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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 16 May 2005

Lundi 16 mai 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 May 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 16 mai 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I wish to point out a bit of a bait and switch in this year's budget. Just last year, this government cried poor in order to take between \$300 and \$900 out of the pockets of working people in Ontario for what was referred to as a health premium; maybe it was a tax. It was an illegal health tax, essentially. In their next breath, the government turned around and delisted key OHIP services, many that our most vulnerable people rely on. After announcing billions in extra taxpayer-funded revenue last week, the budget still remains in deficit and calls for not one red cent of extra revenue to go back to those same working Ontarians we depend upon to continue to drive our economy.

If this illegal health tax had led to shorter waiting lists and stability in our hospitals, that would be one thing, but that's simply not the case. Waiting lists grow; nurses continue to be laid off, and we've heard that the lack of support will lead to thousands more leaving in the next year. Where has that extra revenue gone? Has it gone to more bureaucracy? Has it gone to higher salaries? This, while deserving rural communities, some in my riding, are shut out of needed infrastructure funding. When is this government going to do the right thing and return at least part of that illegal health tax to the rightful owners?

STRATFORD FESTIVAL

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): On May 30, the Stratford Festival of Canada will mark the opening of its 53rd season with a production of *The Tempest*, one of Shakespeare's great late romances, starring the great Canadian actor William Hutt as Prospero.

Drawing audiences of more than 600,000 each year, the festival season runs from April to November and includes, this year, a wonderful array of 15 productions offered at our four theatres, including three by Shakespeare himself. If that were not enough, the season also includes a full program of fringe activities, including concert recitals, discussion sessions and readings by celebrated authors.

This past weekend, I was very pleased to join Premier McGuinty as we attended a performance of *Hello, Dolly!*

one of two musicals being staged at the festival this summer. A must-see, the musical is highly entertaining and good for all ages.

Our government is committed to the arts, as Ontario's culture helps bind us together and provides the basis for vibrant economic growth. This past winter, the Stratford Festival of Canada received \$60,000 from the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation through the industry partners proposal program to specifically market the Stratford Escapes festival package program into the Michigan market.

On a more local note, I invite all members and their constituents to visit the Stratford Festival this season, and I stand ready to assist them.

Finally, I want to commend artistic director Richard Monette and executive director Antoni Cimolino for the creation of yet another wonderful festival season.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): After hearing the budget speech last week, my constituents have one big question for the McGuinty Liberals: How do you raise taxes one year and then run a big deficit the next year?

Before the election, the McGuinty Liberals first claimed there would be a \$5-billion deficit and then wrote an election plan saying there was no deficit. They made a solemn promise to the people that they would not run deficits and would not raise taxes. Dalton McGuinty gave his personal, solemn word. He signed the pledge. He said he had a plan. He said we could trust his word, that he would not raise our taxes and that he would balance the budget.

Then they took power and said that the deficit was \$5.6 billion, so they broke their solemn election promise and raised taxes.

What happened to the deficit? It's still there. Even after raising taxes, they cannot balance the books. They have embarked on a spending spree. Spending is up \$5.5 billion this year alone. The McGuinty Liberals can't make the hard decisions needed, so they solve their problems by spending.

The PC Party has the experience of cleaning up the mess left behind by tax-and-spend governments. We did it once, and we will do it again under the leadership of John Tory.

PENSION FUNDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Saturday's *Globe and Mail* exposed a restructuring proposal cooked

up by Stelco management that would curtail employee pension rights and slow down the rate at which the company repays its employee pension plan.

As a member from the city of Hamilton, I can tell you that Stelco workers, pensioners, salaried employees and retirees are very upset about what has happened to their pensions. Instead of being invested wisely and kept secure for their employees' retirement years, those pensions were depleted by the firm, which is now under bankruptcy protection.

News of Stelco's plan to freeze pensions for 11 years, until 2016, has fed the employees' mistrust. The government shouldn't allow a freeze. For a full year and a half, under creditor protection, Stelco hasn't done anything to improve their billion-dollar pension gap. Seniors, pensioners and retirees have been sick with stress and worry, watching this nightmare unfold.

The NDP believe it's high time to review the pension laws and reform them so that people's retirement savings and security are truly protected.

The Ontario government has a major role to play, but the McGuinty Liberals are behaving like tourists watching the world go by. The McGuinty government should be aggressive in dealing with the Stelco pension issue. Any financing deal approved by the government must have a significant down payment on the unfunded pension liability and a clear plan to pay off the remainder of the gap within the five-year time frame allowed under the law.

If the pension repayment schedule extends beyond the five-year frame, the government should simply use all the tools at its disposal to guarantee the outstanding amount to ensure ironclad protection for Stelco workers.

If they really care about the workers, whose money is at risk, the McGuinty Liberals should step up with meaningful financial guarantees that take the heat off the employees and put it on Stelco, where it belongs.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I would like to talk about an important measure in the recent Ontario budget that will help our province fight cancer and deliver accessible, high-quality services.

One of the most important accomplishments is the reduction of wait times throughout the province. Our recent budget will increase the number of cancer surgeries by an additional 2,900 in this year alone.

Families and individuals around the province and the Canadian Cancer Society all welcome the move toward a more coordinated cancer research system. Of the government's approach to reducing cancer waiting lists, Peter Goodhand, CEO, Ontario division of the Canadian Cancer Society, says, "This is good news."

We are moving forward with an aggressive plan to keep Ontarians healthy. We have introduced a number of proactive measures to reach these goals.

1340

To improve and protect universal health care in Ontario, we passed the Commitment to Medicare Act, which banned "pay your way to the front of the line" health care.

To address the number one killer in Ontario, we have introduced legislation to make public places and workplaces in Ontario smoke-free within three years. We've also launched a province-wide ad campaign aimed at youth, stupid.ca, and supported a toll-free smokers' help line.

To shorten hospital waiting times, we initiated a wait-times strategy by investing \$107 million this year to reduce waiting times in five key areas: cataract surgery, cancer surgery, cardiac procedures, hip and knee joint replacements, and MRI/CT exams.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Will Ontario voters be fooled again? That is the question that comes to mind following the McGuinty budget, which once again promises to do everything for everyone. Ontario has heard promises from Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals before, and they have been disappointed before.

They were told there would be no new taxes before, and that promise was broken when every hard-working Ontarian was slapped with the illegal McGuinty health tax. It was illegal because it was imposed despite the fact that legislation existed at the time that made it illegal to impose a new tax without the consent of the taxpayers by way of a referendum.

Ontarians were told, once again, that there would be no new taxes, but Dalton McGuinty forgot to tell taxpayers that his illegal health tax would hit them twice as hard this coming year by making us pay twice as much for fewer services. Once again he has broken trust with the people of this province through longer waits, fewer services and fewer medical doctors to deliver those services.

Is it any wonder that people in this province have lost faith in this government, have lost trust in the Premier, with fewer services and twice as much to pay in their health tax? It will not be forgotten by the people of Ontario.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I'm the good news. I rise in the House today to recognize the commitment that the McGuinty government made to McMaster University's research park in the 2005 budget.

McMaster University will turn a former factory site known as Camco into an idea factory with the help of this government. This \$10-million contribution is the first contribution by a senior level of government and will finance the next stage of development of a life sciences research park to be completed by 2007. When fully developed, the research and technology park will house

over one million square feet of laboratory, office, teaching and training space, as well as conference facilities.

In his budget speech, the Minister of Finance said, "Research is at the core of intelligent societies.... It's the fuel of our economic engine." These are not just words. This investment in the innovation park in Hamilton shows our commitment to R&D. Brian Wilson, president of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, acknowledged this as a key investment in the city's future.

We in Hamilton West are extremely proud of our academic institutions. The \$6.2-billion investment in post-secondary education shows that this government shares our values and recognizes the talents in our academic institutions and in our citizens in Hamilton. The investment in the McMaster innovation park is just another sign of the vitality of Hamilton's economic future.

NURSES

Ms. Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke–Lakeshore): Last week, we celebrated and learned from nurses across Ontario during 2005's Take Your MPP to Work Week. In Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I personally saw the passion that nurses have for their jobs.

As we all know, nursing is key to quality health care. Last week, I had the opportunity to attend Trillium Health Centre's nursing awards and excellence dinner, where we marked the unique contribution of nurses. I also went to work at the Queensway site of Trillium in Etobicoke. During my visit, I observed nurses in a variety of roles, working both independently and collaboratively to provide a wide range of services to the citizens in our community. Last, I visited Lakeshore Lodge Home for the Aged to speak about the important role that nurses play in caring for the elderly in our long-term-care homes.

With the release of our 2005 budget, I'm happy to say that we are continuing to improve and invest in nurses.

Our plan includes a \$32.9-billion investment in health care this year and will mean more doctors and nurses, shorter waiting times and a plan to keep Ontarians healthier. In nursing, we have provided funding for more than 3,000 new full-time nursing positions in hospitals, long-term-care homes, home care and community agencies. We've also established 52 family health teams of doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and other health professionals who will work together to provide one million Ontarians with access to health care day and night, seven days a week, close to home.

I want to thank the nurses in Etobicoke–Lakeshore for opening their doors to me last week. I know that the valuable work you do affects lives daily, and we are truly thankful for your efforts.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): John Tory doesn't know where he stands on health care. He won't tell the people of Ontario whether he plans to devastate

our health care system immediately or whether he plans to devastate it over a long period of time. He owes it to the people of Ontario to fess up.

In contrast, our government has laid out a clear set of goals to provide Ontarians with high-quality, accessible health care services. These goals are crucial to providing Ontarians with a level of service that they've asked for, that they need and deserve.

Our agenda includes promoting healthier lifestyles and increasing public health funding, new vaccination programs for children, smoking cessation programs, banning junk food from vending machines in elementary schools, the reduction of wait times and an increase in the number of full-time nurses, and an unprecedented focus on primary care through family health teams.

We will continue to ensure that our hospitals have the resources they need to provide quality and accessible care. We will provide adequate funding to secure new full-time nursing positions throughout the health care sector right across Ontario. An investment of over half a billion dollars in hospitals will provide enhanced opportunities for nurses. We have also provided \$292 million in investments in community-based mental health services, as well as a \$264-million investment in long-term-care homes, which will result in the creation of new positions for nurses.

Why won't John Tory give Ontarians a straight answer on whether he will cut \$2.4 billion out of health care immediately or whether he will bleed the system to death gradually? Why won't he tell us what he's going to cut out of health care? That's what I would call back-of-the-napkin planning.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MISSING PERSONS REPORTING ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE SIGNALLEMENT DES PERSONNES DISPARUES

Mr. Racco moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 198, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of the reporting of missing persons from care facilities /
Projet de loi 198, Loi modifiant diverses lois à l'égard du signalement des personnes disparues d'établissements de soins.

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

Mr. Racco?

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): The bill amends the Charitable Institutions Act, the Developmental Services Act, the Homes for the Aged and Rest Homes Act and the Nursing Homes Act to ensure that police are immediately notified when a resident of a care facility operated under one of those acts goes missing. I ask that the House support it.

RURAL ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE JOUR
DE L'ONTARIO RURAL

Mrs. Mitchell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 199, An Act to celebrate and recognize rural Ontario / Projet de loi 199, Loi visant à célébrer et à reconnaître l'Ontario rural.

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

Mrs. Mitchell?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): This bill, if passed, will declare June 21 as Rural Ontario Day. This day will recognize those who have made a commitment to strong rural communities and highlight the rural way of life. I look forward to private members' business.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. till 9:30 p.m. on Monday, May 16, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	Peterson, Tim
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Barrett, Toby	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Kennedy, Gerard	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Klees, Frank	Ramal, Khalil
Bountrogiani, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Tascona, Joseph N.
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Cordiano, Joseph	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Craitor, Kim	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Crozier, Bruce	Mitchell, Carol	Wilson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dhillon, Vic	Munro, Julia	Wong, Tony C.
Di Cocco, Caroline	O'Toole, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Patten, Richard	
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Marchese, Rosario
Hampton, Howard	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSESACCESS TO HEALTH CARE
ACCÈS AUX SOINS DE SANTÉ

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It is with great pride that I rise in my place today to speak about one of the most significant initiatives in our government's budget this year, and it involves access to doctors.

Ontario needs more doctors. It is as simple as that. We inherited a situation from previous governments in which approximately one million people in this province do not have access to a family doctor. These orphan patients, as they are called, are depending upon us to do something about that. All Ontarians are depending upon us to do something about that because they understand, as do we, that a million people without a doctor is unacceptable in a society that prides itself on a system of public health care. And so we have acted.

The budget we introduced last week contains a provision to increase the number of medical school undergraduate positions by 15% over the next four years. Through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, this \$95-million investment will result in 104 new first-year undergraduate positions being added to Ontario's medical schools, beginning this fall. It will also be used to improve programs in the five existing medical schools, to better fund the clinical evaluation for health sciences students and to create a new nursing program for northern Ontario. Over and above all that, it will result in care for thousands and thousands of Ontarians, many of whom might not have previously had access to a doctor at all.

I want to make it clear that we are not, with this investment, simply throwing money at our medical schools and telling them to create more spaces. We are, in fact, going to be working very closely with our schools, devising a rollout plan for these new positions. We will be looking for innovative ways of meeting our current needs, such as support for primary care and, of course, providing better access to care in our underserved communities.

This is only the latest step we've taken in the past 19 months to improve the access Ontarians have to a doctor.

The truth is that we've been working double time since taking office, trying to make up for the ground that was sadly lost in the course of two previous governments. We more than doubled the number of training spots for international medical graduates, from 90 to 200—that's a lot of qualified people who, until now, have had their dreams of practising medicine in Ontario frustrated—giving them a crack at making their dreams come true. And we need them. We established a program with the College of Physicians and Surgeons to repatriate doctors practising outside Ontario who would like to work here. We increased the number of family residency positions in our medical schools. By 2008, we will have produced an additional 340 family doctors, providing care to some 400,000 Ontarians.

Then there's the deal we reached with the Ontario Medical Association. This is an extremely good deal both for patients and for doctors. It will reward docs for practising medicine in new and better ways, including spending more time working with seniors and managing chronic disease, helping people stay healthy. It will also reward them for working in more efficient, comprehensive health teams, and it will offer specific incentives to doctors who practise in northern and rural communities. Overall, it will bring more doctors to Ontario, because it will make Ontario a better, more competitive place to practise.

One of our signature initiatives as a government, one of the most positive steps we are taking to improve access to health care for Ontarians and to improve that quality of care, is the creation of family health teams. Last month, we established the first new family health teams—52 of them, along with three family health team networks—where doctors work in practice with others, with nurses, nurse practitioners and other health care professionals, providing around-the-clock care to patients close to home. Thirty-five of these new family health teams will be located in communities considered to be underserved in terms of family physicians. That means that thousands of former orphan patients will have access to a whole team of health care professionals working together on their behalf. This year's budget is going to support the creation of more family health teams, and by 2007-08, we will have created 150, establishing the capacity to deliver care to an estimated 2.5 million Ontarians.

In short, we have done, we are doing and we are going to continue to do a very great deal to bring more doctors to Ontario and to ensure that the people of this province have better access to the health care they need. We have a vision of health care in Ontario that we share with Ontarians: a system that will help people be healthier, that will get them good care when they're sick and that will be there for generations to come. With initiatives like increasing the number of medical school spaces in this province, we are taking a big step forward in taking that vision to reality.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm very pleased that the Liberal government has seen fit to

build upon the vision and the foundation for increasing access to medical care that our government put in place. As the Minister of Health knows, but doesn't want to acknowledge, it was our government that appointed the expert panel to undertake long-term planning to address Ontario's physician shortage. In fact, I'm very pleased to say that it was our government that introduced primary care reform—the first province in Canada.

This government continues to rebrand the same PC program, but I have to tell you that by the time September 2003 rolled around, we actually had 3,000 physicians in this province who had joined primary care models serving three million patients. I'm pleased to say that one of the first patients to sign up—and John O'Toole witnessed this—was Dr. Neil McLeod in Thunder Bay, and Ruth Wilson was there to witness that taking place. So thank you for building on our model. If you want to give it another name, that's fine. We're just glad you're doing what you can to improve access.

Our government also increased access to medical schools by 30%, so you're not quite there, Minister. We also expanded the international medical graduate program for foreign-trained physicians. Of course, as the minister and the government well know, it was we who announced the first new medical school in northern Ontario, and I'm glad it's finally getting set up. I would say to the government today, I'm glad you're building on our foundation and on our vision. We believe it's important.

However, you have not yet delivered on a promise from your 2004 budget. You said you would introduce a health human resources strategy. You haven't done it. There is no strategy or plan in place, which I think is regrettable because, unfortunately, we don't have much detail today as to how these positions are going to be phased in. Furthermore, if there's no long-term-care planning, how do people know what type of residency programs are going to be available in the next four years? You must expand residency spaces.

The other thing you have to do is continue to improve access for Canadians who have graduated from international medical schools. I would say to you that presently we have 260 Canadians who are completing their medical degrees in Ireland. These students desperately want to come back to Ontario, but the policy we have today makes it difficult and adds at least two years to the total process. I would encourage you to allow these graduates to apply for residency in their fourth year. That would encourage these badly needed medical students to come back to Ontario and practise here. This government knows that other Canadian provinces, such as Alberta, Manitoba and Nova Scotia, allow these graduates to enter into the second round of the Canadian residency matching service. You could do the same thing here.

If you're really committed to improving access to doctors in the province of Ontario, continue to build on our foundation, but at the same time allow these students in Ireland to return to Ontario. Also make sure you have residency spaces for the new students that you're going

to allow into our medical schools and continue to remove the barriers for these very qualified, internationally trained physicians.

There's much more that you could do. I would encourage you to go back and focus on the expert panel recommendations.

I would just remind you of a couple of other things that we did. We doubled the number of community development offices to help underserved areas recruit doctors. We expanded the two northern family medicine residency programs by increasing the number of entry training positions by 25%. Another olive branch that we handed out to doctors who were willing to practise in underserved areas was to announce \$4 million in funding for free tuition and location incentives to new doctors.

Today I say to the government, I'm glad you recognize that we had a vision, that we had a great foundation. I want to congratulate you on continuing the work we started to address the doctor shortage and improve access to medical care.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to check some facts as related by the Minister of Health today, because this is another announcement that is more spin than it is reality. I think this is very important for people across Ontario, because the reality for people across Ontario is that over the next few years it's going to become more and more difficult to find a family physician, not easier, and I want people to know why.

1410

First of all, the Minister of Health's propaganda campaign against physicians last fall really angered doctors. It angered doctors to the extent that many of them came forward and said, "I'm leaving the province"—and that is happening. When the government engaged in a propaganda campaign against physicians and then suggested that it was going to legislate physicians according to terms of work, that went a long way in terms of burning bridges and destroying relationships. We know that there are physicians who are leaving Ontario today because of that wrong-headed approach by the McGuinty government.

Second, the government says that they want to increase medical school spaces by 104 new first-year undergraduate positions. But you have to read the fine print. Only 26 of those positions will happen next year, and 26 the following year, 26 the year after that and 26 the year after that. We'll be into 2009 when this announcement is actually implemented. The reality is that with four years of medical school and two years of residency, this policy will not take practical effect until sometime in 2012, 2013, 2014, if then. Meanwhile, we have the reality of a community like Geraldton, where virtually all of the family physicians have indicated that they're quitting and that they're leaving the community. Geraldton is just the tip of the iceberg, because that is also happening in other communities, where physicians are simply saying, "I'm out of here."

Third, the minister tried to dress up his announcement by referring to the so-called new family health teams, saying that there are 52 new family health teams. In fact, over half of these are simply renaming the family health programs put in place by the former Conservative government. Simply renaming something that wasn't working very well under the former government hardly presents something new for people across Ontario who cannot get a family physician.

Finally, I know that this announcement includes a pilot project for the training of nurses in small communities—a good pilot project. But I say to the minister, in terms of nurses, that it needs to move beyond being a pilot project very quickly, because in all kinds of communities across this province not only are we running short of family physicians, but we are running short of nurses as well, and the one problem is just as serious as the other.

I say to people across Ontario, I know the Minister of Health wants to spin this as a brave new world and a brave new announcement. Much of it is a reannouncement. Some of it is renaming what the former government put in place, and I have to say it wasn't working that effectively. But this is not going to produce any new physicians for Ontario communities—not in four years, not in five years and not in six years. In the meantime, there are lots of communities across Ontario that are going to encounter more and more severe nursing shortages and more and more severe physician shortages.

Et je dis à tout le monde dans la province de l'Ontario que la question est claire : où se trouvent les médecins pour les petites communautés dans le nord, pour les petites communautés francophones dans la province de l'Ontario?

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the order of third reading of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic pupils, to be called immediately, and for the Speaker to put the question for third reading forthwith, without debate or amendment, and that if a recorded vote is necessary, the division bells be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

SABRINA'S LAW, 2005

LOI SABRINA DE 2005

Mr. Levac moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic pupils / Projet de loi 3, Loi visant à protéger les élèves anaphylactiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1415 to 1420

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	Patten, Richard
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Barrett, Toby	Gravelle, Michael	Peterson, Tim
Bartolucci, Rick	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Bisson, Gilles	Kennedy, Gerard	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Klees, Frank	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kormos, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Mathews, Deborah	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Cordiano, Joseph	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craitor, Kim	McNeely, Phil	Tasca, Joseph N.
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	O'Toole, John	Wong, Tony C.
Dunlop, Garfield	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 75; the nays are 0.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise to take a moment to thank the members of this House, the Premier, the Ministers of Education and Health, and my colleagues in the official opposition and the third party for their co-operation in the successful passage of this bill today. All members of this House understand the importance of this law, Sabrina's law. It will go a long way toward the safety of our children.

I know that our guests in the gallery have fought a long fight with their children, who are with us today, especially Max Eck, a 6-year-old boy who created Epi-Man, a superhero. They have worked tirelessly for this bill. I want to thank my honourable colleagues in this House for the good work we do. We will save a life.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order, but I accept it.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Acting Premier. My question is about the inability of your government to stick to fiscal plans in Ontario. Before the election in 2003, the Premier promised that he would not increase taxes, that he would hold the line on taxes. After the election, we had the largest single tax increase in the history of the province of Ontario. Why

did we have that tax? According to the Premier, "To honour my commitment that I made to Ontarians, which was to hold the line on their taxes and to make investments in health care and education, was impossible." Why? Because he said that there was a revenue problem.

Then we saw the budget last week, and a massive tax revenue windfall because of the extra work done by the people of Ontario creating that revenue. But is there a reduction in taxes? No. Is there anything going back to the people of Ontario? No. There was massive new spending of more than \$1 billion last year. Why don't you give some of the money back to the people of Ontario—

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

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the opportunity to get this one-last-gasp question from the honourable member, soon to depart, he hopes, for greener fields. He had the opportunity in the minute of his question to underscore so well the fundamental incoherence that is the heart of that party.

The honourable member stands in his place and asks about hitting the numbers, when this honourable member himself was a prominent member of a government that told Ontarians on one day that there was no deficit, and Ontarians learned only a few days later that the government of the day was concealing a \$5.6-billion deficit. I ask the honourable member, as he takes the opportunity to stand in this House for another minute, to tell us just what the impact would be of the proposed \$2.4-billion cut to health care that his leader is currently proposing.

Mr. Flaherty: I'll tell you what the impact is. Do you know what the impact is of your spending increases? Next year, there's going to be as much money spent on interest on the debt—\$10 billion—as is spent on education for primary and secondary schools in the province of Ontario. Congratulations on wasting \$10 billion of taxpayers' money.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm going to ask the government side to come to order. I can't hear the question.

Interjections.

Mr. Flaherty: I hear the Minister of Natural Resources say, "Who cares about this?"—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It doesn't mean that when I sit down, you start talking; that's not what it means.

Mr. Flaherty: I hear the Minister of Natural Resources say, "Who cares about this?" Well, it's obvious that you don't care about debt; you don't care about deficits. Deficits are tomorrow's taxes, plus interest. When I was the Minister of Finance, we reduced the public debt by a record amount of \$3.1 billion. You should be seizing the opportunity to reduce deficits and debt in the province of Ontario and to give something back to the people who work half the year now to pay taxes to your government. Why don't you do it? Seize the opportunity; do the right thing. Reduce the tax burden to the people of Ontario.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): It is passing strange to hear lectures from a former Conservative finance minister who drove this province during good economic times into the most significant debt we have ever experienced in good economic times. Now, before he leaves to wreak some of that havoc on the federal Parliament, he has one last lecture. I want to tell my friend that for the first year in a very long time, we've set ourselves an objective for deficit reduction, and we exceeded that objective by 100%. We're cutting the deficit, we've got a plan to eliminate the deficit we inherited, and I don't need any advice from that former minister.

1430

Mr. Flaherty: Actually, I'll be pleased, Minister of Finance, to leave this place having balanced the budget and reduced the public debt by \$3.1 billion, two things you'll probably never do in this place. I wish you good luck. Some day—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'll give you an opportunity to ask a final supplementary.

Order. The member for Whitby–Ajax listened very attentively when the response was being given. I would like the same courtesy extended to him when he is asking the question.

Mr. Flaherty: I was pointing out to the Minister of Finance that he has never balanced a budget and he has never reduced the public debt, both of which I was proud to do. I hope you do it some day. Work at it, and I hope you do it some day.

Then I see in the budget—here is a Paul Martin-esque thing now. This is good. Look at this: an increase in the reserve from \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion. This is putting money aside; this is the phony surplus stuff that we get in the federal government now, so that at the end of the day the Minister of Finance and the Premier can make themselves look good.

People are paying more and getting less. The people in Whitby are paying, on average, as a family, \$1,000 more a year, and what do they get for it? Longer waiting lists at Lakeridge Health, nursing layoffs at Lakeridge Health. Give them at least some of their own money back so they can carry on their lives and support their families.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: This from the representative from Whitby–Ajax, who is about to pack up all his little political tricks and take them up to Ottawa.

Let me just tell you about one of those tricks. In the budget that he presented in this Legislature, at the very last minute, what did he slip in? A huge new tax credit for private schools, with public taxpayers' money. Now he's going to go sell that in Ottawa.

I just want to invite my friend from Whitby–Ajax to do what his leader has done and acknowledge that our investment in post-secondary education is the most historic and significant investment in 40 years and is hailed by the Leader of the Opposition, and to do what his leader has done and acknowledge that our investment in

infrastructure—\$30 billion over the course of the next five years—will be a new foundation for this economy.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I will start naming some members today. I am in a naming mood today, so I will start naming members if they can't come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I would start by warning the Attorney General.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Acting Premier. As you know, the unexpected \$1.2 billion in revenues generated by Ontario businesses last year did give you the opportunity to help hard-working Ontarians. Rather than doing that, you continued to punish them by doubling the cost of your illegal health tax. We now know that hospitals are also going to be forced to make significant staff and program cuts because of the lack of a plan and your misspent priorities.

Despite the fact that revenues are higher, despite the fact that the OHA is going to have to make some cuts, why are you forcing Ontarians to pay double your illegal health tax this year, and yet they are getting less health care because you've privatized eye exams and chiropractic services?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The incoherence of the Tory party continues. With them, it comes down to this: Tory, Tory, same old story. Here they are one more time complaining out of one side of their mouth that there should be a reduction in the amount of revenue that the province takes in, and on the other hand calling for additional investments in essential public services.

I'm proud to confirm for the honourable member that as a result of the commitment of the people of the province of Ontario to a good-quality health care system, my ministry has the opportunity this year to invest fully \$1.8 billion more resources. In what things? In things like double-digit increases in five key areas related to wait times, in addressing the critical shortages of doctors that were created on that party's watch and that party's watch.

We will continue to invest appropriately in our hospitals, which this year are seeing a 4.7% increase, almost 1% fuller than was projected last year, and \$500 million—

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

Mrs. Witmer: Talk about incoherence and lack of a plan. This is a government that's had four plans in less than two years. Talk about incoherence. This is the government that criticized P3 hospitals, and now you're introducing private-public partnerships yourself.

Let's get back to the issue at hand: your illegal health tax, which people are going to pay double for this year despite the fact that you had an additional \$1.2 billion in corporate revenues. I say to you today that you had the

opportunity to do the right thing to help those hard-working Ontarians who are paying more for mortgages, gas and hydro. Why won't you take this opportunity to help them and give back some of your illegal health tax?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Here we go again. This party does not have the courage or the clarity to stand in its place and say—with respect, the honourable member is part of a party that is proposing a \$2.4-billion cut to health care. The first phase of that, according to the honourable member's seatmate, who hasn't made it today to talk about this, is a \$240-million cut.

Perhaps in the next question the honourable member can tell us what health care project, what priority, they would be stealing \$240 million from? That is at the heart of the incoherence of this party.

We are a government that's investing in the essential public services that Ontarians depend upon. Hard-working families in Ontario need support for things like vaccinations. They need to know that when mom has cataracts, they're going to be done. Those are the investments at the heart of our government's budget, and we make no apology for investing the dollars of Ontarians in public services.

Mrs. Witmer: Talk about lack of clarity, coming from this Minister of Health. It was our government that added \$10 billion to the health budget and added 12,000 additional nursing positions. I say to you today, we know that last year you laid off nearly 800 nurses and you paid for their severance costs—absolutely unbelievable that you would do that.

We now know that the OHA is telling us that you're probably going to have to cut, because you're not going to be able to provide the funding, an additional 4,000 nurses and health care support workers. Even the RNAO is very concerned about your lack of a plan to hire the 8,000 new nursing positions that you promised.

I say to you today that you introduced this illegal health tax, and all you're doing is hurting Ontarians, who are getting fewer health services than ever before. Will you at the very least return a portion of this illegal health tax that isn't going to nurses, other than to fire them?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member stands in her place, and her proposition on behalf of the Tory party is to cut \$240 million as their beginning investment on a \$2.4-billion cut to health care. Then, in the same breath, she talks about enhanced services in health care.

We're the government that's putting the money of Ontarians behind the important services that they need:

—10% increases in key wait-time areas: cataracts, cardiac, access to cancer service, hip and knee replacement, access to MRI and CT. Why? Because Ontarians said they needed that.

—Growing more doctors in Ontario. Why? Because it is the sad legacy of that party that they sat on their duffs for five years while the list of underserved communities grew from 60 to 142.

That is that member's health care legacy, and I don't need any lectures from the Hula Hoop party about nurses.

1440

Mrs. Witmer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The minister is not telling the truth. The only people talking about—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Let's get some order here.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo did make an unparliamentary comment. I would ask you to withdraw.

Mrs. Witmer: I wanted to correct the record. If I said anything inappropriate, I would withdraw.

The Speaker: Would you stand up and say that?

Mrs. Witmer: Yes, I would withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the acting Premier. In last week's budget, Ontarians learned that under the McGuinty government, profit-driven corporations and enterprises will now be profiting from Ontario schools, hospitals, highway and transit systems, and sewer and water systems. That means that Ontario taxpayers will pay more—a lot more—for new schools, new hospitals, new roads and new water systems. Why? Because profit-driven corporations will charge much higher interest rates for money loaned to build a school, and they will want to make a profit on that loan. It means the Bay Street financiers will do very well, but it means that Ontario taxpayers will pay 30% to 40% more to see a school built or to see a transit system built. So my question is, when did you decide that our schools, our hospitals, our sewer and water systems, and our transit systems were going to become the playthings of people who are seeking profit rather than the public interest?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I refer this question to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I don't know where the member opposite gets his figures from. Clearly, they are not correct. I would like to bring to the attention of the member something that a very prominent person once said. I want to quote: "As well, Metro Toronto presents, in the long term, some interesting possibilities for partnership with private developers. For example, it might be possible to construct courts and to construct commercial space and to construct housing in co-operation with a private developer."

Now, that was one Howard Hampton on October 9, 1991. Clearly, the member opposite had a different view when he made those comments to the *Globe and Mail*. I don't know where he gets his comments today. In additional supplementaries I will be more than happy to share our principle-based framework for investment in Ontario's infrastructure, because it's badly needed, as the member has pointed out on occasion.

Mr. Hampton: I hate to have to tell the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal that there is something a lot different about renting courtroom space in a building and building hospitals, schools, sewer and water systems, and transit systems. If you don't know the difference, then your government is in even more trouble.

We spent some time checking with some of the private financiers, who are saying that if it is a public infrastructure project, whether it is a school, a hospital or a transit system, they want at least a 10% interest rate on borrowed capital. Right now, your government could put out a 30-year bond for 5%. A billion dollars borrowed at 10% through private financiers and a billion dollars borrowed at 5% interest through a government bond repaid over 30 years amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars' difference. That's what you're telling Ontario taxpayers to pay: hundreds of millions of dollars more to private financiers. Tell us why Ontario taxpayers should pay hundreds of millions more just to finance your Bay Street friends.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The short answer is that they won't. In fact, independent evidence on using this method of financing shows that 88% of the time, the projects come in on time and on budget, saving taxpayers considerable dollars. I would listen to the former NDP Treasurer, Floyd Laughren, who said on the weekend, "I think that the public sector unions would be foolhardy to resist that, when now their funds are being used elsewhere," in the UK, in the United States and in Australia, to fund the needed infrastructure all around the world.

Why does the member opposite have problems with pension-sector dollars invested in Ontario to rehabilitate, to rebuild the province of Ontario? Your former colleague, the former Minister of Finance, Mr. Laughren, seemed to think that is a good idea, as do other jurisdictions all around the world, including one Howard Hampton.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: Maybe the McGuinty government can explain to taxpayers in Ontario why they'd have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars more with private financing to have a hospital built than if you simply put out a 30-year bond and got a much lower interest rate. Maybe you could answer that question.

I have a quote from one Dalton McGuinty, who said just about two years ago, "We believe in public ownership and financing. I will take these hospitals and bring them inside the public sector."

That's what he said about the Brampton hospital. We now know the Brampton hospital is going to cost \$175 million more because of private financing, because the private financing, when you work it out over a 25- or 30-year period, will want that much profit and that much higher interest rates. So tell us again, why should taxpayers end up paying hundreds of millions of dollars more for public assets just because you want to help out your Bay Street financial friends?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Once again, the member is wrong. In fact, there is not this mythical additional cost. The

Brampton hospital is a public hospital, as the Premier had commented. In fact, if you look at the framework for investment—the five key principles—core assets like hospitals, schools and water will always be in the public realm, will always be in public hands.

On page 18 of Public Power, Mr. Hampton says, "Private investors attracted to the security and stability of government-backed bonds will ... be a primary source of future capital financing needed to upgrade and, when necessary, expand our system."

I really think it's Mr. Hampton who has some explaining to do. One day he believes that we require the private sector to make these important investments in our infrastructure, yet today he seems to have some different kind of an opinion. I think you should take a principle-based approach like the Premier and this government did to make sure we get much-needed investment—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Hampton: I think it's sad that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal doesn't understand the difference between a public bond offering at 5% and private corporate financing at 10% interest.

NATIVE LAND CLAIMS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to take the McGuinty government back to another promise they made. You promised a new relationship with First Nations communities, but instead the McGuinty government cut the First Nations secretariat by 22%. Acting Premier, I wonder if you could tell the First Nations of Ontario, how does cutting the budget of the First Nations secretariat by 22% create a new and positive relationship with Ontario's First Nations?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The minister responsible for native affairs.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'm glad the member asked that question, because I think it's important that people understand that in fact there was a one-time payment for the settlement of a land claim in last year's budget. Of course, it was a one-time cost, and we're not going to pay for that land claim twice. We're going to pay for that land claim in order to discharge our responsibilities to First Nations. As a result of that, last year's budget reflected that land claim. The following budget, in fact, reflected continued stable funding for the Native Affairs Secretariat. The difference between the two is that one year we paid a land claim, a one-time cost, and the next year we didn't.

Mr. Hampton: I think the message to First Nations across Ontario is that the McGuinty government won't be settling any more land claims. It's clear you're not budgeting for any land claims.

I want to point out another absence in the budget. We know that paper mills and pulp mills across northern Ontario are either shutting down paper machines or looking

at shutting down whole mills. We know that it's the McGuinty government policy of substantially increasing hydro rates that is driving that process. We were hoping, in your budget, to see an investment strategy for the forest sector. We've been waiting for some time to see the nomination of a cogeneration facilitator. Yet we had a budget that provided nothing in terms of an investment strategy for the forest sector, and you still haven't named a cogeneration facilitator. You have an investment strategy for auto, for casinos, for television and movie production. Where was your investment strategy for the forest sector in this budget?

1450

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I know in a further supplementary I'll be happy to deal with the question with respect to investments in forestry, but I just want to say to the member that I was surprised to hear him say at the beginning of his question that the message to First Nations was that we would not be settling any more land claims. I've got some news for you, I say to the leader of the third party: I and my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, David Ramsay, are going to in fact finally ratify the settlement of the Rainy River First Nation's land claim, up in your riding, sir. We're going to be in your riding doing that. We have 15 fully implemented settlement agreements in place and, in addition, three final settlement agreements are already being implemented and four final settlement agreements await ratification. We are working to increase the pace of claims settlement in the province of Ontario, and we are on track to do that right now. That, sir, is the message to the First Nations and aboriginal people of Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: I have to inform the minister that the Rainy River land claim was paid out last year, and it's very clear that there is no money in your budget to settle land claims now or in the future.

I want to go back to another part of the budget where people were told they don't matter. We know that there is a farm crisis virtually across this province. We know that farmer after farmer across this province is facing the loss of their livelihood, the loss of everything they've worked for. Yet what happened in this budget? We see a 23% cut in the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture.

You're telling First Nations they don't matter, you're telling forest workers, pulp and paper mill workers in northern Ontario that they don't matter and you're telling farmers that they really don't figure in your plans as well. Can you tell us, Minister, at a time when farmers are in crisis, why does the McGuinty government cut their budget by 23% and have no idea of a plan to reposition Ontario farmers so they don't lose their livelihoods, their homes and all they've worked for?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: There he goes again. The truth is that we have 15 fully implemented settlement agreements and four final settlement agreements await ratification. The member knows; he understands this, and I don't know why he's not saying this.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I know why.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: You do? Of course, built within the budget are contingencies to deal with the ability for a cabinet and for a government to ratify land claims. That's how it works, and he knows that's how it works. The good news is that not only are we increasing the pace of claims settlements, but we've also established a relationship between First Nations and the government of Ontario that in the words of chief Charles Fox is probably the brightest day for First Nations and the government of Ontario that they have had since Bill Davis was the Premier—I notice he skipped over a couple in between. But I will say that the ability of First Nations and the cabinet to sit down on a regular basis, the triennial negotiations that we have in place and the new relationship that the government has with First Nations and aboriginal peoples is a very bright future—

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

HIGHWAY 69

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): My question is for Minister of Northern Development and Mines. You have in the past repeatedly demanded action on Highway 69 four-laning, and let me remind you of some of the things you've said in the past. You asked when the government would finally listen to the many families who lost loved ones on Highway 69. You demanded to know when the government would listen to municipalities, chambers of commerce, labour groups and service clubs after the CRASH 69 committee. You delivered petition after petition and presided over a billboard campaign to ensure the government understood the importance of four-laning Highway 69.

Now fast-forward to May 2005. In the budget, minister, your government announced that it will be another 12 years before Highway 69 is completed. That means four-laning won't be complete until 2017. That's a full five years later than the previous government's commitment. Minister, when will you provide all the details of the government's plan for the completion of Highway 69?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I don't know what part of the good-news story he doesn't like. Let me tell you, one month after we took office, we signed an agreement with the federal government that allowed for five projects to move forward in a very quick manner. We then committed in the budget of 2005 to four-lane Highway 69 in 12 years, something the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities—and he was at the association yearly meeting this past Friday—thought was one of the greatest announcements that ever took place in any provincial budget.

Let me contrast that with what this government did. The previous government said in November 2002, "We will commit \$1 billion a year to Highway 69," and never committed a penny to Highway 69.

Mr. Miller: Minister, you campaigned on this one issue. In November 2003, you promised an action plan.

That's when you were the minister. In May 2004, you and the Premier again promised an action plan by the end of the summer. Eventually, that action plan was pushed back to the new year. Then it was pushed back to last week's budget.

You've been the minister responsible for northern highways for going on two years. As the Sudbury Star said this weekend, "What Bartolucci has succeeded in doing in the last 18 months is lowering our expectations regarding Highway 69." Minister, where is your detailed action plan? Where is your commitment?

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: The commitment is written in the budget—I think it's on page 123—which clearly says this government is committed to four-laning Highway 69 in 12 years, a commitment no government has ever made in the past. Certainly the NDP never made a commitment. In fact, they took \$20 million out of the highway strategy for northern Ontario. The former Tory government took out 14.7% in funding for northern highways.

The reality is that for the first time ever, a government of Ontario has committed to four-laning Highway 69 in a definite time frame, and that's 12 years. That's cause for celebration across northeastern Ontario, and I applaud our government for finally taking action when that government and that party did nothing in the past.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Acting Premier: Fourteen-year-old Justin Kapoor is autistic, severally handicapped, medically fragile, epileptic and now confined to a wheelchair. His folks from Thorold, here in the members' gallery today, can no longer cope with his daily needs. There are two other younger children in the family. They've been on a waiting list for three years now for a residential rehabilitation and treatment program for Justin. Last week, they made the heart-wrenching decision to call children's aid and surrender their child to the custody of family and children's services so that their child, Justin, can get adequate treatment. Why is your government making people relinquish/surrender custody of their children before they can get the treatment they deserve?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the honourable member will know, this is a matter that is being addressed more fully by my colleague minister, who's not in the House today. I offer to those people who are here our government's full commitment to work through this case on an individual basis, but also to continue to re-emphasize the work that the honourable member has been involved in. I know this is a question that has been before the House in the course of the last few weeks and that the honourable minister is working through the children's aid society with a view toward offering all of the support that's possible to families who are in these challenging circumstances.

I'd like to, in a certain sense, take the question under advisement, as I'm not familiar with the individual

circumstances, and relay to the honourable member that the minister will take this up more fully. I know this is a matter that, as you well know, she's been working on quite a lot in the course of the past little while.

Mr. Kormos: Acting Premier, Connie Covatta and Nash Kapoor love their son. They love their two other children as well. They love their son enough to know that he has to get the best possible treatment, that he's going to be better and live a healthier and happier life in a professional treatment residential program. Are you assuring these folks right here today that you're committing your government to working directly with them to ensure that they don't have to abandon their child to the custody of children's aid so that their child can get adequate treatment? Stand up and tell them that your government will work closely and intimately with them and their son.

1500

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: We've gone one significant measure further. We've said that parents should not have to give up their children to receive this kind of care, and we've backed that up with a significant investment—\$74 million to date—in support of the kinds of services that are required. We fundamentally believe it's important to make investments earlier so that children can be given the appropriate support as early as is possible. I believe that these actions on the part of our government speak to the commitment we have made. I also know that this is an issue that the Ombudsman has taken up.

I think these things combined mean that the matter—which is a very, very serious one, so that no one misunderstands—is receiving the attention required in order to have outcomes which are more positive for families and for children.

I know the minister will want to be apprised of this circumstance, and I will take it upon myself to make sure she is aware of it.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. As you know, today in my riding of Guelph-Wellington there was an announcement regarding the construction and funding of three new affordable housing projects. These three projects are under construction, and we visited all of them. Two of them are fascinating projects, restoring old limestone buildings in Guelph. One, the assembly might like to know, is actually an old building that was built by the Sleeman brewery family originally to house a private streetcar business. It then went on to become what was locally known as the bus barns for Guelph transport. It's now being turned into affordable housing. Another one was an old stone store originally, now occupied by the army, navy and air force vets, and it's being turned into affordable housing.

I'm delighted that our government places a high priority on ensuring that Ontarians should not have to choose between feeding their children or heating their homes, and with today's announcement, 84 Guelph area

families won't have to. Minister, can you please elaborate on what this means for my constituents and other Ontarians?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I want to thank the member for the question. Today's announcement marks the beginning of construction for three more affordable housing locations in Guelph–Wellington. This investment, totalling \$9.6 million, includes support from the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program. With this investment, Guelph–Wellington will now be able to provide a total of 84 more units in the region aimed at lower-income seniors and families.

For almost 10 years, the former government sat by and did nothing to help those in need of safe, affordable housing options. However, our government will not sit by and do nothing. We understand that shelter is a basic human need that cannot be ignored. The McGuinty government has taken decisive action. The previous government may have members who said that they believe housing is part of the dignity of all and that they would not stand by. Instead, they sat idly for a decade, leaving millions of dollars to languish in that account. But that decade of discontent is over.

Mrs. Sandals: The affordable housing program is an important partnership between the province, the federal government and, in my case, the municipalities of Wellington and Guelph. Many stakeholders have been involved in this.

The third project is a Guelph non-profit housing project. They've actually gone beyond the requirement to ensure that some of the units will go to mental health clients and to Association for Community Living clients, making sure that some of the hardest-to-serve people in our community have housing. This is a wonderful investment for our riding of Guelph–Wellington and is only part of the affordable housing investment in Ontario.

The previous government ignored this file. As a result, my constituents have a long waiting list for affordable housing. Minister, can you elaborate more on the overall investment—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Minister?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Again, I want to thank the member, especially for her passion for affordable housing. The member is correct that it's only a portion of the overall investment for the province. A short while back, in fact, our government signed a new affordable housing agreement, which will provide a total of \$602 million for new affordable housing right across this province.

The province of Ontario is fully cost-matching with the federal government. We will create over 15,000 new affordable housing units, as well as housing allowances to provide immediate assistance for approximately 5,000 Ontario families in need.

Our province does not stand by and do nothing, like the former government did. Our province, and our government, believes that safe, secure, affordable housing is a basic human need. With our \$602-million investment, Ontario and the federal government will address that

basic need for over 20,000 Ontario families. Ontario is back in affordable housing in a meaningful and significant way.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. In last week's budget, we learned that you will actually spend \$975 million on operating and administration in the Ministry of Transportation but only \$622 million on building roads or capital. You barely have enough money in this budget to fill potholes. It's a cut of \$200 million since you guys came to office. We also learned in the budget that you're going to do more studies on the mid-peninsula corridor, the 407 eastward expansion, the 404 and the 427—you don't even bother to mention the 410—and you also hood-winked your own member from Sudbury and made the construction period for Highway 69 five years longer.

Minister, given that your capital budget has been devastated, what exactly are you going to do to help alleviate gridlock in many parts of Ontario, not just in Toronto, given that you're down to a budget that can't even fill potholes?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Let me just point out to my esteemed colleague on the other side, that if he can look at page 76 of the budget, he might see that the total infrastructure budget is \$1.13 billion. If he could just start learning how to read the budget, maybe it would help in answering the question, rather than my answering it.

Mr. Wilson: Minister, it's a \$200-million cut since you came. The \$1.1 billion doesn't mean anything. You're going to spend \$622 million this year. That's all the money they've given you. Don't roll in past projects and say that's new money; you've got \$622 million to spend this year. It's not enough money to even fill the potholes in the highways in this province.

I just want to tell you one more thing. Last Thursday, the day after the budget—going back to Highway 26, the road between Collingwood and Stayner—you actually put up plywood over the highway signs that used to say, "New alignment of Highway 26 coming spring 2003." Minister, you've cancelled 26, and you're going to study all the other major highways that are creating gridlock in this province. What exactly are you going to do to earn your wage this year?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Minister for Northern Development and Mines, come to order.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, I want to know, first, is the member OK there?

Let me tell you, we are spending \$1.13 billion on highway infrastructure. We are spending in excess of \$800 million on transit needs, and that is way more than they ever did. They ignored transit and highways for years in this province. We're going to fix all those things for them, which they didn't do for eight or nine years in this province, and move forward.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Attorney General: Your small claims court deputy judges walked off the job this month. Their fees have been frozen for over 23 years, and many say they simply can't afford to provide this service any more. You've refused to meet with them to discuss these issues. As one deputy judge put it to me, you have simply stonewalled. Minister, you have a crisis on your hands in our small claims courts. Why are you stonewalling these judges?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Far from it. I do want to say to all of those lawyers who participate as deputy judges, on average, about two or three times a month, that the work they do is great public service. They do a great job, and I think most of them do it out of public service. I know that when Jim Flaherty, the member for Whitby–Ajax, was practising law before he was in politics, he served as a deputy judge.

It's business as usual in that court, and I will of course continue to work with the Associate Chief Justice on this issue. But lastly, some deputy judges have brought an action against the government of Ontario, and as long as we are in litigation, I'm sure you would understand I can't be in the business of meeting with them if the meeting they want to have with me is in the courtroom of Ontario.

1510

Mr. Kormos: These lawyers have performed a great service. The only regrettable thing is that their rates have been frozen for 23 years now and you've done nothing to increase those rates. Last week's budget flatlined your ministry, and now you can't respond to many of the pressing needs of our justice system. Small claims courts, as you know, are supposed to be venues for people who want to settle smaller matters quickly. Instead, we've got an increasingly dysfunctional system, where cases can drag on for over a year because of deputy judges sitting so infrequently because they can't afford to sit more often, and deputy judges fear for their safety. What is your plan, your government's plan, to deal with the crisis in our small claims courts?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: There is, in fact, a small claims court system that is working very well, and the description provided by the member is patently totally inaccurate. It is business as usual in that court. I know that a handful of people have decided not to participate, but the system works in this way: There are many, many lawyers out there who a couple of times a month, serve as deputy judges. That continues to happen. In fact, the regional senior judge and the Associate Chief Justice continue to ensure that that court, that very important court, as the member points out—and I agree with him that it's an important court—continues to do its work.

I can guarantee the member that we have a system right now where we are tackling issues of backlog, we are tackling issues of ensuring timely justice in a way

that is a complete contrast to the time when the NDP government was in power—and with the Askov result coming down, thousands of cases being thrown out. I appreciate the member's interest in this issue, and I will appreciate further questions from him, but I assure him that this is a system that's running extremely well.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I was frankly both intrigued and pleased with the comments of the new president of the Ontario Medical Association, Dr. Greg Flynn, who said this about the 2004 budget: "New medical school and residency spaces will mean more doctors practising in Ontario and will result in an improved ability to care for patients."

Minister, quite contrary to the approach that the NDP has historically taken with decreasing spaces, it's clear to me that increasing medical school spots will, over time, increase access to doctors. I know we are already expanding our capacity with the opening of the new Northern Ontario School of Medicine this year, but I'm curious: Can you confirm that the 15% increase in medical school spots that you announced earlier today will be over and above the 56 new spots at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Yes, I'm able to confirm that today I was there with my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Dr. Greg Flynn, the president of the Ontario Medical Association, and Dr. David Naylor, the dean, about to be president, of the University of Toronto. At the very same site where, in 1993, under duress from the Mulroney government, the NDP announced that they were reducing our medical schools by 13%, I was very proud to have an opportunity on behalf of our government to announce a 15% increase in the number of undergraduate seats. They will begin to emerge as of this fall, and they're all part and parcel of a strategy on the part of our government to make sure that the challenging circumstances of today are not repeated tomorrow, that we're the government that is working double time to try to bill the capacity that was reduced by that government and very slow to be increased under the official opposition. So yes, 15% in addition to the northern Ontario medical school spots.

Mr. McMeekin: That's just great, Minister. I know the people in my riding who are very concerned about the shortage of doctors are going to be very pleased to hear that exciting news, because they know that in the long haul this is going to have a positive impact, not just in our riding, but right across the province.

I understand that as part of the \$95-million investment in medical education announced in our budget last week, the expansion of medical education represents just one component. Minister, can you please tell this House in what other ways our investment in medical education is

intended to improve the health care of the citizens of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I refer this question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): The member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot has long been interested in the state of affairs in health care, and I appreciate his question.

In addition to the 15% increase in medical spaces, we are also launching a new collaborative nursing program in northern Ontario between Confederation College and Lakehead University which will bring more nurses to northern Ontario and will serve communities like Dryden, Kenora, Sioux Lookout and Fort Frances, where we want to ensure that Ontarians have the health care they need.

We're also turning the corner on the funding that medical schools have experienced over the past 10 to 12 years by increasing funding for clinical training, which is basically the foundation of a physician's education.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. Last week you once again renewed your attack on your health partners who expressed legitimate concerns about your budget; namely, the hospitals that were predicting that with your budget there would be a possible layoff of 4,000 nurses and health care workers and a reduction of services. This is similar to a former attack that you made. You accused the OHA of crying wolf when they predicted nursing layoffs. Subsequently, however, you approved the firing of 757 nurses and provided almost \$100 million to fire them. Now you have derided the president of the OHA on the radio, calling her predictions of layoffs duplicitous. Can you guarantee today that not one single nurse or one health care worker will be fired?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Speaker, what I can guarantee today to all members of this House through you, and to the people of the province of Ontario, is that in a province like Ontario, which has 154 autonomous public hospitals with 154 CEOs and 154 board chairs, I will work with those representatives who work on the front line delivering health care.

I think what's appropriate is that we wait to have the debate framed until such time as those hospitals have been made aware of their allocation, not just for this year, but what the projected allocation is for the next two years. Yes, I'm confirming that we are the government—after years and years, perhaps decades, of promise—that will deliver on the principle of stable, predictable, multi-year funding. We think it's appropriate that before dire predictions are made and acted upon, as the honourable member is inclined to do, we actually give those who operate hospitals the opportunity to examine the impact of our enhanced funding on their budget.

Mrs. Witmer: I would remind the Minister of Health that the last time the OHA said there would be layoffs, he denied it. He subsequently, earlier this year, did provide severance and firing payments to 757 nurses. Obviously the hospitals are skeptical, as are the nurses.

I would say to you, that despite the fact you have more revenue this year, you have only provided increases to hospitals at half the rate of inflation. As you know, they have deficits left from last year. You have provided no details as to where you're going to take health care as you move forward in a very clandestine manner to implement your LHINs. You've already fired 757 nurses. You've spent months attacking the doctors. Now it appears you're trying to cripple the hospitals' ability to deliver care, and maybe what you want to do is transfer governance to the LHINs.

I ask you again, can you promise Ontarians that they will not see a single nurse or health care worker fired or another essential service cut?

1520

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It's always fun to get a question like this from a minister who was part of a government that acted a bit like an axe murderer when it came to the issue of employment in these places.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker; they take offence. I withdraw.

On the heart of the matter, the issue here is a simple one: We have 154 hospitals in Ontario. They're independently managed. They have very, very high quality help, and they have very, very high quality leadership. We think it's appropriate, before we succumb to the temptation to address these issues on the basis of a fast press release, that we instead—

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): That's a headliner.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: He's not even in his seat, Mr. Speaker—that we give the opportunity for these hospitals and the leadership in them to see the resources that are available and to make decisions accordingly, not to deal with the scare tactics of a press release.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Due to your government's inaction, Ontario lost the Bombardier C-series jet manufacturing contract. Securing this project would have literally put new life into the province's aerospace industry. We're talking about 2,500 final assembly jobs, 2,500 supplier jobs; in fact, \$250 billion in economic activity over the next 20 years. Minister, Ontario's aerospace industry is on the ropes. What are you going to do about it?

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): The aerospace industry is very important. It employs 23,000 highly skilled workers in this province. We made a very strong bid for the C-series final assembly. This was a competitive process. But let me say this: We still maintain that there should be

work for the workers at the Downsview site for Bombardier. The work there with respect to the Q-series prop is ongoing. There are four contracts, and I am set to sit down with the company, Bombardier, to discuss additional work packages. This is all part and parcel of a national strategy approach to gaining more work for that facility. There is going to be additional work for that facility, and I am certain of that.

Ms. Horwath: Minister, the truth is that Toronto lost the C-series project because your government didn't have a solid plan. Quebec had a plan to pledge \$118 million, and it said it would pay up to \$175 million for a factory that it would lease to Bombardier. They got the final assembly project. The UK government had a plan. They had a \$421-million plan, and Belfast won the contract to develop the wings and other parts.

Mr. Minister, your Premier was in Ottawa, talking to the Prime Minister. Did they forget to talk about aerospace industry jobs? I repeat, now that your lack of action has put Ontario's aerospace industry on the ropes, what's your plan to save it? You let it fly away. How are you going to get it back?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: That's absolute nonsense and you know it. We had a very strong bid.

Let me just say, with respect to this industry, that it has a very bright future. I was talking last week about Goodrich, which won a contract worth \$6 billion for the Airbus. That's an Ontario company. The industry is on a rebound, and I guarantee this: We will be working with Bombardier to secure additional work for the great workers of Downsview in that facility. We're working with the federal government. I'm going to hold the federal government to their commitment to create a national strategy to make sure there's additional work for those workers at Downsview with regard to Bombardier.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In an earlier exchange in the Legislature this afternoon, the Minister of Health made one of the most offensive remarks that I've heard in the Legislature in my 15 years here, and I would ask him to apologize to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

The Speaker: Order. I don't know if you're making reference to the same comment that I heard. I asked the minister to withdraw and—

Interjection.

Mr. Arnott: It's an offensive remark, and he's done it again by saying he directed it at all of us. I would ask him to apologize to this House.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr. Speaker, in the interest of moving along with question period, I most certainly will. Thank you.

Interjection: Will what?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I withdraw, and to anyone who took any offence whatsoever, I apologize. I could have chosen my words more carefully, and I absolutely will try harder next time.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. John Tory says that the deficit is the self-inflicted wound and that we should have stayed within our planned spending. We know that our government chose to help our farmers through difficult times with emergency one-time assistance. We made the choice to help farmers of this province. With respect to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the leader of the official opposition has been very critical of our support for agriculture. Could you please educate Mr. Tory on what his party did to our farmers, the backbone of Ontario, while they were in power.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Certainly we witnessed the Tory commitment to agriculture: slash and burn the agriculture and food budget, lack of commitment for food safety within the agricultural budget, cuts to valuable research programs. All one has to do is to look at what happened. In July 1995, they immediately implemented \$12.8 million in cuts to the Ministry of Agriculture. By the time we arrived at fiscal year 1998-99, over \$100 million had been cut from the base budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food—program after program slashed and burned.

Unlike the Tories, who were prepared to cut the heart out of the agricultural community in this province, we chose to do the opposite. We chose to be there to support our farmers: last year alone, \$377 million Ontario dollars in direct support and investment of the agricultural community.

John Tory stands up and says we need to cut back on our spending. We are very conscious of where we're spending. We're investing in the future of agriculture in this province.

PETITIONS

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.”

I affix my signature as I am in support of this, and I'm pleased to give it to Alexandra.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I have a petition that reads:

“Whereas the northern economy has lost 6,000 jobs in the McGuinty government's first year of its mandate, mostly due to forest industry job losses;

“Whereas the McGuinty government is making the problem worse by increasing electricity rates by 12%;

“Whereas the McGuinty government has a billion-dollar investment strategy for the automotive industry, the film and television industry and the casino industry;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to immediately implement an investment strategy for northern industries and stop the electricity rate increases that put at risk northern industries.”

This is signed by a number of people from across northern Ontario, and I have affixed my signature as well.

CLASS SIZE

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I have a petition from some members of my community.

“Whereas the Ontario government promised to cap class sizes to 20 children from junior kindergarten to grade 3;

“Whereas, based on the current formula, Bennington Heights E.S. will lose one whole teacher, which will result in class sizes of over 30 for all of our classes from grade 1 through grade 6;

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

“To keep its promise of decreasing class sizes and ensure that Bennington Heights E.S. students and teachers will not be subjected to oversized classrooms.”

I'll ask page Paula to take the petition.

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REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased to read this petition on the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia.

“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 Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities,

many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents 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 Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many 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 Huronia Regional Centre, home to 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.”

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to sign this and present it to Kaitlin to take down to you.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): We're trying to assist the Credit Valley people today. The petition says:

“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.”

I'll affix my signature to this petition and give it to my friend Alistair.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of the many parents and community members of Ontario Street Public School, as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Street Public School community in Clarington wishes to alert the Minister of Education to a damaging situation with respect to overcrowding and underfunding at this French immersion school; and

"Whereas Ontario Street Public School is being penalized because it is located in the fast-growing urban centre of Clarington, but is part of a larger ... board that includes rural communities with declining enrolments and less access to public funding; and

"Whereas, despite its exceptional track record, Ontario Street Public School's French immersion program is being reduced from a K-8 to a K-6 program, with a cap on K-6 enrolment, and grade 7 and 8 students being temporarily housed off-site for a third consecutive year; and

"Whereas our single greatest need is in adequate housing of a program that has seen superior academic achievement and a unique community culture, building on strong values of success; and

"Whereas the entire Ontario Street school community is committed to working with the Minister of Education and all parties to explore a fair, practical and effective solution;

"Therefore we, the undersigned parents, students and friends of Ontario Street Public School respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To grant special consideration for a review of funding options that will protect and develop the existing K-8 French immersion single-track program at Ontario Street Public School in Bowmanville.

"To undertake the necessary actions immediately, in the context of the current budget, to resolve the urgent accommodation needs of Ontario Street Public School in the shortest time possible."

I'm pleased to sign this in support of the many constituents and present it to Kyle.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): This petition is to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"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 fund-raising 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 and the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite."

I affix my signature as well on this petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I want to thank Ms. Norma Penny of Wasaga Beach for sending me the following petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget will break the taxpayer protection law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11, 2003, not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in TV ads not to raise taxes by one penny on working families; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty pledged in writing to obey the taxpayer protection law, which requires a referendum before increasing taxes;

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

"To ensure that all of the McGuinty government's tax increases are put before the people of Ontario in a referendum to force Premier McGuinty to obey the Taxpayer Protection Act."

I agree with this petition, and I've signed it.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition signed in part by Glen Miller of Gananoque Drive, the McTear family of Oslo Crescent, Betty and Hugh McGeach of Copenhagen Road and their neighbours, all of whom live in Meadowvale in Mississauga. 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 and the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite."

As one of those who live in Credit Valley's catchment area, I wholeheartedly support this petition. I've signed it, and I'm going to ask Lindsay to carry it for me.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "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 Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

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"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents 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 Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many 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 Huronia Regional Centre, home to 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."

I'm pleased to sign that and again give it to Kaitlin to present.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that comes to me by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3904. It reads as follows:

"Whereas rebuilding our post-secondary education system is critical to the future of our communities and our province; and

"Whereas high tuition user fees are resulting in massive student debt; and

"Whereas Ontario ranks second-last among all provinces in terms of total PSE budget received from government grants and has the highest percentage of total post-secondary education revenues from private sources; and

"Whereas working and learning conditions must be healthy and safe, because working conditions are learning conditions; and

"Whereas the deferred maintenance cost at Ontario university campuses is estimated to have already reached the \$2-billion mark;

"We, the undersigned, support the Canadian Union of Public Employees' call on the provincial government to invest sufficient public funds that will:

"(1) Restore public money cut from operating" grants "since 1995 and bring Ontario up to the national average for funding post-secondary education;

"(2) Finance the \$1.98 billion needed for deferred maintenance; and

"(3) Provide the funding needed to continue the tuition freeze beyond 2006 and increase grants to working-class families."

I agree with the petitioners and have affixed my signature to this.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2005 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 12, 2005, on the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to respond on behalf of New Democrats to what was, in my view, another very conservative budget.

Before addressing the specifics of the budget, I'd like take a moment to reflect a bit on what this budget and the really telling Conservative Party response to the budget say about the current political situation here in Ontario in the spring of 2005. I see the situation this way:

On the one hand, we have two centre-right political parties, the Conservatives and now the McGuinty Lib-

erals, who are looking to Bay Street for guidance, who are looking to Bay Street to tell them what to do. For the life of them, they can't articulate the difference in their overall fiscal priorities.

On the other hand, we have one progressive force, the NDP, which represents the mainstream values of an Ontario that increasingly embraces the principles of fairness, decency and public-spiritedness. I want to elaborate.

Over the past few days, I have read and reread the budget and also listened quite carefully to not only the budget-related remarks of Messieurs McGuinty and Sorbara but also Monsieur Tory. This is what I find remarkable: Taken together, this budget and Mr. Tory's complementary response to the budget outline a moderate, updated conservatism that fits nicely with today's Bay Street politics. Gone are the days of massive, across-the-board cuts and the obsession with balanced budgets, even if they are a phony balance, and budgets that cut taxes. Those were all the hallmarks of the 1990s-style conservatism. But what we have now in its place, in the form of the McGuinty government, are modest investments in health and education—much too modest for my taste—and an almost complete disregard for the everyday concerns of the average Ontarian.

I repeat, the McGuinty-Sorbara-Tory-conservative budget is a budget for Bay Street and for some Ontario elites. But the majority of Ontarians don't see anything that will benefit them in this budget. It is not a budget for ordinary Ontarians, and it is certainly not a budget that the New Democratic Party can in any way support.

I want to refer to some specifics. I'd like to elaborate on some of the issues which really stick out.

Example one: This is a budget blinded by the false Bay Street ideology that the private sector always does things better and cheaper than the public sector. The best illustration of this rigidly held ideology is the role that private, profit-driven financiers will now play under the McGuinty government in our schools, our hospitals, our transit systems, our sewer and water systems—indeed, the role that Bay Street financiers will now play in what we consider to be, and want to be, public services.

Put bluntly, so-called public-private partnerships, or P3s as they are generally known, will cost Ontario taxpayers billions of dollars more in terms of the financing of public assets. It boils down to this: If the government is going to build a hospital—it doesn't matter if we're talking about governments in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or, traditionally, governments in Ontario, British Columbia or Quebec—typically, if the hospital costs \$1 billion, the government would go and issue a 30-year bond for \$1 billion. If you go to the Report on Business pages in the Globe and Mail today, you'll find that the interest rate on that 30-year bond would be about 5%. So government would borrow the money directly and then provide the money for the building of the hospital. And since that hospital is going to provide public services for over 30 years, that bond would be paid back over 30 years. It makes sense. All the people who benefit from that hos-

pital, not just the people who are alive now, but people who will be born 15 years, 20 years, 25 years or 30 years from now, should make a contribution to the construction of that very necessary and very valuable public asset. By issuing a public government bond at 5%, all of us who benefit from that new hospital will, in effect, pay for it. Again, the interest rate would be 5%.

The McGuinty government, instead of issuing a government bond at 5%, now wants to go to Bay Street financiers and say, "You borrow the money." But those Bay Street financiers will want at least a 10% interest rate on that 30-year financing, and they'll want to make a profit. When you borrow \$1 billion to build a hospital, the difference between a 5% annual interest rate and a 10% annual interest rate comes out to hundreds of millions of dollars more. That's what the McGuinty government is up to in this budget.

Yes, this will be very popular with Bay Street—very, very popular—because the McGuinty government will literally be taking hundreds of millions of dollars out of the pockets of ordinary Ontario taxpayers and transferring that money to Bay Street on a speedway. Bay Street will love this: "Hey, instead of having to lend our money directly to government at 5%, we can do this private financing at 10% and make twice as much money; in fact, more than twice as much money."

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This will cost the taxpayers of Ontario, when you look at it over a 20- or 30-year period, not hundreds of millions of dollars, but billions of dollars. Will we get that many new hospitals out of it, that many new schools out of it, that many new university buildings out of it? No. Billions of dollars will go directly from the pockets of ordinary Ontario taxpayers into Bay Street financial corporations.

To give you just one real-life example, because we've actually had a chance to look at the numbers, the privately financed hospital in Brampton will cost about \$520 million to build. But because it is being financed through private, profit-driven financing, that will add an additional \$175 million to the cost of the hospital. What could you build with \$175 million that's now going to go into those private financiers' pockets on Bay Street? You could build several schools. You could build another small hospital in a smaller community somewhere else in Ontario. You could fix up the sewer and water systems in literally dozens of communities across Ontario. But that's not going to happen now. It's not going to happen in those communities because that money is going straight to the McGuinty government's financial friends on Bay Street through private financing. And I can't tell you how much I disagree with that direction.

Over the years, a 20- or 30-year period of this private financing, the public actually ends up paying 30% to 40% more for the same school or the same hospital. As I say, on a project like the Brampton P3 hospital, the additional cost through private financing at 10% interest rates rather than 5% interest rates comes out to \$175 million. I just want to say, I'm all in favour of building public

infrastructure. I'm all in favour of replacing older hospitals with newer hospitals that can provide a better service. I'm very much in favour of public transit. I'm very much in favour of fixing the roads and bridges across Ontario. But the private financing that the McGuinty government now wants to put in place will cost Ontarians far, far more and deliver far less.

What's really amazing is that Dalton McGuinty, just 19 or 20 months ago, when he was Leader of the Opposition, couldn't criticize private financing enough. He told his hometown newspaper in Ottawa, "I am opposed to private, profit-driven financing of public services because it costs too much. It costs taxpayers more, a lot more." And then he said that he would end the Conservative experiments with private financing. That's what he said before the election. Once again, this is another case where Dalton McGuinty says one thing before the election and then does entirely the opposite after the election.

I couldn't help but notice that the Conservative finance critic, Mr. Flaherty, was practically doing somersaults, congratulating Dalton McGuinty and Greg Sorbara for adopting the Conservative financial plan, for following in the fine tradition of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. I've heard Greg Sorbara and Dalton McGuinty castigate the former Conservative government—castigate them, scorn them—and here we see them adopting the centrepiece of the Conservatives' private financing plan. No wonder the Conservative finance critic says, "Congratulations. You've finally come to see the Conservative view, the Conservative vision that public assets, public hospitals, public schools ought to have that much domination by private, profit-driven interests."

New Democrats reject that, and we reject it because we know Dalton McGuinty was right before the election: This will cost taxpayers far, far more, and looked at over a 10-year period, a 15-year period, a 20-year period, it's going to deliver the public of Ontario, the taxpayers of Ontario, far, far less. New Democrats can't support that.

The next thing I want to turn to, though, is what this budget does to the lowest-income people in Ontario. I remember, when the Conservative government came into office and cut the incomes of the poorest people in Ontario by over 22%, that most of the people who are now in the Dalton McGuinty cabinet couldn't speak in tones more holier-than-thou about that. When the Conservatives cut the incomes of the lowest-income Ontarians by 22%, Dalton McGuinty and company swung from the chandeliers. They said it was criminal. They said it was inhumane, that it was a vicious, vicious attack on the lowest-income people in Ontario, and they said it had to be reversed.

I read this budget in detail. Do you know what this budget does for the lowest-income Ontarians? Do you know what it does for those people who have to survive on Ontario disability support plan payments, for those people who have to survive on Ontario Works? Do you know what it does for them? It does nothing. Zero. Nada. It says to those people who have had their incomes cut so

badly, and who have also had to endure inflation rates at 2% and 2.5% a year, that the McGuinty government doesn't care one whit about them.

After all of those sanctimonious speeches, after all of that holier-than-thou rhetoric—that the former Conservative government was attacking the poor, was vilifying the lowest incomes and was attacking the most vulnerable—what did the Liberal budget do to restore any of that? What did it do to help the lowest-income Ontarians? Nothing. When you read this budget, it's as if someone who's struggling to survive on Ontario disability support plan payments or somebody who's struggling to survive on Ontario Works doesn't even exist. It is shameful. It is especially shameful when you put it in the context of all that holier-than-thou, sanctimonious rhetoric that we used to hear from the McGuinty Liberals. It is shameful.

Another example: the national child benefit. I know the McGuinty government likes to blame Paul Martin for all of their troubles. If you listen to the McGuinty government, it was Paul Martin who made all these promises in the election campaign without a plan to implement them, without a plan to do anything about them, without a plan to put the money in place to address the promises. You know, the federal government actually provides something called the national child benefit. For those who don't follow all the technical things, the national child benefit used to be known as the family allowance.

In my home, when I was growing up, my mother waited for that family allowance cheque to come in, because that's when my brother and I got a new pair of shoes, or maybe a new pair of pants or a baseball glove or maybe just some winter clothes. But that was important. Every family across Ontario waited for the arrival of the family allowance cheque and had plans on how to use that family allowance cheque to improve things for their kids, make a difference for their kids. Do you know what? The McGuinty government takes that money away from the lowest-income kids in Ontario. A family of four with two kids, struggling on Ontario Works or with ODSP benefits—when they receive the national child benefit, when they receive the equivalent of the family allowance, the McGuinty government reaches into the pockets of those children and takes that money back. They take \$3,000 out of the pockets of that family of four who are struggling on the very lowest of incomes.

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What's really interesting—actually, it's tragic—is that, once again, before the election Dalton McGuinty promised he was going to stop the clawback. He said the clawback was wrong. He said the clawback was immoral. He said he was going to end the clawback, that that money belonged to those poor kids. But after the election, what does the McGuinty government do? Once again, they adopt the same policy, the same direction, as the Conservative government they used to criticize. The McGuinty government continues to take the national child benefit supplement out of the pockets of the poorest kids in Ontario.

Since the election, we've been calling for the McGuinty government to live up to their promise on this

issue, to stop the clawback, to stop taking money from the poorest kids in the province. It hasn't happened. This budget didn't do anything for those kids.

I've received some of the postcards from these kids. I've received some of the postcards where they talk about what it means when the McGuinty government takes this money out of their pockets. They talk in terms of a child who goes to elementary school, when the parents don't have enough money for lunch, and they have to say to other kids at school, "I forgot my lunch," because they're too embarrassed to say, "In my house, we don't have enough money for lunch." It means kids going to school in beat-up shoes, where other kids laugh at them and ridicule them. It means kids ashamed to go to school because kids will laugh at them because their clothes are worn or their clothes are tattered. It means kids, when you have pizza day or hot dog day at school, who have to make up an excuse for why they can't buy a hot dog. They don't have a loonie for a hot dog or a toonie for pizza.

This shouldn't be happening in Ontario. This shouldn't be happening. But once again the McGuinty government is continuing the same policy they used to scorn the Conservatives for. The McGuinty government hasn't ended the clawback of the family allowance; they haven't ended the clawback of the national child benefit from the poorest kids in Ontario. They just ignore that serious problem, pretend it doesn't exist. But I have to tell you, those kids know that this exists. They know how difficult it is, they know how painful it is, and they know how disgracefully unfair it is.

I call again on the McGuinty government to live up to the promise they made before the election. End the clawback of the national child benefit. Stop taking \$2,000 or \$3,000 a year out of the pockets of the poorest kids in Ontario.

Do you know what? This budget shows that in the new, more modern 21st-century conservatism that both John Tory and Dalton McGuinty can share and take part in, there isn't really much concern for the most vulnerable. There isn't much concern for the most vulnerable even when they are kids who can't speak for themselves. There isn't much concern.

This becomes even more clear when we look at the two other child-related issues that we've been raising day after day in this Legislature: child care and IBI treatment for autistic children over the age of six. I saw the letter from Dalton McGuinty to the parents who have an autistic child. I saw the letter, and in the letter he said it is wrong to discriminate against children six years old and over. It is wrong to say arbitrarily that when a child reaches age six there will be no more IBI treatment for that autistic child. He said that the McGuinty government would end that discrimination.

You have to put yourself in the position of those parents. They see their child at age 5 or 4 receive, say, 12 months of IBI treatment: They see their child start to progress, they see their child start to become communicative, they see their child start to understand and

respond to instructions, they see their child all of a sudden become toilet trained, and they see their child starting to grow developmentally, intellectually, emotionally.

Then the government arbitrarily comes along and says: "Your child is age six now; no more IBI treatment." Imagine what that does to the those parents. Imagine what it does to them. Imagine what it does when someone like Dalton McGuinty before the election says to those parents "We will end the discrimination. We will ensure that children age six and over continue to receive IBI treatment and are not cut off." Then, after the election, what happens? The Dalton McGuinty government continues the same policy, the same direction, the same discrimination that was put in place and practised by the Conservative government that Dalton McGuinty and his team used to criticize and scorn. Imagine how those parents feel now. Imagine how those parents feel. I can tell you how they feel. They feel they have been manipulated. They feel they have been betrayed. They feel they've been taken advantage of. I could use stronger language, but I'm not going to do that here. I'll let those parents do that.

Then there's issue of child care. Wherever you go in Ontario today—small rural communities, small towns, large towns, small cities, large cities, metropolitan cities like Toronto or Ottawa—one thing you hear from family after family is, "We need access to affordable, regulated child care." That's what you hear. Parents are very specific: They want child care that is not-for-profit, they want child care that is publicly provided, they want child care that is regulated and they want child care that is of quality. Parents recognize that their kids, their children, are probably the most important things in their lives, the most important expression of their lives. They recognize that in an economy where more and more parents have to work at two jobs—he works, she works, sometimes they work at two and a half, three jobs to try to make ends meet—they need help with their kids.

They were promised by Dalton McGuinty before the election that they would see \$300 million of new provincial money invested in regulated, not-for-profit child care. What happened in the first budget? Nothing. What happened in this budget last Wednesday? Nothing again. Those people were ignored again. All they want to do is to look after their kids, to ensure that, whether children are two years old or a year-and-a-half old or three years old or five years old or seven years old, they have quality child care—quality child care which leads to better early learning, which leads to better child development, which leads to better educational results, which leads to better opportunities. That's all they want. Once again, Dalton McGuinty was prepared to promise that before the election, but after the election he is following the same policy, the same direction, doing the same thing as the Conservative government that he and his team used to criticize and scorn.

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Not only do I think Dalton McGuinty should keep his promises, but I think we need to recognize that these are

positive investments. These are investments that we need to make in our kids, in our communities, and they are investments that will benefit us far more than the financial cost of the initial investment. There has been study after study that has shown that for every dollar governments invest in not-for-profit, public, regulated, quality child care, we save \$7 down the road. Boy, that's a good investment: invest \$1 and save \$7. You save because those children are less likely to need special education, more likely to do better at school, less likely to get into behavioural difficulties, less likely to get in trouble with the law, more likely to go on further in school and more likely to actually succeed in employment. Those are all not only positive financial benefits but positive social and public benefits that we all benefit from. Not just those kids, not just their parents, but all of us benefit from those.

Once again, though, the McGuinty government isn't making those investments. They're not doing what they said they would do before the election. They are adopting and following the same direction, the same policies that they used to criticize and discredit when they were being implemented by the Conservatives.

I want to talk just a bit about housing. Affordable housing is important. I know the Conservatives used to say that if you help developers at the top end, they will build housing, and sooner or later some of it will trickle down to lower-income folks.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): How many condominiums built?

Mr. Hampton: There are lots of very expensive condominiums being built, condominiums I can't afford, condominiums that most of the people in this Legislature couldn't afford. Lots of those are being built. And, yes, those new, flashy, top-of-the line, very expensive condominiums may influence rents at the top level. Somebody may move out of a very luxurious apartment building into a very luxurious condominium and, as a result, luxury rents at the very top end may come down a little, but I'm not talking about luxury rents. People who can afford luxury rents can look after themselves. I am talking about people who are struggling on minimum wage. I'm talking about people who sometimes have to work two and a half or three jobs on minimum wage, a husband and wife who are working three, four or five jobs on minimum wage, trying to pay the rent, put food on the table and look after their kids. I am talking about affordable housing.

We didn't see any affordable housing under the Conservatives' trickle-down strategy. And do you know what? Despite all the promises, despite all the holier-than-thou, I-feel-your-pain speeches from Dalton McGuinty, despite all the sanctimony, I don't see any provincial money, I don't see any provincial dollars dedicated to affordable housing from the McGuinty government. Incredible.

I used to hear speeches before the election that the McGuinty government was going to invest in affordable housing, that they were going to re-implement real rent

control. Do you know what? We haven't seen real rent control either. They said we were going to see real rent control within one year. Well, we are now well into year two, and there is no real rent control—no affordable housing, no real rent control.

Once again, it sounds like the McGuinty government is simply adopting the direction, the policy, of the Conservative government that they used to criticize. John Tory and Dalton McGuinty agree: You don't need to build affordable housing. That's the message that comes out of this budget.

A few weeks ago, there was actually a glimmer of hope. A modest federal-provincial deal was reached on affordable housing and the province agreed to match the federal contribution: approximately \$75 million a year over four years. But did I see \$75 million a year for four years in this budget? They didn't have to finance the whole thing. All they had to do was come up with some matching money to unlock the federal money. Did I even see that? No, not even that. After all that holier-than-thou rhetoric, after all those sanctimonious speeches, after all that condemnation of the lack of affordable housing policies of the former Conservative government, did I even see money from the McGuinty government that would unlock federal money available for affordable housing? No, not a cent, not a penny, nada, nothing for affordable housing.

Here's the result we find today. The truth of the matter is that the federal government is contributing \$81 million for affordable housing. What can the McGuinty government muster after two years, after two budgets? A measly \$30 million. That's not even a fraction of the money needed to build the 15,000 affordable housing units promised in the budget. There seems to be a trend here: The budget promises—another McGuinty promise—15,000 units of affordable housing, but when you look at the money, a measly \$30 million over two years, it's not going to build one tenth of that amount of affordable housing. To add insult to injury, there's no money for housing allowances in the budget; this is after the minister, Mr. Caplan, indicated that housing allowance money might be flowing within three months of the federal-provincial housing agreement that was signed.

Let me be clear again: Whether it's ending the claw-back of money from the pockets of the lowest-income children, whether it's money for the IBI treatment for autistic kids that was promised, whether it's the provincial money for child care that was promised that isn't there or whether it's the money for affordable housing that was promised and isn't there, this is a Bay Street budget. John Tory could say, "I agree with it."

Mr. Bisson: Jim Flaherty did already.

Mr. Hampton: Jim Flaherty says, "I could love it."

Mr. Bisson: He did.

Mr. Hampton: He did say he loves it. He practically did a backward somersault, he's so in love with it.

Bay Street has no trouble saying that they're in love with it. Why? Because this is the new conservatism. This is the new conservatism that John Tory represents and

Dalton McGuinty represents and that Bay Street is oh so happy to embrace.

This is not a mainstream budget. A mainstream budget in Ontario would end the clawback of the national child benefit. It would end the clawback of the family allowance from the pockets of the poorest kids in Ontario. It would stop taking money out of the pockets of the poorest kids in Ontario. But the new-style, new-image conservative budget of Dalton McGuinty doesn't do that.

A mainstream Ontario budget would invest new provincial money in child care, as was promised. But this new, trendy, 21st-century style of conservatism that we see John Tory and Dalton McGuinty so happy to embrace doesn't invest new provincial money in child care.

A mainstream Ontario budget would uphold the Charter of Rights of those children who suffer with the affliction of autism. It would stop the arbitrary and discriminatory conduct toward children six and older who suffer from autism. It would ensure that those children are treated fairly. But the McGuinty budget doesn't do that. Just as the Conservatives before discriminated against children age six and over who suffer from autism, the McGuinty government discriminates against them as well.

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A mainstream Ontario budget would match the federal dollars for affordable housing—it would match them and it would do more—but in the spirit of this McGuinty government's embracing of the new conservatism, the new conservatism that John Tory is quite happy to embrace as well, there isn't the investment in affordable housing. I repeat: It's this absence of compassion, this absence of caring about the people who are the most vulnerable, who are the least well off, who struggle the most, it is this absence of compassion and caring for those people that I find most disturbing. I have to say that this is something New Democrats can't countenance.

I know that some people want to say, "You know Hampton is old-fashioned. He believes in these things. He believes that we shouldn't take money out of the pockets of the poorest kids. He believes that we have a moral obligation to ensure that the lowest-income Ontarians have a roof over their head. He believes that we shouldn't discriminate against children because they went from age five to age six." If that's being old-fashioned, I have to tell you I am proud to be old-fashioned, because I think those are the values that the majority of people in Ontario agree with.

I want to address some of the other people who were totally ignored by the McGuinty budget. We know that farmers in the province are literally being pushed to the edge of the cliff. It's not a crisis on the farm: it is not a continuing crisis on the farm. It is a series of crises on the farm. And it's not just in the beef sector or the grain sector or the oilseed sector. Literally everywhere you go in rural Ontario, people who have worked their whole lives to build up their farming operation, to produce food for the rest of us in Ontario—you see more and more farm families being pushed to the brink.

I know that many of those families across Ontario were hoping—indeed I expect some were praying—that there would be some help from the McGuinty government. They were expecting that they would see a plan from the McGuinty government as to how they could, over the next six months, one year, two years, three years, reposition themselves so they wouldn't lose everything they've worked for. What did they find in the budget? What they found was that far from a plan to help them, far from a strategy to help them reposition themselves, far from a hand up, what they saw and what they see is a 23% cut, a 23% reduction in the Ministry of Agriculture budget. It is as if the McGuinty government drove by and said, "Oh, I see you're having a tough time. Gee, let them eat cake." There is no plan, there is no strategy, there is nothing here for the hard-pressed farming communities of Ontario.

I say "farming communities" deliberately, because it's not just individual farmers who are at risk here; it is whole communities. It simply goes up the chain: farmers, suppliers, people who are trying to lend and help farmers out are all at risk, and this budget does nothing to help them. In fact, when you read the details in the fine print, it does much to hurt them. It's as if the McGuinty government said, "Ontario extends through 416 and 905, and as far as the rest of Ontario, whether it's 807 or 705 or 519, you don't matter."

That kind of message simply doesn't reflect the real values of Ontarians. I don't think that the majority of people across Ontario want to see our farmers going bankrupt. I don't think they want to see our farmers losing their livelihoods, losing everything they've worked all their lives for. It doesn't represent fairness, it doesn't represent justice and it doesn't represent the kind of community that Ontario is.

But it is the new conservatism. What Bay Street wants—private financing of schools, private financing of hospitals and private financing of universities and colleges so they can make money out of our hospitals, make money out of our schools, make money out of sewer and water projects and make money out of transit systems—that's all in the budget. But farmers: "Let them eat cake." That's the message of the McGuinty government.

I want to talk just a bit about the part of the province that I come from. There are not just a few thousand people who work in the forest sector; there are tens upon tens of thousands of people who work in paper mills, pulp mills, sawmills and the associated operations. In fact, it is the second-largest earner of foreign exchange for the Ontario economy. It's either the second or third most important industry for Ontario. And what is the McGuinty government doing to those paper mills, pulp mills and sawmills? Shutting them down.

A paper mill in Kenora, in my riding, is surrounded by hydro dams that produce clean, affordable, sustainable hydroelectricity; hydro dams that are 30 kilometres, 40 kilometres or 50 kilometres away from the paper mill. Do you know what the electricity costs from those hydro

dams? It costs about a cent, maybe a cent and a half, a kilowatt hour. But do you know what those paper mills are paying for that electricity as a result of the McGuinty government's privatization by stealth, privatization through the back door of our electricity system? They're paying over seven cents a kilowatt hour now. Companies are saying, "If we're forced to pay seven cents a kilowatt hour, we're going to shut down this paper machine or we're going to shut down the whole mill." So you have 500 workers, and they're struggling. They're scratching their heads. They can't understand this. They know that if they go 30 kilometres up the road, the electricity that's being produced at that hydro dam only costs a cent and a half a kilowatt hour, yet the paper mill where they work is being charged seven cents a kilowatt hour and it's going to put them out of a job. They're saying, "How does this happen?"

I'll tell you how it happens. It happens with a government, once again, that used to scorn the Conservative approach of privatizing our electricity system, that used to attack the Conservatives over their strategy of privatizing the electricity system. It happens with the McGuinty government. Now that they're the government, they're following the same policy.

Oh, yes, there's a little difference. The Conservatives were going to do it through the front door. They were going to look people in Ontario in the eye and say, "As a Conservative government we believe in electricity privatization and we're going to do it." The McGuinty government believes in doing it through the back door. They tell people they're going to keep the electricity system public, affordable, sustainable and reliable; in the meantime, they're devising strategies to sell the system to the private financiers on Bay Street.

This is the new conservatism: You don't tell voters what you're going to do; you don't tell the public what you're going to do; you look at them, you smile and you say, "We'd never do that. We'd never privatize the hydro system," and then you go in the backroom and plot strategy to do just that: privatize it through the back door.

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That's why those workers in Kenora, those workers at the Abitibi mill in Thunder Bay, those workers at the Neenah paper mill in Terrace Bay, some workers at the St. Marys paper mill in Sault Ste. Marie, at Domtar's Cornwall mill—that's why so many workers in the paper industry are either losing their jobs or are at risk of losing their jobs: because the McGuinty government is raising hydroelectricity rates so fast and so far that those companies are simply saying, "We can't afford to do this; we can't afford to sustain ourselves."

All you have to do is look at hydro rates in Quebec, Manitoba or British Columbia and you see that paper mills in Ontario now are paying double what they pay in Manitoba, Quebec and British Columbia. That's why these same companies, whether they be Abitibi or Domtar or Tembec or Bowater, are investing in their mills in Quebec; they're investing in their mills in Manitoba; they're investing in their mills in British Columbia.

They're even investing in mills that they own in the United States. They're taking production that used to happen here in Ontario and they're moving it there, as a direct result of the McGuinty government policy.

A lot of those workers were hoping that they were going to see an investment strategy by the McGuinty government to counter some of this, or at least neutralize it. The McGuinty government boasts about an investment strategy for the auto sector—\$500 million; the McGuinty government boasts about an investment strategy for the movie and television sector; boasts about an investment strategy for the casino sector. But here are communities that are suffering as a direct result of the McGuinty government policy of rapidly raising electricity rates, and they're saying, "Where is the investment strategy for us?" They looked at the budget, and what did they find? Nada; nothing; zip. Once again, it's as if Dalton McGuinty and his government drove by northern Ontario and saw communities that are facing difficult circumstances and said, "Let them eat cake"—once again, the new conservatism that I know John Tory has no trouble endorsing and that Dalton McGuinty in his budget has certainly endorsed.

I want to be clear on where New Democrats stand. A paper mill in Kenora that is only 20 or 30 kilometres away from hydro dams that produce electricity at a cent and a half a kilowatt hour—clean, sustainable electricity at a cent and a half a kilowatt hour—should not be paying seven cents a kilowatt hour for that electricity. People shouldn't be losing their jobs as a result of that wrong-headed policy. If the McGuinty government can afford an investment strategy for the auto sector, the movie and television production sector and the casino sector, there should have been an investment strategy in this budget for the forestry sector, a sector which now really needs the help as a result of Liberal McGuinty wrong-headed electricity policies.

I also want to talk about the situation that First Nations are facing. I am one of those people who have probably been to the majority of the First Nation communities in this province. There are 55 First Nation communities in my own constituency, and I've been to First Nations in southwestern Ontario, in central Ontario, in eastern Ontario and northeastern Ontario. If there is one part of Ontario that constantly faces social and economic challenges, it is First Nations. I'm not going to go into the history; I'm not going to go into the wrong-headed federal policies that have been created and recreated and announced and reannounced; I'm not going to go into the fact that when treaties were signed with those First Nations, we agreed federally and provincially to share with First Nations, to share the land, share the resources and share the financial benefits that come from the land and the resources. That's history. What I know is that before the election, Dalton McGuinty and his team said that they were committed to forming a new, positive and progressive relationship with First Nations. They were going to work with First Nations to take up the challenges of reducing some of the economic disparity, the

educational disparity, the health disparity, the housing disparity.

I know a number of First Nations leaders across this province who were really hopeful. In the first budget of the McGuinty government they were told, "Wait, wait. Wait and you will see something. Something will be there." So they waited for the second budget, and the second budget came this last Wednesday. And what did they see in the budget? The budget of the ministry responsible for native affairs was cut by 22%. The ministry of native affairs has one of the smallest budgets of the whole government. It has a very small budget, and yet that small budget wasn't small enough for the McGuinty government; they had to go and cut it by a further 22%.

I say again, I heard the promises before the election, and now I know why so many of the First Nations leadership are disappointed. Indeed, many of them are angry, because they too feel betrayed; they too feel that they've been taken advantage of; they too feel that they have been told, "Let them eat cake."

Then there is the issue of Ontario municipalities. I'm talking here about municipalities, whether they be very large, like metropolitan Toronto, or whether they be the smallest, some of the small municipalities that I find in my constituency.

Just one issue. I remember when Dalton McGuinty stood in this Legislature and criticized the former Conservative government for downloading the ambulance system onto municipalities. I can quote him. He said to the former Conservative government, "Why are you forcing municipalities to take over responsibility for an ambulance system that is underfunded, that is broken down, that is underresourced, especially when they don't want the responsibility and they don't have the money?" That was the question he used to ask. That was the condemnation of the former Conservative government.

Is there anything in this budget to address that? I know municipalities were facing the awful decision of having literally to say, "We're going to cut back on ambulance services. We are going to start cutting ambulance services because we as a municipality do not have the financial wherewithal to operate them and the McGuinty government is not picking up their fair share of the cost. So we have no choice."

Then there's the issue of social assistance. I remember when Dalton McGuinty and many of his now cabinet ministers used to swing from the chandeliers here, criticizing the former Conservative government for not picking up their share of social assistance costs, for forcing those social assistance costs down onto municipalities that didn't have the tax base, the revenue base, the resources to pay for it. Municipalities were hopeful that they were going to see in this budget something that addressed that, something that recreated a level of fairness.

Did they see that? Did they see even a small measure to move in that direction? No. What did they see? They saw nothing, zero; nothing for those municipalities that are being financially hard-pressed to provide those

services, which, under the current rules, are actually a provincial responsibility.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Say one nice thing.

Mr. Hampton: The government wants to talk about so-called winners. Everyone wants to say that the health care system was a winner. But I went out of this chamber after the budget was presented and I saw the interview of the head of the Ontario Hospital Association, who said, "We told the government very clearly that our costs of running the hospital system are growing by about 7% a year." The population is aging. The population is increasing. There are more and more illnesses which can now be treated or addressed, and people are turning to the hospital system for treatment, for help. So the Ontario Hospital Association was very clear with the government: "If we're going to provide these health resources for people, the health treatment that people want and need, we are going to need about a 7% increase."

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Was there a 7% increase? No, it was significantly less than that. As a result, the head of the Ontario Hospital Association says, "Hospitals will again go through the same painful process they went through over the last 12 months: They will have to draw up plans and strategies to lay off nurses and other health care workers, because the money isn't in the budget to pay for those resources."

Once again, I remember when members of the McGuinty team used to castigate the former Conservative government for doing exactly that: for underfunding hospitals and forcing them to lay off nurses, nurses aides and other health care workers. But here we are; this is what the McGuinty Liberals said before the election. Now, after the election, they are adopting virtually the same approach, the same policy, the same direction that they used to criticize the former Conservatives for.

I actually had the opportunity to listen to the head of the Thunder Bay Regional Health Centre when he was asked by his local media in Thunder Bay what this budget does for the Thunder Bay Regional Health Centre. He was very direct. He said, "It does nothing for us. It puts us in a hole. It makes it very difficult for us. It puts us on a path where we will have to reduce services and look at laying off nurses and health care providers."

I want to again return to the theme that I talked about at the beginning. I started by saying that this budget makes it clear that there really are only two political philosophies represented in this Legislature. Both Dalton McGuinty and John Tory either subscribe now or have subscribed to the direction that the McGuinty government is taking. New Democrats believe that this new conservatism of the 21st century, which both the Conservative leader and the Liberal leader can join hands in, doesn't represent mainstream Ontario. It doesn't represent the progressive values of mainstream Ontario.

Mainstream Ontario is asking, "Why should we, as taxpayers, be forced to pay 30% or 40% more to profit-driven corporate interests when a hospital is built, when a school is built, when a transit system is built, when a

health centre is built, when a sewer and water system is put in place?" Why should taxpayers be forced to pay 30% or 40% more just so the McGuinty government can benefit its Bay Street financier friends? Why should people pay a 10% interest and borrowing rate on private financing for a hospital when the government could put out a 30-year government bond at only 5% interest? Why should the public be forced to pick up the hundreds of millions of dollars of greater expense just so the McGuinty government can benefit the Bay Street financier friends?

I say again, no one was happier than the John Tory finance critic, Jim Flaherty, who said, "They're adopting exactly what we Conservatives said they should do: private financing, for-profit financing, Bay Street financing." I cannot say how strongly this is the wrong direction. I cannot say how strongly I reject the McGuinty government forcing Ontario taxpayers to pay for the profits of Bay Street financiers when we want to build a hospital or a school.

I believe Ontarians really did vote for change 18 months ago. They really did want to see the end of the clawback of the family allowance, the end of the clawback of the national child benefit. They really did want to see autistic children age six and older not have to suffer from discrimination. They really did want to see public hospitals built with public money, not catering to Bay Street financiers. They really did want to see provincial money going to child care. They really did want to see nurses hired rather than nurses fired. But what's clear is that they are not going to see that from the McGuinty government.

When the Conservative finance critic can say that he is overjoyed, that he couldn't be happier with the Bay Street financing of the McGuinty government, that tells you just how little change there has been. That tells you that Dalton McGuinty and John Tory are happy to embrace this new 21st-century conservatism, where Bay Street gives the direction and Dalton McGuinty says, "Whatever you want, folks. We'll do it however you want."

I want to be clear: New Democrats reject this. We reject it outright. This is going to cost ordinary Ontarians hundreds of millions of dollars that people can't afford and that people shouldn't have to pay just to line the pockets of the McGuinty government's Bay Street financier friends.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton–Lawrence): It has been a pleasure to listen to the leader of the third party as he rails on without any real hope. He is full of despair, full of negativity. I think he underestimates the people of Ontario. He underestimates their willingness to work, their willingness to invest, their willingness essentially to believe in each other. That's what this budget is all about.

You notice that throughout his whole hour-long rant, he never once mentioned an investment in our young people. This budget made an historical investment in our young people, in skills training, in our universities and

colleges. It was unprecedented. The leader of the NDP does not mention one word of this historic investment. There was more invested in our young people in this budget than there was in the last 40 years. He doesn't believe in the future of this province. He believes in being a pessimist, he believes in being negative and he doesn't care about the future of this province and how we have to invest in our universities and colleges.

He doesn't understand that there's a changing economy. He doesn't understand that in Hamilton, the number one employer is now the Health Sciences Centre, McMaster, a world-leading institution where some of the best young men and women are doing research. They're helping people with illnesses. It's a cutting-edge university hospital. It's the number one employer. He doesn't mention that. In London, another great Ontario city, the number one employer is now the London Health Sciences Centre, affiliated with the University of Western Ontario, where again we have the best and the brightest, with all kinds of potential.

He doesn't understand the new economy. He's in the past. He's stuck in negative views out of his rear-view mirror. You've got to look ahead when you're driving a car, and that's what this budget does. You've got to look ahead into the future.

If you look at the United States, the number one state in terms of per capita income is not Texas or Alabama, it's Massachusetts. What do you have in Massachusetts? You've got centres of excellence for learning and for health care. You've got MIT. You've got Harvard. That's what we have to emulate. We can't keep harping back on things that happened 40 or 50 years ago. We've got to go ahead, and this budget goes ahead with a \$6.2-billion investment in our universities and colleges—unprecedented.

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This also means very real things to our ordinary working families, who will save anywhere from \$500 to \$2,500 a year in tuition fees because of this budget. These are working families who want to send their child to university or to college or to a skills training program. They are going to save up to \$2,500 per child. Sixteen thousand students of low income will be able to get a \$6,000 grant. So it's not only the universities and colleges that benefit; it's also the families and the bright young people we have in this province who want to work and want to be part of this exciting new economy.

We forget that these colleges and universities are economic drivers. All we have to do is look at the miracle that took place in Ireland in the last decade. It wasn't done on the old economy; it was done on the new intellectual economy. As Thomas Friedman talks about in his book—and I really ask the member from Rainy River to read Thomas Friedman's book, *The World is Flat*—the world has changed. It's no longer the world of worn-out steam engines. We are now into the intellectual economy. It is a flat-earth economy. That's what is changing, and we have to appreciate it.

This budget does some fundamental things that are not very dramatic, you might say, in a tabloid sense, but what

it does is it puts the financial house in order. The deficit that we inherited has basically been reduced by half, by 50%. That's quite an accomplishment: from \$6 billion down to \$3 billion. That is an unheralded accomplishment, really, that is in this budget. It puts the financial house in order so that we can put money into our universities, into our health care system, into our elementary schools, into our child care centres.

We first of all had to do that, and that was not done by accident. If you'll recall, the second bill this Legislature passed was Bill 2. What Bill 2 did was it rolled back the proposed corporate tax cuts of the Tories, because we knew this was not a time to continue tax cuts to corporations, that we instead had to invest that money into our health care system, our universities and colleges and our cities.

It's ironic that the NDP leader rails about Bay Street, yet he voted, along with the Tories, to continue the corporate tax cuts worth billions of dollars. He can't have it both ways. He can't say, "You should be hitting the corporations," when he voted to give the corporations huge corporate tax cuts.

We, in Bill 2, decided that we needed that corporate tax revenue to invest in our universities and colleges. That is why we have been very fortunate in this budget, because of this long-term plan, that we got an increase in corporate tax revenues of \$1.2 billion. What did we do with that \$1.2 billion in corporate tax? We put it into our universities and colleges, into our municipalities. We put it into our cities, in the gas tax. We invested that money.

Then we have this railing about privatization and Bay Street. I wonder what the NDP leader really sees wrong with our pension funds—teachers' pension funds and the Ontario municipal employees' pension funds, two of the biggest pension funds in North America—that maybe, for a change, they might partner with us, the government of Ontario, to build schools, bridges, transit systems, water systems. These are the ones that the NDP leader talks about as being Bay Street privatization friends of ours.

We have to build this infrastructure. We've got a water infrastructure deficit in the tens of billions of dollars, a public transit infrastructure deficit, our roads. Our northern economy needs infrastructure investment. Instead, others on the opposite side say, "Bury your head in the sand. Don't do anything. Just go into more and more government debt," which we are trying to get out of by being a bit more prudent in the management of our fiscal long-term plan.

I think partnering with the pension funds of teachers and with the pension funds of municipal workers is a good way of investing in our sewer work, in our road work, in our hospitals and schools. Right now, that pension fund money is going to England to invest in similar projects, because Prime Minister Blair in England welcomes that. I think he's a socialist of sorts, like Mr. Hampton is, but he says it's OK to take Ontario money. Yet we say, "No, no. Don't use the pension fund money here in Ontario. Let it go to England." That doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense to the people of Ontario,

because the people of Ontario say, "Listen, I want that bridge fixed in Chatham-Kent. I want that water system fixed in Walkerton." They want that infrastructure. That's why we put—

Mr. Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): We could sell the GO train.

Mr. Colle: I don't want to get into that.

The budget has \$30 billion of government money put aside as the core revenue to finance infrastructure for the next five years. We have to get to work on that infrastructure. We can't debate 19th-century socialism any longer. We've got to get down to building those sewers, roads and power plants. We have to move forward on those fronts without any more delay or any more excuses. We've got to move ahead.

If you look—

Interjection: Thirty billion dollars.

Mr. Colle: Thirty billion dollars, along with what we can partner with, like pension funds, for example.

Also, some people mentioned, "Why is this budget good for the city of Toronto?" The Minister of Finance said very eloquently, "I think in the city of Toronto we're investing in some of the most inspiring institutions in this country or in North America"; that is, Ryerson University, York University, the University of Toronto, our community colleges. We've got Mohawk College, Durham College, we've got Seneca, we've got George Brown and Humber. They are one of the economic drivers in the GTA. Our colleges and universities employ tens of thousands of people in good-paying jobs, plus they educate our future scientists, our future doctors, our future pianists, our future politicians perhaps—whatever it is. By investing in Toronto's universities and colleges, in London's universities and colleges, in Ottawa's, the University of Ottawa and Carleton—those are economic engines in all those communities. We have to look upon that investment in the long term, and therefore it's good.

This budget is also good for cities because it invests in infrastructure. It invests in the building of 15,000 affordable housing units: 15,000 affordable housing units on which we are going to partner with the federal government.

By the way, we are not including in this budget any of the arrangements made between Premier McGuinty and Prime Minister Paul Martin. We are not counting those dollars in. That is really a silver lining. In the future, if we get that commitment of money, we'll be able to do even more than in this budget. This is a modest budget in many respects, although I think it's very bold when you look at the investment in our universities, in our colleges and in skills training. It's unprecedented in that regard. You've just got to fathom that \$6.2 billion and what it's going to do for our students, our economy and our cities where those universities are housed.

I think we have to start to look at Ontario not as yesterday's economic engine but as tomorrow's intellectual economic driver. We've got to be more like Ireland, more like Massachusetts. We could learn from our competitors abroad, because we're no longer in competi-

tion with Quebec. We're no longer in competition with Michigan. By the way, Ontario has now surpassed Michigan in automobile production.

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We're always talking about Detroit and cars. The pages will know about this. When the pages think about cars, they think about Detroit. That's not the case any more. We've surpassed Michigan. We're the number one producer of automobiles in North America—Ontario—because we've invested strategically in our automobile sector in a very aggressive way, whatever the company may be. And we're going to have even more investment, because we're at a competitive advantage to our American cousins, who are having a heck of a hard time paying for their health costs. Our health costs are part of our legacy here in Ontario, where you have one of the best public health care delivery systems in the world. It has its challenges, and that's why we put over a billion and a half dollars again this year into this health care budget: because we have an imperative to transform health care. We're going to continue to invest in prevention. That's why, for the first time in Ontario's history, we've got free vaccinations for children—to prevent serious illness from happening in the first place. That's why we're investing in immunization.

Interjection: Six hundred dollars per child.

Mr. Colle: Six hundred dollars per child. We're doing that with this budget.

We're investing in our seniors. Someone asked me, "Well, what's in this budget for seniors?" I say, "If you look at the health care investment in nursing home care; in home care, it's unprecedented, hundreds of billions of dollars; long-term care and the cataract operations we're going to be able to deliver in a more timely fashion." These are serious investments in our seniors, who benefit with our investment in our health care system.

We want to ensure that there is an ongoing improvement in our health care system. That's why we've got 52 new family health teams springing up in Ontario to meet the demands of the underserved areas. This is a dynamic new funding venture for this budget.

We've got all kinds of initiatives that ensure that our hospitals are not the only place where you go for health care. That's why we're trying to do more home care investment in this budget. We're trying to do more emphasis on lifestyle changes, everything about banning junk food. We're looking at prevention. We're looking at investments in healthy Ontarians.

We're also very concerned about public education. That's why we're unequivocal about our continued reinvestment in public education in this budget. We haven't forgotten the elementary schools, the smaller class sizes. In the early years, those are of critical importance. That continues on in this four-year plan in this budget in our high schools. We're continuing that investment in our secondary schools all across this province in this budget, and that is an ongoing continuation of the last budget.

We're also doing things that are part of our heritage. We're ensuring that our cities continue to flourish, and

that's why one of the things we're doing here is beginning the uploading of services. We've increased the grants to municipalities and cities again this year by over 6%, so all the municipalities right across the province have a 6% increase in funding for their services. We're no longer downloading services; we're beginning the fair treatment of our municipalities. That is something that is ongoing in this budget.

The other interesting thing is about our agricultural partners. The budget, year over year, has increased, and we'll be there. As the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Peters, said, last time we had the \$170-million top-up for farmers who are in need and the \$30 million for beef farmers. And we'll be there if our farmers need us again, as we were last year. We're not afraid to help our farmers in a time of need and will continue to do that.

In terms of initiatives that we have to remember are very important, this budget continues to invest in job growth. You can talk about all these needs that are out there, whether it be in health care, education or our cultural sector. I should mention that we passed the historical heritage act. The Ontarians with Disabilities Act will be reinforced with this budget. But if you look at the jobs—146,000 new jobs created in Ontario since we took office—146,000. The Ontario economy is continuing to grow.

Despite a 20% increase in the value of the American dollar, our Ontario economy is still vibrant. It overcame that and still had very healthy growth. People said, "Well, with that high American dollar, Ontario relies so much on exports to the United States that it's really going to be in a tailspin because of the high dollar." We've overcome that high American dollar, and I think it really shows, as I said in my beginning remarks, how resilient the Ontario economy is and how strong it is despite the challenges of that high dollar and of high gas prices.

The Premier is leading the way. He is not afraid to stand up for Ontario. He is fighting for our fair share so that we can continue to grow this economy. That's why we're talking about the \$23-billion gap that has to be narrowed and about investing in our new Canadians on an equal basis. Those are all things that are going to continue to be on our work agenda. But this budget stabilizes our plan because it reduces that deficit. It continues investment in our priorities.

It was a tough budget, because 15 ministries had to make some tough decisions. They were flatlined because we still face this deficit. We still face economic challenges. Like in every household, you can't say yes to every child for everything they want. You make choices. You can't always buy a new car, you can't always build that addition, so you make choices. But the basic choices here are pretty fundamental to our core values. We said in the last election that we were going to invest in health care, and we're investing in health care big time: almost \$33 billion. We're investing in education: again, unprecedented educational investments right from preschool all the way to \$100 million for postgraduate students.

Those are Liberal core values. We've stuck to them, and we're making great headway in reducing that deficit

so we can invest even more next year in our future, in our students, in our elderly and in this great province. I would not put this province down. I think it's got incredible potential. Let's make it better.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the first government speaker in the rotation. I would like to ask a question. Hopefully, Mr. Colle can respond to this in his summation. My concern is the announcement of the \$30 billion. I applaud the government if there is \$30 billion of provincial dollars to actually invest. The question I'm asking is, in the budget document on page 75 it shows capital expenses to do with all the different ministries. I'm curious where any of the \$30 billion is on page 75 of the budget. I can't find anything, in fact: a little bit of money in culture, some money possibly in infrastructure renewal, but they certainly don't add up to even a fraction of \$30 billion.

I would expect, if it's over a five-year period, that we would see an amount of \$4 billion or \$5 billion; maybe they're going to spend more toward the end of the five-year period. I would just like the member to show me or tell me where and how much money the Dalton McGuinty government is going to spend of the \$30 billion that he's announced on page 75, and how much will be spent in the fiscal year 2005-06, the year we're dealing with today.

I think it's important, because to me this budget is very grey in a number of areas. It has a nice little comfortable budget speech, but I don't see in the wording and in the mathematics where in fact we see the actual dollars being spent. I would like that clarification from the government.

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Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to some of the comments that were made by the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, I wanted to touch on immunizations first, because I heard him say that we are investing in immunizations. Really, it's the federal government that's investing in immunizations. It's federal money over three years—\$150 million in each of the three years—that's actually going into immunizations. That was money that was allocated in the federal budget last year. So for the next three years, the full cost of the program for immunizations is actually being paid for by the federal government, through their immunization program.

It's always ironic to me when I hear Mr. McGuinty trying to say we've been shortchanged. He doesn't ever mention the programs that are already being funded with federal dollars, like the child care program, which is the next one I want to reference. The fact of the matter is that the \$300 million that the Liberals, before the election, said they were going to invest doesn't show up again in this budget, and the announced money for child care is entirely dependent on whether or not the federal budget gets passed at the federal level—and the way things are going in Ottawa these days, it's really hard to know. So, in fact, the only money that has been invested in child

care under the Liberals has been all federal money, all of the time. That's the money that has been invested. Not a single new provincial dollar has gone into child care in the province of Ontario despite the election promise that was made.

If I look at family health teams, I want to point out to the member that over half of the family health teams that were announced were actually already operating. They were the former family health networks that were established under the Conservatives that were up and operating in so many communities. So it's kind of ironic that the government that used to bash the Conservatives for their sins actually just transferred over half of them into family health teams and they continue to operate in the way they did under the Tories. So there's not a really new, significant investment in either new doctors or new health care professionals through that scheme, which is a bit too bad.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'd like to commend my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence for his excellent summary of all the good things in our budget.

I would like to go back and think a little bit about the comments from the leader of the third party, specifically about agriculture.

My riding has more people in it who are either directly employed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food—because that's actually where OMAF headquarters is located—or who are indirectly employed by OMAF—because the University of Guelph holds a significant research contract with OMAF. So I have more people who are directly or indirectly employed by OMAF than any other riding.

I would like to tell you that the comments of the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party, in which they have tried to misrepresent the true state of the agriculture budget—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the member for Guelph-Wellington would like to withdraw that and choose a different word, please.

Mrs. Sandals: I withdraw, sir—in which they have had an interesting interpretation of the numbers in the budget—the core agriculture budget this year is \$564 million. That is a \$15-million dollar increase in the core budget over last year's core budget.

I want to assure my constituents, who have been very distressed by this mangling of the arithmetic, that the intent of this budget is not to decrease the core budget at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. It makes me very angry when people who are trying to score political points distress real people with real lives. My constituents don't deserve that.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I want to raise a couple of questions and just a concern that the member from Eglinton-Lawrence raised in his comments.

I appreciate his comments with regard to the new economy and the fact that in Hamilton and London the health sciences centres are the recipients of new money, according to the minister, in this budget. I think that most

of us would appreciate the importance of ongoing investment in this area. But I also found, as I listened, that there was some concern in my mind. Being the largest employer raised a warning flag for me in the sense that it is only through robust employment that any government can spend the kind of money that this government has proposed in its budget to be able to support those. I realize that this government is particularly happy about its corporate tax windfall of \$3.1 billion, but I do think that as a government goes forward, it has to always be cognizant of the fact that paying for any of this comes from the pocket of the taxpayer. So any kind of initiatives have to be managed in a prudent way that ensures we can continue to provide this kind of support for institutions such as those named by the member, and that comes with the kind of strong economy and the jobs that are important.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Eglinton-Lawrence, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Colle: I really welcome the constructive comments, member from Simcoe North, and I would just like to say that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal will be giving out those details on how much per year and how this plan unrolls for the \$30 billion. I think he'll be more than happy to sit down with him.

The member from York North made an excellent point. If we don't grow the economy, keep people working, allow small business to flourish and also keep big businesses working in Ontario, we won't be able to pay for our health care system. That's why in this budget we're trying to do that with no new taxes and no tax increases.

To the member from Nickel Belt, the thing that astonishes me is that she still doesn't get it. She talks about how we're using federal money for health care—immunization—and for child care. It's our money. It's Ontario taxpayers' money. The hard-working people of Ontario, who work their derrieres off every year and every day, write a cheque to the federal government of \$23 billion, and the Premier of this province has the backbone to stand up and say, "Let's keep some of Ontario's money here so we can invest in our children: in child care, in immunization." I don't see what's so complicated about that. I don't know why you're going to defend these federal dollars. They're our dollars. The dollars are Ontario dollars that we want to keep here for our schools and our hospitals, to ensure that Ontarians get the services. For the member from Nickel Belt to say, "Those are federal dollars"—wake up. They're Ontario taxpayer dollars. That's why the Premier is winning applause all across this province when he says, "Stand up for Ontario for a change."

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Dunlop: I'm very pleased today to be able to rise and start off some of the 20-minute rotations for our party. Our critic Mr. Flaherty, the member from Whitby-Ajax, will be speaking on this tomorrow.

The motion calls on the House to approve in general the budgetary policy of the government. In a positive

comment, I do applaud the government for fulfilling some of the commitments of the Rae report. I sat in on meetings with Mr. Rae. I have a community college in my riding, Georgian College. Let me put it two ways, because I think it's important that the government doesn't try to grab all the credit for post-secondary education. We finished some substantial projects under the Super-Build program for the 1,000 people places. Georgian College, in my riding, received about \$25 million of that money and built some beautiful new facilities. I know that there still has been a problem with the funding and the college will appreciate any funding that they receive in this budget.

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As well, I have talked to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and sat in on a number of meetings, because we do have, in the case of the riding of Simcoe North and the city of Orillia and district, plans to possibly hold a satellite campus in the city of Orillia. Right now we are negotiating with Lakehead University, so we are very pleased if anything like that can happen and more than happy to—OK. I just had a note passed to me. Overall, it's important that we acknowledge the Rae report recommendations and the fact that the government has started to fulfill those.

I wanted to say something about the budget, and I'm very curious why nothing happened in this particular area. Just today we passed Bill 3, Mr. Levac's bill, in the House with a recorded vote. I also support that piece of legislation, as I support the legislation by a number of private members who have introduced different bills in this House. I am really curious why the government would not have actually put their approval or support of those bills, and possibly some money to go with it, in the budget speech. I think it does a lot when a private member is doing something really good in this House, like Mr. Gravelle and Bill 55, the insulin pump bill, and it's always great to see that the bill can be acknowledged in the budget. We didn't see that this year and I think it is a little bit disappointing, because it was a real opportunity to promote some of the really good things that all the members of this House support. Mr. Gravelle, for example, has been working on this for some time and I know he would really have appreciated that. I think a lot of the members in the House would certainly have supported it, as they would Mr. Levac with Bill 3. I know it is what we call water under the bridge, but the bottom line is that it's an opportunity for this Legislature to support things that all members of the House are doing and then incorporate them into the finances of the province as well.

I've had a number of concerns about the budget, though. As a member of the opposition, I have to put my concerns on record and I have to follow up what I have been hearing from my constituents in the last few days. One of the first e-mails I received was from a lady up in Oro-Medonte township. She heard the budget clearly and asked, "What about seniors? What are we doing for seniors in this budget?"

There is a growing senior population, they are fairly well organized, and we didn't see the word "seniors" in the budget speech. I am curious why. I felt that that was an area in which the government should have brought forward possibly some funding in a certain area. I can tell you that the seniors in this province are, on a yearly basis, having an increasingly difficult time in survival, particularly those on very fixed incomes. We have seen increases in things like insurance. If they own a car, automobile insurance has gone up. Their hydro costs are going up, their energy costs, gasoline etc. Drug costs are rising substantially. We think that the government should have addressed that in the budget as well.

I have to disagree with the member from Guelph-Wellington when she talks about the agriculture budget. I have to read the press release from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. I will read it out right now. I want to put it on the record. This is the news release from the day of the budget. It says here, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture news release, "It's What's Not There that Hurts Farmers."

"Toronto—Ontario farmers listening to Finance Minister Sorbara's delivery of the 2005 budget were probably left with a terribly empty feeling Wednesday. While agriculture was given four paragraphs in the minister's budget speech, there was no new investment announced for the industry.

"That is a huge disappointment for Ontario's farmers working in Ontario's second-largest industry," said Ron Bonnett, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

"Now we need to be concerned with where Hon. 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," Bonnett said.

"Minister Sorbara recited the government's recent spending on agriculture—\$170 million for grains and oilseeds producers, and up to \$30 million to facilitate the recovery of the livestock industry.

"OFA, in its pre-budget submission to Minister Sorbara, reminded him of a number of outstanding issues that needed additional funding to relieve the mounting pressure on farmers and their families.

"Funding announcements at the end of March provided some relief for farmers hit by losses on their 2004 crops, but 'today's budget made no mention of further losses these farmers are projected to take this year,' Bonnett said.

"The grains and oilseeds sector is expecting to be short another \$300 million for 2005; livestock producers continue to watch their losses mount as a result of the BSE crisis; farmers faced with provincial legislation requiring large investments to comply with the Nutrient Management Act got no good news from the budget; and fruit and vegetable producers' needs for an extension of the self directed risk management program were ignored.

"Creation of a \$3-million research chair at the University of Guelph was as close as Minister Sorbara came to

recognizing anything agriculture sought from the province. 'Certainly not an encouraging budget for Ontario farmers,' Bonnett concludes."

So where they got all these increases out of the budget is beyond me. I have to support the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. They do represent the farmers in the province of Ontario. I talked to the OFA representatives in a number of different areas. I can keep reading out press releases from our agriculture stakeholders, if anyone would care to listen to them, and I can pass them on to other members to speak to as well. But I think what's important is that, again, this government has no concern for rural Ontario. I will say that directly. I'm disappointed. When we saw the care that some of the other areas were getting, like post-secondary education, I thought there should have been a little something in there for the people who grow our food in this province.

I wanted to go over to the announcements in the budget again. I want to point out that for the second year in a row the word "police" was not mentioned in the budget; "community safety." The minister has currently three pieces of legislation before the House: the mandatory gunshot wound bill, the grow-op bill and the bill on private security. All three of these pieces of legislation will require additional funding from the government. It's as plain and simple as that. On top of that, the government has a commitment, an election platform commitment, to provide up to 1,000 new police officers to do community programs.

If we're going to have a safe and secure society, I think it's important to this House that we acknowledge the fact that we'll have to put more resources into community safety. A lot of these areas have grown in strength, in the issue area, during the mandate of this government. I'm thinking of things like the increasing number of grow-ops; there has been more gang violence; the Internet-luring and child pornography issue. These are growing at an enormous rate. They all need substantial investments. And when I don't see the words "police" or "community safety" mentioned in a budget, I have to be very leery. For that reason alone, as a critic for community safety, I cannot support this budget. Maybe there's some money hidden somewhere; who knows? The budget is so grey, if you read through this, it really tells you nothing. It just does a lot of bragging. It does nothing, really. It doesn't direct where any money is going.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): Tell us more about education, Garfield.

Mr. Dunlop: Well, no. You can talk about education, but when the member who's heckling me wants to stand up and point out where this money will be found in the budget—show me in black and white, like I asked the parliamentary assistant, where the money is being spent in these areas and I will be more than happy to acknowledge that. But I don't see any money in community safety, I don't see the word "fireman" mentioned, I don't see the word "senior" mentioned, and of course, as the leader of the third party mentioned, nothing for

autistic children. Mr. McGuinty went out and promised everybody what they wanted to hear prior to the last election. He told the parents of autistic children, "Absolutely, we will be providing IBI treatment for those children over the age of six." And of course they are expecting this funding. What happened? He's appealing a court decision. He's just going against the grain and actually reversing his decision, and now people are saying, "It's just one more broken promise." That is something that I think we all should be concerned with in this House.

1730

As you read through a fancy budget speech like this, we don't see seniors, we don't see police, they don't mention that agriculture was actually cut, but the bottom line is that here we are again—you know, we're back at it. What I see is a lack of concern for rural Ontario. We've seen that just recently in the COMRIF announcements from a couple of weeks back. The government has brought up this greenbelt legislation. We know that there is 1.8 million acres in the province of Ontario that will basically be frozen out of development. Of course, developers—we need to put people somewhere, so there is going to be leapfrogging of development in the province of Ontario. I happen to be very concerned about that, because a lot of that leapfrogging will take place in the county that I represent.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: I hear the member from Durham saying it'll be in Durham. And it will be. There will be a leapfrogging effect. Yet if we're going to have growth far faster than normal in different parts of rural Ontario, the municipalities are going to have to be supported with that growth. In the county of Simcoe, I had the only sewage treatment plant mentioned in all of the county of Simcoe. In all of the county of Simcoe, in Barrie-Orillia and the 18 municipalities within the county of Simcoe, something like a population of 400,000, only \$3 million, and that's the total contribution—federal, provincial and municipal—for one sewage treatment plant. I think it was only \$5 million in total spending that went to the county of Simcoe municipalities. We've got a concern with that. The government brags about their \$30 billion over 10 years—

Mr. Colle: Five years.

Mr. Dunlop: Sorry, over five years; I stand corrected. We'll be watching that very carefully, because first of all I want to know from the government, is the \$30 billion going to be split three ways? When it all comes out in the wash, I think you'll find that there will be \$30 billion over five years, but the municipalities will be asked to put in \$10 billion, the federal government will be asked to put in \$10 billion as part of the Canada infrastructure program, and the other \$10 billion will be paid for, of course, by the provincial government. The key thing is—

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: —and I hear the heckling continuing. All I'm saying is the government would lead you to believe that it's the provincial Liberal government that is

finding our tax dollars—30 billion of them—to spend in five years. I don't think that's the case whatsoever. I think you're going to find that it's \$10 billion of provincial dollars over five years and that's why I was asking earlier, and I fully expect not the Minister of Culture but the Minister of Infrastructure Renewal to come up with some clear understanding, and clearly indicate to this House where that money will come from and when it will be allocated in each of the following years.

One other thing I wanted to add, because I know we're moving along quickly here, was I wanted to draw some attention to an amendment that Mr. Tory wanted to make. I want to read this into the record, because I think it's important that John Tory, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, made a really good amendment that all members of this House should support.

Here's what I want to read in. Mr. Tory moved that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on May 11, 2005—"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"—again, I go back to what I talked about earlier in my comments;

"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."

This will be our amendment to the motion. I would think that all members of this House would support Mr. Tory's amendment. He has made some very clear points here. I think it would be a prime opportunity for us as members of this Legislature to work together and support a good amendment to a poor budget. That's what this is really all about today, and I appreciate it.

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: We're trying to keep decorum in this House. Mr. Tory is trying to be very professional in this House and act like a business person, yet the heckling continues. They haven't caught on to how a real leader

actually operates. I thank Mr. Tory so much for bringing decorum into this House.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dunlop: It is hard, on days like today, to actually get your point across, when people from all over the Liberal caucus are yelling and screaming at you all the time. It's disappointing. Wouldn't you think they'd treat this like a home? You wouldn't do this in a classroom; you wouldn't do it in a boardroom; you wouldn't do it in your living room. But the people in the province of Ontario are getting used to this happening in the Legislative Assembly. As Mr. Tory works toward being the Premier of this province, you will see more decorum and more political correctness in this Legislature.

As I said earlier, I can't support this motion, at least. I will be supporting John Tory's amendments. I would ask all members in this Legislature to support Mr. Tory's amendments, which we will be voting on tomorrow afternoon at 5:50. I look forward to seeing the Liberal caucus and all the government members here to support Mr. Tory as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: I want to follow up on what the member from Simcoe North had to say with respect to agriculture. I'm going to quote from a different release that came out from the OFA, by Ron Bonnett. It says the following:

"Ontario farmers were left with more questions than answers about support for their industry when the 2005 provincial budget was presented. It contained little for agriculture, and it came at a time when the financial hurt continues to grow. Numerous times in the past year, OFA, its county federations of agriculture and many provincial commodity organizations took the unified message of agriculture and its devastating financial needs to the politicians that make up the Ontario Legislature. Agriculture's need for new provincial investment has been made abundantly clear....

"Agriculture is Ontario's second-largest industry, and ... Minister Sorbara, in his budget speech, acknowledged its \$8.6-billion contribution to the province's economic wealth. That's a lot of jobs for the non-farm community and a lot of rural economic development.

"How are farmers and their families expected to continue operating? Once the equity is used up and credit is no longer available to buy inputs for the farm, the whole economic structure that keeps rural Ontario alive begins to crumble. That crumbling sound eventually will reach urban Ontario, because farmers buy vehicles, furniture, and clothing just like the rest of society.

1740

"That's not all the bad news from the 2005 Ontario budget. Documents provided by the finance ministry reveal the operating budget for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food will take a cut of \$169 million this year. OMAF Minister Peters, in conversation following the budget presentation, said the real number will be an increased investment of \$15 million.

"Before much more can be said or done on that topic, we will have to work with OMAF officials to establish the real number—is it an increased investment of \$15 million or a cut of \$169 million?"

If you look at the documents, you do see it's a cut of \$169 million. I don't think there's much to work out. Farmers are getting hammered again.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for London—Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London—Fanshawe): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Let's just have a little order. The member for Nickel Belt, the minister, let's listen to the member for London—Fanshawe.

Mr. Ramal: I lost some time, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: You'd better get at the time you have left, so keep going.

Mr. Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, because I have a lot of things to say about the great budget we had last week.

I hope the member from Simcoe North was not serious when he asked the members of this House not to support this great budget, because I believe that all people, from the south to the north, from the east to the west, were waiting for this positive, great budget. Wherever you went, people were talking about this positive budget. They felt that for the first time in a long, long time they have a government at Queen's Park working for them, planning for the future for them.

This budget also didn't forget about our seniors, who worked hard to build this beautiful nation, this beautiful province. That's why this budget gives them \$125 extra in initial tax credits to support them and will also allow, by 2007-08, 232,000 elderly to receive the support service.

It's a great budget. It's a great plan for the future, investing \$6.2 billion in colleges and universities, because as the parliamentary assistant for the finance minister, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, was talking about, the world is changing. We have to meet that change; otherwise, we're going to miss out. If we don't have higher-educated people, if we don't invest in research, if we don't invest in our science and research, we are going to miss out, because we are competing with many different jurisdictions in this world investing in the same way. That's why, if we want to be progressive, if we want to be—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to respond to the member for Simcoe North. He raises a very important issue; really, fundamentally three issues that need to be raised.

On the government's own document—it's unusual. It's got the red here, which is kind of the branding colour for the party. That's all inside politics. But it does say here, you know, 23.1%. The minister is denying it; of course, he's been denying agriculture, in a broader sense,

since the very beginning. Ron Bonnett had it right. In fact, he's extremely disappointed: "It's a budget that ignores agriculture" symbolizes his response.

If I look at my riding of Durham—it's the second largest industry in Durham—I know that people are hurting from BSE and from corn and oilseeds. I think of Dave Frew and I think of Joe Hickson, people who have worked hard to arrange the rally here at Queen's Park, as well as Burt Werry. They must be extremely disappointed.

But more importantly, the seniors in my riding—I'm getting calls now. I had a budget breakfast, and I'm getting calls. One of the major neglects here—I had members of the Lakeridge board there, and Minister Smitherman should know this. Their traditional portion of the health care budget for hospitals was in the order of about 8%, and this year it's half of that. Last year, Lakeridge Health got about 1% of that in increased funding, with the cost drivers being wages and settlements. They've got a \$20-million-plus shortfall this year. There are no numbers here to address the shortfall in operating budget going forward. Even Hilary Short from the Ontario Hospital Association said that there are 4,000 front-line jobs. My heart is saddened for the seniors and for those persons who will be denied health care.

George Smitherman made a very crude remark to Elizabeth Witmer today. He must be frustrated himself, because there's no support for health care from this government that I see.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'll pick up on the re-education of members who have sat in government for over 10 years.

If you look at the budget that was presented in 2004, the budget for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food was \$549 million. The budget that was presented this year is \$564 million, an increase of \$15 million in that budget.

There's also a commitment in this budget for an \$11-million capital investment within the Ministry of Agriculture. Capital is something that the previous government totally ignored and something that the NDP really ignored. I think it's important for farmers to understand that the NDP closed two agricultural colleges in this province. They closed Centralia, and they closed New Liskeard. The Tory government cut over \$100 million, cut core programs, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food budget.

This budget that we have presented does not cut programs. If anything, it reinforces that, for example, we are reinvesting in the municipal outlet drainage program; putting in \$3 million for the creation of a chair for bio-agricultural research at the University of Guelph, and investing \$7 million in food safety in this province.

Again, if the honourable members could understand how to read the budget, they would look and realize that there was \$628 million in in-year spending; \$184 million added to the \$549 million gets you to that \$733-million figure—an additional \$444 million in support for farmers in this province.

I think it's important to understand as well that this government, last year, provided \$377 million in investment in support of the farmers in this province, including such things as over \$173 million for grains and oilseeds and well in excess of \$15 million for BSE—overall, with the federal share, \$889 million in support for Ontario farmers in this budget.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe North has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Dunlop: I want to thank all the members in the House who made comments on my speech a few minutes ago.

I'm really glad the Minister of Agriculture stood up and clarified that for us, because it made me look to the budget. I think this is the one he's talking about. Let me tell you, in 2002-03—and I believe Ernie Eves was the Premier that year—in agriculture and food, the operating expense was \$598 million. This year, it's \$564 million. Regarding the capital expense that the Minister of Agriculture just mentioned, that same year, in 2002-03, the agriculture and food budget was \$68 million. This year, he brags about putting in \$11 million. I think I'm reading the same budget he's reading. He talks about all these cuts, but I'm talking about the comparison between 2002-03 and 2005-06. So I'm going to go along with the news release from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. I think they got it right.

I know the farmers in my municipality don't really believe the Minister of Agriculture. They tend to agree with John Tory. They tend to agree with Howard Hampton. They tend to agree with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the people who speak on their behalf.

If the Minister of Agriculture is really thinking he's helping rural Ontario, he'd better have a second thought. These people want Helen Johns back. That's what I'm hearing. We hear it every day across this province. We hear that the farmers in Ontario want Helen Johns back.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Let's all simmer down. I want some order in here or I'll just stand here till 6 o'clock. In fact, it feels good to stand up occasionally.

Further debate?

Mr. Dunlop: Can I finish up?

The Deputy Speaker: You were finished. Further debate?

Ms. Martel: It's a pleasure for me to start the budget debate, and I will have the privilege, I know, of continuing when we next deal with this. I know that Mr. Colle, for example, will come again tomorrow to hear what I have to say then, as now.

1750

I'm going to start with a piece from the Toronto Star, which usually is quick to defend the Liberal government. I've noticed that in the time I've been an MPP here, and that's been over 17 years now. But here's what they had to say on May 17, and I'm going to read the whole thing into the record, because I thought it was so good and I couldn't say it better myself:

"McGuinty Errs on Privatization

“Premier Dalton McGuinty is risking the last of his political credibility, is reviving memories of his earlier broken promises, and is possibly dooming his government to defeat in the next provincial election in 2007 with a new scheme to allow private” sector “companies to bankroll and build new roads, bridges, transit systems and schools.

“McGuinty put his government’s future on the line when he let Public Infrastructure Minister David Caplan deliver the news in a speech Tuesday. Details of the scheme will be unveiled in today’s budget. ‘It’s not a code phrase for privatizing public services,’ Caplan insisted. ‘It is a strategy for building more public infrastructures and, importantly, build it faster.’

“As Caplan explained, Ontario’s roads, schools, hospitals and water pipes are old. We need to replace them and add to them to meet the needs of a growing population. But Caplan claimed the ‘traditional’ method of building these assets—by means of public ownership financed by public borrowing—no longer works because the Ontario government lacks the money.

“And so Caplan believes the province must find another way. One way he ruled out was to follow the lead of the former Conservative government and form public-private partnerships, so-called P3s, to provide the infrastructure Ontario needs. Instead, there is a ‘third way,’ he said, called alternative financing and procurement, or AFP. It involves finding private sector financial partners who can bring infrastructure capital and expertise to the table to supplement government resources.

“In fact, this scheme is public-private partnerships, by a new name, and all dressed up in the public interest.

“And what it is, too, is the latest McGuinty flip-flop.

“Before he goes down this path, McGuinty should realize his plan may actually backfire on taxpayers. There are two key reasons why governments can do a better job than the private sector at creating public infrastructure. First, governments can usually borrow money on better terms than private investors, who also expect to make a profit above and beyond what their capital earns. Second, when the government takes on a private sector partner, the narrow interests of that partner become as important as the broader public interest that the government purports to represent.

“Regardless of how you spell it, P3 or AFP, Ontarians will end up paying more than they have to for the infrastructure they need.

“Just as importantly, though, McGuinty is playing with political fire if he takes voters for fools. Broken promises are one thing. But continuing to run a government that flip-flops seemingly without stop is bad for the government, is bad for public policy, and ultimately is bad for Ontario.

“Since coming to power in 2003, McGuinty and his Liberals have broken dozens of election promises. To date, the three biggest have been the promise not to raise taxes, which was broken with the imposition of the health levy; the vow to hold the line on hydro rates; and the

promise to stop all construction on the Oak Ridges moraine.

“Now, after fighting hard against the privatization of Highway 407 and against P3 hospitals, McGuinty is welcoming private sector involvement in roles that have historically been the responsibility of the public sector. Such a move threatens to enrage traditional Liberal voters, who are already hard pressed to support a government that has lost the faith of many Ontarians. They could easily be asking themselves now if it is still possible to tell the McGuinty Liberals apart from the Conservatives.”

This follows on the theme that was established by our leader, Howard Hampton, when he spoke earlier, because it is pretty hard to tell the difference these days between the McGuinty Liberals and the former Conservatives. It’s especially hard to tell the difference on the private-public financing scheme: P3 under the Conservatives; AFP under the Liberals. The fact is that when the former Conservative government decided to use a P3 model of financing, both in Ottawa at the hospital there and in Brampton, oh my goodness, the McGuinty Liberals were hard pressed to contain their criticism of that funding scheme. They said repeatedly in this House and outside that it was going to cost the taxpayers more because of course it costs more for private sector consortiums to borrow money, more than the government can, in terms of lending its borrowing power, and the private sector isn’t going to do this for free. They are interested in making a profit on their capital projects, and that cost is added into the overall cost of the project.

That’s why it is going to cost more to build the hospital in Brampton than it would have been if the government financed itself through traditional borrowing. That’s why it’s going to cost more to build the hospital in Ottawa. That’s why the McGuinty Liberals, before the election and during the election, said they weren’t going to have any more P3 deals, because it did cost the taxpayers more. In fact, Dalton McGuinty said that to the Ottawa Citizen before the election. He said that his government was going to be committed to public administration of hospitals and public financing of hospitals.

Herein is the key: public financing of hospitals. I assumed, before the election, that that included the two hospitals the Conservatives were proposing to build with private sector financing. I assumed that if he was opposed to that with hospitals, my goodness, Dalton McGuinty would be opposed to private sector financing of schools and bridges and roads and sewer and water, and the list goes on and on. Here we are, after the election, 19 months into the mandate of the Liberals, and the P3 model, or the AFP model, is exactly the same.

Dalton McGuinty was right before the election. It is going to cost taxpayers more money. How is it, then, that after the election, after promising that he would not finance public assets and public infrastructure with the use of private financing, that in this budget, the centrepiece of this budget, we see a massive scheme to invite the private sector in to finance public assets? How much

more money do you think it's going to cost the public when the private sector is involved in these schemes? I say billions. It's going to cost us billions more than the traditional financing of the government going out and getting a bond and financing it in that manner.

The real problem is that the additional money that is going into the pockets of the private consortium is money that could be better spent for patient care or for operating grants for hospitals or for other public assets or for other public institutions. Those are taxpayers' dollars that are going to transfer directly into the pockets of those people who are involved in the private sector consortium, and that makes no sense. It doesn't make financial sense and it certainly doesn't make sense if you look at what Premier McGuinty had to say before the election about how much more this was going to cost and how the Liberal Party wasn't going to go down this road.

Here we are with the second budget before us, with a big scheme to allow the private sector right in there, right up front and centre, to be part of building important

public assets, and, at the end of the day, the people who are going to lose are going to be the taxpayers of the province of Ontario, who are going to see much more money go into those projects than if the government funded it themselves, and see much more money that could have gone into other public assets and into operating funds for schools and hospitals go right into the profit line of those institutions. I am opposed to that scheme. That makes no sense. I don't know why Dalton McGuinty is continuing down this road, when, before the election, he had something so different to say.

Speaker, on that note, because I see you looking at your watch, I will ask for adjournment of the debate, and I will continue this on another day.

The Deputy Speaker: I don't think you are officially asking for adjournment of the debate, but I will say that it is 6 of the clock. This House will stand adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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