New question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): My question is for the Minister of Health. I really believe—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. The member for Don Valley West is trying to speak.

Ms. Wynne: I really believe that the tabling of the budget yesterday is good news for Ontarians in both the long and the short term. We continue to progress with a strong plan to provide better access to health care across the province. At my budget breakfast this morning with the member for Eglinton–Lawrence and the member for St. Paul's that's certainly what we heard: positive response. This means more doctors and nurses, greater investments in long-term care and increased funding for hospitals. We have an aggressive agenda to keep Ontarians healthy. This agenda includes promoting healthier lifestyles and increasing public health funding to 75% by January 2007. We've announced three new vaccination programs for children, smoking cessation programs, and banning junk food from vending machines in elementary schools.

Our agenda includes a whole lot of key elements. However, one of the most crucial elements in this agenda is the plan for reduction of wait times. Last night on Our Town, on Citytv, the member for Hamilton East and the member for Erie–Lincoln were really struggling —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I really do appreciate the commitment that comes from the honourable member from Don Valley West, and I'm pleased to be able to say that as a result of the commitment demonstrated by our government, we're going to be able to build on the progress we've already made to reduce wait times in Ontario. I saw a quote this morning from Cam Dickie from Windsor Regional and Hôtel-Dieu Grace hospitals. It said that local hospitals have already begun shortening waiting times for surgeries, while at the same time providing more procedures such as hip and knee replacements, MRIs and CT scans, which will give area residents better access to health care. That was before the contribution that comes as a result of yesterday's budget where, on the key wait-time priorities that we campaigned upon, you will see nearly double-digit increases across the board, meaning that Ontarians who have waited too long for those key services will have access to them. This stands in stark contrast to the kind of health care that they'd get if a \$2.4 billion—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Wynne: I think the reason the members for Erie–Lincoln and Hamilton East were having so much trouble

last night is that neither of their governments has ever put a sustainable, rational plan in place to reform health care.

My question: Our hospitals are also critical and we need them there when we need them most. It's important that we continue to ensure that they have the resources they need to go forward. Unfortunately, our hospitals have been taking on more than just critical care. Our health care system hasn't been working as well as it can; for example, long-term care should be provided in long-term-care homes, not in hospitals. We have to make the necessary investments or changes to ensure that our hospitals can focus on critical care. Minister, what are we doing to reduce the challenges that hospitals face so that they can focus on what they do best?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Our record on this stands in very sharp contrast to that of previous governments that sometimes thought that all of health care could be measured on hospitals. Our mandate is it a very different one. It's to deliver a comprehensive health care system to the people of Ontario, one that recognizes the component parts that are needed to work well together. Page 61 of the budget lays out very well the comprehensiveness of the funding commitments that we've made, not just to hospitals alone, which themselves are getting a half-billion-dollar increase, but building on last year's most significant one-time investment in community care; we're expanding with significant new resources for long-term care—\$274 million to expand the capacities there; a significant investment in the renewal of public health—ongoing; more money for community-based mental health and addiction support, with strong, strong support coming from that sector yesterday. These things, taken together, are all designed, along with significant contributions to more home care, to do the best we can to take the pressure off our hospitals, to free them up for their special mission. Our contribution of family health teams will aid significantly in this very —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1520

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier. Your Minister of Health, after having been relatively quiet for a few months, seemed to have been unleashed again yesterday. In a scrum, he made the following statement regarding Hilary Short and the Ontario Hospital Association. He said, "When it comes to the Ontario Hospital Association, there's a real tendency to cry 'wolf.'" This morning on 1010 CFRB he again derided Hilary Short and the OHA, saying their predictions were duplicitous. That was simply because the OHA is saying that as a result of your budget, some 4,000 nurses and health workers will be laid off.

First of all, is it an appropriate manner of conduct for a senior cabinet minister to deride a key stakeholder the way he is doing, and second, is there no confidence in the OHA?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Where were you for the last 10 years?

The Speaker: Order.

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

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I make no apology for the commitment our government has shown to Ontario hospitals with more than a half-billion-dollar increase in resources. I send this message on behalf of our government: We intend to continue to do as we have, which is work very, very hard with front-line health care providers in the interests of enhancing the quality of care for patients in the province of Ontario, and I have no patience for comparisons of apples and oranges, which is exactly what we got into yesterday, taking numbers that included one-time, non-recurring funding and piling those in as a comparison to try to diminish this contribution of half a billion dollars of new resources. We're going to move forward as a government to enhance quality care for the patients of Ontario. That is our bottom line, and we will deliver on it.

PETITIONS

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Brock township has been declared an underserviced area by the Ministry of Health with respect to physician services since 1996;

"Whereas the Ontario government announced the creation of 150 family health teams, just like the community health centre in the spring budget;

"Whereas a CHC in Brock township could provide a range of community-based health and social services provided by a multidisciplinary team including physicians, nurse practitioners, nutritionists, health promotion coordinators, social workers, counsellors and other health professionals needed in our local community;

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

"That the Brock CHC proposal submitted on February 27, 2003, be funded as recommended by the district health council."

It's signed by Lynne Marie Johnson, Krista McAvoy, Dwayne Long and many other people within the riding.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to read a petition sent to me by Deborah and Steve Kwinter, Robert McNay and their neighbours in the Creditview and Eglinton area of Mississauga. It deals with protection of anaphylactic students, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas there are no established, Ontario-wide standards to deal with anaphylaxis in Ontario schools; and

“Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylaxis in the Ontario Education Act; and

“Whereas anaphylaxis is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

“Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

“Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all Ontario schools, be it therefore resolved that ... the government of Ontario support the swift passage of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, that requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan.”

I'm pleased to support the petition, to sign it and to ask Owen to carry it for me.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): “Save the Frost Centre.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre has a long history in the county of Haliburton and provides an important historical link dating back to its use in 1921 as a chief ranger station; and

“Whereas the history in the use and management of natural resources in Ontario stretches back to the 1600s and forms an integral part of the overall history of the province and Ministry of Natural Resources, and the history of the ministry and the Frost Centre itself easily qualifies as a significant historic resource; and

“Whereas the Minister of Culture, Madeleine Meilleur, has said, ‘The McGuinty government values and is committed to conserving Ontario’s heritage for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future generations’; and

“Whereas the Frost Centre is an important educational resource for the community, being described on the Ministry of Natural Resources Web site as ‘Ontario’s leading natural resources education, training and conference centre’; and

“Whereas closure of the Frost Centre would cause economic hardship in the local communities of the county of Haliburton and district of Muskoka due to direct job losses and loss of tourism dollars spent in local communities; and

“Whereas the local community has not been consulted about the closure plans;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should not close the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre.”

This is signed by hundreds of people from my riding.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, specifically

addressed to the Minister of the Environment. It reads as follows:

“Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks plus children’s playgrounds;

“Whereas it is therefore unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

“Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

“Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminum cans worth \$27 million into landfill” sites “every year instead of recycling them;

“Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institute a collection program that will include all pop drinks, Tetra Pak juices and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment.”

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I’ll be delighted to sign it as well.

EYE EXAMINATIONS

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby–Ajax): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the 2004 provincial budget was not clear on whether adult optometry patients who have or who are at risk for medical conditions such as diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and clinically significant cataracts would continue to be covered through the Ontario health insurance plan; and

“Whereas Ontario’s optometrists strongly feel that Ontario seniors, those under 20 and those with chronic sight-threatening diseases must continue to receive primary eye care services directly from Ontario’s optometrists; and

“Whereas forcing patients to be referred to optometrists through their family physicians ignores the years of specialized training optometrists undertake to detect, diagnose and treat eye conditions; and

“Whereas almost 140 communities across the province have already been designated as underserved for family practitioners and the government’s approach will only exacerbate the problem unnecessarily;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately clarify that the eye examination services they provide to patients at risk for medical conditions will continue to be covered by OHIP and the coverage for these services is not dependent on a patient being referred to an optometrist by a family physician.”

I’ve signed my name.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Ontario’s three remaining regional centres for people with developmental disabilities, located in Smiths Falls, Orillia and Blenheim, Ontario;

“Whereas the regional centres are home to more than 1,000 disabled adults, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing the regional centres will have a devastating impact on people with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the regional centres to extend specialized services, support and professional training to thousands more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Ontario’s regional centres for people with developmental disabilities open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

This petition is signed by a number of residents from Chatham, Thamesville and Charing Cross. I, too, sign the petition.

1530

HALTON RECYCLING PLANT

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas noxious odours from the Halton Recycling plant in Newmarket are adversely affecting the health and quality of life of residents and working people in Newmarket; and

“Whereas local families have lost the enjoyment of their properties for themselves and their children, face threats to their health and well-being, and risk a decline in the value of their homes; and

“Whereas for the 300 members of the nearby main RCMP detachment, as well as other workers in the area, the odours are making their working conditions intolerable;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, demand that the Minister of the Environment take immediate action to halt all noxious emissions and odours from the Halton Recycling plant, and take all steps necessary to force Halton Recycling to comply with environmental rules,

including closing the plant if the odour problems continue.”

As I am in full agreement, I have affixed my signature. I’m happy to give it to Alistair.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Before I read the petition, I just want to congratulate my colleague from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock on the successful second reading of her proposal on apprenticeships, having read my own petition on access to trades and professions so often.

I have a petition here from Marilyn Matthews of Greensboro Drive and Sophia Cabral of Northmount Avenue in Mississauga. It’s a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly on Credit Valley Hospital capital improvements. It reads as follows:

“Whereas some 20,000 people each year choose to make their home in Mississauga, and a Halton-Peel District Health Council capacity study stated that the Credit Valley Hospital should be operating 435 beds by now, and 514 beds by 2016; and

“Whereas the Credit Valley Hospital bed count has remained constant at 365 beds since its opening in November 1985, even though some 4,800 babies are delivered each year at the Credit Valley Hospital in a facility designed to handle 2,700 births annually; and

“Whereas donors in Mississauga and the regional municipalities served by the Credit Valley Hospital have contributed more than \$41 million of a \$50-million fundraising objective, the most ambitious of any community hospital in the country, to support the construction of an expanded facility able to meet the needs of our community;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care undertake specific measures to ensure the allocation of capital funds for the construction of A and H block at Credit Valley Hospital to ensure the ongoing acute care needs of the patients and families served by the hospital are met in a timely and professional manner, to reduce wait times for patients in the hospital emergency department, and to better serve patients in the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite.”

This is my home hospital. I’m pleased to affix my signature in support and to ask Joshua to carry it.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by a great number of people in the riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, where the present Minister of Agriculture is the MPP. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen’s Park

because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm issues; and

“Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions, rising costs for energy and a crushing regulatory burden on farmers; and

“Whereas current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario’s farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province that protects our rural way of life, and to work in the short term to alleviate the farm income crisis and listen to the concerns of farmers about the greenbelt.”

Obviously, the concern in our farm community is still there. I affix my signature, as I agree with the petition.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I do have a petition here, accompanied by a letter, which is signed by 325 tenants of Doversquare Apartments. I’ll read the petition, as it is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario in March 2005. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the so-called Tenant Protection Act of the defeated Harris-Eves Tories has allowed landlords to increase rents well above the rate of inflation for new and old tenants alike;

“Whereas the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal (OHRT) created by this act regularly awards major and permanent additional rent increases to landlords to pay for required one-time improvements and temporary increases in utility costs and this same act has given landlords wide-ranging powers to evict tenants; and

“Whereas our landlord, Sterling Karamar Property Management, has applied to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) to add a fourth high-rise unit to our compound, in order to circumvent city of Toronto restrictions on density and the city’s opposition to its project;

“Whereas this project would lead to overcrowding in our densely populated community, reduce our precious green space, further drive up rents and do nothing to solve the crisis in affordable rental housing;

“Whereas this project will drive away longer-term tenants partially shielded from the post-1998 Harris-Eves rent increases, thereby further reducing the number of relatively affordable units in the city core;

“Whereas our own MPP, Liberal Tony Ruprecht, called for a rent rollback (reduction)—

Interjection.

Mr. Ruprecht: I’m sorry, Mr. Speaker. This is part of the petition and I have to read this, OK? I’m not making this up, because it’s right here in black and white.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Just keep reading the petition.

Mr. Ruprecht: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

“Whereas our own MPP, Liberal Tony Ruprecht, called for a rent rollback (reduction) at a public event in June 2003 and spoke out against the proposed fourth high-rise at a community meeting in November 2004;

“We, the undersigned, residents of Doversquare Apartments in Toronto, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“To institute a rent freeze until the exorbitant Tory guideline and above-guideline rent increases are wiped out by inflation;

“To abrogate the Harris-Eves ‘Tenant Protection Act’ and draw up new landlord-tenant legislation which shuts down the notoriously pro-landlord ORHT and reinstates real rent control, including an elimination of the Tory policy of ‘vacancy decontrol.’”

Since I agree with this petition, I will sign my name to it.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise pursuant to standing order 55 to give the House the business for next week.

On Monday, May 16, in the afternoon, the budget motion; in the evening, Bill 194.

On Tuesday, May 17, in the afternoon, the budget motion; in the evening, Bill 176.

On Wednesday, May 18, the afternoon and the evening are to be confirmed.

On Thursday, May 19, the afternoon and the evening are both to be confirmed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2005 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 11, 2005, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The leader of the official opposition.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I’m very glad you’re here in the chair for these remarks I’m going to make today. I will have an amendment to move at the end of the period I’m allotted today with respect to the budget because, needless to say, I’m not standing to speak in favour of a motion that endorses the budgetary policy of this government.

We made reference to the fact that this was an ad lib budget, and I think in just about every respect, and it’s becoming more obvious by the minute, that’s exactly what it was. It starts from the fact that there really is no financial plan that can be relied upon here for the prov-

ince of Ontario. This is now, by our count, and we've probably lost count, the fourth financial plan, but there probably have been more that we've missed—the fourth plan.

Of course, this was a government that came to office promising to balance the budget every year. They then had their first budget, in which they promised to have a balanced budget by 2007. Now we have a plan that makes some sort of sketchy commitment to balancing the budget possibly in 2008, but maybe it could be balanced in 2007, but maybe not, and on it goes from there.

I have absolutely no doubt that when we come to be in this place at the same time next year, we will have yet another plan that has some other date attached to it, or the government and my friend the Minister of Finance will have finally fessed up and said, "You know what? We really don't believe in balanced budgets at all. We're just not going balance it at all." They'll fess up and be straight with the people and tell them, because they really don't believe in it.

It's also an ad lib budget because there are no details in it. There are details in some areas, I'll confess, but there are lots of other areas where there are no details. We had the spectacle today where we had the minister of infrastructure in here who cobbled together some sort of statement overnight, because he could see that there were five different numbers published in five different papers over the last 24 hours on how much the government would be spending on infrastructure this year. Even in his own statements—his own statements, I think, gave a number of \$18 billion that was to be spent, but the budget itself, on page 71, only indicates an allocation of \$11.5 billion in capital. So as usual with our friends opposite here, the numbers just don't add up. They just don't add up.

1540

The teachers, who are of course very supportive of this government—and they have good reason to be, in some respects, in terms of some of the things that have been done: cheques that have been written and so forth—said in their release that vis-à-vis education policy, this budget is short on specifics. You could go right down the list in many different areas. So it really is an ad lib budget.

I also referred to it yesterday as a budget of missed opportunity. I want to talk about that for a couple minutes, because I think that it really was a missed opportunity to do one of the things the government talks about a lot and to do even more of it, but also to do two other things they don't talk about a lot. The extra money that the Treasurer basically had pouring in the door of his offices this past year from the taxpayers—where did it come from? It came from the hard work of people across Ontario. I think I'm right that the amount of personal income tax surplus, I'll call it, that you had over what you expected was \$274 million.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): That's not a surplus.

Mr. Tory: It's a surplus over what you had planned on having. It's more than you budgeted to have; it most

certainly is. The personal income tax revenues were higher than they expected. The corporate tax revenues, going from memory, were, I think, \$1.193 billion higher than what the Minister of Finance had projected in his budget of last year. This reflects the hard work—

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: And there's more good news to come.

Mr. Tory: This is good news. I agree with my friend the Minister of Finance that it's good news. But what the Minister of Finance doesn't focus on at all is the fact that this results from the hard work and the ingenuity of businesses and people across Ontario. That is why I would argue that when you have that kind of unexpected windfall of revenue, which was not in your plans at all, you should look at a variety of things you should be doing with that money. It's why I advanced the argument yesterday—

Interjections.

Interjection: The Minister of Finance is heckling.

The Speaker: Would you allow the leader of the official opposition to make his presentation. I recall, Minister of Finance, how quiet he was listening to your presentation. Give him the same courtesy.

Mr. Tory: What was done with this windfall of money earned by hard-working Ontarians and their businesses was to spend, spend and spend again—not just spending that money, but spending another \$800 million on top of that, because the deficit, in a year when it could have gone down, actually went up, notwithstanding this huge windfall in revenue. It went up, as against what the minister projected it would do for the fiscal year just ended.

I believe, when I talk about a missed opportunity, that there was a missed opportunity to do three things instead of one. The one was spending, and there was lots of that done, for sure. The other two things that I think could have been done, though, would have been to bring about a more significant reduction—in fact, there was no reduction at all—a reduction in the deficit, so that the deficit and spending levels we went into this year with would both have been less, and would have put the province in a stronger financial position entering this year, allowing the province to move toward a balanced budget, with certainty, by 2007. It would have allowed the minister to keep his own commitment, made last year at this time, to balance the budget by 2007.

The second thing that could have been done, and I think should have been done, as a reflection of the fact that we have this windfall of money, is to provide some relief to the people who earned it. I was thinking there, in particular, of the individuals who earned it. The income tax revenue that came in would have allowed for—I gave the example yesterday—a 10% reduction in the Ontario health tax brought in by this government last year. I refer to it as the illegal health tax, because it was and it is, and people are going to have to pay twice as much in dollars out of their pockets this year for their health tax as they did last year. I think some recognition of the fact that people earned a lot more money and paid a lot more tax

to this government than it expected and some relief provided to them, in terms of the health tax, would have been most welcome indeed.

I found when I was campaigning in the by-election, and have found many, many times since—I've had the good fortune to be in, I think, 96 ridings in the province since I became leader of this party—that there are an awful lot of people you meet in every walk of life, particularly people who are just hard-working Ontarians, who say they're getting 2% at the office or at the plant; they're getting 2% at work, whatever it is they do. Some are saying they're getting less than 2% at work. However, they're saying, "I get 2% at work, and then I get the new health tax imposed by the Minister of Finance and Premier McGuinty last year," a huge additional tax burden on them. Then they get the bill from Hydro, indicating that their hydro bill is going up by 5%, 6% or 7%. Then they get their municipal property tax bill, which will, of course, be even higher next year, reflective of the cutbacks in municipal funding we're seeing from this government, which we've catalogued in this House. Those are government-controlled bills of one kind or another that they're getting. They match that against the 2% and add to that, of course, the fact that gasoline and natural gas prices—as I heard the Premier saying on some radio station or other this morning, milk and bread and those prices are all going up. They just look at you and say, "How are we supposed to cope?"

If there had been just the slightest recognition when the Minister of Finance, thanks to the efforts of the people of Ontario, had decided not only that he could have done better in reducing the deficit, not only that he could have invested some money in additional spending on their priorities, whatever they might be—be it health care, education—he could have done that. He could have done some additional reduction on the deficit to a level that would have helped us this year and helped us get closer to a balanced budget by his own chosen deadline of 2007, which he has now said he's not going to meet, or is unlikely to meet, and it would have allowed people to just get some recognition for their hard work and maybe have that money in their own pockets to spend in the economy and create jobs and economic activity as they see fit.

I think that would have been a good sign. It would have increased confidence in the functioning of government and in the management of people's money. It would have given them a small sign, a flicker of recognition from this Minister of Finance and from Premier McGuinty that they understand the fact that the combined weight of all the different charges and taxes and increases in things they, the McGuinty Liberals, control has really made it difficult for people who are getting 2% or less at their work.

Some more meaningful work on the deficit last year, with the revenue windfall the Minister of Finance had, would also have signalled to the people of Ontario that this Minister of Finance and this Premier understand the fact that you can't just keep borrowing and borrowing. I

think the people have come to understand over the last decade or so—I don't know if they did before—that when you run deficits, it is simply added to the debt, and the debt is money on which we pay interest, like everybody else does when they borrow money, and that money has to be paid back in due course, and will have to be paid back out of existing or increased tax revenues and tax increases in the future.

It's interesting to note, and I think it's a good point of comparison—these are points of comparison you can often make with people when you're talking to them, because these numbers are sometimes difficult for us all to comprehend; they're so big—that in 2006 and 2007, the debt interest budget for the province, that is, the interest on the debt, is almost equal to the budget for education. When people hear that kind of thing, I think they do understand, but it brings home the message that we can't just keep borrowing and borrowing, and adding and adding to the debt by incurring deficit after deficit.

If the members opposite in the McGuinty Liberal government cared as much as they say about health care and education and all the other services this government has the responsibility to deal with, they would care more about the deficit and would have taken more decisive action, starting last year when they had a windfall. When you have a windfall in your personal life, if you get a bonus at the office you didn't expect, I admit to you there are some people, whom you would call less than responsible, who would just go out and immediately blow it at a bar or go out and buy something and say, "We're going to spend it all." Most people who get that kind of bonus at the office and have credit card bills would say, "I'd better take at least some of that money and pay down those credit card bills and do something about the debt I have out there, because I've got this unexpected money," but not this government, which decided to spend it all. They spent it all.

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I'd like to talk about health care for a moment, because I think there is less here than meets the eye. When I say that, I will concede that there is in the budget—I believe I'm right in saying this; I'm sure the Minister of Finance will correct me if I'm not—\$1.8 billion in additional investment. Do you know what? That is good news. There is always good news and bad news, and you've chosen to help me put the good news on the table first. But the bad news is, there is \$2.8 billion in obvious pressures that exist in the system that have gone completely unaddressed. When I talked earlier about this being an ad lib budget that's very short on details, what you have here is another example of that, with the \$1.8 billion that has been allocated, but no mention in the budget whatsoever of things like the \$330 million in accumulated deficits from the past that are left over from last year.

This government had the unbelievable gall to have the hospitals, on threat of dire consequences, submit their reports on how they would balance their budgets. The worst things would happen to them if they didn't do this.

They have sat and they have sat and they have sat on the key parts of those reports submitted by the hospitals of Ontario for months and months now and, even now, in the budget of the Minister of Finance, there is no answer as to what is to be done about that. Unless the answer is just to say, "You're just going to have to eat it," when they've gone out and borrowed that money and so forth, we can only assume that the \$1.8 billion has to include taking into account the \$330 million in deficits that existed as of the end of last year.

On top of that, we have the wage increases that were baked into the system as of the time we began the year. They were negotiated previously; they're in the system; they're going to happen when the new fiscal year begins. Then we add to that some of the specific measures that were announced yesterday in the budget itself, and you end up with a number that is not that far off \$2.8 billion. Of course, it's evidenced further by the fact that you have the comments from people like the Ontario Hospital Association and some of the other stakeholders in the health area. There are just a couple of them here.

We have Nicholas Vlacholias, the CFO of the Cornwall Community Hospital: "The budget increase for hospitals is far lower than what's required to balance the books.... It falls far short of what is required."

Hilary Short—we heard her comments earlier today a number of times in question period—the president of the OHA: "This means that many hospitals could—within weeks—be required to plan reductions to core patient services and for the elimination of up to 4,000 staff positions." She went on to say, in another comment, "We're very disappointed and we're very worried. It looks as though we're facing another challenging year.... It could lead to something in the region of 4,000 layoffs."

Joan Lesmond, the president of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, says, "We are concerned about the government's silence on its next steps in reaching its promised 8,000 full-time new nursing positions by 2007."

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: The ONA president had a comment to make that was even more disconcerting than that. Linda Haslam-Stroud, of the Ontario Nurses' Association, said, "There will be layoffs. We don't believe that the ministry money that's being put out is actually being spent on nurses on the front line."

What we have here is this budget that, again, is short on details and doesn't address these pressures. We have these comments from the people who are on the front lines and responsible for administering these budgets, people who are the head of the nurses' organizations and so on. I would suggest this is a real attempt to sort of mislead or to fail to deal utterly with these issues that total about \$1 billion. I think it is less than responsible to do that, to come forward to this House, bring in a budget that crows about the \$1.8 billion in additional funding and all the wonderful things that are going to be done with it, when it's clear, in response to the question from the member for Whitby—Ajax this afternoon, that they

have no answers on how they're going to deal with these things and meet their targets going forward.

The minister said in the budget speech yesterday—and I remember the quote—"The wait-time strategy is working." I raised yesterday—and he can put his thumbs up. I would ask him the same question I asked the Minister of Health and I asked the Premier once previously, which is that in the event they want to tell us and prove to us that the wait-time strategy is working, all they then need do is show us where the wait times started on any given day, including the day, April 4, when I first asked—

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: That's what we're working on.

Mr. Tory: He says they're working on it. They're working on everything. If I picked up and read out of this budget all the things they're working on, it would take three hours to read the things they're working on, the studies they're about to commission to think about the possibility of potential legislation in the future, in 2009. This budget is filled with all kinds of things to be done in 2009. But back to the wait-time strategy. There are no numbers whatsoever in the budget or anywhere else that would allow the Minister of Finance to say the wait-time strategy is working. Again, all they've done—they stand up and say they have spent more to finance more procedures of one kind or another, and there's no question that all of us would agree that all those procedures were needed, but what they never were able to tell us—because they can't, because they're not really managing it, because there is no plan and because they don't know—is, "Where did we start in terms of what the waiting list was? And now, after we've invested all of this taxpayers' money, can the taxpayers rest assured, can they be comfortable in the notion, that the money has been well invested and in fact has led to some reduction in the waiting times?" They still can't tell us, yet the minister is able to stand up and say that the wait-time strategy is working.

It is really just more evidence of the pay more, get less health care system that has been operated by this government from the beginning: pay more in the sense that every single individual taxpayer in Ontario will pay out of their pockets twice as many dollars this year as last year for the health tax, and they will end up this year getting less health service than they did last year. We don't need to go into that long list of chiropractors and physiotherapists and a whole host of other things.

Then, maybe we could turn and see if we can find a ray of sunshine for Ontario's farmers. Heavens above, we know—I know, because I spend a lot of time in rural Ontario; my riding is principally rural—that farmers in Ontario are in need of a lot of help. I heard the Minister of Finance say at his press conference yesterday that he's met many farmers across the province who are doing very well indeed. Well, the fact of the matter is that I haven't had the luxury of meeting those people the minister has met. I have spent a lot of time meeting with a lot of farmers across this province, and while I will say to him that some who are in the supply-managed sectors

are doing OK, they will tell you that there is no occasion for celebration among that group of farmers whatsoever.

The dairy farmers, for example: I was on a dairy farm in the riding of the member for Simcoe North last week and they were telling me, for example, of the issues and difficulties they have in culling their herds because the closure of the border has had a very significant impact on their ability to make an income. They counted on that income from the sale of those cows in past years to run their farms and to make their budgets. Now they're basically without that income. Of course, many of those farmers who are in the supply-managed areas are farmers who are also growing some crops. I don't call them cash crops any more, because there's no cash involved.

So I haven't met these farmers. I did suggest yesterday that perhaps the minister was talking about the marijuana farmers. They're the only ones I could think of who are doing well—before they get busted—because there just isn't anybody else.

The question that the minister was being asked by members of the media yesterday—so it was clear that it wasn't just me, and it wasn't just the Ontario Federation of Agriculture that noticed that this government has cut back yet again on its funding for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food—was, “Don't you consider this cutback, this latest cutback in the budget of Ministry of Agriculture and Food, to be an open invitation to the farmers to come down yet again?” The only time they got attention from the Minister of Agriculture and Food, who stood up today—I was afraid he was going to explode. But he stood up today and talked about all that he had done, and the only time he flinched a muscle, the only time he showed the slightest degree of interest in the farmers of Ontario in terms of getting them any help last year, was after 10,000 of them stood out here on the front lawn of the Legislature and protested—decent people who would never think to come and protest at the Legislature, who had never protested at the Legislature before. He was asked yesterday, “Isn't this an open invitation to come back to protest?” His response to that was, “Gosh, I've met a lot of farmers who seem to be doing OK.” Perhaps you could get me a list of those people because I can tell you I haven't met them at all. I think it demonstrates an insensitivity, frankly, on the part of this government and this minister, and in particular this Premier, and the man who's charged with the responsibility at the cabinet table for standing up and fighting and obtaining resources for the farmers: namely, the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Again, don't take it from me. Let's take it from a couple of people who've had some things to say about this today in the course of responding to this budget. Ron Bonnett, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, says, “Our initial reaction was, ‘Holy cats, what's going on here?’ We've been making the case for the last number of months that there had to be renewed investment in agriculture. It appears there's been a huge cut.”

Let's have Kevin Durkin, the president of the Hastings Federation of Agriculture: “I can't imagine where the

cuts will be coming from. The agriculture budget has been cut and cut and cut.” I guess he's making that up too; I don't know.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Yes.

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Mr. Tory: You're saying he is. Perhaps you should call him and tell him he's making this stuff up.

In any event, then we would have Mr. Bonnett again: “Now we need to be concerned with where the Honourable Steve Peters, Minister of Agriculture and Food, will be making cuts within his ministry ... something's going to suffer.”

Marg Telford, a Peterborough farmer quoted in the Peterborough Examiner: “If things keep going the way they've been going, we'll have to downsize. We'll have to get rid of a farm, we'll have to get rid of some land. We can't keep feeding all these cattle while not making any money. If there's no money being given to farmers, what do you do? You're SOL. There will be a lot of farms going down.” I'm quoting her. I got in trouble for using initials like that earlier today, but that's what she said. I'm quoting Marg Telford, a Peterborough farmer.

What we have here is a government that I think really has turned its back on the farmers, and turned its back on the smaller towns too. We asked about 60 questions in the Legislature about towns that had had confirmed the fact that under the Premier's new so-called fairer deal for municipalities they were going to see very substantial cutbacks. I think they will be in double jeopardy here because what they will see is the impact on their economies in some of these smaller towns and cities and the rural parts of the province, the negative impact on their economies from the fact that the farmers are not doing well. We've seen cutbacks in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food at the same time as we're seeing dramatic cutbacks in the transfer payments from the province of Ontario, which will undoubtedly, as these mayors and reeves and others have said, lead to very significant property tax and commercial tax increases on the local taxpayers in those cities and towns at this time next year.

I really believe this is reflective in the end of some kind of seeming inability on the part of this Minister of Agriculture to stand up and achieve results for his constituency. It's very disappointing because there is no question but that the farmers of Ontario are hurting badly. When you meet these people in the stores, when you meet them on the street, when you meet them on their farms, there is a very palpable sense of despair and anxiety and of just not knowing where to turn. They don't understand how people seemingly can have such a lack of appreciation for what they do in the fact that they feed us. All the way through society there seems to be a lack of recognition for their hard work, and it starts with what has happened here with this government turning its back on rural Ontario.

Let's go to infrastructure for a minute: \$30 billion over five years—or is it? Mr. Sorbara, the Minister of Finance, said yesterday that the plan “contemplates expenditures directly by the province.” When his officials

were asked about this yesterday, they said that the government itself would be financing \$20 billion to \$25 billion over time. That somehow doesn't add up to \$30 billion, and he said yesterday, and I think he even repeated it, or the Minister of Infrastructure did today, that all of the much-vaunted five-year, \$30-billion program would be paid for with public money. The minister said today in his statement that it was funded, and he threw around various numbers that it was funded, yet we just can't find numbers that add up in this budget to anything approaching even this year's part of it. Forget about the outlying years, because every program here requires you to have a telescope to look so far into the future in terms of when this stuff will actually get paid for. But even for this year, where is the money; where do you find it? You just don't find it in this year's budget.

I do want to say this: I welcome the conversion—and it started a couple of months ago—of this Minister of Finance. I remember very well a most excellent article in the *National Post* in which the Minister of Finance was quoted as saying that perhaps it was a trial balloon, for sure, and it was the beginning of his conversion, and obviously he has now converted all of his colleagues across the way to the notion that maybe, just maybe, the odd time, people who are outside of the government might have a good idea or might have a dollar that could be invested, or might have a way of doing something or might have a meaningful role to play in participating in these kinds of projects.

I remember the article in the *National Post*. It was about the Spadina subway extension, which I would be very supportive of. Obviously, if the people in the region of greater Toronto decide that that's the number one transit project, which I believe it should be, then we should take it up. But that day in the *National Post* the minister said, "Well, maybe we could turn to the pension funds." So significant a conversion or partial conversion did the *National Post* consider this that they phoned me and asked what I thought of this. I said that day—I always try to be charitable to the minister—that I welcomed the fact that he recognized that government can no longer be all things to all people, that government simply does not have the resources to do absolutely everything, certainly not on the timetable that some of these things have to be done. The bottom line is, if we don't make some of these investments in transportation, public transit and other public assets, we will be repeating the behaviour of governments over the last very long period of time, of all parties, I would say with respect—Progressive Conservative, Liberal and New Democrat.

For some reason, a lot of the time we think we can treat our public assets differently than we would ever treat our private assets. You would never have a situation where your house is falling down around your ears, the windows falling out, the eavestroughs falling down and holes in the wall, and you said, "Well, let's just leave it." The bottom line is—and the Minister of Finance knows this—that the level of infrastructure investment has been inadequate for many years under governments of all

parties. Part of the reason for that was, at least in the last couple of years, a complete rejection on the part of this government of the fact that maybe it would work to expedite some of this investment if you could get involved and do some of the things that were done by SuperBuild. I believe that this program was half announced in a big rush by the Minister of Infrastructure today because he knew they hadn't announced any detail yesterday. I believe that this really is just SuperBuild. They've kind of dusted it off. SuperBuild was an excellent program that did many good things across the province. They stand today as assets that people are using, buildings people are studying in and all kinds of projects that they are doing.

We had the presidents of pension funds in to see you on Monday.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: They were asking about you.

Mr. Tory: I'm sure they were asking about me because they know there is a better-than-even chance—well, I won't say better than even. They know there's a chance—

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: Do you know what they know? They know that I have been consistent on this throughout in terms of the need and the desirability of having people like the pension funds involved. It was my friend the Minister of Finance and all of his colleagues who absolutely, completely, ideologically and dogmatically rejected that kind of involvement until Monday of this week, or should I say more properly, Friday of last week, when the Minister of Infrastructure got up and made a speech. Suddenly the pension fund presidents are invited in for a meeting. Isn't it interesting that they are invited in on Monday before the budget? Isn't it interesting that all of the government's own capital spending numbers for this year are going down in the principal departments that actually will have these projects in them? I think what happened here is they pulled money out of the budget. They want to do the stuff they know they have to do and they rushed out the minister to make a speech and rushed the pension presidents in. Now they have suddenly become converts to public-private partnerships or wherever they want to call it.

It's revealing that in this year, you have the Ministry of Transportation—I think I'm right with the numbers—spending more on administration of the department than they are on capital, which is the money they use to build roads. That, I think, just says it all. The administrative operating cost of the Ministry of Transportation is \$975 million, the capital budget to build and maintain roads is \$622 million. Only this government could get the gap to the point where they are spending a huge amount more on administration than they are on building roads.

I am trying here to be reflective, on the one hand, of the fact that the government cobbled this together; in fact, they're still cobbling it together. I have my napkin here and I'm willing to send another one over if they need it to finish drawing up the infrastructure plan, because the minister himself said there will be more state-

ments given later. The plan is, as we say, being made up as they go.

Now, let's talk for moment, if we could, about efficiency and modernization. I believe that the goals—and I will say, there are some that are in this budget. In fact, there are previously repeated goals from six or eight months ago to achieve, over the period of the life of the government, a total of \$750 million in efficiencies and other kinds of savings across the government of Ontario. So when you look at the progress to date, and I was looking at it yesterday in the budget, you can see on page 41, they mention courier contracts having been put out for tender. They say that some of the things that have been done to look at business support services will generate savings of \$200 million when fully implemented by 2008. There is no progress report at all on how much has actually been done. I was being charitable and assumed a third or quarter of that has been done, so let's say that's \$50 million. Then we have the government's accommodation cost strategy, which will achieve, by 2007-08, \$50 million. So take a quarter of that, and we've got another—

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: Thank you very much—\$12.5 million.

Then we have information technology spending, \$100 million total by 2007-08, so \$25 million. Then we have the hodgepodge of other things to do with business practices, for a grand total, over four years, by 2007-08, of \$57 million, so a quarter of that.

I would say that this, on a budget of \$80 billion, is the best they can do, and I'm assuming; I was being charitable in actually saying you've done anything on this list.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: We've already done \$400 million.
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Mr. Tory: I say to the Minister of Finance, with the greatest of respect, that he has never come to this House or gone anywhere else and listed it. He came in here last fall and gave his third-quarter statement and he said at that time—I think I remember the number you had achieved—\$330 million of those savings.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Now we're over \$400 million.

Mr. Tory: That's terrific. He's now said they're over \$400 million, but never once has he even had just the courtesy or the respect, or the straightforwardness I would argue, to come into this House and actually catalogue what has been done. What has been done? It's just like the Premier coming in here with his deal with the Prime Minister the other day, and when I said, "Well, could you show us the piece of paper?"—I mean, I've been around. You don't come out of a meeting like that, where you've been negotiating for nine hours and you're going to have a press conference, and not have a single piece of paper on which you've written the deal down. I mean, come on, now.

This Minister of Finance would have us believe that he has achieved, now he says, \$400 million. I'll take him at his word and I'll ask him, then, to come into this House tomorrow—sorry, Monday afternoon at 1:30—

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I'll be here tomorrow if you'll be here.

Mr. Tory: I'll be happy to be here if you'll produce the list. Come in here on Monday afternoon at 1:30—it gives them the whole weekend to tabulate the list—and bring us the list of the specific savings. You know what? The list doesn't exist, because if it existed, it would be right here in this budget instead of these vague statements of nothing that has been achieved.

I would say to the minister that, even if he brought the list, he is unambitious in taking a budget of \$80 billion, where the taxpayers know there is a lot more money being wasted than finding \$750 million, which is less than 1%. It's a quarter of 1% being found each year of the life of this government. Having had responsibility for running lots of large organizations and having been around government before, I can tell you that you can do better than finding one quarter of 1% over the course of each year in the life of the government.

I wonder if the Clerk's table could tell me how much time I have left. I'm sorry, I didn't look. I thought it was counting down on the clock. Twenty-two minutes? You can't tell me that. I've no time left. Oh, I'm allowed to talk as long as I want? Never mind, I'll just keep going here.

The other thing I would say to my friend the Minister of Finance is this: I don't know whether it's the good fortune or the misfortune to read the report of the auditor, and I don't know how many members of this House or people outside the House read it from cover to cover, but I did. Oftentimes, the stories in the media focus on who used a credit card—these are important matters—to buy lunch somewhere and so on. There isn't as much focus on some of these other matters that make up this big, thick book, big matters that relate to very large expenditures of government money. I find it interesting that in all of this list here—again, if you had more to say, I'm assuming you'd say it on page 41 or you'd have taken a couple more pages to say it—there really is no mention made here, aside from the vague generalities that are in the Auditor General's report, which are so vague as to be basically meaningless—

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Now you're criticizing the Auditor General.

Mr. Tory: No, I'm not. I'm criticizing the government's response to the Auditor General's recommendations in the report, which contain the usual generalities. Frankly, if I tried to give those responses to the comments of the internal audit department when I was running a big company, they'd have called me up on the carpet, but nonetheless, that's a different subject.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: That's what I heard happened.

Mr. Tory: It never did. Not once.

Having said that, we don't even have—

Interjection: Sure?

Mr. Tory: Absolutely sure.

We have listed here no savings or no progress, nothing that could be reported on some of these very big items. I look at the fact that there was, for example, in the Aud-

itor General's report, a comment on all the bad morale in the public service and so forth and so on. There was an absenteeism problem of 12 days average for public servants across the board. That kind of an average you would never see ever allowed to exist in the non-government sector. You couldn't function on that kind of basis. If you did the math on what that would involve in terms of the money it cost the government to either replace those people, or work that doesn't get done, it would be an amount of money well in excess of any of these items, these very timid items, that the minister says he's going to deal with over the course of four years.

These are public servants who, I think, if they had a meaningful program in place to deal with these kinds of issues, you'd also see some of the other issues raised in the Auditor General's report dealt with in that regard, and everybody would be better off. They'd be happier in their work, they'd be away less often, the government would save money and so on.

But there's not a peep of any of that or any of most of what's in this book in terms of other things mentioned that are at the heart of the very large amounts of money that would allow this minister, if he really wanted to do what he said he was going to do, which was a line-by-line, program-by-program analysis, to really go at some of these things that involve big opportunities to save and accord greater respect to the taxpayers' money.

Then we get to page 106, where we have the Minister of Finance talking about the importance that exists to modernize "financial regulation to support a new generation of economic growth." Again, the Minister of Finance and I would agree on that, that it is crucially important.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: So far you've supported everything in the budget.

Mr. Tory: The minister wishes that I supported everything in the budget. We'll get to one other thing I support in a couple of minutes.

But I support what you say you want to do. What I don't support is the fact that what we have here is a series of things that, by including them in his budget, the minister concedes are necessary to maintain the strength and viability of one of our most important industries in Ontario, namely, financial services, and then he has all the measures that have to be done. Let's look at the language that's in the budget beside those different items.

"The Minister of Consumer and Business Services will be leading the implementation of a multi-year plan to update" etc.—again, another multi-year plan. These will all go on forever. In fact, when you look at the multi-year plans, they even have 30-year plans. Heaven knows, I want the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal to stand up one day and give us the list. I'd love to have the programs for this year. He could bring us this year, which would be super, because there isn't such a list at the moment, and then maybe he could bring us the list of projects that fall into year 30 so we could tell the people who drive on those roads and go to those school buildings that they're in year 30, when I'll be 80 years old and

heaven knows what will be going on. I mean, just the whole notion—

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: You'll still be Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: I might be Leader of the Opposition after four or five terms as Premier. Having said that, the Leader of the Opposition's job is a very important job here, and I'm proud to have it for the moment, until October 4, 2007, when I'll be changing jobs. Heaven knows, you might be Leader of the Opposition after that. I understand that's one of your ambitions.

Having said that, then we go down to the five-year review of the Securities Act: "The government remains committed to quickly completing the final steps needed to implement this change." Then we get to the Chair of Management Board and the report on the common securities regulator. The government "is leading work to ensure that, later this year, the next round of legislative changes ... will be introduced."

Then we get down to one of the really good ones, when it comes to the replacement of the Mortgage Brokers Act, and it's obviously important enough to be in this budget: "The government reaffirms its 2004 budget commitment to introduce a bill to replace the Mortgage Brokers Act in 2005." One of the bits of good news about this is that we can probably save money now in terms of the computer work being done; we can actually just change the dates in here, because all this stuff will be in here again next year. It's so important to protect an industry that is vital to the health and welfare of this province that it is—oh, I'm sorry, I forgot one: "The review of the Credit Unions and Caisse Populaires Act is well underway.... The government reaffirms its intention to introduce amendments to the act by fiscal year ending 2006." There's real urgency for you.

In any event, I want to talk about some other disappointments and then talk a little bit about a couple of other things.

Other disappointments: We have been promised time and time again by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and assorted others that we're going to see 1,000 new police officers on the street. I think we need those police officers. I have been to community after community across the province. Given all the things that we're putting on to the shoulders of our law enforcement officials, whether it's the new work they have to do on child pornography, the new work they have to do keeping track of predators, guns and gangs and so forth, we need those police officers. I ask the question again—back to my point about an ad lib budget: Where's the money? Where are the details? In fact, if you look at the spending of the Ministry of Community Safety, it's going up by a tiny amount, but there is no way that the amount by which the spending of that ministry is—

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): Twenty-seven million.

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Mr. Tory: Twenty-seven million dollars? Well, if the minister would like to stand in his place now and say that that money is specifically to fund the province's share of half, which the minister confirmed here just a few days ago, then that's super. Let him get up and announce it. Let the municipal police forces and others get on with putting those police officers on the street. We've heard enough of the promises; now they need the police officers to be on the street, in the cars, on the bicycles, walking the beats and keeping our communities safe.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Done.

Mr. Tory: Done. I tell you, don't we all wish it were that easy.

Municipal funding: Again, we asked 60 questions in here about municipal funding and about all the prices that will be paid by some towns, big and small, across the province that are going to see brutal reductions to their budgets this year. While they stood up and told me my figures were wrong, while they told me about the people who were getting more, I simply repeated to them over and over again, as I repeat here today: It's some program that takes money away from some people to give it to somebody else. The bottom line is, there are a lot of people being hurt by this new program, and that is going to hurt the taxpayers of those communities, who are going to have to pay very significant increases indeed next year.

I want to just make a reference as well to the very fulsome commitment made to the forestry industry. Perhaps it's easier to look at the minister's budget statement. It was very easy to find it there because it was so short. Again, it probably illustrates about 12 of the different points I've been trying to make about the ad hockery and the ad lib and all this sort of thing.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Are you going to quote me?

Mr. Tory: Maybe the Minister of Finance could help me with the—there we are. I found it now. It's on page 12 of the budget address. It acknowledges that 30,000 people rely on this industry in the north and elsewhere for their livelihood, and probably many more than that in terms of jobs that are affected by the health or lack of health of the forest industry. Here is the—

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Read the whole speech.

Mr. Tory: Well, there's nothing more said about forestry, so I'm going to quote the part that relates to the government's plan for the forestry industry. Here it is; it won't take long: "And we are working on ways to strengthen the forest products sector. It's a very important industry for Ontario—it employs over 30,000 people in the north." Some plan. A very profound statement indeed from the Minister of Finance in his budget.

I'd like to talk about education, and specifically post-secondary education, for just a moment. You know, people often say, including me—and I believe it to be so, in my heart—that in our system, opposition leaders and opposition politicians don't say often enough, when some of the right things are being done, that they're being done. I do welcome the investment being made by this

Premier and by this minister and by this government in post-secondary education. I said yesterday that I think it is something that is right to be done in the interests of not only providing more educational opportunities for more people, but also in ultimately putting in place the kind of stronger foundation we need going forward. I just wish some of the other things were being done in terms of financial management, taxation regime, the regulatory regime and so on—a different story. I might just mention that toward the end. I've touched on a number of these things as we've gone through.

As was said by some of the education and student officials, while there's some good news in here—I welcome, for example, the changing of the thresholds for parental contribution and so on. I think these are good things that are being done. There were often a lot of students in the past where it was assumed their parents were making contributions to the cost of their education when they weren't, for whatever reason. It was often assumed that the parents could. I think these changes to the thresholds are good. But as someone said yesterday—and it applies to so many things: In budgets, and especially when it comes to this government, the devil is indeed in the details.

I think we will have to wait to make sure the minister is good at his word on one of the most important things that people will have to watch in the context of this investment, which is, are we going to make sure we are getting a return—it comes back to the same point I was making about wait times. I don't know. I don't say these things about wait times in a spirit of partisanship; I simply say it as someone who says, "How do you know whether your plan is working for wait times if you can't measure it?" I say the same thing with respect to the investments in post-secondary education. The minister—

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Accountability. Accessibility.

Mr. Tory: He said it too. I agree he said it yesterday, but the key is to see what happens ultimately in terms of the measures and policies that are put in place that accompany the money, to make sure we see that it doesn't just go down a black hole, that in fact it does actually improve accessibility and actually improve the quality of the educational experience for the students in Ontario.

I do note the fact that this, like almost every other measure in this entire budget, is back-end-loaded, more so than Mr. Rae would have recommended. I do note that there is, again, a serious lack of detail in terms of the bureaucracy of student aid. When I've had the student groups in—and I'm sure the Minister of Finance has heard this himself, as other members of the House probably have—part of the frustration as well has not just been the quantum of what's available, but the morass of bureaucracy and paperwork you have to go through to actually get the help.

While I welcome the statements of good intention and I welcome some of the principles the minister has said will accompany that investment, the devil will be in the details. I hope it isn't the devil; I hope there is good news in the details when they're forthcoming, and I hope

they're forthcoming soon. I think that's a fair enough thing to expect.

Who is it I ask about how much time I have left here, Mr. Speaker? I'm unclear on that; I'm new.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Ten minutes.

Mr. Tory: I have 10 minutes. Thank you very much.

I want to conclude by talking about the importance of having a plan and sticking to it. As I said at the outset—unless we have missed some, and that's entirely possible—this is the fourth plan coming from these Liberals in two years.

People out there who are making investments, people out there who are just trying to live their lives, are looking for a number of things. They're looking for consistency. They're looking for consistency on tax policy and for consistency on things like infrastructure. They want to know: Can they participate or not? If we go through these wild swings where one day your participation is welcome—"We want to be your partner; we want you to help us."—and the next day you're seen as the epitome of evil and you're not wanted, your money's not wanted, it's a bad thing, this is very bad. No group has been more inconsistent when it comes to infrastructure and what their policy is than the Liberals.

My friends in the New Democratic Party are consistent. They are opposed to it. They think it's wrong. They have all kinds of comments to make about it. We've been consistently in favour of these kinds of partnerships because we believe that they're necessary, that they work well and so on. Then we have, as usual, as in so many other areas, our friends in the Liberal Party who were deathly against this. Many trees have been killed publishing statements by the Premier and the Minister of Finance about being opposed to these partnerships and so on. But now they're in favour. That's fine; it's OK. I'm just saying that a little consistency would be great. If you could even just keep this policy in favour of these partnerships until you are defeated in October 2007, that would be super, because then we could have two and a half years where we have that consistency of policy.

We need transparency. People are right to be mystified about how it can be the case that you can have a government that claims in its election platform and in its first budget that it's going to hire thousands of nurses, and yet they see with their own eyes in the newspaper, and they see the people on television—the Minister of Health keeps saying we're making this up or that the nurses' association is making it up. They see nurses being laid off. They see the hospital association saying nurses and other people who work in hospitals are going to be laid off. So there is a need for transparency on things like this. You can't say in the budget that you're going to hire, I think, 3,000 more nurses this year and the money is there for it, and then total up all the numbers for the Ministry of Health and find there is absolutely no way they can finance the hiring of those nurses, paying off the deficits, funding the hospitals properly for this year, and all the new initiatives they announced in their budget. They're way short.

People out there need certainty in the economy. People who are going to invest need certainty. Again, I raise infrastructure. They need to know that infrastructure is going to be there. That's why I am happy that we will see what the plan is and when it comes and how many dates, times and places and amounts are attached to it.

I look at the comments on Highways 404 and 427 and what you now call the GTA-Niagara corridor, and it says the government—I'm just going from memory—is going to begin to review options. Heavens above. Those projects have been on the drawing board for years, under various governments. It's time to get on with them. Get the minister to stand in his place and say, "Here's the date, here's the money, here's who our partners are going to be. We're going to get it built and we're going to have it done," and maybe we are actually going to have one thing done by 2007 so somebody can actually go and look at it, as opposed to looking at all the signs you'll put up in 2007. I think the reason these capital spending numbers are alike is because all you're really going to buy are signs. You're just going to buy signs and they'll all be put up in 2007, and there won't be anything built anywhere by anybody. But you'll put up the signs: "Honourable Greg Sorbara, Minister, Premier-to-be." But never mind. I'm completely off topic, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how I can get so badly off topic.

The certainty we need with respect to infrastructure is a plan with dates, times, places, money, projects and partners. I endorse the fact that we're going to have partners to do it.

Let's talk about how much we need to have a welcoming environment in this province to make sure that people want to come here to invest, want to stay here, want to stay invested here and keep creating jobs here. It starts with the last thing people want to see when they come to look at investing. There's a whole bunch of them. They don't want to see inconsistency. They want transparency. They want certainty. They certainly don't want a high-tax environment. I think one of the reasons why is that when the minister was awash in this extra revenue, he might have sent even the smallest of psychological signals to everybody, starting with the hard-working individual taxpayers, who generated \$200-plus million of that money with their hard work for you and for your government; and going all the way through even the business community, where they had said, "If there was the glimmer of recognition on the part of this government and this Minister of Finance that you could just take a little bit off that tax load to respect and recognize," at the same time, you had enough money to bring down the deficit more than you did and to make investments in some of your stated priorities.

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The same is true of waste and inefficiency in government. If people from the private sector who look, who are going to invest here, see a government that is truly committed to eliminating waste and mismanagement, it is related to the level of taxation and the level of borrowing and spending, I think they would welcome that. The same

is true with regulation. We see this kind of funny, “Let’s have a study to examine the potential of the possibility of maybe one day having a piece of legislation following a report by some consultants,” and they say to themselves, “These people are not serious about creating the kind of environment that will result in the maintenance of, let alone new investment in, the financial services industry that is so important to the welfare of this city and of this province. Of course, it’s true as well that they don’t want to see a high-spending government because they know that a high-spending government means a borrowing government, a high-taxing government, and so forth and so on. Of course, I believe that what they want to see as well is a government with one plan—not four, not six—dates that don’t change all the time, promises that are made and kept. I think one of the fundamental—

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: The Minister of Finance can say whatever he wants, but the bottom line is that people who lived in this province and who did business in this province would have had good reason to know in their hearts that these people were the people who said they would come to office and not raise taxes, they were going to come to office and balance the budget every year. They then said they were going to balance the budget by 2007, and on it goes, all the different things that they have said.

The result is speaking for itself a bit, because when you don’t do those things—and make no mistake. You asked me a question today, or the Premier did, and I actually answered it, which is better than what can be said for what he does most days in this place. But the bottom line is, I answered and said, “No, I would not have gutted the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, I wouldn’t have gutted it. I wouldn’t have taken a 25% reduction when these people are in crisis.” I said that I would have chosen to use the toolbox differently than you did when it comes to how I would have dealt with the two points.

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: You’re saying “Fair enough,” I think, that I could have used the toolbox differently, but then it’s not fair to say that I don’t have a view on these things.

I am saying, “Yes, I am.” I said yesterday—they asked me a straight question; they got a straight answer—that I wouldn’t have tried to balance the budget this year, but I would have tried to balance it for sure by a date certain, not this “Well, maybe we’ll kind of try to do it by 2008,” or “Well, maybe we can do it by 2007.” Next year it will be, “Well, 2008. Maybe we can do that, but it might be 2009.” This is no plan. This is no commitment. This is not the discipline that’s required to run an organization like this, and to send the message of confidence to people who want to invest or just continue to live in this province. So I said that. If you had asked me yesterday would I have, as part of that use of the different tools of the government of Ontario, given back to the people of Ontario 10%, or perhaps not collected it for this year, because you are collecting twice as much as last year,

then I would have done that. That is exactly what I would have done.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: That’s wrong.

Mr. Tory: You say it’s wrong, I say it’s right. It’s the least you could do to reflect the hard work of these people.

The bottom line is that when people don’t see the things that cause them to make the decisions to invest and to grow and to create jobs here, then we see a lack of economic growth and a lack of job creation. When you look in this budget, the minister said yesterday that he was using conservative projections. But I’ll take his projection. It’s the one that’s in our budget—

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: “Cautious.”

Mr. Tory: “Cautious”; I’m sorry. Did I say “conservative?” I was sitting in the lock-up watching you speak yesterday, and I said, “He should have said ‘conservative.’” The minister is quite right. He said “cautious” yesterday. He should have said “conservative”—but nonetheless.

He has a 2.0% economic growth in the province next year, and he has 65,000 jobs. It’s great that there are 65,000 jobs being created, but that is far fewer than was the case last year. It is far fewer than should be the kind of productivity of the Ontario economy. I would suggest to you that there are a number of factors influencing that. The minister talked about some of them yesterday, but I would suggest to you that among the things that are impacting on the decisions people are making or not making about investing and creating jobs in this province are the lack of plans, the lack of consistency, the lack of transparency, the lack of infrastructure, the spending habits, the borrowing habits, the taxing habits, and some of the new legislation in the area of labour and other places that causes people to pause and say, “Can I rely on that environment in this province? Can I put my money there? Can I build my plant? Can I put my money there and create jobs for people, or do I have to worry about where these people are going?”

The same with the health care system. I think you said yesterday—I’m not sure whether it was in your paper or somewhere—that the health care system represents an important competitive advantage for us in terms of the kind of health care system we have. When people see—and I’ve had people tell me this, so I’m not relying on making it up or reading a clipping—the health care system in a state that’s more chaotic than it should be in terms of the doctor shortage, which, quite frankly, is not being addressed, or in terms of the insecurity that people are feeling about all the programs being funded going forward, that has a negative impact on investment decisions.

When people see a taxation regime they consider to be unfair and where there really is no consideration, the minister throws up his hands and says, “It’s not possible to show that glimmer of recognition to investors and hardworking people, that when I, the Minister of Finance, have \$2.6 billion in extra money, I will give a small nod to the people who worked hard to produce that revenue

and put it back into the economy where they can spend it,” at the same time as he seemed to have no trouble at all spending that money. He had no trouble making decisions to spend it; he had no trouble at all. My use of the toolbox would have said, “Spend some, apply some to your deficit, and give a little, tiny bit—just a little, tiny bit—back to people.”

At the end of the day, this is a plan that is no plan. This is ad hockery at its best and at its worst—its best in the sense that it’s a fine effort at ad hockery, but it’s at its worst because it is going to do things to the economy over time that are not going to be helpful. I just think there’s so much more that needs to be done and requires a much more focused and determined and detailed effort on the part of this government. I look at every single one of the important elements—infrastructure, health care and down the list—and see that there just isn’t the detail there. Every one of these things, I think almost without exception, has deadlines out into 2009 and 2010. That speaks to a lack of desire to be held accountable, because what the government does want to do, most of all, is to go to the election in 2007, when they already have enough problems based on all their past sins, let alone any that are committed after today—they don’t want to go to the election in 2007 and say, “Yes, that program has been completed; here are the results.” They’ll be able to say, just like all this bafflegab on page 106, “We are studying a way to enable possible legislation to be introduced sometime when somebody’s finished a report at some point in time or other.”

I’m happy to have had this opportunity to say these very few words. You know, it’s hard, because I like the Minister of Finance. He is a personable man. I said in my speech at the very successful—and I should underline “very successful”—fundraising dinner we had the other night—more than 2,000 people there. Rhetorically I asked the question: Did I think that Mr. McGuinty was really doing these things—no plan, no accountability, no real goals that are stated, no transparency—to harm the Ontario economy? I answered my own question. I said no, I didn’t think that was the case; I just thought he was in over his head and that the government was in over their heads on this.

In the case of my friend the Minister of Finance, I’m sure what is happening over there in that cabinet room, the same cabinet room that is seeing the Minister of Agriculture and Food routinely beaten down when he tries to say a word on behalf of the beleaguered Ontario farmers, is that this man, who has a background in business and understands the importance of goals and accountability and measuring results and really seriously looking hard for waste and inefficiency and having meaningful goals to meet—I think this man gets beaten down too. That’s what happens. It may well be connected to all the political intrigue of the Liberal Party; I’m not sure. I’ve heard reports. But never mind; that’s for another day.

I would move that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on May 11, namely, “That this House ap-

proves in general the budgetary policy of the government,” be amended by deleting the words after “That this House” and adding thereto the following:

“Recognize that this budget is the latest in a series of ever-changing fiscal plans and that:

“The government has provided inadequate support to Ontario’s hospitals, putting timely access to care in jeopardy;

“The government is failing Ontario’s farmers by cutting funding by 23.1% this year, on top of the 20% budget cut last year;

“The government has laid out no specific plan for meeting Ontario’s infrastructure needs and has not explicitly budgeted for those needs;

“Taxpayers will pay double the amount in health taxes this year, despite a promise by the Premier not to raise taxes at all;

“The government has done little to nothing specific to meaningfully attack waste and mismanagement in the government on a budget of \$80 billion; and

“These failures, these broken promises, these high taxes, high deficits, wasteful spending and burdensome regulations will harm Ontario’s economy and create a climate which will discourage investment and jobs in Ontario.

“Therefore, this House has lost confidence in this government.”

The Speaker: Mr. Tory moves that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on May 11, “That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government,” be amended by deleting the words after “That this House” and adding thereto the following:

“Recognize that this budget is the latest in a series of ever-changing fiscal plans and that:

“The government has provided inadequate support to Ontario’s hospitals, putting timely access to care in jeopardy;

“The government is failing Ontario’s farmers by cutting funding by 23.1% this year, on top of the 20% budget cut last year;

“The government has laid out no specific plan for meeting Ontario’s infrastructure needs and has not explicitly budgeted for those needs;

“Taxpayers will pay double the amount in health taxes this year, despite a promise by the Premier not to raise taxes at all;

“The government has done little to nothing specific to meaningfully attack waste and mismanagement in the government on a budget of \$80 billion; and

“These failures, these broken promises, these high taxes, high deficits, wasteful spending and burdensome regulations will harm Ontario’s economy and create a climate which will discourage investment and jobs in Ontario.

“Therefore, this House has lost confidence in this government.”

Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I move adjournment of the debate, please.

The Speaker: The member has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to revert to motions and to move a motion without notice regarding the standing committee on social policy.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? We have no unanimous consent.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could we have order, please?

Mr. Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move that this House adjourn for five minutes.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent for adjournment for five minutes? Agreed.

The House is in recess for five minutes.

The House recessed from 1644 to 1649.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I believe we have unanimous consent to revert to motions and to move a motion without notice regarding the standing committee on social policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting time, the standing committee on social policy be authorized to meet on Wednesday, May 18, 2005, and Thursday, May 19, 2005, for the purpose of considering Bill 183, An Act respecting the disclosure of information and records to adopted persons and birth parents.

The Speaker: Mr. Caplan moves that, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting time—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I want to express my opposition to this particular motion, which is intended to pass this bill within a very short period of time. This bill deals with the disclosure of adoption records to adoptees and the natural parents of those adoptees, going back as long as 30 or 40 years. It's a retrospective law which changes the rules that people agreed to 30 or 40 years ago. It does not give the adoptee or the natural parent the power to control the disclosure of the adoption record.

I believe that the proper way to go forward with the procedure is to advertise widely across Ontario that this bill is before the Legislature, that there are hearings and that people who are concerned about this huge breach of their privacy have the opportunity to appear in front of the committee.

That's why I object to the motion, which is going to bring those public hearings on within the next week or two. We will probably pass this bill before we rise on June 9. I do not feel that there is sufficient notice for people all across Ontario to know what's going on in this Legislature. That's why I believe it's wrong to proceed this quickly. I think it is more prudent for this Legislature, when we are making a retrospective law which is going to have a tremendous effect on a whole number of people's lives, we owe it to the citizens of Ontario to let them know what is happening here so that they can come here and make their presentations.

This law allows only the adoptee or the natural mother to say, "I don't want to be contacted by the other party." Quite frankly, that part of the law will never work, because neither a natural mother nor an adoptee would ever invoke that kind of litigation against the other party.

I feel very strongly on this bill. I and my caucus believe very much that maybe the law should be changed going forward, and we don't object to that. But this motion contracts this into a very short time period. People who would like to appear on the other side, who have many concerns about this breach of privacy, are not going to know what has happened to them until that knock comes on the door.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Caplan moves that, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting time, the standing committee on social policy be authorized to meet on Wednesday, May 18, 2005, and Thursday, May 19, 2005, for the purpose of considering Bill 183, An Act respecting the disclosure of information and records to adopted persons and birth parents.

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

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

I think the ayes have it. Carried.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please say "aye."

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it. Carried.

The House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1655.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Lanark–Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Chatham–Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	London–Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Dufferin–Peel– Wellington–Grey	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Eglinton–Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Elgin–Middlesex–London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Erie–Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Guelph–Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
Haliburton–Victoria–Brook	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)
Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Stoney Creek Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh Sudbury	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L) Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thornhill Thunder Bay–Atikokan Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines Racco, Mario G. (L) Mauro, Bill (L) Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	McNeely, Phil (L) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Oxford Parkdale–High Park	Hardeman, Ernie (PC) Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée Churley, Marilyn (ND) Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Parry Sound–Muskoka Perth–Middlesex Peterborough Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge Prince Edward–Hastings Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke Sarnia–Lambton Sault Ste. Marie Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Miller, Norm (PC) Wilkinson, John (L) Leal, Jeff (L) Arthurs, Wayne (L) Parsons, Ernie (L) Yakabuski, John (PC) Di Cocco, Caroline (L) Oraziotti, David (L) Duguid, Brad (L)	Toronto–Danforth Trinity–Spadina Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Flaherty, Jim (PC) Zimmer, David (L)
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest Scarborough–Agincourt	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Waterloo–Wellington	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough–Rouge River	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Curling, Hon. / L'hon. Alvin (L) Speaker / Président Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Whitby–Ajax Willowdale Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Munro, Julia (PC)
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Simcoe–Grey St. Catharines	Wilson, Jim (PC) Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Windsor–St. Clair	Cordiano, Hon. / L'hon. Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce Sergio, Mario (L)
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique	York Centre / York-Centre	
		York North / York-Nord York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
		York West / York-Ouest	

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

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

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Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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