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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 31 October 2005

Lundi 31 octobre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 31 October 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 31 octobre 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SMITHS FALLS DISTRICT COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): On Friday, October 21, I had the honour of participating in the opening of a new high school in my riding. The Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute's opening symbolizes what a community can do when faced with a challenge.

In the spring of 2001, I visited the old high school in Smiths Falls. With the help of guidance counsellor Pat Tobey, I was shown a 50-year-old institution that had outlived its usefulness. Imagine a school whose front office and foyer had to be supported by steel girders due to the failing ceiling. I was appalled that the young people of Smiths Falls and area had to come to this place each day to try to learn.

From that point on, the people of Smiths Falls rallied behind a cause that ultimately came to fruition with a brand new school. Rallies were held, petitions were filed and politicians from all levels were lobbied. Students Ashley Campbell, Bronwyn Cline and Megan James, along their principal, Debra Thomlinson, made a presentation to our Minister of Education right here at Queen's Park that was mature and reasoned.

The efforts of the students and citizens were unrelenting, and in the end the community was not only successful in getting a new, state-of-the-art school, but managed to open a program to provide similar funding for 50 to 69 other dilapidated schools across Ontario.

Thanks also go to Mr. Drew Nameth, a former Ministry of Education employee, for his work in creating a solution to this problem.

TORNADOES IN CENTRE WELLINGTON AND MAPLETON

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): On August 19, tornadoes touched down in Centre Wellington and Mapleton. I know we are all relieved that there were no serious injuries as a result of these tornadoes, and I want to congratulate all involved on their quick response. In particular, the municipalities of Centre Wellington and Mapleton, and also the Grand River Conservation Au-

thority along with community volunteers, did an excellent job of responding and providing relief to the affected citizens.

I also want to thank Monte Kwinter, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, who visited on August 23; Perth–Middlesex MPP John Wilkinson and Waterloo–Wellington MPP Ted Arnott, who are both strong advocates for the communities; and also the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, John Gerretsen, who toured Centre Wellington and Mapleton on September 1 to view the tornado damage.

In order to assess the damage, both the township of Centre Wellington and the township of Mapleton provided detailed information. As a result of the information gathered, the government has recognized that there are significant costs for cleanup on public property.

I am pleased to announce that the province is providing a grant to each municipality to cover some of these costs. Our government will provide a grant of \$182,500 for Centre Wellington and \$152,600 for Mapleton. Thank you to the province on behalf of the communities. These grants are greatly appreciated.

MNJIKANING FIRST NATION EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTRE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On Friday, October 28, I was honoured to be part of the official opening of a new daycare facility at Mnjikaning First Nation in my riding. I was joined that day by the Honourable James K. Bartleman, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario; Chief Sharon Stinson Henry; the Honourable Paul DeVillers, our MP for Simcoe North; and the Honourable Mary Anne Chambers, Minister of Children and Youth Services.

The community selected the name Binoojiinsag Kinooaagewgamig, which means "small children's learning place." The daycare will be situated in the Honourable James K. Bartleman Building, named in honour of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, a Mnjikaning First Nation community leader. He has championed education and literacy in First Nations communities during his term in office. His efforts have now generated annual campaigns that will continue to foster learning in our communities. We are honoured that he has allowed us to dedicate the building in his name.

The architects of the project were Teeple Architects of Toronto, and they have created a fascinating daycare

facility for the young people of Mnjikaning First Nation. It's a state-of-the-art building.

With the problems we've seen in some of the other First Nations communities across our province and our country, I think the people of Ontario and Canada would look to the Mnjikaning First Nation as a leader in many areas. I'm very proud to be the MPP for that area and to take part in this official opening.

EID-UL-FITR

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): Firstly, I would like to salute the spirit of tolerance and even celebration of diversity that this government and this House continuously demonstrates. In that spirit, it is a privilege for me to rise today and recognize one of the great Islamic celebrations and to extend to the Muslim community of Ontario, some 500,000 strong, felicitations on the end of the holy month of fasting, the month of Ramadan, and the celebration of Eid which will be taking place this week.

Eid is a time to come together as a community, to renew friendships and family ties, to exchange gifts, to forgive and to give thanks. This is a time for peace and for all Muslims in the world to devote to prayers and mutual well-being.

The first Eid was celebrated 1,400 years ago by a handful of followers. The same community, ably and strongly and vocally present in Canada, now numbers some one billion across the world.

Speaker, may I, with your permission, use this opportunity not only to extend greetings to the Muslim community but also to extend, on behalf of the Muslim community, gratitude and recognition to the whole country for the extraordinary outpouring of generosity, donations and moral support as the community deals with one or other natural disaster across the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity. I wish all of my colleagues in this chamber and in the Muslim community of Ontario Eid Mubarak.

LUPUS DISEASE

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): As members of the assembly know, October is Lupus Awareness Month throughout much of the world. To recognize this in Ontario, many municipalities have raised lupus flags to raise awareness of this terrible disease and its effects.

I want to take this time to congratulate Patricia Leece, president of the Lupus Foundation of Ontario, which happens to be in Ridgeway in my riding of Erie-Lincoln, and all of her team and fundraisers. They have asked me to convey the following information to the Legislature.

Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease that affects one out of every 185 people; it can affect people of different races, ethnicities and ages, and affects men, women and children of all ages. The immune system attacks the body's own healthy cells, causing tissue damage, organ failure and, sadly, in some cases even death.

1340

Medical research efforts into lupus and the discovery of a safe, more effective treatment for lupus patients are underfunded in comparison with disease of comparable magnitude and severity. Many physicians worldwide are unaware of the systems and health effects of lupus, causing people with lupus to suffer for many years before they obtain a correct diagnosis and medical treatment.

There is an urgent need to increase awareness in communities of the debilitating impact of lupus. I'd like us to join other communities across the province to proclaim that October is Lupus Awareness Month and to bring awareness to this little-known disease that affects many of our citizens.

JEFFREY BALDWIN

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Today marks the last day of Child Abuse Prevention Month. Yesterday, a little boy named Jeffrey Baldwin was remembered and honoured in Greenwood Park in my riding, a little boy who died on November 30, 2003, just shy of his sixth birthday. Jeffrey had everything taken from him in his short life, and the horrific conditions under which he lived are unbearable to contemplate, but contemplate them we must: Jeffrey weighed only 21 pounds, the size of a one-year-old. He was kept locked in a small, filthy room, and rarely let out. He was starved to death.

A small sugar maple tree was planted in his honour, close to children's swings and a baseball diamond. There was also a rock with a plaque bearing his name and picture, and an inscription saluting Jeffrey saying, "Whose small voice we did not hear." The memorial to the little boy was conceived of by a woman named Amanda Reed, and to her we are grateful for organizing this event, along with Councillor Paula Fletcher, so that we could, together, under the bright autumn sun, remember this little boy and grieve for him.

At the end of the speeches, we formed a circle around Jeffrey's tree at the request of Councillor Fletcher, who said, "Let's encircle him in a way he was never encircled in life." Particularly moving was the attendance of the emergency personnel who first responded to the 911 call that day. There is a murder trial in process now, and after that, we hope there will be a coroner's inquest.

Yes, today marks the last official day of Child Abuse Prevention Month, but let's make every day Child Abuse Prevention Month. Make yourself think of Jeffrey Baldwin and his suffering, and let your anger and sorrow grow like a kernel deep inside you so that we can find ways to prevent something like this from happening to another child ever again.

UNILEVER CANADA

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I'm pleased to rise today to acknowledge the expansion of Unilever Canada's Bramalea plant. This

expansion is the result of a \$3-million investment and will create 25 new jobs

This indeed is good news, not only for my riding of Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale, but also for the rest of the city of Brampton. The Bramalea plant currently employs approximately 325 people and manufactures Lipton and Knorr soups and side dishes. With this expansion, the site will be responsible for all the Lipton and Knorr soups for all of North America. Not only will this expansion better serve the North American market, but it will also serve the residents of greater Toronto area.

On behalf of the residents of my riding as well as Brampton, I would like to acknowledge Unilever Canada for choosing Bramalea as its Knorr-Lipton North American headquarters, for putting Bramalea on the map and for contributing not only to the economic well-being of the region of Peel, but to Ontario as a whole.

CONSERVATION

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Last week, our government fully demonstrated its commitment to protecting Ontario's parks, green space, woodlots and conservation reserves. The proposed legislation will ensure that the ecological integrity of parks and conservation reserves be considered a priority.

As a long-time advocate for green space, I am pleased to see this type of legislation being introduced. The legislation proposes mandatory reporting of the health of parks and the amalgamation of existing bylaws and legislation that governs parks and conservation reserves at this time.

Furthermore, it proposes to provide guidance and management to both parks and conservation reserves. The legislation also recognizes the unique needs of First Nations people and creates provisions to protect their needs accordingly.

In my riding of Thornhill, we have a number of woodlots and parks. In my 18 years as councillor, I always tried my best to make sure that the development of lands did not compromise the natural beauty of Ontario but promoted the use and appreciation of parks and woodlots. The Concord-Thornhill Regional Park, on Racco Parkway, has something for every member of the family, from its water park, to the picnic benches to sports fields.

The Sugar Bush Heritage Park in Thornhill is attached to a woodlot that is being developed by the city of Vaughan, the region of York and the Toronto Region Conservation Authority. The German Mills Settlers Park in Markham-Thornhill is 65 acres of natural park area.

Parks like these in my riding of Thornhill and across Ontario have made the quality of life of Ontarians better.

This legislation will ensure accountability—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

CENOTAPH IN LUNENBURG

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlotten-

burgh, in the rural community of Lunenburg, there is a beautiful cenotaph at the Memorial Hill Cemetery. This cenotaph rests on a hill overlooking countryside and farmland. The names of brave men who gave their lives in defence of our European friends through two great wars are etched in stone.

Three years ago I visited the cenotaph to lay a wreath, only to realize that my wreath was the only one there. The cenotaph, for whatever reason, had faded from general memory, as have the men whose names it carries. Since then, I have maintained a yearly vigil, returning to that cenotaph every November 11 to ensure that the memory of those soldiers is never, ever allowed to be forgotten.

On this Remembrance Day, in the Year of the Veteran, I would encourage all members, indeed all Ontarians, to take the time to visit a local cenotaph in their community. I would also encourage everyone of our generation to look to our youth and instill in them a respect and understanding of all the sacrifices that our veterans have made, both living and deceased.

I will never allow the Memorial Hill Cemetery cenotaph, nor the memory of the great men it represents, to be neglected again. As a province, as a community, we must all do our part to ensure that the contributions of our veterans are honoured on this upcoming Remembrance Day.

VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to draw members' attention to the east members' gallery and introduce two guests making their first visit to the Ontario Legislature. We have two representatives of the executive MBA program from Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC. Please welcome Marg Vandenberg and the dean of the faculty of business administration, Ernie Love.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): That of course was not a point of order, but welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (POMPES À INSULINE POUR DIABÉTIQUES)

Mr. Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act /
Projet de loi 15, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-
santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may have a brief statement.

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): This legislation would amend the Health Insurance Act by making the provision of insulin pumps and the supplies for them an insured service under the act. For people with diabetes, the insulin pump makes an enormous difference in their day-to-day quality of life. In fact, the insulin pump can save the health care system substantial dollars by reducing hospital stays, let alone eliminating more dramatic health care consequences associated with diabetes such as amputations and loss of vision.

I am particularly grateful to the Thunder Bay branch of the Canadian Diabetes Association for their support of this initiative, and I look forward to second reading debate on my bill on Thursday, December 1.

DUFFINS ROUGE AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA RÉSERVE AGRICOLE DE DUFFINS-ROUGE

Mr. Ramsay moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act respecting the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve / Projet de loi 16, Loi concernant la Réserve agricole de Duffins-Rouge.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister may have a brief statement.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I'll defer to the time allotted for ministerial statements.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. Patten and Mr. Berardinetti exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Patten assumes ballot item 57 and Mr. Berardinetti assumes ballot item 13.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, October 31, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1353 to 1358.

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

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Levac, Dave	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	Wong, Tony C.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry	
Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra	

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

Nays

Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Tory, John
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DUFFINS-ROUGE AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I'm very pleased to rise in the House to affirm that this government is acting on its plan to conserve Ontario's prime

agricultural land and to ensure our communities are strong and healthy for generations to come. To help us accomplish that goal I've introduced both new legislation and amendments to the Conservation Land Act that, if passed, would ensure that the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve is set aside permanently for agricultural use.

If passed, the legislation would reinforce the conditions of an agreement signed in 1999 by the province, the region of Durham and the city of Pickering. The three parties to that agreement all agreed that the agricultural lands in the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve would be held in perpetuity. To me, "in perpetuity" means forever.

The 1999 agreement was clear. Under it, the city of Pickering was entrusted with holding the easements of the lands. Once the province, Pickering and Durham signed the agreement, the lands were sold by the province to the original landowners or tenant farmers. The sale price was based on the land continuing to be used for agriculture. Yet on March 1, 2005, the city of Pickering unilaterally, without consulting the province, removed the agricultural easements on two thirds of the properties sold by the province in the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve. In other words, Pickering broke the agreement it signed six years ago and violated the trust that was placed in the city to protect those lands. The city of Pickering's actions have created the impression that the lands may be available for development and have put their protection at risk.

Many of the properties sold by the province to the local farmers have since been sold to land developers. Conserving prime agricultural land is vital if we want to ensure that Ontario's farmers can continue to grow the foods that we eat.

In fact, the last two provincial governments both recognized the importance of the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve. Through a series of letters from Minister Phillips, Minister Caplan and myself, we have repeatedly asked the city of Pickering to reinstate the easements and respect this agreement, yet the city of Pickering's only response to these letters to date is a letter stating that it cannot reinstate the easements. This response does nothing to ensure the long-term protection of these important agricultural lands that the city agreed to. Instead, it strongly suggests that the city of Pickering would rather see them developed. It also makes clear that Pickering has no intention of honouring the agreement it signed in 1999.

There are no second chances when it comes to protecting agricultural land and green space. Once it's developed, there's no going back, and that's why we must act now. The legislation that I've introduced, if passed, would ensure that all existing conservation easements on the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve are held in perpetuity. It would also reinstate easements previously held and released by the city of Pickering.

The proposed amendments to the Conservation Land Act, if passed, would provide greater certainty about using conservation easements to provide long-term pro-

tection for natural features and agricultural land on private property.

This government has taken a number of steps to strengthen the protection of farmlands and natural areas in the Golden Horseshoe. It has passed the Greenbelt Act; it has strengthened the provincial policy statement by setting clear ground rules for how Ontario communities will grow and prosper; it has developed the greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan and the proposed central Pickering development plan; and earlier this year, I announced both Ontario's biodiversity strategy and our natural spaces program.

The legislation I introduced today is another important step toward ensuring healthy growth in southern Ontario and leaving our children a legacy of protected agricultural lands and green space.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I rise today to advise the members of an important milestone in our discussions with the province of Manitoba to help supply Ontario with clean hydroelectric power.

The government of Ontario has signed an agreement with Manitoba to negotiate the purchase of 400 megawatts of clean, renewable power. The clean energy transfer will begin in 2006 with 150 megawatts, increasing to 400 megawatts as transmission upgrades come on-line to increase capacity between Winnipeg and Thunder Bay. The upgrades are expected to be completed by 2009, representing a doubling of east-west grid capacity at the critical Manitoba-Ontario connection point. Total energy supply will amount to 2.5 terawatt hours annually, or enough electricity to power 250,000 homes.

A second phase allows for a longer-term arrangement to help develop hydroelectric sites starting early next decade in northern Manitoba, including Conawapa. These projects could deliver from 1,500 megawatts to as much as 3,000 megawatts of electricity over a new transmission line.

This project will benefit both provinces by making a major contribution to helping Ontario replace coal-fired power with a cleaner source of energy. It will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create employment and economic opportunities in Ontario and in Manitoba, particularly in northern and First Nations communities.

As we move forward, an important stage will be the identification of a preferred route to transfer electricity from Manitoba to southern Ontario, and the eventual launching of regulatory approvals. As a critical part of the process, the government of Ontario will seek greater involvement of First Nations, leading to a formal consultation process. The government will also explore possible roles for the federal government.

As we continue to move forward on the clean energy transfer initiative with Manitoba, it is important to recognize how this agreement fits with our overall energy plan for the province. Our energy plan consists of three key components: building new generation capacity; maxi-

mizing our existing generation and transmission assets; and creating a culture of conservation. In all of these areas, our government is taking decisive action.

In just two years, our government has brought on-line more than 2,200 megawatts of power, and we are going further. This government has set the wheels in motion on projects that will provide us with nearly 9,000 megawatts of power over the next five years, and over a quarter of this power will be from renewable resources. At 9,000 megawatts, this would be enough to power over four million homes. In fact, between 2004 and 2007, no other jurisdiction on this continent will secure more new generation capacity than Ontario, thanks to the decisive leadership of this government.

1410

Our agreement with Manitoba is another effective way of increasing the supply available to our province. While we are building upon our existing relationship with Manitoba, we are also continuing our discussions on the other side of the country with the government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Hydroelectric power is clean power, and these clean power resources in Manitoba and Newfoundland, along with our own resources, will strengthen our national energy supply and security.

Our plan is bold, and our vision for our province is clear: an Ontario where industry has a reliable source of clean, affordable energy; an Ontario that leads in renewable and sustainable energy supply; an Ontario that remains prosperous and is the envy of the world.

I will continue to carry out this plan, and I look forward to working with all Ontarians to make it happen.

DUFFINS-ROUGE AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to respond to the statement from the Minister of Natural Resources. The Minister of Natural Resources keeps coming into the Legislature and introducing bills of which we have no notice. I have been attending House leaders' meetings, and one of the questions we—the third party and the opposition—have asked is that we could have an outline of what legislation the government is planning to introduce in this session of the Legislature. I can only assume that the minister is making up these bills weekly on the back of a napkin, because they keep on introducing bills of which we are receiving no notice.

This bill is not new news. Former municipal affairs ministers Chris Hodgson and David Young were involved with this and have always been clear that they wanted to maintain this land as agricultural. The former Minister of Finance, Janet Ecker, ran in the last election being very clear that she wanted to preserve this land. You have to contrast that with the current member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): What did he say?

Mr. Miller: He said one thing to get elected, and now the government's doing something very, very different. I

would like to quote from some of the newspapers that point that out.

The Toronto Star, Tuesday, October 7, 2003: "Environmentalists are concerned that Pickering mayor Wayne Arthurs ... will try to influence his Liberal colleagues at Queen's Park to change their own policy and provincial rules on the protection of farmland and open space in the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve and the neighbouring planned community of Seaton."

"The Tories' stand on the preserve has been clear, to the extent that former municipal affairs minister David Young took all planning for the area out of the hands of the city of Pickering when officials threatened to develop the preserve."

Ms. Janet Ecker "wants it left untouched, but developers and Pickering mayor Wayne Arthurs, the Liberal candidate, argue the use of the land should be open to negotiation."

Sunday, May 18: "David Young, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, was not available for comment, but in the Ontario Legislature May 6, he said that in the 1999 agreement it was 'made clear that this land would remain agricultural forevermore.'"

Sunday, September 7: "Ecker Stands Her Ground; MPP Says She Will Continue To Defend Agricultural Preserve."

The Tory position is clear.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):

The announcement by the energy minister today is no real announcement at all. We already have the capacity to import power from Manitoba and have had that in place for some time. The rest of it is down the road: this optimistic dreaming that this government keeps planning, that they're going to have all these kinds of things in place—prior to what? Prior to shutting down over 20% of our capacity in this province between 2007 and 2009. But there's no assurance they're going to have new placements up and operating.

These new transmission lines and these kinds of approvals are going to involve an awful lot of jurisdictions. They're going to involve First Nations lands and all kinds of environmental approvals that must be sought and received. And there's no guarantee that this government will have those things in place at that time.

But they are under a great deal of pressure, because they made these kinds of commitments with regard to shutting down from 20% to 25% of our capacity without having any kind of plan in place on how they were going to make up for the shortfall. They made the promise, and now they're dancing around, trying to figure out how they are going to get there. They're making all these kinds of announcements. They're running roughshod over all kinds of people. All these announcements in Mississauga with power plants—there are three: one in Oakville, two in Mississauga. We're down to one now because they're having all kinds of problems as they

come out with plan A, B—we're up to about plan L, and they're still evolving every day.

The question is: When are they going to actually tell the people of Ontario what power they actually have coming on-line, guaranteed, working in the mix, not, "We hope, we're planning, we're optimistic and this is what we're looking forward to"? The people of Ontario need to know that they're going to have juice in the lines and that when they turn on that switch, the lights are going to go on. Right now, all we get is announcement after announcement, but the lights really aren't going on over there. The lights aren't going on over there. We need some real ideas and we need some real plans, not hope. This is Ontario. This is not a field of dreams.

DUFFINS-ROUGE AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): Well, well, well, what have we here today? I think we have an admission by the Liberal government, finally, that the greenbelt is not permanent, and it's not able to protect lands like the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

I've got the record here. I asked a question back on May 31, 2005, and this is what Gerry Phillips, from management board, said: "The member will know that we have our greenbelt legislation; we have the minister's order on the agricultural preserve, which we believe will protect the agricultural preserve. So we're quite confident that we have the tools in place to ensure that that important property stays as an agricultural preserve."

The member ends by saying, "So I hope the member can rest relatively comfortably." Well, I want the government to know I haven't been resting relatively comfortably, because I knew at the time and said at the time that this is a floating greenbelt. Indeed, developers know that as well. I'm looking forward to seeing the legislation, but I do want to say to the government: We've got the big pipe, we've got Simcoe south, we've got a floating greenbelt. Preserves like this are not—

Interjections.

Ms. Churley: It's the truth. You've got to admit that this admits it today. So I'm calling on the government to amend that greenbelt to make it fixed, not the floating greenbelt that it is, so you don't have to bring in stand-alone pieces of legislation like this to protect valuable farmland.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I have to respond to the Minister of Energy, who brings in yet another McGuinty spin exercise today that has virtually no substance to it. This is what it amounts to: The government announced today that it has a deal for a transmission line from Manitoba to southern Ontario. Did it announce that it has a deal to bring the 1,500 megawatts from Conawapa to southern Ontario? No, Speaker. That's still something that might happen, perhaps, maybe

will happen—who knows?—in the future. What we did get is simply this: The existing 200-megawatt transmission line which connects northwestern Ontario with Manitoba is going to be upgraded to a 400-megawatt transmission line. But guess what? You can't move that electricity past Thunder Bay. It does nothing for electricity-short southern Ontario. Yet, the McGuinty government continues to try to spin this as something that's going to solve an electricity shortage problem in southern Ontario.

It also repeats something else that isn't happening. The McGuinty government continues to say, "Oh, there's 9,000 megawatts of new supply," but then you go through the list. They talk about Pickering A, unit 1. Well, that happened under the Conservatives. That's not 9,000 megawatts of new supply. Then they refer to cogeneration from the Toronto airport authority. That didn't happen under this government. That too was under the Conservatives. Then they talk about new natural gas from Calpine. Hello over there; have you checked? Calpine is about that far from bankruptcy in the United States. Does this sound like another Enron? The list goes on. They talk about 500 megawatts of new natural gas in downtown Toronto. That's nowhere to be found—nowhere to be found. Then they talk about the refurbishment of Bruce A, units 1 and 2—1,500 megawatts. But if you read the agreement, if and when Bruce A, 1 and 2 come on line, Bruce A, 3 and 4 go down. What we hear is the McGuinty government continuing to try to spin a line, continuing to try to tell people that there's new supply, when this is clearly the emperor with no clothes. As soon as you look under the curtain, it's not very pretty. This is indeed the emperor with no clothes.

1420

The other point that I want to make is this: People in northwestern Ontario do not have an electricity shortage; people in northwestern Ontario actually have an electricity surplus. The issue across northwestern Ontario, where the McGuinty government is busy shutting down pulp mills and paper mills because of skyrocketing electricity prices, is affordability of electricity. Is this deal going to do anything for affordability? No. Paper mills that are 10 kilometres away from a hydro dam where you can produce electricity for \$10 a megawatt are going to continue to pay \$80 a megawatt because of the McGuinty government's insane electricity policy.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Acting Premier. Tomorrow is the massively publicized date on which Justice Gomery will deliver his report on the federal sponsorship scandal, something that is already dominating the news. Can you assure us that it was just a coincidence that your update

on the Ontario economy was scheduled for the same day, virtually guaranteeing that nobody will hear about it?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I can assure the honourable member that we consider this very good news for the people of Ontario—the fact that our government has created more jobs than any government for the last decade. Actually, it's sad news for us that there might be some competition in the media tomorrow, because we think that it's very important for the people of Ontario to know that because of the policies of this government, businesses in the province are able to actually hire more people and create jobs.

Mr. Tory: I guess that assurance probably fits into the same category as a McGuinty election promise. But, having said that, because of the policies of your government, as you point out, actually 42,000 families in Ontario now have one less paycheque to go on because 42,000 families in Ontario have been affected by the loss of manufacturing jobs over the course of this year alone. On Saturday, it was reported that Hemosol, a once promising biotechnology company and manufacturer of blood-related proteins—exactly the kinds of jobs we have to have in Ontario—announced that it was laying off two thirds of its employees; 50 more families to add to the 42,000 manufacturing jobs lost in Ontario in the past year.

Much as you might hope that no one will notice, can you guarantee in the economic statement being brought forward by your government tomorrow that there will be specific measures and provisions to address those 42,000 families and the situation they're in?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: What I feel very safe in committing to the people of Ontario is that they will be most encouraged that this government has reduced the debt of the province and has reduced the deficit—

Interjection: That's the Tory debt; the Tory deficit.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: That's the Tory debt. We're also reducing the deficit, a deficit that was left by the previous government. The people of Ontario will also be very encouraged to know that during the term of this government, Ontario companies and manufacturers have in fact established 193,000 new jobs for the economy of Ontario. We believe that's very good news.

Mr. Tory: They of course will be most interested in seeing the details of the reduction in the provincial debt that the Acting Premier has just announced.

Now, Acting Premier—this one, we might be able to get closer to an answer on—aside from manufacturing, another area that's close to home for you, a critical area where people are struggling in this province is on the farm. Last week, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said that the men and women who put food on our tables are swimming in debt and are facing financial ruin. Last Thursday, they called for \$100 million to help cover what they called a disastrous 2004-05 crop year. The farmers say they need immediate assistance to cover this year's debts and to have the money necessary to fund next year's crops. The grain and oilseed safety net committee

was quoted in the press as saying, "The farm income crisis in Ontario has put farm families and their neighbours in jeopardy."

My question is this: Even if the economic statement will be happening under the cover of Gomery darkness, will you guarantee us that specific, detailed help for the farmers of Ontario will be in that statement tomorrow afternoon? Will you give us that guarantee?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'd like to remind the honourable member that we have, number one, increased the budget at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. If you want to talk about what this government is doing to alleviate and to support farmers and to help them deal with their debt issues, just last week this government made an announcement. In keeping with our commitment to support them with their nutrient management infrastructure, we have always committed to spending \$20 million. Last week, I'm very happy to say that our ministry committed an additional \$3.7 million to farmers to support them in their investments in nutrient management infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I think you should be setting aside some of that money for nutrient management infrastructure down here. There's a big need for that.

My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. The minister said last week on CBC Radio that her adoption bill, Bill 183, concerned adoption disclosure and not privacy. Would you not agree with me that there are some serious privacy issues arising out of your legislation, and do you have any intention of addressing them?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate this question, because I know that this Leader of the Opposition will recall our telephone conversations around this so that we could show the Leader of the Opposition exactly what our intent would be in this bill, through regulation, once it became law.

Let me reiterate those things for him. What we would do in regulation we have now moved, through amendments, into the bill itself. We would structure a board where individuals who understand that they may come to harm can in fact apply for a disclosure veto. This was very important. It was always our intent that we would have a bill that would have the right balance, to protect people from coming to harm because of a change in the law and, as well, finally to allow people who have a right to information to access that right but still have people maintaining their privacy.

Mr. Tory: My supplementary to the minister is this. In June, information and privacy commissioners from across Canada added their voice unanimously to the debate, demanding a disclosure veto to protect privacy. I want to quote from their press release: "Birth parents and adoptees should not have to demonstrate significant harm

in order to maintain their privacy. For those who do not wish to have their private records disclosed, the disclosure is the harm.” They’re referring, of course, to your law, which will make people come forward and beg for their privacy.

Minister, will you agree right now that, if you insist on making people plead for their privacy, which you shouldn’t do—at the least, you can stand here in this House this afternoon and say that this bill will not be proclaimed until such time as you have made public and for discussion and consultation those draft regulations you’ve been talking about for months now. We still haven’t seen them and seen what guarantees they contain and what requirements they have. Will you make them public before you proclaim the bill, so we can all discuss them and consult on them?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Once again, the Leader of the Opposition would recall the conversations that he and I have had as to the detail of this bill, which we were very happy to share because he should know the intent of the government. In fact, if this bill does go to a vote in this House soon, it nevertheless won’t receive royal assent for an additional 18 months, which gives us the opportunity for a significant campaign to make people in Ontario and abroad very aware of the implications of this change. The Leader of the Opposition is aware of that. That also buys us 18 months—a significant amount of time. Some of the work has already been done so that we will be ready on the ground for the kinds of changes we need to make for the protection of people.

We have been very clear: This is a bill that is about balance. It is about the fact that people deserve information, and yet there are people who should be entitled to privacy. It is a right to information, not a right to a relationship. I believe this bill strikes that balance.

1430

Mr. Tory: If we have the 18 months, I don’t understand for the life of me why you can’t just say yes, you will publish the draft regulations and have them subject to discussion and consultation with this Legislature and people outside. I don’t understand. You’ve got time for an ad campaign and all the other things.

I just want to read you a passage from a letter dated October 23, sent to the Premier from a birth mother. She says:

“I was promised in a courtroom 35 years ago, a frightened teenager, surrounded by learned lawyers and a judge, that the adoption records would be sealed. Now this legislation will allow them to be opened and I will not have a say in the matter. Ms. Pupatello says there is nothing in law to say that the records would be forever sealed. Tell that to the frightened teenager who believed what she was being told in that courtroom so many years ago. She has rebuilt her life on a cruel fallacy.”

Minister, do you have anything to say to these people who placed their trust in our system and now feel that you and your colleagues have completely forgotten about them and their rights?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I would again like to remind the Leader of the Opposition of my invitation months ago to

have the Leader of the Opposition himself participate with his views as to the specifics of the regulation. We have made that available not just to him but as well to everyone who has an interest here. We in fact want to strike the right balance and intend to do that, both with the bill and with regulations.

Let me say as well that right here in Ontario, the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies, which is supporting the bill, knows better than most people in this House the dire circumstances that people may have been in or are in today. Let me also remind the Leader of the Opposition that finally, with this bill, will come protections that do not exist today, that in fact today those very women are receiving those phone calls and those knocks on the door with no access to a no-contact and no access to the potential for a disclosure veto.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Last week the Premier said, “It’s the McGuinty government’s job to help Ontario communities facing emergencies.” Today, as we speak, drinking water is unfit to drink in 51 Ontario First Nations communities. Many of these communities are Kashechewans in waiting. Can you tell us what action, prior to Monday of last week, the McGuinty government took to ensure safe, clean drinking water for Ontario First Nations communities with boil-water advisories?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Our government is committed to implementing the recommendations from Justice O’Connor. O’Connor has made it very clear that the province of Ontario has a responsibility to offer our resources with respect to water testing and training of water facility operators. Our province is certainly ready to support the federal government in any plan that they would have or at any time when they would express a need to do that. You would know as well that the Premier has communicated with the Prime Minister of Canada, and this government certainly stands ready with our resources available when asked.

Mr. Hampton: It seems that once again you want to refer to jurisdictional differences. I can tell you that what First Nations and First Nations people have experienced is jurisdictional indifference from your government and the federal government.

I want to ask you about the Six Nations of the Grand River near Brantford. People there have been under a boil-water advisory since the late 1990s. Study after study has shown the water in up to 80% of the 2,700 wells that supply most of the 12,000 residents is contaminated with everything from rats to E. coli. What has the McGuinty government done to make sure the Six Nations citizens—citizens of Ontario—can drink their water?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Again, I say to the honourable member that this government stands ready to assist in the support of the federal government, which has the responsibility for managing water issues on First

Nations reserves. It did come to the attention of this government, I believe it was in April 2004, that there were serious water issues on the Six Nations reserve. At that time the Minister of the Environment wrote to the federal minister to make it very clear that Ontario was prepared to provide the resources that we had that may assist that level of government; the level of government that has responsibility for managing clean water issues on First Nations properties. We are very prepared to be there to help them.

Mr. Hampton: So once again the response from the McGuinty government has been to write a letter.

I want to ask you about Kee-Way-Win First Nation, which has been under a do-not-drink-the-water advisory since 2004 because the water is contaminated with uranium. The Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte have had a boil-water advisory since 2003. The Neskantaga First Nation has been under a boil-water advisory for almost 10 years.

Unsafe drinking water for Ontario First Nations is a public health disgrace. Fifty-one First Nations in Ontario under the McGuinty government have boil-water advisories, and your indifference and inaction is obvious to everyone.

Tell me this: What is your government prepared to do now to assist these First Nations so they can begin to overcome this obvious, disgraceful situation of tainted drinking water?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Our government is absolutely committed to putting all of the resources that we have responsibility to manage to assist the federal government in their responsibility to ensure that there is safe, clean drinking water on First Nations reserves.

The statistics that the honourable member brings forward, indeed, are disturbing and that is why our Premier and this government stand prepared—as Justice O’Conner made very clear that we have a responsibility to do—to work with the federal government to provide them with the resources that we have that will assist them in ensuring that people on First Nations reserves have access to clean, safe drinking water.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Acting Premier: You mentioned the Walkerton report. Again, it says, “Members of First Nations are also residents of Ontario. There can be no justification for acquiescing in the application of a lesser public health standard on certain residents of Ontario ... the province, if asked,” by First Nations, “has much to contribute.”

Last year, Ontario earmarked \$90 million over two years for water quality projects through the Canada-Ontario rural infrastructure fund and the northern Ontario heritage fund. We know that First Nations asked for your help. Can you tell us how much of that \$90 million the McGuinty government moved toward First Nations to improve their water quality infrastructure?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Our government is very proud that we’ve had the opportunity to work with our federal government and our municipal partners to invest

in rural infrastructure in the province of Ontario. Again, I’d like to remind the honourable member—and he has quoted O’Conner—that I believe O’Conner has been very clear that the responsibility for providing clean, safe drinking water on First Nations properties is the responsibility of the federal government. The Prime Minister of Canada, in more than one statement, I believe, has made it very clear that this is a federal responsibility.

What I will say to the honourable member is that our government stands ready, when asked by the federal government, to provide the human resources for training, testing and so on, so that peoples on First Nations can access clean and safe drinking water.

1440

Mr. Hampton: I asked how much of the \$90 million that you announced was going to First Nations to help them with issues of water quality. I know why you didn’t answer: because under the McGuinty government, nothing went to First Nations.

Previous Ontario governments have understood that there is a serious problem with the quality of drinking water on First Nations. The NDP government invested \$48 million over four years in water and sewer upgrades on First Nations because, despite the jurisdiction, we saw that there was a problem. Even the Harris Conservative government invested \$70 million over eight years to upgrade sewer and water quality on First Nations. What has the McGuinty government invested? Well, a year and a half ago you invested \$200,000 in one community. Since that, nothing.

Can you tell me, Minister, why the McGuinty government continues to speak with all these platitudes, yet you have invested nothing in sewer and water quality on First Nations?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I remind the honourable member that our government is committed to the recommendations contained in the Walkerton inquiry. Very clearly in that document it identifies where the responsibility for providing clean, safe drinking water is for First Nations people.

Just as we are taking that responsibility in the province of Ontario very seriously for those areas where we have jurisdiction, we assume that the federal government would have done the same. The Prime Minister of Canada has made it very clear that this is a federal responsibility. Our government has made it very clear that we are prepared to provide the resources, as O’Connor has recommended, to support the federal government to provide clean, safe drinking water for First Nations peoples in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, over the last 15 years, previous Ontario governments saw there was a serious problem. They didn’t run around blaming constitutional this or constitutional that; they didn’t point the finger at the Prime Minister. They took action. I agree with you: Paul Martin has been missing in action, but Dalton McGuinty has been missing in action on this file as well.

There is an epidemic of bad water on First Nations. The McGuinty government is contributing zero dollars to

try to fix that problem. Tell us, Minister, will you stop the platitudes, stop telling First Nations you feel their pain, and start making some financial investments to improve the quality of water in their communities?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I would like to remind the honourable members that this government acted to protect the First Nations when there was an emergency. That is what this government did. The Prime Minister of Canada has announced that he has a plan so that First Nations peoples will be guaranteed clean, safe drinking water. Our government is absolutely committed to working with the federal government to enact that plan, because there's no question that First Nations peoples, whether they are in Ontario or any other province of Canada, deserve that kind of consideration. Their people deserve clean, fresh drinking water.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources, and it also has to do with the emergency in Kashechewan. Minister, when did you become aware of the 1992 emergency preparedness agreement between Ottawa and Ontario?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I became aware at 12:30 on Tuesday, when federal minister Andy Scott called me from his office in Ottawa.

Mr. Miller: Well, that makes it very interesting. In Kashechewan there's been a boil-water advisory for two years. There's been your Ontario clean drinking water report from 2003 that identified a problem.

Didn't your past minister, who is now the Attorney General, who had been responsible for aboriginal affairs for the last year and a half, brief you on your responsibilities? Minister, now that you are responsible for aboriginal affairs, this falls under your ministry. What steps are you taking to ensure the province is kept apprised of conditions in other First Nation communities in Ontario, especially now that we know that there are 51 First Nations reserves across the province that have a boil-water advisory?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Last week, I asked the Ministry of the Environment if they would do a survey of all the First Nations in Ontario. They have undertaken that, and they said they will get that report to me tomorrow.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Acting Premier. Day after day, the gun violence continues in the largest city in Ontario. And day after day, you and your government say that you are consulting, but you refuse to address the fundamental causes of crime.

Ontario's so-called Safe Schools Act is really the gang recruitment act. It takes kids who are most likely to get into trouble and throws them out of school, throws them on the street with no resources so gangs can recruit them.

Students, parents, community activists, educators, even your own Ontario Human Rights Commission, have called on you to repeal this act, but you've done nothing.

Can you tell us when the McGuinty government will stop giving speeches on this issue and repeal the act?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I think it's important that the people of Ontario understand the commitment of this Minister of Education to deal with this. It is because of his concern that he has made a commitment to review the safe schools legislation. There will be consultations; they will begin this month in the city of Toronto.

The minister recognizes that certainly there are issues when young people are no longer able to attend in a school system. We see that, quite frankly, as a waste of our human resources and we are making investments to ensure that our young people stay in school until the age of 18. We believe it's important that they continue to learn; it may not be in a formal school setting, but we see tremendous opportunity for our young people to continue to learn up until the age of 18.

Those are the kinds of programs that this Minister of Education is implementing.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, 64 young people are dead on the streets of Toronto. What we need is some action. We don't need more dithering, we don't need more speeches; we need some action.

Before the election, you said you were opposed to the Safe Schools Act because it discriminated against youth who were already in trouble. You said it discriminated against black youth. You said it discriminated against poor youth. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has said that, yes, it discriminates.

Earlier today a 16-year-old, Keelon Featherstone, who was handcuffed, placed in a cruiser and strip-searched by police after he was wrongly accused of stealing pop and chips at school, said this act needs to be repealed.

Can you tell the people of Ontario how long you are going to consult, how long you are going to dither, how many more young people are going to be shot on the street?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: As I've already indicated, our government is committed to reviewing the legislation. We are committed to consulting with the people in our communities, with families who have children in schools, with families who have been affected by this legislation and with people in our larger communities. We believe that that is the responsible way to move forward.

I think it's fair to say that our government is absolutely committed to keeping young people in school as long as they can be. That's why we will be introducing legislation to require young people to learn until the age of 18. That does not necessarily mean they're going to be in a regular school setting, but they will be in an instructional setting. We are working to improve access to apprenticeship programs for young people in Ontario. Our youth are our greatest resource, and we believe in investing in their development.

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. We know that children have a better chance of succeeding when they arrive at class well nourished, and our government has made significant investments to ensure that our children are ready and eager to learn by the time they reach grade 1.

Our government has also made substantial investments to improve the quality of our children's education once they reach grade 1 to help ensure that these students succeed. But if a child arrives at school hungry, it's unlikely they will fully benefit from a higher-quality educational experience.

Minister, what is our government doing to ensure that our children arrive at school well nourished and ready to learn?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'm very pleased to respond to the question from my colleague the MPP for Huron–Bruce.

Last year we announced that we would do more than simply increase the funding for the student nutrition program. We have almost doubled the funding from \$4.5 million per year to \$8.5 million a year. In fact, as of last month, the start of this school year, 253,000 students are receiving breakfasts or snacks or lunches as a result of this revamped program. I remember making this announcement and hearing stories about teachers sending kids to rooms to get snacks so that they could perform more effectively.

1450

Mrs. Mitchell: That is wonderful news. I know that our government is making a substantial commitment to our children on being well nourished and ready to learn at school each day.

But we all know that different communities have different needs. You've mentioned the revamped program, that it will be in a better position to meet local needs. Minister, could you explain how that program will work?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: The program has been revamped to include more involvement from local agencies. There are now 15 local agencies helping to determine the needs of local communities and to deliver to those needs. We also had dietitians contribute to the redesign of the programs so that food is more nutritious. So 67,000 more young people will have access to fresher, more nutritious breakfasts, snacks and lunches.

I'm pleased to tell the member from Huron–Bruce that, in your region, more than 37,000 students are benefiting. I want to thank you for your interest in this and your support for your young people in your region; \$1.2 million went to your region.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): To the Acting Premier: Ontario has some of the toughest

laws for safe, clean drinking water, yet under your government's watch—under your watch—the Six Nations community turned up a report of 82% of their wells showing coliform. They have the largest native community in Canada with some of the dirtiest water in the country.

A year and a half ago, I raised the following questions in the Ontario Legislature, and I'll give your government another chance to answer: "Where is the provincial-federal coordination on drinking water" for Six Nations? Does "the left hand know what the right hand is doing? Are both levels of government talking to each other?" Do you not appreciate the urgency of the situation? Question number 5: Do you believe the water at Six Nations is safe?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): The honourable member would know that the Leader of the Opposition asked this question of the Premier last week, at which time the Premier made it very clear that it was in April 2004 that the Minister of the Environment for this government wrote to the federal minister and made it very clear that we were aware of this issue and that our government was prepared to provide whatever resources the federal government would require to assist them in addressing the water quality issue on the Six Nations reserve.

We continue to be committed to providing those resources when the federal government needs that support. That is also consistent with what Justice O'Connor would say the role of the provincial government should be: that the responsibility is that of the federal government, but that the province of Ontario should be able to provide resources that may not be available to the federal government to deal with water quality issues on First Nations reserves.

Mr. Barrett: You've written a letter, but it has been a year and a half, Acting Premier, and we're still waiting for some action. We're seeing lack of information-sharing. We're seeing finger pointing. We need leadership, not bickering between different levels of government. This is not a game of hot potato. People's lives are at stake.

I stated five questions. I think I'll state them again and give you an opportunity to answer. These were questions posed a year and a half ago: Where is the provincial-federal coordination? Does the left hand know what the right hand is doing? Are both levels of government talking to each other? Do you not appreciate the urgency of this situation? Do you believe the water at Six Nations is safe? Those are the five questions.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Our government certainly does believe that water quality is a priority for all of the people of Ontario. For those people for whom we have responsibility as a province, for municipal water systems, we are making significant investments, and we are ensuring that the recommendations of Justice O'Connor will be implemented. When I speak of Justice O'Connor and his recommendations, he also identified that there are water quality issues that must be considered on First Nations reserves. He has made it very clear that it is the

responsibility of the federal government. The Prime Minister of Canada has accepted and acknowledged that it is a federal responsibility. Our provincial government has, on more than one occasion, made it very clear that our government is prepared to provide whatever resources we can to the federal government so they can ensure that water on First Nations property is safe for the people who live there.

LANDFILL

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I have a question for the Acting Premier. It's another water question. For over seven years now, the Mohawk First Nation at the Bay of Quinte has been opposing the proposed expansion of the Richmond landfill. They warned how the expansion of this landfill puts their source of drinking water at even further risk. Like Kashechewan and 51 other First Nations, this Mohawk one is already under a boil-water advisory.

Now the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency has released a report confirming this very point. In light of CEAA's findings and the evacuation happening because of water contamination, will you stop the Richmond landfill expansion today?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): To the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of the Environment.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I'd like to thank the member for the question and bring you up to date about Richmond. I understand that the environmental assessment process is still underway, but it's important to note that citizens will have two opportunities to contribute their comments on the proposed project. There are seven weeks to comment on the proponent's EA report and five weeks to comment on the ministry's review report. I would encourage citizens to participate in the EA process.

Ms. Churley: This happens to be in the Acting Premier's riding, so I'd think there would be an interest here, given the report that just came out. It warns that the leachate could seep out of the proposed mega-dump into surrounding waterways that provide the Bay of Quinte Mohawk First Nation with their drinking water.

On the campaign trail, Minister, your government expressed your opposition to this landfill, but then once in office you sided with the project's proponent, Waste Management Canada. The report says that this landfill site appears to be in violation of several of Justice O'Connor's recommendations from the Walkerton inquiry, yet you are still siding with this company. Will you do what is necessary? Forget about the EA, just stop it in light of what's going on on First Nations in this province. Stand up here today and say you will stop this landfill from going ahead.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Wilkinson: It's basically unbelievable that a member with your experience in this House would say to

this House that we should get rid of the environmental assessment process in this process on a party. I can tell you that there is an environmental assessment process underway.

Ms. Churley: Tell the truth.

The Speaker: Order. I need the member for Toronto–Danforth to withdraw.

Ms. Churley: I withdraw.

Mr. Wilkinson: It's very important that all of us in this House respect the environmental assessment process that we find ourselves using in this province. It provides checks and balances. It protects people. It protects the environment for our children and our grandchildren. Though sometimes people can be taken away with emotion and say that we should somehow get rid of this process, I would tell the member, yet again, that it is not in the best interests of people. What citizens in this province need to do is look at the process underway and participate in it. That is what the Ministry of the Environment encourages for all citizens with concerns about this or any other process, any other project that is under the environmental assessment process.

1500

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, this past summer, a number of incidents of domestic violence occurred within my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. On Saturday, September 17, the life of a 28-year-old woman, who contributed much to her community, was cut short through a tragic murder. This young woman, who has been described as a kind soul by those who knew her, is not a statistic; she was a woman considered by everyone to be bubbly, attractive and perhaps, most telling, so young. Sadly, her story is not unique. Here are two headlines that appeared in local press this past summer from my riding: "Woman Pushed to the Ground and Kicked" and "Living in Fear: Domestic Abuse a Disturbing Problem." There have been similar stories from across the province.

Minister, I know that you take issues of domestic abuse and violence very seriously. Could you tell us what the government is doing to combat the increase in such crimes?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the question from this member in particular, who has spoken with me in light of incidents in his own riding and how concerned he is that our government is moving forward in the right direction. I believe that our landmark domestic violence action plan is doing just that.

Particular to these justice issues, where we have to worry that we are seeing stories like this, and we have to be certain that we are responding in kind, let me point to the ODARA tool, a risk assessment tool that is being

piloted now in both North Bay and Ottawa, starting in January of this past year. When we see those tools and the evaluation, we will know that we can roll them out province-wide and we'll determine when we can do that. The model police response is also being analyzed to be certain that it is effective and standardized. In addition, there are a number of police responses and justice responses: the \$2.5 million that we've been putting forward toward the bail hearings. Again, the standardization of how the system responds to these incidents is critical. Those are items that were in our plan, and we are—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Brownell: I know our colleagues will agree that we must do everything in our power to stop this kind of violence from happening. The effects of abuse are devastating and far-reaching. As much as we must try to stop it, we must also look to providing care and support for those who have been victimized by it.

On August 25, I informed the people of my riding of a new action plan initiated by your ministry that would provide investments to agencies that provide services to those who suffer from abuse. More to the point, this investment has been tailored to meet the distinct needs of women of all cultural backgrounds within our communities. Minister, would you expand on this program for us, and explain how women from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh who have faced abuse will benefit?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: I am very pleased to say that I know as well that the local member was very happy to see that initially, even in our first budget, we moved to increase the operating budget, for the first time in 12 years, by 3% in those agencies that provide support. One of our more recent announcements was specifically around counselling dollars, and in this area that is so critical—and we know we need to do more—we saw an increase of 10%. There are three tremendous agencies in this member's riding, which I know will use that and help women who have been through this most horrific experience.

We also know that this fall we're launching our first-ever provincial-wide conference called Finding Common Ground. To date, we have blown the doors off on the registration for this conference, where we will see 70 speakers coming together. There are excellent practices across the province in this area dealing with domestic violence, and we want to roll that up and be sure that we have excellence in every region of Ontario.

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have a question to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, the timing of your economic statement of the day of Justice Gomery's report is very curious. We suspect that you're simply trying to hide behind the skirts of Justice Gomery's report. One suggestion is that you tried to hide the fact that your deficit is actually going to increase. Can you tell us how much greater the deficit will be this year than what you reported last year?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I couldn't disagree with the honourable member more. In fact, we know that the announcement we will make around our economy in Ontario tomorrow is going to be very positive and encouraging for the people in Ontario. We had no way of predicting that there was going to be another key announcement at another level of government that will probably command the airwaves. I will say, with confidence, that I believe the people of Ontario will be very heartened and confident at the end of tomorrow that this government is a good fiscal manager.

Mr. Hudak: It's no surprise that the Acting Premier did not answer my question specifically on the deficit, because in fact your own budget papers indicate that your deficit is going to increase from \$1.6 billion to \$2.8 billion in the 2005-06 fiscal year, an 88% increase in your deficit. The reality is that there's no justifiable reason for that. You're allotted \$10 billion in revenue, taken from hard-working taxpayers and businesses in Ontario. I'll ask you again, Acting Premier—taxpayers have to know—please tell us that your deficit is not going to increase.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I find it interesting: I'd like to know where your crystal ball is that you would say, or you would present, that you know exactly what's going to be in the statement tomorrow. I have made a commitment to the people in this House today that the economic statement that will be released from this government tomorrow will demonstrate that our government is committed to responsibly managing the tax dollars that come to us from the people of Ontario. We are committed, certainly, to reducing the deficit, the \$5.6-billion deficit that was left to us by the previous government when they said there was none. We arrived, and it was significant.

What I can say to the honourable member is that tomorrow it will demonstrate that we certainly have a handle on dealing with the poor spending practices of your government. In addition to doing that, we have reduced the deficit and seen a climate that has increased jobs in Ontario. This is good news for the people who live here. We look forward to doing that.

CHEDOKE LONG-TERM-CARE FACILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Acting Premier. Your government closed Hamilton's Chedoke complex continuing care centre and transferred many of the patients to nursing homes. These patients are severely disabled, with multiple complex medical conditions. In fact, at least five of these patients have since passed away, within two months of being transferred out of Chedoke, and the coroner's office is currently investigating these deaths. What are you telling your family members who have told you—and in fact have told your minister, who is unfortunately not here to answer the question—their loved ones are not receiving adequate care since being transferred out of that facility?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I thank the honourable member for the question. I would say that we're very concerned about the issues that the honourable member has raised. She has indicated that family members have had the opportunity to speak directly with the minister. I have to say that I have not had a conversation with the minister to understand the details or what you're asking of me, but what I can commit to you today is to bring this to the attention of the minister directly, and then he would get back to you on this.

Ms. Horwath: In view of the coroner's investigation, and the serious concerns that family members have relayed to the minister, I'd like to take a minute to inform you of the details. The health of their loved ones is deteriorating. They're developing bedsores where they never developed them after 20 years in the previous facility. They're not getting the physical therapy that they need. Their arms and legs are seizing up and their physical abilities are diminishing. They're in facilities that do not accommodate their physical condition. They can't even access the elevator buttons, Acting Premier. The reduced ratio of staff to patient does not meet the medical needs of their complex conditions.

In light of these issues, will you have the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care review and reassess each and every one of the transfers, and will you put a temporary hold on the transfer of the few remaining patients until the coroner's investigation has been completed?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I would like to thank the honourable member. She obviously is very committed to this issue and to the individuals who have been impacted. I will give her my undertaking today that I will most definitely bring the details of her question to his attention. Certainly, knowing the commitment of the minister, he will respond to her in an appropriate time frame. I thank the member for her question.

1510

GAMBLING

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. Gambling is an activity that many responsible adults take part in. For most Ontarians, a night out at the casino—win, lose or draw—is an evening of entertainment. But I want to bring to the minister's attention a 2003 study from Harvard University which showed a troubling risk for developing problem gambling behaviours amongst youth. The study, and similar ones in Ontario, showed that the rate of problem gambling among 18- to 24-year-olds is about 7%—twice the general average.

Minister, what action is being taken to ensure that youth do not develop serious gambling problems?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I thank the member for Essex for his question. Problem gambling, of course, is a serious problem for a small but significant portion of our society. On Monday, October 24 of this year, the Responsible Gambling Council launched the "friends4friends" peer awareness campaign.

This is a program funded by my ministry. It's a Canadian first, based on extensive research. It showed that peer pressure is one of the most effective ways of reaching the 18- to 24-year-old demographic group.

It's a \$2-million education and prevention campaign which will run between now and March 2006. It includes an interactive Web site, which is friends4friends.ca, which provides young people with the tools they need to help their peers through some troubling times.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): There are lobbies in this building to carry on conversations that are not germane to question period.

The member for Essex.

Mr. Crozier: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, Minister. I also wanted to draw your attention, though, to the many adults who are problem gamblers as well. While most individuals can enjoy gambling as a recreational activity, to a small but significant group of people gambling is problematic and does impact negatively on their lives.

Minister, how is your ministry working to prevent all individuals from becoming problem gamblers in the first place?

Interjection.

The Speaker: Before the member replies, the member from Nepean—Carleton would know that he's one of the members of the Legislature and knows where the lobbies are, so perhaps he would sit down.

Interjection: His mind is somewhere else.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Mr. Speaker, my friend said, "His mind is somewhere else." I think it's in Ottawa West—Nepean—the honourable member from Nepean—Carleton.

This is a serious issue. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, of course, operates the problem gambling hotline. The number, if I could give it out, is 1-888-230-3505.

The McGuinty government, in fact, provides more funding than any other government in Ontario's history.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Perhaps the NDP thinks this is a joke. Perhaps they think it's a laughing matter when this government is trying to help those people with gambling addictions, particularly when their party brought in gambling in the province of Ontario. So I would suggest they stop laughing and listen to what we're doing on this side of the House.

Our ministry is providing \$9 million in prevention and education strategies as part of the \$36-million problem gambling strategy.

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): My question is to the Minister of Government Services. I have repeatedly pointed out in this House the Liberal government's continuing failure to replace the unsafe and inadequate building housing Ontario's archives. Your government cancelled our PC government deal that would have saved

the archives. For more than a year, the government has been promising action. It is now clear that you have no plan; you will take no action.

What are you doing, Minister, to preserve the irreplaceable documents and artifacts that are so important to Ontarians?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): To the member, two things: First, we're taking all the necessary steps in the existing building to both—most importantly, actually—protect the health and safety of the people who work there, but also, obviously, to protect the resources that we have stored there.

Secondly, we have made a commitment to a long-term, new facility. The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal is doing the necessary background work to prepare what we call a request for proposal from the community on how we best can replace the archives.

As I said earlier in the House, we are dedicated to a long-term, quality solution for our archives that everyone in the province will be very proud of. That requires the background work. I think in the next few months—I hope in the next few weeks; but I can certainly promise in the next few months—we'll be out publicly to get that proposal.

Mrs. Munro: I certainly appreciate the response with regard to the health and safety of the people who work in the archives, but I am very conscious of the fact that the mould and the lack of security and things like that represented such a major investment that it was deemed appropriate by our government to look for a new home. You mentioned that you have started some steps which would see something change, in terms of a new building. I guess the question that so many people would want to know is, when can we expect to see a new home for Ontario's treasures?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Again, just to add to my answer on the first part: Recognize that we have entered into a relationship with a warehouse where about 80% of our records will be stored. That we've done, and we have moved about 80% of the material into that new building already. So that's done.

The specific question you asked: When we can expect? I said in my answer that we can expect in the next few months—I hope in the next few weeks—to have a request for proposals out publicly so we can find recommendations for various possible solutions.

When will it be finally implemented? Frankly, these things can't happen overnight, so it probably is two or three years before it happens. In the meantime, as I say, 80% of our archives are stored in a warehouse facility. The health and safety of our employees—to the best of our ability, the best way we can preserve the existing archives is taking place in the existing building. But we're probably looking at two to three years before the new archives.

PENSION PLAN

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): The question is to the Acting Premier, in the absence of the new

Minister of Finance. Acting Premier, I wanted to ask you a question about the participating Co-operatives of Ontario's trustee pension plan.

Over two years ago, the 2,300 members of the plan had very modest pension benefits averaging less than \$700 a month cut in half to \$350 a month, through no fault of their own. On May 24, 2005, the superintendent of pensions at FSCO, K. David Gordon, notified the members of the plan that FSCO had reached a preliminary decision that the 50% reduction in benefits for the retired members of the plan contravened the plan bylaws and was invalid. Since then, however, there's been delay after delay after delay in implementing the decision. The latest is an extension of the appeal process until January 25, 2006.

Minister, will you do justice to the members of the plan and put a stop to the endless delays?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): First of all, I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. This is an issue that I hear about in my own riding as well.

What I can indicate to the honourable member today is that I will bring this request to his attention, and I'm sure that when it is appropriate, he will act as he sees fit and in the best interests of all of the people of Ontario. But I believe that this is something that all members of this House have received some information on.

That the appeal process has been extended, I think, would suggest that there continues to be some opportunity for folks who are not happy with the decision to make that known.

1520

Ms. Horwath: Acting Premier, you're quite correct: These members of this plan are in every single one of our ridings. But unfortunately, FSCO, the government's pension regulator, was partly responsible for the very fiasco that you've all heard about through the presentations and the documents they're providing to us. They had ample warning of the problems of the plan but did nothing about it. Now, they seem to be stalling again and again in the implementation of the decision that came down earlier this year. Unfortunately, the people who are suffering are those pensioners who worked very hard all their lives for their pensions.

Acting Premier, I ask you again: Will you do justice to the members of the plan and put a stop to the endless delays and just enforce the decision that was brought down on May 24, 2005?

Hon. Ms. Dombrowsky: What I will do is what I indicated to the honourable member when I answered her first question, and that is to bring this to the attention of the minister.

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question today is for the Minister of Labour. Our government is implementing an aggressive legislative agenda that will change the face of the province for the better. Last week,

you introduced second reading of Bill 211, a bill that, if passed, will prohibit mandatory retirement in the province of Ontario, ending decades of discrimination against older but still so very competent workers. I know that many applaud this initiative, understanding that mandatory retirement undermines the dignity and sense of self-worth of older workers. However, I also know that there are concerns and, at times, a lack of understanding of the bill's true intent.

Minister, can you clarify why the government is introducing legislation to end mandatory retirement and to reassure the fine people of this province that this is long overdue and it is the right thing to do?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): As you know, this legislation, if passed, will amend the human rights act by amending the definition of "age."

This is about choice. This is about ending a culture of discrimination that exists in this province, a culture that has existed for far too long. When somebody turns 65, they don't suddenly lose the skills they had, the determination they had, the drive they had. Many of these individuals still have a great deal to contribute to society. So we're certainly conscious of that.

We want to give people the right to retire; we don't want to force people to retire. That's why I would urge every member of this House to support Bill 211: because it's about choice. It's the right thing to do.

PETITIONS

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):

I have a petition here for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I want to thank Paul Melcher, Dave Markus and Rick Krieger for visiting me in my office to give me this petition and bring this matter to my attention. Rick Krieger is a client with Community Living in Upper Ottawa Valley.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent upon the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that

they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I support this petition. I affix my name to it and pass it to Jeffrey for you, Speaker.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe):

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

"We are requesting that all diabetic supplies, especially and including insulin infusion pumps and the supplies to maintain them, as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor, be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing" the disease. "They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood, and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences.

"Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating costs of managing diabetes. We think it is in all Ontarians' and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations.

"Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

I agree with this petition. Almost 4,000 have signed this petition, and I want to affix my signature to it too.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I have a petition from my riding of Durham to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 137 introduced by Durham MPP John O'Toole has received second reading in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario; and

"Whereas Bill 137 would support public transit by allowing transit users to obtain a non-refundable income tax credit for up to 50% of expenses that they incur and pay for using public transit; and

"Whereas this tax credit would be a valuable incentive to support the use of public transit; and

"Whereas public transit would reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ease gridlock, reduce rush hours and generally improve the quality of life in Ontario communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, urge the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support Bill 137 so that more

Ontarians are encouraged to make public transit a part of their daily commute and part of their everyday routine.”

I'm pleased to support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, and present it to Trevor, one of the pages here in the Legislative Assembly.

COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Warden corridor in the heart of Scarborough Southwest is going through a major redevelopment with industrial land being converted for residential use;

“Whereas the residents of the surrounding community want to ensure that there are enough community supports to ensure that community needs for recreation are met;

“Whereas a community centre, located in the heart of the Warden corridor, would go a long way to ensuring that these community supports are met;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work in conjunction with the city of Toronto in providing the necessary funds to help construct this community centre as an example of the government's commitment to build strong communities in urban centres.”

I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration ... there are other forms of macular degeneration ... that are not covered.

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

“There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment cost for this disease is astronomical for most constituents and adds a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

I also sign this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that comes to me from people in Kawartha Lakes and reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty, MPP, as leader of the official opposition made the following commitment: ‘I

have committed that a Liberal government will ensure a binding referendum is held to allow local citizens to determine whether or not to dismantle the amalgamated city’; and

“Whereas, in the interest of true democracy, the Minister of Municipal Affairs put the following question to the voters of the city of Kawartha Lakes: ‘Are you in favour of a return to the previous municipal model of government with an upper-tier and 16 lower-tier municipalities?’; and

“Whereas the voters, by a clear majority on a provincially mandated ballot, answered in the affirmative; and

“Whereas the council of the city of Kawartha Lakes has demanded that the province of Ontario honour the results of the 2003 election as it pertains to the minister's question;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario act to honour the commitment made by Dalton McGuinty and to respect the will of the people as expressed in a democratic vote, and restore the former municipal structure as stated in the minister's question.”

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

1530

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition here for which I'd like to thank Sonny Sansone in Scarborough Southwest. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I join with my colleague the member from Scarborough West in submitting it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Scarborough Southwest is a growing community dependent on public transit to move people around;

“Whereas the city of Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission are calling for and predicting continued growth in Scarborough Southwest over the next 25 years;

“Whereas the Toronto Transit Commission, in its growth plan, has called for the expansion of subway service to cover more of Scarborough;

“Whereas the government of Ontario has traditionally assisted the city of Toronto in funding subway expansion as recently as the Sheppard subway expansion project;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work in concert with the city of Toronto and come up with a funding arrangement to assist in expanding subway service to Scarborough.”

I'm a continuous user of the TTC, I support this petition, I affix my signature and ask page Austin to carry it.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I have a petition regarding the Adoption Information Disclosure Act.

“Whereas Bill 183, the Adoption Information Disclosure Act, 2005, is currently before the Ontario Legislature and, if passed into law, will give unqualified retroactive access to adoption records, regardless of the wishes of the adoptee or birth parent, which were previously understood to be sealed in perpetuity;

“Whereas the Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, along with every other information and privacy commissioner in Canada, members of the legal community and many MPPs, have expressed great concern about Bill 183 as presently drafted and have called upon the government to amend it to include a disclosure veto provision and protect the legitimate privacy rights of thousands of Ontarians;

“Whereas the right to file a disclosure veto would introduce the element of consent for birth parents and adoptees, allowing them the same choice afforded to every other birth parent and adoptee in Canada, that being, whether or not they wish to disclose their personal identifying information, without having to plead their case before a tribunal and justify their reasons for maintaining their privacy;

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

“Not to pass Bill 183 into law without the provision of an automatic disclosure veto.”

I will sign that.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): This petition was collected by Sonny Sansone from Scarborough.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas new immigrants to this province have professional designations in a wide variety of areas;

“Whereas the barriers that exist to have these designations recognized in Ontario are extremely unfair;

“Whereas these barriers force many skilled immigrants to take up jobs that barely pay minimum wage and make it hard for these people to make ends meet;

“Whereas shortages in various professional vocations such as doctors can easily be addressed if these barriers are revised;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the government to come up with a plan to address the problem of underused skills among immigrants with professional designations.”

I support this petition. I put my signature on this one as well.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 183, the Adoption Information Disclosure Act, 2005, is currently before the Ontario Legislature and, if passed into law, will give unqualified retroactive access to adoption records, regardless of the

wishes of the adoptee or birth parent, which were previously understood to be sealed in perpetuity;

“Whereas the Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, along with every other Information and Privacy Commissioner in Canada, members of the legal community and many MPPs, have expressed great concern about Bill 183 as presently drafted and have called upon the government to amend it to include a disclosure veto provision and protect the legitimate privacy rights of thousands of Ontarians;

“Whereas the right to file a disclosure veto would introduce the element of consent for birth parents and adoptees, allowing them the same choice afforded to every other birth parent and adoptee in Canada, that being, whether or not they wish to disclose their personal identifying information, without having to plead their case before a tribunal and justify their reasons for maintaining their privacy;

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

“Not to pass Bill 183 into law without the provision of an automatic disclosure veto.”

I support this petition and I sign it, and I send it to the table with Alexandra.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 25, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 197, An Act to implement Budget measures / Projet de loi 197, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): On the last occasion, after having exhausted some 52 minutes, I ran out of time. I have 8 minutes left, and I'd just like to go back to where I was. I was talking about the environment; I was talking about the cutbacks to the environmental program, and the detrimental effect they have had in Ontario. I talked about the water in Kashechewan, because that was the day that the news broke, and I talked about the lack of government plans around that and how the water degradation in that particular community had caused irreparable harm to the people who lived there.

I went on to talk about the water degradation closer to home as well, at Lake Simcoe. Many of us in this Legislature had an opportunity to meet with the Ladies of the Lake. I talked about the calendar, and how they're trying to get some money together to try to stop the degradation of what is arguably Ontario's best-used water resource in terms of boating, recreation, fishing and swimming, and that the people all around southern

Ontario, particularly in the GTA, look to Lake Simcoe as a place for recreation, and how, in fact, ordinary citizens are having to do extraordinary things to try to protect the environment, because there simply isn't enough money in this government's coffers to do so.

Then my time ran out. Just as it ran out, I was about to get on to the issue that is grabbing a lot of headlines in the last couple of weeks, and that is the issue of the big pipe that is being put forward for the communities north of Toronto. The city of Toronto certainly has weighed in; the city of Toronto has passed a motion asking this Legislature and the minister to stop the big pipe. They have talked about the degradation of the land and the aquifer of the Oak Ridges moraine. They've talked about the potential health hazards, should anything go wrong with this big pipe as the water is transferred from the area north of Toronto through the various pipes to end up in Pickering.

They are quite right in their assessment of what this big pipe is all about. To date, in the construction that has taken place, 30 billion litres of water have been taken out of the ground in the aquifer of the Oak Ridges moraine—30 billion litres of water, which is not likely to be replaced in the short term. If this continues, another 60 billion litres of water will be taken out of that aquifer. To put that in context, what is happening each and every day since the time that the construction has been undertaken until the time, should the big pipe be completed—it amounts to 71 million litres. The average backyard pool, for people who have a swimming pool, just to put this in context, has between 15,000 and 20,000 litres of water. This is 71 billion litres taken out of the groundwater in the Oak Ridges moraine, probably never to be replaced.

1540

When that water table goes down, when that water is gone, what happens? We're already starting to see it happen. First of all the wells go dry, and in York region 120 wells to date have gone dry, wells that have been in some of the locations for a century, wells that provided water for cattle and farms, wells that provided water for people to drink. They have simply dried up because the groundwater has sunk so low. Farmers are losing their groundwater, so it's becoming increasingly difficult and more expensive to get water to cattle.

We have seen what is happening in Rouge Park; the minister stood up today talking about the Rouge again, and he was talking about Rouge Park. The trout streams that go all through Rouge Park, the trout streams where I used to fish occasionally as a boy, have gone dry; they have gone stagnant. The trout that the Ministry of Natural Resources put in them are starting to die off. So I wonder, when the trout streams start to go dry, doesn't anybody twig to what's happening? You might say it was kind of a wet summer, but the groundwater itself is what is to blame. It's simply not there.

All of this has happened while this government seems to be frozen. It seems to have inertia when it comes to the environment. Of all of the ministries to cut back, this was one of them, where the money was taken away in the last

budget. I am shocked a little, because it doesn't take very long to see how the environment is affected. It doesn't take long to see the pollution, the degradation. It doesn't take long to see what happens in Kashechewan. It doesn't take long to see what's happening around Lake Simcoe or, more recently, what will happen if the big pipe is not stopped. There are simply not enough resources in the environment department to cut them back. There is not sufficient staff to monitor what is going on by cutting back even more. There are not sufficient monies to hire expertise to simply cut it back again. This budget did that to the environment branch, along with several others, and it is not something of which this government should be proud.

In the few minutes remaining: On the last occasion I talked about the failure of Bill 197 to address the real needs of Ontario. I talked about how it took six months to get that bill before this Legislature, and the failure has manifested itself in, oh, so many ways: The hospitals that needed some 7% only got 4.7%, and we have seen hospitals in the last two weeks talking about cutting back their staff and their essential services, and in some cases even their emergency departments. We have seen the mistakes the government made trying to bail themselves out by making secret deals on P3 hospitals. We have seen the Ministries of the Environment, Culture, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Northern Development all with reduced budgets and the real, detrimental impact.

But I have to tell you that the biggest impact, the biggest detriment to all the people of this province, really has to be among those who are our poorest citizens. If you look at what has happened in terms of the claw-back—and I heard one of the ministers responding today about putting \$8 million into a food program at schools. That pales in comparison to the money that you are clawing back from the poorest children in this province. If you give them \$8 million to eat in school, you have to know that you are taking 50 or 100 times that out of their mouths every single year. It does not make sense to me to claw that money back, and this government continues to do it. It does not make sense to me for this government to have promised to build so many housing units and to have failed to deliver, or, in the alternative, to have offered money for rent supplements, and only 400 rent supplements are currently being given in this entire province. It is unconscionable to talk about the poorest of the poor on Ontario Works or ODSP and in this budget give them not one cent of extra increase. They are people who are actually worse off today than they were in the worst times of Mike Harris, and this government ought not to be proud of that.

On the last occasion, I talked about child care. I talked about autism, how you're taking people with autistic children to court to fight them as they struggle to do the best for their families. I talked about native affairs.

Mr. Speaker, my time is just about up, but I have to tell you, in the six months since this budget was introduced, things have gotten even worse.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): I'm pleased to rise and make some comments about our budget that was held in recent days.

For the rural community, it's important for them to know, particularly our farmers, that in our budget, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's base budget actually increased. I know there was some conversation back at the time as to whether that was the case or not, but the OMAF budget actually increased by \$15 million in 2005-06, so there are many more dollars there: some \$564 million with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. We know that our farmers are going through some difficult times. Many of my colleagues and the Minister of Agriculture have met with them in recent days, and I'm certain that we are going to move forward to address their problems in the future.

As well, this budget made the largest and most significant investment over a multi-year period in 40 years—it is the largest investment in 40 years—for post-secondary education, which will result in new jobs and economic growth. It will help universities in my region, such as Windsor and Western. It will certainly assist colleges such as St. Clair, Lambton and Fanshawe colleges. At \$6.2 billion, it's a significant part of our budget initiative. We know that a well-educated province will move us forward into the new economies as they change and evolve over time—and most certainly they will, these economies of the world. Part of that initiative will increase financial aid for some 135,000 low- and middle-income students, giving them a chance to contribute in their education, and therefore to the province of Ontario.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech by the member from Beaches–East York, and I would like to say that he gave an excellent hour-long speech and it was very thoughtful. Of course, I may not necessarily agree with everything he said, his perspective, but I do respect that he spent a lot of time thinking about what he was saying. I had the pleasure of sharing a flight, a trip with the committee to the north last year, with the member from Beaches–East York, and we visited a number of the northern communities, including Attawapiskat, quite close by the Kashechewan area.

I have to say that today, when I asked a question of the Minister of Natural Resources to do with the situation in Kashechewan, I was quite surprised to learn that the minister was not aware of the 1992 agreement between the provincial government and the federal government, the emergency preparedness agreement. In fact, he said today, in answer to a question in question period, that it wasn't until last Tuesday that he discovered that he was responsible for declaring an emergency on the First Nation. I'm very surprised by that. I would have thought someone in the Ministry of Natural Resources would have let the minister know that that was the government's responsibility, or that perhaps the past minister responsible for aboriginal affairs—Michael Bryant, the Attorney General, who was responsible for the past year and a half—maybe would have briefed the current minister that

that was part of his responsibilities. It demonstrates how First Nations' concerns are not paid attention to. They are real concerns, and they so often just fall through the cracks.

I only have 15 seconds, so I can't go into great detail, but I would like to compliment the member from Beaches–East York on his speech. It was certainly very carefully thought out.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I congratulate my friend from Beaches–East York; he covered a lot of ground. He talked about housing, which is a theme that I will speak to in approximately an hour from now. You'll recall, as he reminded us, that the Liberals—

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): A little advertisement.

1550

Mr. Marchese: Please tune in. Stick around.

You will recall that the Liberals promised that thousands and thousands of units would be built for people who have an affordability problem to get into some modest housing. That was an electoral promise, a campaign promise they made. They get into government, and two years later, how many units have they built, by their own record? Sixty three. The minister of infrastructure stands up and he blah, blah, blabs about so many things, but by their own record, the data that we have seen that they have shown us—63 units.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): The shovels are in the ground.

Mr. Marchese: Members behind me who will speak after me might say, "The shovels are in the ground." I see only 63 units of all of the promises they made of all the thousands of units that would be built.

Oh, yes, the Liberals really care. They care as much about housing as they do about ending the clawback of the national child care benefits that would go and flow directly to women. The government said, "We would end that clawback, because we care." They get into government, and they don't do anything.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Oh, for God's sake.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, but it's true. You might deny it all you want. Not one cent. That clawback is not ended. They didn't do what they promised. As a result of that, \$300 million, which would otherwise be going to people who need it, is not going anywhere. I thank the member for bringing that to our attention, and I will repeat it an hour from now.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): The 2005 budget is a great budget. It is taking care of the needs that we have today and positioning Ontario for a bright future tomorrow.

I'll go along the vein of the member for Trinity–Spadina and talk a little bit about infrastructure that we're building.

Hospitals: I could say that in my community we are rebuilding the Trillium hospital—it looks great; it's addressing community needs—and the Credit Valley Hospital.

Highways: 401, 403, 404, 410, the QEW. There is construction going on around this province. Infrastructure is getting built.

We are taking care of our water systems, pipes, sewers; making sure that we have the infrastructure to build a strong economy.

But our strong economy is not going to be built on just infrastructure, on bricks and mortar; our strong economy, through this budget, is going to be built on our people. That's why we're investing so much in education: \$6.2 billion in post-secondary education—unprecedented in 40 years—making sure that we have those engineers to build those bridges, those buildings and those roads; making sure that we have those doctors, nurses, pediatricians to take care of our kids; making sure that we have professionals so that we are positioned Ontario as a knowledge-based economy.

That's why companies like Toyota are coming here and investing hundreds of millions of dollars in Ontario, because we have the infrastructure, but more so because we have a great workforce with terrific universal health care, great education and investments in our environment. Ontario is positioned for a prosperous future.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Beaches—East York has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Prue: I'd like to thank my four colleagues for their comments. To the member from Chatham—Kent—Essex: He talked about the students, and I would say any time you build a school, any time you put teachers or professors into it, any time a child learns, it has to be a good thing. But it is impossible for poor students to learn when they don't have enough money for food, when they are dressed in shabby clothes and when they simply don't belong.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services said as much, and I talked about that in my speech. I think what she said was far more eloquent than what I could have.

For the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka: Yes, we did go on a trip to the north, and the reason we went on that trip—and I think the government members opposite need to think about this—was that we were there for a private member's bill for revenue sharing for the communities in the north and the money that they so desperately need to build their own infrastructure. What happened to that bill? It died on the order paper. It didn't need to, but there was no stomach in the government ranks, when it came to negotiation, whether that bill continued to survive. It has not, and our communities in northern Ontario desperately need that money.

My colleague from Trinity—Spadina talked about the reality: Only 63 housing units have been built. Of those 5,000 that I heard of—mutterings from the rump—that are in the works, most are not affordable.

The member from Mississauga East talked about this being a great budget. I would tell you that it's a great budget if you are not poor. It's a great budget if you are not on ODSP or welfare. It's a great budget if you are not a poor child who has his or her money clawed back and doesn't have food or decent clothing. It is not a great

budget if you rely on the government in any way for a better Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London—Fanshawe): I'm honoured to stand up and speak in support of the budget of 2005. Before I start, Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that I'm sharing my time with my colleague from Mississauga West.

It's a great budget regardless of what anybody says. When you go on the grounds, visiting colleges and universities—schools—you notice that it's a great budget, because our government in this budget talks about great investment in post-secondary education. My colleague before me spoke about it: a \$6.2-billion investment in post-secondary education.

I had the chance last Friday to go to Fanshawe College with my colleague Minister Bentley. We talked about our investment in that college. It was a huge ceremony. The president and many different departments in that college came to thank us for the investment our government is making in that college to complete the trade centre, which they've been working on for a long, long time. This is our investment showing in the colleges.

One the same day, I also got the chance to go to the University of Western Ontario to see another investment. The research and innovation ministry is investing a lot of money in research, more than \$7 million. Our government is putting a lot of attention into post-secondary education, investing for the future. As you know, the future is about technology; the future is about research. That's why our government paid attention to those details, because we want to make a good future for our province.

In kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools our investments are great. When you visit the schools, the principals and teachers tell you about their relaxation, talk to you about their happiness, talk to you about the good working relationship between the government and them. For the first time in a long time, those institutions are working well with the government, because we believe in education. We're investing in education. When we invest in education, it means we're investing in the future of this province.

We also invested more in child care spaces in Ontario. Everybody heard, people heard me say today, that in the summertime, in August, there was a great announcement, a joint announcement, between the province and the federal government of an almost \$1-billion investment in child care for more spaces, care providers and building more institutions to absorb the need for child care spaces in Ontario. All these elements are because of our budget, because we believe in the future of this province. We believe in reinvesting in our people in many different ways.

Health care is also a great element of our budget. It takes a lot of money. Our minister put a lot of investment in this area. Our health care has improved, regardless of what anybody says, regardless of the people from the other side who always talk about the lack of investment in health care.

1600

I want to tell you that last Friday a gentleman from my constituency, London–Fanshawe, walked into my office. He gave me permission to mention his name: Richard Thomas, who lives in London–Fanshawe. He was telling me that our health care has improved big time. He went to the hospital emergency department in August and got evaluated for his hip replacement. By October 13 they operated on him, and by October 28 he walked into my office. He felt a lot better. He thanks our government, thanks us for all the investment, thanks the hospital, thanks the doctor who operated on him. This is a good indication that our investment in health care is working. Lowering the wait time is working. We're going to continue to invest in health care because we believe that health care investment is going to go far in protecting our people and our future in this area.

Besides that, everybody is talking about the infrastructure. We invested more than ever in infrastructure by rebuilding highways, bridges and affordable housing. More than \$5 million of this infrastructure money went to complete many hospital projects across Ontario, two of them in London, in my riding: one for St. Joseph's hospital and another for the London Health Sciences Centre. People in that riding appreciate the government's effort to support them, to strengthen the ability to continue servicing the community.

With all this work, with all this investment, we haven't forgotten our deficit, which we inherited from the past government. We are working toward eliminating that deficit, and hopefully tomorrow you are going to hear good news from the minister about our progress on the economic front, because we also believe not just in investing in education and health care, but also that the strength of the economy is very important in giving us the ability to continue investing in education, investing in health care and investing in infrastructure.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Earlier this afternoon I had the opportunity to introduce the dean of the faculty of business administration at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, where I graduated with my own MBA in the late 1980s. Let me take just a moment to urge all the SFU MBA grads in the GTA to come out and attend SFU's 40th-anniversary breakfast for grads tomorrow morning at 7:30 at the National Club on Bay Street.

Ontario's annual budget is where we count what's countable and we measure what truly counts against our goals as a government. We compare our results to what matters to Ontario's working families, and those results are solid and impressive.

Our fellow Canadians in Alberta are building their future on the natural resources in the Athabasca tar sands, which now rank as one of the world's best oil reserves. Here in Ontario we've historically built our future on the natural resources in the brains, the work ethic and the pride of our talented people and in the creativity that they possess, and they're the best in the land. It's that wealth

of talent, drive and brainpower that Ontario's 2005-06 budget supports, fosters and celebrates. Post-secondary education builds the talent pool of tomorrow's managers, entrepreneurs, professionals, scientists and risk-takers. That's why Ontario has said that post-secondary education is our key to the future. That's why Ontario stepped up with an historic \$6.2-billion infusion in post-secondary education, the largest multi-year investment in 40 years.

Bill 197 implements this and other strong, forward-looking budget measures, all the leading-edge businesses that governments seek out and try to foster to add value not only from the sweat of physical work but from the inspiration and creativity of knowledge work.

Ontario is a leader in aerospace, pharmaceuticals, software, biotechnology, semiconductor technology and basic research. The reason Ontario continues to lead the world in so many areas—areas that are profitable, areas that create careers, build homes, support families and sustain businesses and services—is because Ontario has the natural resource that all the world needs and wants. That natural resource is smart people.

We had lost our way between 1990 and 2003. Our universities, community colleges and other post-secondary institutions had slipped into neglect. Our alumni and students were forced to pick up the difference in donations and soaring tuition fees.

This government understands that the farm system for the best brains in Ontario exists in our post-secondary education system. This 2005-06 budget changes that neglect. Ontario's 2005-06 budget, and Bill 197 which implements it, allow leading companies like Microsoft to hire Ontario computer science graduates like Mohammed Samji and Leon Wong, both Ontarians, who are now leading the development of Windows Vista, which is in beta, for Microsoft Corp. In the software business, a computer science degree from the University of Waterloo has an equivalent cachet value to a Harvard MBA in the investment banking trade.

This historic budget makes OSAP funds more widely available. This forward-thinking budget makes outright grants to low-income students more widely available. This higher education budget means that access to post-secondary education is about what's in your head as a student and not what's in your parents' bank account.

Our smart people have always driven Ontario's prosperity. When our province took post-secondary education for granted, we saw our knowledge-intensive competitive advantage slip. This budget turns that sad situation around.

Moreover, Ontario's budget deficit continues to come down as we approach a sustainably balanced budget, and what pleases Ontarians most is that our deficit is coming down sustainably. That means Ontarians can expect their government to bring Ontario's debt down without fire sales of our highways and other public assets.

Ontario's 2005-06 budget implements an important and historic series of commitments. Our government thanks the member from Vaughan–King–Aurora for his

leadership and vision in shaping it. I look forward to its quick passage.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Marchese: I'll have an opportunity to speak in about half an hour or so, so I will leave much of my comment to then.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Here we go. A little advertisement: the Rosario Marchese show.

Mr. Marchese: I know that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs is looking forward to it, and that's why she's here.

To hear the member from London–Fanshawe speak, you would think that they are the only government that has ever invested so much in infrastructure. Those superlatives make you worry, and I'll tell you why. When the Tories were in government, they used to say the same thing. He wasn't here to remember the language, so he doesn't understand that when he uses those superlatives, it's somewhat elusive, somewhat exaggerated. Had he been here, he would have witnessed the slashing of the Conservative government as they were saying, "We have invested more than any other government in the history of this Legislature." That's the kind of stuff they would say, and everything they would do was "historic," similar to what the member from Mississauga West says, that this is an historical budget. How could you say of a little budget that makes some investment in post-secondary education that it's historic?

It's no different, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, than the previous government. So you've got to understand: Whenever you hear the exaggeration, you've got to worry. It means there is less to it than the claim. Only the claim is inflated; everything else is hollow and small and enough for people like me and you to worry about.

As soon as I have my opportunity, I will be able to make a couple of comments—

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: We're waiting with bated breath.

Mr. Marchese: —for which the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs is waiting with bated breath. I look forward to that as much as she does.

Mr. Duguid: I want to commend the members for Mississauga West and London–Fanshawe for two excellent speeches on the budget. They recognize the importance of this budget in terms of preparing Ontario for our future. They recognize the important investments: The investments in our young people, investments in our school system, investments in our post-secondary education system.

1610

But the member for Trinity–Spadina really got me going here the last couple of times he's gotten up. He gets us going a lot; he's good at doing that. I've got to tell you, when he talks about our housing commitments as being trivial, it tells me he knows not what he is speaking of. Some 5,250 units is what we'll be bringing on-line, in partnership with the federal government. We're fulfilling our commitment to match every dollar

that the federal government is putting into housing—something that's a very significant commitment. It's not being done overnight; of course not. It takes time to put these projects together. I'm sure the member knows it; I'm sure the member recognizes it. It takes time to do that. But 5,000 housing allowances going out to residents, because we've got an increasing vacancy rate out there, which means there are units available but not to the people who need them. That's why we're going to bat for those people: to make sure that we can get them those housing allowances. I appreciate that members of the opposition have to try to find the negative in everything we're doing, but surely the member recognizes that those are significant commitments that are going to make a big, big difference in the future for a number of people living not only in Toronto but right across the province.

Then he talks about a \$6-billion investment in education as being trivial. I find that absolutely absurd. I think the member next to me here from Mississauga West pointed out that that's about the size of the deficits that they ran when they were in government, so maybe he does think it's trivial.

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I want to just comment on the member from London–Fanshawe, who gave a rather lengthy oration about expansion of colleges and universities. If he wanted to be more accurate, he could have said that the openings that he attended with such great fanfare were capital expansions approved by the previous government. The funding was begun by the previous government. It was a multi-year commitment which our government honoured and which his government is having a hard time honouring. The fact of the matter is, if you look at the headlines in my paper, the Burlington Post, of the last week, "Funding Crisis at Joe Brant Hospital" and "Fiscal Uncertainty at School Board Reaches Boiling Point," we've got one trustee saying that the board is on the verge of a bankruptcy.

The fact of the matter is, in the last two years the Liberals have been really good at getting in front of the camera and at the end of the ribbon, cutting it to open the doors to buildings that were funded and approved by the previous government. In hospital expansion alone in this province, the restructuring commission looked at a considerable number—all the hospitals, for that matter, in the GTA—and put together expansion plans. Where has your minister been on this? We cross-examined him a couple of weeks ago and he cannot give us the schedule of commitments for dollars.

There have been three hospitals in the GTA where the government has said, "Yes, we'll apply some expansion funding." There are 19 hospitals in the GTA; you have announced three for expansion. You're behind schedule. Yet the member opposite is up there in this budget debate giving his government credit. You are behind the previous government's schedule for expansion, and you should be ashamed of yourselves for that. You should be committing those dollars to capital funding and fixing the hospital situation in Ontario as soon as possible.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise and take part in this debate as well this afternoon. I

listened to the two speakers from the government's side promoting their bill. However, I think what you should be doing more of being out in the communities more, particularly in rural Ontario, and spending more time in the business community. I can tell you that I work a lot with our chamber of commerce and I work a lot with our agricultural community. I talked to a member from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario just this morning, and I can tell you they're a very disillusioned and very disappointed group of individuals. They see their businesses sliding away. They see this government returning to the lost decade. We all know what the lost decade was: the five years of Peterson and then of Bob Rae, when this province basically came to a standstill. We actually lost jobs in that period. Now, we're seeing this new government—after two years of bragging and thinking they're going to do fantastic things, we actually see a very disillusioned business community. They feel that the government does not support them in any way.

That's the problem: There are no supports for the business community; they don't feel wanted in Ontario. That's why, every day, you're seeing so many jobs leave this province, and the Minister of Economic Development goes back to one announcement every time. In fact, there are literally thousands of jobs leaving this province every week.

I just want to re-emphasize that they can brag about their budget measures, they can brag about their tax increases and the \$10 billion more they have in revenue, but the fact of the matter is that there's a disillusioned business community out there, and particularly the agriculture community.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for London—Fanshawe, two minutes to reply.

Mr. Ramal: I just want to thank everyone who has spoken and commented on my speech, and my colleague's speech too.

I'm proud to support this budget because it's a great budget; I will repeat it again. Regardless of what the member from Trinity—Spadina is talking about, it is a historical budget, especially in post-secondary education. It's the first time in 40 years: \$6.2 billion in post-secondary education, an investment for the future of this province. It's a very important investment.

I also want to talk about the member from Burlington, when he was talking about this budget, how our government is not doing enough. I want to tell you, I wish he had been with me Friday in the presence of a past Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Dianne Cunningham. She was listening, and she agreed with what we are doing. This was a past minister for the past government. She was there, and she agreed that we are doing a great job toward enhancing the colleges and universities.

In terms of our investment in hospitals, I agree with the member from Burlington. Before the election, they went across the province and they promised so many hospitals. They promised money for all the hospitals in the province of Ontario. They promised to open hospital

in every corner of the province of Ontario. But where's the money? Nothing, zero, zilch, NSF cheques. This is what London Health Sciences Centre said; this is what St. Joseph's said. They waited for us, with our support, with our infrastructure plan. We are completing London Health Sciences Centre; we are completing St. Joseph's hospital, because we believe in the health of those people who supported us, who told us that we need to change. That change is coming. I know the opposite side doesn't want to agree with us, but this is a reality. This is a reality when you walk through the schools, talking to the board of trustees, when you talk to the colleges, when you talk to the universities—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate? The member for Erie—Lincoln.

Interjection: Oh, this should be a good speech.

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): Thank you, member for Nepean—Carleton—very kind. And Scarborough, thank you.

I'm very pleased to rise and offer some comment on Bill 197, probably the first of an expected three or maybe more budget bills emanating from the April 2005 budget by then finance minister Greg Sorbara.

Before we get into the particular details on Bill 197, I think it's important to put the entire context of the state of the province's finances and the state of the provincial economy on the table first, and then it's best to understand the context of Bill 197, if there are any worthy measures in here that will help, quite frankly, working families, seniors and young people, who find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. Secondly, are there initiatives in here to help an Ontario economy that continues to fall behind not only our peer states, those that we compete with for jobs and investment but, sadly, now is falling behind the average of Canada's provinces in far too many economic indicators?

I think all of us in the assembly have grown up in a province of Ontario that led Canada, that was always the engine of growth. It was a great source of pride to be an Ontarian and to help lead Canada: the last province into a recession and the first province to pull the rest of the country out of recession. But I do fear with some of the economic indicators that we're seeing, some of the reports coming from the banks, the Conference Board of Canada and such, that Ontario's machine has become considerably tarnished, and I don't see much grease, much oil in this budget to help us turn around the state of Ontario's economy.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we had stood down the lead, and there should be 60 minutes on the clock.

1620

The Deputy Speaker: Kindly stop the clock for a second while we determine that. Was the official opposition's lead stood down, and therefore should this be an hour? It is? OK. So we'll see that you get that.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you very much for your assistance, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's important to put Bill 197 into that larger context of the challenges that working families, seniors and young people face on a daily basis in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario and the challenges faced by small business—in fact, all businesses—in a crisis of confidence about where the Ontario economy is going in the future, which may cause these companies to reconsider investment in expansion plans in the province of Ontario; certainly some worrisome trends out there that this assembly needs to address.

Importantly, too, I think as a highlight we also need to remind ourselves of what exactly Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals promised in the last campaign on the finances, on the fiscal issues. After all, if you find that somebody routinely breaks their promises, one wonders if what's written in Bill 197 will actually see the light of day or if they're just more broken promises for short-term political gain.

One of the highlight promises that Dalton McGuinty made during the 2003 campaign was to balance the budget every year. Whether it was during debates, whether he was on the stump, whether he was looking into TV cameras, Dalton McGuinty promised that he would balance the budget every year. This is actually like a running broken promise, and we all know that that promise basically went out the window as soon as Dalton McGuinty had the keys to the Premier's limousine. Then, if I recall correctly, Premier McGuinty said, "OK, I've broken that promise, but then we will get back to balanced budgets, and in fact I think I committed to balance the budget before the next election." Then lo and behold, the member from Mississauga will remember, under the finance minister's first budget that promise got broken once again, when they said they wouldn't balance the budget, I think, until the 2008-09 fiscal year.

So it is hard, I say to my friend from Northumberland, to keep track of all the broken promises, but I think I'm relatively accurate here in saying that—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: He's disagreeing with me, but I think I'm correct in saying that this promise has clearly been broken and then it morphed into sort of half-promises that have also been broken subsequently in the past two years by Dalton McGuinty or his finance minister. The reality now is, despite a campaign promise to balance the budget each and every year, the McGuinty government plans to run deficits for at least five years in a row, adding approximately \$13.8 billion to the provincial debt in that time.

Interestingly, as well, to give them cover on this broken promise, the Liberal government repealed the balanced budget act, an act to ensure the budgets were balanced each and every year, and if they weren't, there would be financial penalties ascribed to the ministers involved around the cabinet table who failed to balance the books. We now know that that act has been scrapped by the McGuinty government so they can run deficits year in and year out without any fear that cabinet ministers would have their pay docked. I think people liked

the notion of the balanced budget act that politicians were required to put their money where their mouths were, so to speak, so that if the cabinet ran a deficit, they would be required to pay a fine back to the provincial treasury. Now, that protection is gone and, as a result, the barn door has been opened and we are having what appears to be five consecutive deficit budgets under the Dalton McGuinty Liberals, if they do get the opportunity to present a fifth budget. For the sake of taxpayers, we hope that's not the case. But then again, you never know. The targets shifted so much under the previous finance minister, there wasn't a target that the finance minister couldn't miss. The projections for the 2004-05 deficit, for example, were changed on four separate occasions; four different plans for the 2004-05 year. So who knows, really? In terms of what the finances of the province look like, all bets are off under the Dalton McGuinty Liberals, because they keep changing their minds and changing their plans. But the last word we have is, five consecutive deficit budgets.

Another key promise that Dalton McGuinty made during the 2003 campaign was, "I won't raise your taxes." In fact, during the campaign and running up to it, he would look into the TV camera and he would say to the TV camera, "I won't raise your taxes." Maybe my television wasn't large enough; maybe beneath the screen he had his fingers crossed. I don't know. Maybe someone with a larger TV could tell me if he had his fingers crossed. Maybe there was an asterisk that appeared after the Liberal leader—

Mr. Dunlop: But it wasn't on the screen.

Mr. Hudak: No, the asterisk was not in evidence. Maybe in high resolution, if you had an HDTV, a high-definition TV, you could pick up that asterisk, but certainly I didn't see it.

Then-opposition leader and head of the Ontario Liberal Party, Dalton McGuinty, said, "I won't raise your taxes." I think significantly—figuratively too—was it the second bill in the Ontario Legislature? One of his first acts as Premier of the province of Ontario was to bring a bill forward that raised taxes massively. I think I can use "massively" with no apology whatsoever. This was the largest tax increase in the history of the province. It made Floyd Laughren blush, this massive Dalton McGuinty tax increase, despite his promise not to increase our taxes.

Mr. Delaney: That was last year's budget.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague is saying, "That was last year's budget." It gets to my point that you really don't know what to believe. The member from Mississauga says, "That was last year's budget. We didn't really mean what was in our campaign platform. That's all in the past." It's a moving target. I think the reality is that Dalton McGuinty made a solemn promise. He look in the TV cameras and made a solemn promise that he would not increase taxes. They increased taxes on working families by some \$2.4 billion, through his health tax, impacting significantly on working families and some seniors, as well as a 12% increase to the corporate income tax rate, and overall, made for the single largest tax hike in the history of Ontario.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Tax grab.

Mr. Hudak: A massive tax grab, as my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke aptly calls it.

My friend from Leeds–Grenville noted too that there was another promise. It's not even on my list of key broken promises in the context of finance bills. There was another promise that there would be a referendum. Dalton McGuinty supported the Taxpayer Protection Act, which would have called for a referendum upon a broken promise of raising taxes. Sure enough, just like all those other promises Dalton McGuinty made at the time, it just sort of disappeared into the ether somewhere, and there was no referendum. It would have been an interesting and fair campaign. Dalton McGuinty could have put his case—

Mr. Yakabuski: They behaved like—

Mr. Hudak: The member is right, if you can figure out how to spell that.

It would have been an interesting and fair debate. The government could have said, "We're going to increase your taxes by \$2.4 billion in the form of a health tax"—allegedly, they claimed, going into health care. "We know we promised to the contrary, but we're going to do this," and then put it to the people. It would have been a fair debate. It would have been an honest thing to do, an honest question to ask and put before the people. But even that promise was, sadly, broken. So that's three.

I'll just go over five of the key broken promises when it comes to finances in the province of Ontario. Another one in the Liberal campaign manual was, "No accounting trickery in the province's books." This one took less than a year, I believe, to shatter, when then-Minister of Finance Sorbara got caught by the auditor red-handed by not properly accounting for \$4 billion in hydro liabilities. Well, \$4 billion is not exactly pocket change. A \$4-billion accounting trick; that took a lot of nerve. That's like Doug Henning trying to make an elephant disappear. An accounting trick involving \$4 billion in revenue—smoke and mirrors, like Mr. Henning may have used. The Provincial Auditor caught him out and made him change the books to ensure that that accounting trick did not continue to fester and harm the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

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The fifth of the broken promises, as we consider whether this bill can be trusted in the first place, is a solemn promise by Dalton McGuinty to cap hydro rates at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. I remember clearly in the campaign Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal candidates promising to freeze hydro rates at 4.3 cents. This is another one of those moving targets. It's a broken promise that just keeps breaking itself. It keeps giving—or taking is a better word for it. It's a broken promise that keeps taking, because since then they have increased the hydro rates, the cost of electricity—twice: I believe about a 28% increase, in my recollection, in the price of power. And we—I don't want to say "anticipate," but we are sad to expect and report that we will see another hydro

increase, they're saying probably in the neighbourhood of about 30%, in 2006. At a time when hard-working taxpayers, working families and seniors can ill afford hydro prices as they are, I don't know why energy minister, now finance minister, Duncan would want to hit taxpayers with another 30% increase in 2006.

Nonetheless, these are only five of the many examples of broken promises in the context of the fiscal approach, the fiscal policy of the Dalton McGuinty government. There is lots to talk about, and we'll settle with those five for the time being. But I know other—

Interjection: You only have an hour.

Mr. Hudak: It's true. If I used the whole time to recite the broken promises, I wouldn't have much left in my hour. It would go far beyond that.

Mr. Yakabuski: You wouldn't have much left in the session.

Mr. Hudak: Probably true.

So this is the context: We have, quite frankly, a government whose promises on the financial front cannot be trusted because of all the broken promises we've seen to date.

Let me also talk a little bit about some of the myths that the current Liberal government has brought forward. The government claimed in its public accounts in 2004-05 that they were able to reduce the Dalton McGuinty deficit to \$1.6 billion through sound fiscal management. Well, if you actually took the opportunity to look through public accounts, you'd see that that projection does not meet with the facts. In fact, the government at the time claimed that they had saved, I think, \$700 million through spending less, but in reality, it does not meet with the facts.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I know the member from Scarborough is very anxious to hear the facts in public accounts. I know he has taken the time to read them.

Mr. Duguid: I'll go by the auditor.

Mr. Hudak: Well, it is your own document from your own finance minister. I will tell you what happened: The Liberal government actually overspent their budgets on some programs and services by more than \$1.6 billion, enough to balance the budget last year, I suppose. That was the number: \$1.6 billion.

Health care in 2004-05 wasn't on projection. In fact, the health care budget was almost a billion dollars over budget: \$900 million more in increased health care spending than the budget had predicted.

Some will say, "Well, health care is a priority. If you have extra money to spend, spend it in health care." It's a fair enough point, but I would guess that the vast majority of people watching the Legislative Assembly today and, I would say with certainty, the vast majority of constituents in the beautiful riding of Erie–Lincoln would say they are simply not getting their money's worth for that extra \$900 million overspent in the health care budget. I get that question all the time: "Where is the health tax going to? We are not seeing any benefits. We are seeing longer waiting lists. We're not seeing more

doctors arrive.” They wonder where that money has disappeared to. I remember that members of the assembly brought forward that in 2004-05 some of it was earmarked for sewage projects and some advertising for the ministry of recreation.

Certainly the main point is that despite raking in a lot more money in the health tax, despite raking in, I think, over a billion dollars in increased federal transfers, the Liberals still managed to outspend their own projections in health care by \$900 million.

The education and training budget was \$100 million over budget. The social services budget was some \$50 million beyond what was projected in the 2004-05 budget. The economic development cluster, that cluster of ministries, was over half a billion dollars over budget. So health care, education and training, social resources, environment resources and economic development—you combine those sectors, which is the vast majority of spending in the provincial budget, and they missed their targets by something like \$1.6 billion; \$1.6 billion in spending beyond projections.

Let’s not forget there was already a massive increase in provincial spending contained in the 2004-05 budget. I think the public accounts themselves say that the average increase in education and health care spending in the two years under Dalton McGuinty has been some 10% on average. There were already built in significant increases in those two budgets, but despite that—despite that—they overspent their own projections by some \$1.6 billion dollars.

One of the only highlights, and they don’t really acknowledge this in their spin, in their press releases from the ministry office—but if they found any savings whatsoever, it was simply because interest rates were lower—was that there was some \$1 billion saved in the most recent budget because interest rates were lower than expected when the minister delivered his budget in the spring of 2004. So by serendipity, by good luck, by good fortune there was a billion dollars in savings because of lower-than-expected interest rates. But that money was blown on much bigger spending without seeing results in higher-quality health care or reduced wait times, for example.

The other interesting thing, when you read in detail the public accounts for the fiscal year 2004-05, is that there was a windfall in what is likely one-time revenue. It’s like then-Finance Minister Sorbara won the lottery, a big windfall, and not by good planning, not because they made the right forecasts, but simply because of good luck and circumstances there is a \$3.2-billion windfall in new revenue—one time. I’ll give you examples of the windfall, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, almost a billion dollars—to be accurate, \$961 million—was saved on interest payments on the debt due to low interest rates. Interest rates were predicted to be a certain level, they came in lower, and by good fortune the government had a \$961-million saving in the fiscal year 2004-05.

Also put into the stocking, a nice treat came from the federal government which increased transfers to the

province by \$1.1 billion more than was accounted for, more than was projected in the budget. Certainly, every year there are numerous programs the federal government contributes to—things like health care and child care in Ontario. Those are all well-known and can be accounted for in advance. But when you look at the reality in the public accounts compared to the projections in the budget in the spring of 2004, there was a \$1.1-billion jackpot from the federal government in one-time revenue to provincial coffers. As well, corporate income tax from previous years came in; bills that were owed in the past were brought in in this past fiscal year: \$411 million that was accounted for in a one-time fiscal bonus.

Furthermore, the federal government was extremely generous in additional money during this past fiscal year. Furthermore, there was a one-time revenue increase arriving from a federal recalculation of tax entitlements from 1995 to 2003. For a period 10 years ago until 2003, the federal government recalculated the amount of money to be transferred to Ontario, so about an eight- or nine-year span, depending on the fiscal years: one-time revenue of almost half a billion dollars, part of the jackpot, part of the windfall that the province received this past fiscal year.

Lastly, as part of that was \$287 million to do the recovery of prior years’ expenses, all recalculated in one fiscal year. So in one fell swoop, Santa was very generous this past year to the provincial treasury: \$3.2 billion—as my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka said, “That ain’t exactly pocket change”—\$3.2 billion in surprise revenue that the province was not expecting came into the coffers in 2004-05. Despite that huge windfall, was there any break for Ontario taxpayers hard pressed to make ends meet? Not a single one.

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Mr. Miller: They must have balanced the budget with all that extra revenue.

Mr. Hudak: One of my colleagues says, with a lot of extra revenue, they must have balanced the budget. I mean, come on: \$3.2 billion in bonus money at the end of the year.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): Good managers.

Mr. Hudak: I know. That’s what I’m saying to my friend from Northumberland. You claim that you’re good managers, but if you’re counting on \$3.2 billion in surprise finances at the end of the year, that’s not good management. It might be a good style for betting at the racetrack, it might be a good approach for going down to the casino in Niagara Falls and playing the roulette wheel, but for managing the books in Ontario—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It is Halloween and I know you want to have fun, but let’s listen to the person who has the floor. The member for Erie-Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: I know it’s provocative. It’s scary to imagine \$3.2 billion in bonus revenue, and you still fail to balance the books. You still fail to balance the books, with that massive increase in revenue coming in on top of

the \$10-billion revenue grab that the province of Ontario under Dalton McGuinty has taken out of the pockets of working families and businesses—despite that, running a deficit.

This notion of good fiscal management: I don't think that betting on the roulette wheel is good fiscal management, with all due respect. This notion of good fiscal management is horse feathers. You increased spending substantially, some \$1.6 billion above projections, and depended on a \$3.2-billion windfall.

That's what will make it interesting to see what the new finance minister, Mr. Duncan, the member from Windsor—St Clair, will be presenting tomorrow. Because of this one-time windfall, the books came in at \$1.6 billion for 2004-05. I'll be interested to see if the deficit for 2005-06, our current fiscal year, will in fact increase tomorrow. Will the new finance minister have a poor entry, I think, on to the political stage by actually increasing the deficit? That is, I say to my colleague—I know he's good at math—about an 88% or so increase, right? That \$1.6 billion to \$2.8 billion will be substantial.

Mr. Rinaldi: Stay tuned, Tim.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague from Northumberland says, "Stay tuned," and we'll wait with bated breath, but I don't think there will be good news for a new finance minister when he goes and increases the deficit in his first public appearance. We'll see what happens, and it happens tomorrow, but certainly the answers I got today during question period from the Acting Premier were not at all encouraging.

What has all this meant? I can make small side bets, but I do bet you that his projected deficit will actually be higher. You've got to go way back in time to find a finance minister who came midstream into a government and then increased the deficit. You've got to go back a long time. I don't think it's a title that this finance minister wants to wear, not exactly a prize he wants to put on the mantel, but we will see. And I hope—

Interjections.

Mr. Hudak: My colleagues are making a lot of noise. I know they're surprised by how much money came in as a big, one-time bonus to the province of Ontario. I know that's surprising to them, but I look forward to them standing up in the House and criticizing the finance minister when he increases the deficit. We will see what tomorrow brings.

I've got to think that if you decide, of all dates, that the economic statement will be on the day of Justice Gomery's long-awaited report on the scandal of the federal Liberal Party—about the money stuffed in the envelopes and all that kind of stuff—if you decide to put out the economic statement on the same day as probably the most-anticipated report in a generation, that makes me wonder what the finance minister has got to hide. If it's supposed to be good news, if it's supposed to be the days of wine and roses and such, why isn't he doing it on a day after Gomery? Why didn't he do it this past week? Why is the finance minister issuing the economic statement on the day when the media will be singly focused on the scandal of the federal Liberal Party out of Ottawa?

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I've been too long in this place and I'm being too cynical. Maybe it will be good news. Maybe he'll balance the budget.

Mr. Dunlop: I think you are. He's cynical.

Mr. Hudak: Maybe so. Maybe my colleagues say with full confidence that tomorrow the minister will announce a significant tax break to help working families, a significant tax break maybe for small businesses to hire more people. Maybe that's going to come true, but I doubt it. We doubt it.

Mr. Dunlop: We all doubt it.

Mr. Hudak: We on this side doubt it. I think, in fact, we'll see continued bad news and maybe the first finance minister in Lord knows how long to come in and take over for another finance minister and substantially increase the deficit.

What does this all mean for Ontario families: the broken promises, the runaway spending, higher taxes? The average Ontario family—let's say a typical Ontario family—making a total of \$61,000 is now paying \$2,000 more per year in additional costs and taxes that they were not paying before Dalton McGuinty was elected.

Interjections.

Mr. Hudak: Now I am hearing a lot of noise from across the way, but you've got to be hearing this. When you're in your ridings on the weekends, when you're in your ridings when the House is in session—and I know my colleagues opposite are working hard. In doing that, you must be going to public events, and you're telling me that nobody comes up to you and complains about taxes, hydro costs?

Interjections.

Mr. Hudak: They're saying no. Maybe they all represent the riding of Wonderland. I really don't know. But this notion that you're not hearing about high taxes, higher hydro costs, higher heating costs this winter, that it's harder for working families to make ends meet, I find difficult to countenance. I find it difficult to believe. I believe that in Northumberland or Brantford, for example, ridings not entirely different in their income levels—a lot of working middle-class families in those ridings, a lot of seniors who are retired there, a lot of young people who want to climb that up ladder, buy their own home, buy a car, get married, a lot of the same kind of people in my riding—they're extremely concerned about the higher taxes, higher hydro, higher gas prices. Come on, you must hear about these things back in Northumberland, back in Brantford.

Why are they complaining? They're complaining for good reason. Because there has been a merciless increase in taxes and living expenses in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. That typical family I mentioned now pays almost \$700—\$690—out of their pockets each and every year in the new income tax, the so-called health tax, that we're not even convinced actually goes into improving health care. In fact, I think you rejected all of our suggestions that legislatively it would be tied to health care. They were all rejected. Maybe you can spin this in the

chamber, maybe you feel comfortable doing so, but I don't think, if you're putting it into sewer projects or recreation advertising, that people will say that's improved health care.

Natural gas costs are increasing \$65 for the average house this year. That's a significant increase. Was it Enbridge that was allowed under this government through the OEB a significant increase—I suspect others will follow—in their natural gas costs? I remember Dwight Duncan, the member for Windsor area, now finance minister, just railing in this Legislature about increases in utility costs, saying that the previous government allowed the OEB to increase the cost of natural gas on working families, and now that he's there, all those promises, all those commitments are forgotten. As a result, natural gas costs are increasing by \$65 for the average house this year.

Gasoline prices—you know it's a strange world where you see 87 cents a litre and you think, "Oh, I should pull over before it goes way up there again." It was only a few cents—

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): It's 84.6 cents in Listowel.

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Mr. Hudak: We should all drive to Listowel then: 84.6 cents per litre. But it was only a few years ago that we were down in the 60-some cents and not too long ago—

Interjection: What about diesel?

Mr. Hudak: It's a concern, diesel is a significant concern as well. We heard a lot about that from the farmers at the OFA south dinner on Friday night in Pelham. Gasoline costs are estimated to take about a \$600 bite from the average household, from the average working family, this year. I know that some members that are in the GTA, or outside the GTA area, have a lot of working families—even both partners in the relationship are commuting on a regular basis into the GTA. I expect, for those individuals, like a couple who came up to me at the fall fair in Wainfleet, where they both live—one works in Burlington; one works, I think, in Mississauga, and making that commute daily from Wainfleet is way more, I expect, than \$600 per year.

Drivers' licences now cost \$25 more for each driver—which I did today, as a matter of fact, at a great shop in Smithville. I'd recommend it for members who want quick service from one of the MTO contracted-out operators. A \$25 increase, though, in my driver's fee from a couple of years ago. Annual eye exams have been delisted, at the cost of \$75 per adult. Cancelled income tax cuts that were in the budget, that were on their way: some \$240 in lost spending. An important number of my constituents in Erie–Lincoln and, I suspect, some in the Speaker's riding as well, and other members of this chamber, were counting on the independent school tax credit, had banked on for 11 months, expecting that to come through to help relieve the costs. Individuals who pay full taxes into the public school board and make the choice to send their children to independent schools had a

break coming on their income taxes and then, I think in a mean-spirited way, had that ripped away, 11 months into the year. Highly regrettable.

For the average working family in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario there is some \$2,000 more they're paying in taxes and fees, a higher cost of living, than previous to Dalton McGuinty. I do hope that my colleagues opposite's confidence will be rewarded tomorrow, and Finance Minister Duncan will come forward with some break for working families, for these seniors, for young people; some break, instead of continuing to claw and claw and claw more money out of their pockets, which happens in every budget, sadly, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

You know the other interesting thing: how much that revenue to the provincial government has gone up since taking office. The increase in the corporate tax rate by 10% brought in \$3 billion more; the new health taxes, about \$2.4 billion more; cancelled PIT cuts, about \$1.7 billion more; tobacco taxes, among others, \$200 million. I think I'm right. My recollection, I believe, is accurate: that there is some \$10 billion more in revenue coming into the province of Ontario. We're still running a deficit—and a deficit that may go up, in fact, tomorrow.

Mr. Ramal: What about health care and education?

Mr. Hudak: The member opposite from Brampton says, "What about health care and education?" I think people value health care and education investments, but they want to make sure their tax dollars are actually leading to improved services: a reduction of waiting time, for example; more doctors coming into the Fort Erie area, for example; more investments in long-term care, perhaps. If they actually saw a return on their investments, I think it would be a different story. But when I speak to the residents of Erie–Lincoln, or other residents across the province of Ontario, by and large they're paying more and receiving fewer services from the province of Ontario.

Some middle-class families, seniors, young people hard-hit in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario; the province getting fatter—some \$10 billion in increased revenue, as I mentioned; some \$3.2 billion in one-time funds from the federal government, or serendipity.

The other important concern to put into the context of Bill 197 is the economic indicators in the province of Ontario. I have great concern, and I hope my colleagues opposite have great concern: Consumer confidence slipped seven points in August in Ontario, and it slipped a further six points in September of 2005. Consumers, in many senses, helped to drive the economy in the past little while—one of the more important parts of economic progress. Now we see that consumer confidence slipped some 13 points in the last two months alone. Much of this decline is attributed to significant cooling of interest in big-ticket purchases, and also may be reflected in housing market numbers.

I think I've heard the government—or members opposite anyway, on the government side—talk about the housing side of the economy. They often look at housing

starts as a gauge of our economic performance. But with a reduction in disposable income and an increase in tax rates, concerns about higher interest rates as well and, I think, an underlying concern about job security, housing starts are projected to plummet to under 65,000 per year by 2007, down from a peak of 85,000 in 2003.

Following this year as well, the floor is projected to fall out on personal savings rates. Between 2005 and 2012, the personal savings rate is forecast to drop by over 35%, with a measurable decline in each and every year. Clearly, inarguably, the dramatically increased costs of living in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario are having a dramatic impact on Ontarians' pocketbooks and investments in the coming year.

I heard the Acting Premier's answer today. I don't think that members of cabinet have grasped the significance of the drop in consumer confidence, of the worrisome trend on the housing side. Nor do I think they fully grasp the fact that Ontario has lost 42,000 manufacturing jobs, comparing September 2005 to September 2004—almost a 4% drop in manufacturing jobs. I know that routinely staff will give ministers numbers and they'll quote the service sector and such, but surely there has to be grave concern about the future of manufacturing in the province of Ontario when you see a 4% decline in jobs, when you see some significant-profile companies closing down, moving operations to Mexico, to the States, to other Canadian jurisdictions. Surely there must be grave concern when you hear businesses come forward—the chamber of commerce folks recently down from Kenora—about the impact of high energy prices and, frankly, a loony energy policy, an ill-conceived energy policy impacting on investment in the province of Ontario today. Manufacturing jobs are down some 4%.

We do have to have concern about the rising interest rates and, I think importantly too, the fact that the Canadian dollar has increased and is holding at a high level.

Mr. Delaney: That's how strong the economy is.

Mr. Hudak: The member says, "That's how strong the economy is." I don't think he's listening to the Ontario version of the numbers. Usually when I hear fellow colleagues speak, they talk about Canada. The Canadian numbers are stronger because Alberta is blowing us away; they're leaving us far behind. BC's performance is much stronger. Ontario, on so many indicators now, is behind the provincial average: manufacturing jobs down some 42,000, almost 4% down. We are highly sensitive in Ontario due to our degree of trade with the Americans, a good part through the Peace Bridge. I was born and raised in Fort Erie. If our dollar continues to stay high, I worry about further impacts on the manufacturing sector in the province of Ontario.

Over the last quarter, retail trade actually fell by 1.2%. Personal bankruptcies in the province of Ontario are up. From July 2004 to July 2005 the personal bankruptcy rate was up 0.6% from the previous year, in contrast to the rest of the country: bankruptcies down by 1%. So, while the rest of the provinces—maybe not all—are moving

forward and bankruptcies are going down, are in decline, the province of Ontario—for my entire life, we've always prided ourselves on being the economic engine, the mightiest of the 10—is falling behind, with a 6% increase in the bankruptcy rate for the previous year.

In August, there were 1,862 corporate bankruptcies, almost 2,000 corporate bankruptcies reported in Ontario for the 2005 year, representing over \$670 million in value. Forty-five per cent, nearly half of these bankruptcies, came from the construction, manufacturing and retail industries. What's important about these figures is to reinforce and illustrate the point that here again, Ontario's decline in bankruptcies—Ontario's bankruptcy numbers are worse than the provincial average.

1700

In considering Bill 197, we enter a time when working families are in trouble. An average couple living in Beamsville, for example, has \$2,000 less in their pocket, and they're worried about the future. They're worried about the increasing costs of home heating; they're worried about their taxes. With assessments as well going through the roof across the province of Ontario, they are justifiably worried about their property taxes and their education taxes increasing. Seniors living on fixed incomes are wondering how they're going to make ends meet at the end of the month.

The other big item the government continues to miss—and I do hope there will be some help in tomorrow's economic statement—is that on so many indicators and in so many trends, Ontario, formerly the engine of growth in Canada, is in jeopardy of going off the tracks.

I'll refer to numbers as well: There were some good articles in the Globe and Mail recently, reinforcing my point—it's not just me. Jeffrey Simpson, Friday, October 7, 2005. His column starts out: "You live in Scarborough, Nepean, Newmarket or St. Catharines.

"You earn \$65,000 a year, or so, the average household income. Your spouse works. You have a mortgage, a car and a family."

Mr. Simpson goes on to say, "You are about to get poorer, perhaps much poorer, in terms of disposable income. A perfect economic storm that will reduce incomes is about to hit middle-class Ontario..."

He does put it in the context of an upcoming federal election, but I think his points are instructive for us in the Ontario Legislative Assembly. All Ontarians are going to shoulder higher gas and heating fuel costs. Ontarians are to face four other pressures that will shrink their incomes.

This is the first: "The provincial energy minister has already announced that electricity bills will skyrocket"—skyrocket, I'd say again—"starting in February. These have already been soaring, but the trajectory will increase."

Secondly, "Homeowners are receiving this week their new municipal property assessments. They are staggering. In Ottawa, the average increase is 11%, with some neighbourhoods experiencing increases of 25%" in their assessment notices. Mr. Simpson goes on to say, "These high assessments will inevitably be followed by

property tax increases. These will eclipse the rate of inflation and any rise in household incomes. So to gas, fuel and electricity costs, add soaring property taxes.”

Number three: In four or five months’ time comes tax time in 2006. “Citizens will begin to collect and assemble information for their personal income taxes.” Those who don’t know already will soon learn “how much their pockets are being depleted by the McGuinty government’s health care premiums,” taking “hundreds of dollars from a middle-class family.”

“Finally,” Mr. Simpson says, “the 87-cent Canadian dollar: It will pinch companies integrated into the continental economy. A powerful union like the Canadian Auto Workers union, for example, could only secure wage increases below the inflation rate. Those workers will now suffer a decline in disposable income. A powerful union represented them.” Think of how the many workers without a union, or with one less robust than the CAW, are going to do under those circumstances.

“So, what do Mr. and Mrs. Middle-Class Ontario face,” as we consider Bill 197 today? “Downward pressure on wages from the rising dollar. Sharp and unavoidable increases for basic necessities: gas, heating fuel, electricity, health premiums. Property taxes rising faster than inflation or incomes.” In short, “the perfect storm.”

A couple of days later, Saturday, October 22, the *Globe and Mail*’s business section report on consumers: “A ‘Bigger Chunk of Money’ Going to Bills.

“Rising interest rates are an ominous sign for those with variable-rate mortgages and loans.... Soaring heating and gasoline costs will only add to consumers’ misery this winter.”

In this article, Rob Carrick, the journalist, talks about a typical working family, the Kavanaughs of Washago, Ontario. Charlene Kavanaugh, who works in Barrie for State Farm says, “Hydro is going up and, because I live in a rural home and hydro is my main source of heating, that’s a huge thing.”

What is significant about today, as we get later into 2005, “is the vulnerability of Canadians to higher borrowing and living costs.”

TD Bank has some interesting figures: “Back in 1997, the average person’s loans, mortgage, credit-card debt and other financial liabilities were about equal to their entire annual after-tax income plus an additional 6% or so.” That’s a lot of money—on the hook for their entire after-tax income plus an additional 6%. The sad story is that it has begun to get worse. “Debts rose to 119% of personal disposable income two years ago, and today,” 2005, as we consider Bill 197, we’re on the hook for 124.5% of after-tax income.

As interest rates go up and the cost of living increases, consumers are hugely vulnerable. I won’t repeat, but it goes on to talk about the heating costs, the borrowing costs, the interest costs.

Probably the most instructive lesson comes from the concluding paragraph in this *Globe and Mail* story that I refer members to of Rob Carrick, Saturday, October 22,

2005, Report on Business. He basically accumulates the increase of costs on a typical working family from the utilities, the taxes and the increase because of the typical vulnerability to higher interest rates. The extra monthly cost to this family would be \$352, or \$4,224 annually. A perfect storm: \$4,224 per year coming from a typical middle-class family. It’s absolutely unaffordable.

Combine that with concerns over the state of the economy, and I can’t fathom why the previous finance minister would not commit, would not help out these working families, would not try to do something to ease their burden and to help our economy turn things around and reverse some of these worrisome trends that have us, at best, average, if not behind the average in Canada—a reverse of Ontario’s traditional position. The previous finance minister was not interested in that at all.

Maybe there is some hope. As members opposite said, maybe tomorrow the new finance minister will come forward and offer for the Kavanaughs in Washago, working in Barrie, and the working families down in Northumberland or Brantford or Ottawa or Lambton county and the hard-working taxpayers near Lincoln, maybe, we hope, some break for those working families. But I do worry, given the trends of broken promises we have seen to date, that that will not be realized.

I’ll move forward. I thought it was important to set the stage for the context of this bill. There are a number of schedules attached to Bill 197, and I won’t be able to get into them all today. I think my colleagues will do a bit more. I’ll call attention to some of the highlights that I look forward to debating in this chamber, and hopefully some improvements in the legislation.

Schedule B, if passed, would grant tax exemptions to certain classes of health professions. Amendments to the Business Corporations Act and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, would allow this. Basically, in order to, I think, retain more doctors, have more doctors practise in the province of Ontario, the government extended this benefit to doctors. I can understand the motivation behind that. Certainly, I know that one of the top calls I get to my constituency office is on a lack of a general practitioner in the Niagara or Dunnville area. There has also been a public commitment to extend that to dentists so they can benefit from the changes to the Business Corporations Act and the RHPA.

The question, though, that is begged in this legislation is that there are a significant number of other health care professions that are not addressed by this legislation or by any commitments the previous finance minister made: the Ontario Chiropractic Association, the Ontario Physiotherapy Association; the Ontario Psychological Association; the RPNAO, the practical nurses, who were here last week; and, for example, opticians, optometrists, chiroprodists and midwives.

1710

I’m curious to find out why the government drew the line in the place it did—I hope I’ll hear from members opposite or from the staff listening attentively behind the Speaker’s chair—and how the calculations were made. If

it's limited to doctors and dentists, what are the impacts? I think I've heard the number, between \$10 million and \$40 million. What are the impacts and how are they calculated? If the same rights are transferred on to other health care professions or other business professionals, what will be the impact on the budget? And help me understand the government's rationale for limiting it to only doctors and dentists, at least by public commitment, to date. So we'll look forward to more information on that, and I hope members opposite will be forthcoming with information on the calculation and the logic behind that.

Schedule D: changes to the Corporations Tax Act to increase the film tax credit from 20% to 30%; other changes that deal with the film and television industry and amendments to the Corporations Tax Act. We're pleased to see this aspect in the bill. We have grave concerns about the approach to finances as a whole, as I've illustrated in my opening comments. As far as schedule D is concerned, we are pleased to see this and I want to refer members to a press release of November 29, 2004, by Ontario PC Leader John Tory, where he called upon the McGuinty government to move and to bring forward these tax credits. He said, and rightly so, that under the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves governments, "Ontario pioneered and perfected the use of tax credits to attract film production. For years, Ontario was in a league of its own," and other states and provinces copied what the then PC government had brought forward to spur film production in the province.

Mr. Tory went on to say, "Times have changed. The dollar's value is rising and Ontario has more competition. Other provinces are taking action.... And while Manitoba has a 35% tax credit and Newfoundland offers 40%, the Ontario Liberals" are stuck at 20% despite campaign promises to the contrary. I believe he brought this up quite often publicly as well, and they were pleased to see that our advice from across the floor was incorporated, to an extent, in schedule D of the legislation. There is some way to go, but I did want to recognize—and I hope the members will as well—the work Mr. Tory did in pushing for schedule D to be in this legislation. We hoped it would have been sooner but, all the same, we're pleased to see that there has been some reaction.

In the interests of time, maybe I'll come back to the other schedules, but I want to get to schedule K. I am trying to be fair and balanced in my comments. There are some aspects of the bill that we are pleased to see, and we want to encourage the government to continue down these paths. We regret that they've been put as part of the budget package, which does nothing for working families, which does nothing for small businesses, which continues to claw in more money and continues to run deficits despite record revenues coming into the province of Ontario.

Schedule L, the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005, amendments, we're pleased to see as part of this legislation. I know a number of my colleagues have met with the private career colleges folks. They're pleased

that there are proper checks and balances under this particular schedule. We will look for ways to improve it and hopefully have a chance to suggest any ways to improve it. We look forward to hearing from those involved with the private career college sector. But I generally wanted to note that although we are displeased with the approach to the finances in a general sense, as I said in about 45 minutes of our address, we are pleased to see accountability measures included in the legislation under schedule L for the private career colleges. I believe it's something that the then finance minister Sorbara cared quite a bit about, so we are pleased to see him moving forward in that direction. We wish it weren't part of a budget bill that spends so much money and runs deficits, but I do want to commend the then finance minister for moving forward with that schedule L of the bill.

Schedule M: As part of schedule M, booster seats in the province are given the same retail sales tax exemption as child car seats. Again, if these are being mandated in Ontario, members of the opposition and, I expect, members of the government, called for a retail sales tax exemption for booster car seats. I've already illustrated how difficult it is for working families, young parents, to get by in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. Another burden on the booster seats, for them, their grandparents or relatives or whoever would transport the children. At the very least, we had demanded that there be a retail sales tax exemption on this, and it is included in schedule M of the legislation.

I want to give particular credit to the member for Wellington as well, who had brought this forward. I recollect a private member's bill of this nature. I know the member for Wellington had brought this up in the assembly a number of times. He may have a chance to speak about this bill in more detail, but I think the member for Wellington should be recognized for his championing of a retail sales tax exemption for booster seats.

I do have some concerns with a couple of other schedules in the bill—schedule E, for example. Maybe that will be better explained to me.

Schedule F, in terms of improving access to freedom of information requests to universities, is interesting, particularly in the context of the government stalling a number of FOIs that are already out there for things like Minister Takhar's cellphone. Minister Takhar, the transportation minister, has been significantly criticized by his own Premier for lapses in judgment, and now we're finding out that routine freedom of information requests about his schedule and cell bills are way, way behind. So if the government is serious about expanding access under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to universities, we do ask that, at the very least, they respond to FOIs already out there and set an example with quick turnarounds for FOIs, particularly on the ministers' offices. Minister Takhar in particular is way behind in that respect.

Schedules H and K—I talked about K a little bit earlier—deal in a more general sense with finances and

giving ministers more authority. Schedule K, particularly, allows the government to borrow up to \$7.1 billion under the Ontario Loan Act. If you put it in the context of some of the comments I made earlier, in terms of the number of broken promises that this government has made and the huge expansion in revenues due to their big tax increases that are impacting on the economy—and, I suspect, over time those revenues will decline as the economy slows as a result—and despite a massive \$3.2-billion one-time revenue windfall, the government continues to run deficits and continues to stonewall working families, seniors and young people who can't make ends meet. So we have to wonder, with aspects of the bill like schedules E and K, if the Dalton McGuinty government can be trusted to use those new powers in light of the major problems that I've pointed out with the finances and the state of the economy.

In conclusion, I think we have to look at the facts in the context of Bill 197. The current government has mismanaged the finances of the province: massive revenue increases, spending out of control, higher taxes and no break for working families. By 2008-09, the McGuinty Liberals plan to spend over \$90 billion—some \$16 billion more taken from taxpayers than when they were over there—and, despite that, ongoing deficits, debt increases, and we're not seeing results in terms of taxpayer dollars being invested wisely.

This is not a fiscal plan for the province of Ontario; it's a fiscal problem for the province of Ontario and our hard-pressed taxpayers. I ask the government to bring forward measures to improve the economy, to help out working families, because only with a strong economic foundation can we improve health care and education and improve those services.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Marchese: It's hard not to speak to the broken promises theme that the member from Erie-Lincoln made reference to. The image that I am struck with is the one of McGuinty where he says, "No new taxes," and it's played and replayed over and over again. You've got McGuinty saying, "No new taxes. Look at my lips." It's a comical scene.

1720

I don't dispute that we need more money. In fact, prior to the election, we said, "We need new sources of money." Only New Democrats were able to say, "We need new sources of funding," after the \$13 billion the Tories had taken away. So that image of McGuinty saying, "No new taxes. Look at my lips," is a particularly memorable one for New Democrats because he didn't have the courage to say prior to the election, "We're going to increase your taxes."

Then, after the election, when he institutes the new tax regime, most of the Liberal members say, "Ah, but let's move forward. Let's look at where we're going rather than where we were." How easy it is for McGuinty and other Liberals to say that, because, you see, you've got to base it on something, and most people vote on the basis of promises. So it's not quite good enough for the

Liberals to say, "Let's look forward. Why look back?" The reason we look back is so that we can judge you now and judge you in 2007 based on new promises you're going to make.

Promises are very, very important. I will speak to a couple of others, including the cap on hydro rates. The Liberals said, "We will cap hydro rates until 2006." No sooner do they get into government than they say, "The cap is gone."

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Do you think caps are a good idea, Rosie?

Mr. Marchese: That's not the issue, madame, and I'll have a lot more time to speak to that in a few minutes.

Mr. Delaney: I had planned to use my two minutes here today to talk about how important one of our budget commitments, that of public infrastructure renewal, is to our constituents in Mississauga West, where finally, after years of waiting, we've got phase 2 of our Credit Valley Hospital expansion. But in listening to some of the comments from my colleague from Erie-Lincoln, I was, first of all, glad to see him join with our caucus in giving some credit where credit is due and praising the member from Vaughan-King-Aurora, Greg Sorbara, for his work on Ontario's budget. I thought that was a good quote, and I'm real pleased to hear that.

I'd also like to quote another member of the official opposition speaking about our government's progress toward a balanced budget. Asked by Global Television about balancing the budget, this member said that "if it takes three or four years that's fine—a reasonable period of time, because you can't do things in too jarring a fashion." This was said on Focus Ontario.

Ms. Wynne: Who said that?

Mr. Delaney: John Tory said that. He has actually endorsed our budget plan. I thought that was very magnanimous of John Tory. We followed a government that well, let's cut to the chase: They were bad fiscal managers. They had a legacy of mismanagement. They mortgaged our future with their tax cuts, they failed to invest in crucial services, and they left us with a public infrastructure debt that this government is coping with even as we bring the budget gradually and sustainably into balance, because one thing that Ontarians know is that there aren't going to be fire sales of assets to get to a balanced budget. Hello, 1999; hello, sale of the 407—it's not going to happen under this government, not this year and not in the future.

This province is doing well. We've created a net 193,100 new jobs. That's one measure of why this budget is working.

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to join in and add some comments to the excellent hour-long speech made by the member from Erie-Lincoln critiquing Bill 197 and the budget of the Liberal government. I find it interesting that the member from Mississauga West is criticizing John Tory for, when the budget came out in the spring, having a few positive things to say about the Liberal government's budget. I think John Tory is showing that he's not your typical politician, that he has the guts to say

positive things when there is the odd, small, little positive thing to be said. I'm awfully pleased we have a leader who is trying to bring some civility to this Legislature and is willing to think for himself.

The member from Erie–Lincoln did talk a lot about the broken promises that have been brought in by this government. A couple of things he did miss, though, in talking about finances: He didn't talk about the cancellation of the seniors' tax credit that was brought in—a lot of people probably aren't aware that a seniors' tax credit on property taxes was brought in in June of 2003. That would have meant a 25% reduction on property tax for most seniors in this province. It was brought in. It was passed in June. Then one of the first things this government did when they were elected in October of 2003 was to cancel that tax credit that would have benefited seniors in this province to the tune of 25% of their property tax.

Another spending issue that was not touched on by the member for Erie–Lincoln was the recent money they're spending on greenbelt advertising, some 25 million of your tax dollars that are going to fund the Greenbelt Foundation. I don't know if you've heard the ads on the radio about whether you've seen a deer or not, but it's got to be the worst case of partisan government advertising through a third party that I've ever witnessed and should be an embarrassment for this government, which said they were going change things.

Mr. Ramal: I was listening for almost an hour to the member for Erie–Lincoln talking about the budget. Whatever he read, I guess he wasn't reading it right, because the people of this province are seeing a different picture. They're seeing good education being implemented, they're seeing good support of education, they're seeing good investment in post-secondary education, they're seeing good investment in health care and they're seeing the creation of jobs in many different parts of the province. That's what they're seeing. That's why the people of this province appreciate our budget.

I'm supporting this budget, as I mentioned before, not only because it's a great budget but also because the budget was delivered from this House, read in this House and given from this House, not from somewhere else, because we believe in the people; we believe in the assembly of the people. I believe that the results will start showing in many different sectors of our society: in the hospitals, schools, colleges and universities and also infrastructure.

He was talking about why we didn't balance the books yet. We maintain our investment in all the elements of our society because we believe in investing more in many different parts—in education, health care and infrastructure—which means it strengthens our economy and gives us the ability to lower the deficit, which we inherited from you when you guys were in government.

We're looking toward it because we don't want to cut the investment to the people. That's why we want to go slowly but surely, to make sure we have great infrastructure, great education and great health, to give us the

ability to eliminate the deficit and deliver our promises, our vision, for the future of this province. We believe our vision is working, our vision to have a province able to compete on the international market with a new technological era.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Erie–Lincoln has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues on my remarks on Bill 197. I didn't know that Pollyanna had won so many seats in the last election for the Ontario Liberal caucus. It's true. Some of the fundamental economic indicators are worrisome: the loss of manufacturing jobs, the fact that on so many fronts Ontario now is a middling economy in Canada instead of being the economic leader that it always had been before.

I don't know how members opposite can reconcile that in the Ontario housing market, residential construction has suffered in the past year. As Statistics Canada has reported, housing start units have decreased by 16.7% in the province. The Royal Bank of Canada Financial Group's current analysis in September had further concerns about Ontario's housing market. Across Canada, results show that home sales have increased in 13 metropolitan areas and decreased in 12. But distressing is that among the 13 CMAs where home sales have increased, only one is in Ontario, and of the 12 decreases in the entire country, nine are in Ontario: Windsor, Hamilton, Toronto, Greater Sudbury, London, Ottawa, St. Catharines, Niagara, Kingston and Thunder Bay.

The Toronto Star reported on September 14, 2005, "Watch out, Toronto. Watch out, Toronto. Some U.S. retailers looking to open stores in Canada are seriously considering making Calgary their first stop.

"Retail sales in Alberta rose 11.4 per cent in the first half of the year." Ontario, on retail sales, is "behind the national average with 5.4% growth." The hospitality industry has come forward with shocking statistics that, again, Ontario is significantly behind the national average—worrisome trends that I hope members opposite will show greater concern about in the future.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

1730

Mr. Marchese: I welcome the citizens of Ontario to this parliamentary channel. We are on live; it's 5:30, it's Monday and we're going to have a lively debate on the issues of what this government did or didn't do. I will begin with the issue of promises.

Interjection: Halloween is very scary.

Mr. Marchese: Halloween is pretty scary to the Liberals; it's true. That's why you're here and not out there.

The issue of promises is important, and let me tell you why. I talked about the promise the government had made, McGuinty in particular, and the band of Liberals that follows him, that there would be no new taxes. He said that social services would be increased and taxes would not. Understand the inconsistency of that. You can't increase social services or services in general without new sources of money. You have the Premier

saying, "We're not going to increase your taxes, but we will increase your services."

I understand that the people of Ontario are looking for magic each and every time, each and every election, and they thought the Liberals could do both. They wanted to believe, everyone wants to believe, even when they know intellectually that it is impossible to do two contradictory things.

The government didn't have the integrity, I would say, prior to the election to say, "We need new revenue. The Tories have cut income taxes to the bone. We've lost \$13 billion in the space of eight years. We need to rebuild in order to provide money for services we lost and for promises we made." Where is the courage in a political party prior to the election to say, "We need to tax you"? So you had, foolishly, McGuinty being interviewed, and there he is on that clip, back and forth, "No new taxes. Look at my lips: No new taxes," and it was comical. It still is comical to remember.

But he and others in this place, the other Liberals who are sitting here, listening to this discussion, are saying, "Yes, but please look what we had to deal with. We really didn't know the condition we were in. We had to do it. Don't judge us on our promises. Judge us on where we are going," as if promises mean nothing.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: If Mr. Levac has a different point of view, he should state it in his two minutes. But every Liberal MPP I have spoken to here and any television program that's been done says the same thing: "We had to do it, and judge us based on where we are going, not where we were and the promises we made." People need to judge you based on the promises you made.

"We are going to get rid of the clawback on the national child benefit supplement." You had so many Liberals, McGuinty, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and others, saying, "We will end the clawback." And, if you're a poor person looking for that little extra benefit, you believe; you believe in those promises and you'll vote for any Liberal who says these things. No sooner do they get into office than that promise of the clawback was gone. All they gave was a \$3-per-child increase the first year, and that was it.

Mr. Duguid: Yes; the first time in—what?—10 years.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, the first time in 10 years: \$3 per child. "We will end the clawback, but don't judge us on the promises we made; judge us on the three bucks we gave." That's what the Liberals want you to do. Each family would get \$2,800. If you eliminated the clawback, all they gave was three bucks per child.

So you have Mr. Duguid from Scarborough Centre, who's going to correct the record because all of you people there, living on the edge, are just dying to hear the fact that what he is giving you is enough for you and forget the promise to end the clawback. That first-year increase: a couple of bucks per child. He's proud to say, "More than anything the Tories used to do and, yes, less than the promise we made, but more than otherwise

would have been given by the Tories," and forget about the promise.

But you stand up, member from Scarborough Centre, and defend your record; defend the facts.

Then we have the issue of the cap on the hydro rates. My friend Kathleen from Don Valley West says, "Yeah, but Rosario, what was your position?" What matters more, member from Don Valley West, is your promise and your position. Your position was, "We would maintain the cap until 2006." Those are promises. You get into power, and then, "Oh, but the conditions are so, so different and, oh, we didn't quite know, so we had to do it." It's so hilarious to listen to Liberals each and every day. I find it so amusing.

On the housing front, So many Liberals, McGuinty and others, said, "We will create thousands and thousands and thousands of units for people who find themselves in this market unable to earn a living that would allow them to live somewhere that is decent. We will build affordable housing." I think you guys promised 14,000 units, if I'm not mistaken.

My buddy from Scarborough Centre says, "Judge us on the units we will build." He says, "We will have 2,400 units down the line somewhere." He says, "It takes a long time to get the shovel into the ground," and right he is. But to date, only 63 units—by your facts, the facts that you offer us—of affordable housing.

I tell you, fine Liberal members, you're on your third year, and soon you'll be confronting the electorate. But you'll be able to go to them and say, "The shovel will be in the ground after we've left politics. We might not be re-elected, but the shovels will be in the ground."

The member for Scarborough Centre says, "Judge us on the units we will build down the line." It just tires you. It just exhausts you to listen to them. Some 2,400 units are coming. I can't wait. They are coming, though. Those of you who need it, don't worry; they are coming. Just 63 units; it's a pitiful record. You ought to be ashamed, but because they can't say that, they say, "Oh, no, that's not true. The facts are different." The facts, by your record: 63 units; a shameful, shameful, pitiful record.

Talk about the member from London—Fanshawe, who stands up and talks about the great things they are doing in education—he and others—"Some \$6.2 billion for post-secondary education; the highest amount of support we have ever, ever seen." They make it appear—I have to switch to my other glasses, because I can't see you with these. The beauty of this is, it's \$6.2 billion, and they make it appear, my friends from Scarborough Centre and London—Fanshawe and others, that the \$6.2 billion is coming today.

Mr. Duguid: No, we don't.

Mr. Marchese: "No, we don't." This is why we need you to speak and lay it out. Put out the facts. They say \$6.2 billion is coming.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Over five years.

Mr. Marchese: Écoutez, s'il vous plaît. S'il vous plaît.

By 2009-10, there will be \$6.2 billion. They make it appear as if somehow they are going to be re-elected. Why else would you make a promise that leads beyond 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010? You're only elected for four years. You've got to get another mandate in 2007. They make a promise that there will be \$6.2 billion down the line, in 2009-10. Who told you that you are going to be re-elected? Is there some kind of oracle that you have consulted, some Greek oracle you've consulted, that says you'll be here after 2007? You remember the Greek oracles, Madame la ministre. I don't know who you consult, but I would make a promise based on what I'm going to spend while I have the mandate.

You see, you borrowed a page from the federal Liberals, because the Liberals at the federal level do the same. They announce money for years and years to come in the future, with the assumption that they're just going to get re-elected. I don't know how they can be so presumptuous.

Mr. Duguid: I'm telling Reggie Johnson on you.

1740

Mr. Marchese: And I say to you, Brad Duguid, member from Scarborough Centre, that despite some increases, Ontario will still be well below the national average on per student funding this year. You know something else? Dramatic tuition fee hikes are coming.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): That's under the NDP.

Mr. Marchese: Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy. No. The hikes are coming. And McGuinty said the question is, how high? And your other minister of post-secondary education, the previous one: How high? They've got to go up. Students are paying—

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Fifty per cent.

Mr. Marchese: Fifty per cent of what, Jimmy? You stand up when you get your two minutes, because I want to hear you—

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Trinity-Spadina, when I'm standing, you know what you're supposed to do.

I'm interested in the debate, but it's the first name, repeated, that we should stay away from.

Mr. Marchese: No, you're quite right. You will observe, Speaker, that I give their names and often their titles, because the electorate has a fascination to know who people are, based on their names. I try to combine them as best as I can, and where I fail, you will help me; I know that.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy.

Mr. Marchese: Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy, the Minister of Tourism, I want you, in your two minutes, to stand up and say where tuition fees were when we were there and how high they went, if you have that. Minister of Tourism, give us the number, because I tell you this: Students are now paying five thousand bucks a pop if you're just in a regular program. If you're in a deregulated

program such as law here at U of T, you're going to get whacked with \$18,000 a year in tuition fees.

The Liberals think it's OK; the Tories thought it was lovely. The Liberals think it's great and we'll continue with that policy. You know what? We're not sure about deregulation; the minister wasn't quite clear on that. He says he needs to listen to advice from people.

But on the issue of tuition fee hikes, they're coming. Students are paying 43% of their education. Under a New Democratic government, it was 21%. We went from \$2,000 to \$5,000, and it's rising. Liberals are saying, "But you know what? Students have to pay their fair share." They are paying their fair share, and they cannot take the load any more. Not only does it tax them with social problems that some of you haven't reflected on, nor do you want to debate them, but students have to consider, once they leave their educational endeavours in university in this city and they've got a \$20,000 debt—and if you're in law, who knows what it is—whether or not they can get married, or at least when they might be able to marry, because if you're carrying \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 or \$70,000, it's a whole weight to carry. It's a big economic weight, psychological weight, social weight. You Liberals are not thinking about that weight, but it will force students to consider whether they can marry, or when. It will force students to consider whether they will have two children versus one child. The debt is a big factor in terms of whether students will have one child or two. If people care about the fact that we have a declining birthrate, this is an issue. You might not think it's serious enough, but I think it's a serious one. They will have to make decisions based on, "Can we afford to have a car? Where do we live? Can we afford to have a house?" I tell you, with that kind of debt, only the rich boys and girls are going to be able to afford a house.

So when you gloat about, "Oh, we have so much that we are giving," if you have two parents working at Wal-Mart and earning \$34,000, they are not eligible for any grant. Two people working at Wal-Mart, earning \$34,000: not eligible. I presume they are wealthy.

What it means is that students are going to be able to borrow. They either have to go to the bank, as so many students have done and will continue to do, where you pay interest rates right away, or some day this government will make it easier for people to be able to borrow more and more, because that's OK; education is a beautiful thing. If you're loaded with debt, it doesn't matter; you'll be able to pay it off because you'll have a good job.

It is a big debt to carry. We have never seen that kind of load on students. Students are working part-time to make ends meet, and it affects their education, and nobody's thinking about that. Liberals are happy to say, "We'll be able to decrease the level of parental participation." That's great. From what to where, and what kind of support is that, except students will be able to get indebted further and further?

It's a big, big problem, this education issue, I tell you. We're talking about education. The Liberals are proud to

talk about education at the elementary and secondary levels. I say you have nothing to be proud of. You have made some investment in your first year and you're dragging it out for four years. I often complain about your capital announcements that you've made. The first year you announced \$200 million, and that was going to leverage \$3 billion, but no money was ever flowed. The following year, the minister announces \$275 million, and that would leverage \$4 billion. I wager that next year the minister's going to announce \$350 million and it will leverage \$6 billion, and on and on every year. Just announcements, reannouncements, reannouncements—that's all you get from this government.

This year alone, of the \$275 million this government has promised, this summer only \$75 million has been put toward the reconstruction of schools. We've got \$4.5 billion worth of problems, including 100 schools that have to be replaced because they're of no use whatsoever, and only \$75 million has been put up, as far as we know. It's not more than that, but it could be less. The government said, "We're going to do a review." We've already done a review of the capital dollars. We should be spending all of that \$250 million or \$275 million you wanted to spend today. We can't wait for another five-year review. So of the \$275 million you announced, only \$75 million has been spent, and the rest of the money won't be spent because you're doing a five-year review.

I think you get my drift. There are only announcements of money that never comes, and then the reviews and so on. It takes a lot of expertise to be able to dig out the facts and expose the problems of the promises.

Take special ed. When this government got elected, the Tories had a procedure in place to be able to identify special ed. The government gets elected; they wait 10 months to announce the money the board should have gotten. They announce it in July. A long while ago, in July, when all the kids were out, they announce \$100 million, and in August they claw back another \$100 million. Now we realize it's \$83 million, so it's possible they might have given \$17 million for the previous year. It's possible, but it's hard to say. Last year, as far as I know, not one cent was put back, in spite of the promise of the Liberals that they were going to do another review, a new application process, and they were only going to give \$50 million of the \$83 million or \$100 million they said they'd claw back—stole, I argue—from the boards.

You see, you can't believe anything these people say, because what they say and what they do are two different things. Not one cent last year was given for special ed, the most needy of students. We have big problems by way of the promises of this government. We need to expose them, and that's what we are doing. People need to see what the government claims they're doing. You need to remember the promises they made that were never kept, and you need to understand that what they say is never what they're doing. "Foul is fair, and fair is foul," said Shakespeare.

1750

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I was thrilled when this budget came out. I think every parent in this province worries about how their children will do in life: Will they be successful? Very clearly, we know that the key to success is education. We have seen, over an eight-year period, that the number of working families able to afford post-secondary, as a percentage, was going down and down and down. Sending a child to an out-of-town college or university is a \$15,000 to \$20,000 venture.

This budget very clearly targeted the fact that the key to good health care, the key to a clean environment, the key to every part of our society, depends on our young people doing well in the workforce. Industry will be created in Ontario, jobs will be created and industry will come from outside of this country, only if we have a highly skilled, well-trained workforce.

We have an education system in this province that had dropped to the point where I believe we were almost at the bottom in North America in terms of funding per pupil.

Interjection: Ten out of 10 in Canada.

Mr. Parsons: Yes, the lowest in Canada. About 58th out of 60 when you consider the US states and the Canadian provinces.

Now we have seen a commitment to rejuvenate the education system, to move us back. There is no reason in the world this province shouldn't be a world leader in education. We have the people; we just lacked, for eight years, a process that allowed them to get adequate funding.

In my community, we have Loyalist College, an excellent college—probably a better college since I left, but a great college, that has turned out thousands of graduates who have flourished in this province. But they were struggling, going into deficits, having to make decisions to cut programs. And when they cut programs, they were cutting opportunities for our youth.

This budget very clearly, for working families, means they can get the education their children need and deserve.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I want to commend the member from Trinity–Spadina for his critique of the faults and broken promises of the McGuinty Liberal government.

One thing that struck me in his concluding remarks was he mentioned that you can't believe anything they say, in reference to the McGuinty Liberals. It struck me how true that is. We know they've broken 50 of the 230 promises that got them elected into government, but beyond that, the leader of the third party, Mr. Hampton, today in the House, in responding to a statement by the Minister of Energy where she was taking credit for bringing new power generation on stream—I give credit to the leader of the NDP, who pointed out that, in reality, the only real additional generating capacity that has been brought on stream was by the former Conservative government. Yet the minister stood in her place and took credit for those installations.

But that's not just unique to her; we see it all the time. I pointed out that the Attorney General quite frequently—and the Premier does the same thing—takes credit for things they had absolutely nothing to do with. The guns and gangs task force in the city of Toronto was created in 2002 by Chief Julian Fantino, yet this government and this minister stand up on a regular basis and take credit for it.

When we talk about honesty and integrity and truthfulness, there are certainly a lot of questions that can be validly raised about the current Liberal government. I don't have enough time to talk about the job situation: 42,000 manufacturing jobs lost in this province.

The Premier, when he is asked to respond to specifics, like Guelph, gets up and gives bad information. A company under investigation for fraud: he doesn't answer the question with respect to the communities that are affected, the families that are affected. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade does exactly the same. It's a shameful performance.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I listened very carefully to my colleague the member for Trinity-Spadina. He's the education, colleges and universities critic for the New Democratic Party caucus. I say this to Liberal backbenchers, many of whom do not have the years of experience here that Mr. Marchese has: They would be well advised to listen carefully and heed his warnings, because Mr. Marchese, the member from Trinity-Spadina, points out that we are denying thousands of young Ontarians—bright, talented people who have a great deal to contribute to this province and this country—post-secondary education because of the McGuinty Liberals' insistence on ever-escalating tuition costs, which leave university and college but the privilege of the very wealthy.

Mr. Marchese knows. He comes from an immigrant family, like so many others here. He watched his parents work hard—darned hard, incredibly hard—so that their kids, Mr. Marchese and his siblings, could go to college and university. Just as Mr. Marchese was the first generation of his family, as the child of immigrant parents, to go to college and university, his fear and our fear, as New Democrats, as we travel across campuses of colleges and universities in this province, is that the children of immigrant families currently on those campuses could be the last generation of their families to go to college and university because of this government's constant privatizing. Every penny of additional tuition is an increased element of privatization of what should be fully funded post-secondary education. I say don't reduce; abolish.

I know Mr. Marchese is busy. He's probably leaving here this evening to campaign with Sheila White, our candidate out in Scarborough, because we need Sheila White in here if we're going to protect young people from this government and its insistence on ever-higher tuition.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I'm very pleased and proud to speak in support of the budget. One of the things I am most proud of is the \$6.2-

billion investment in post-secondary education. I happen to have the pleasure of having Algonquin College in my riding. Let me quote you from Michael Barrett, who is the president of the Algonquin Students' Association and president of the College Student Alliance. He said, "The budget is very promising. It is a comprehensive, long-term plan that seeks to provide quality college education to more students. Premier McGuinty is developing a learning culture that will ensure the prosperity and future of Ontario."

We are in the second year of a tuition freeze. You compare that with the NDP. When they were in power, tuition went up by over 50%, which is really quite startling and quite outrageous. This plan, the \$6.2 billion, is not only going to allow more low- and middle-income students to have grant opportunities for their tuition, it's going to make post-secondary education more accessible.

On the health care front, I was very pleased to announce that the Queensway Carleton Hospital in my riding of Ottawa West-Nepean received its largest-ever operating increase of 21.5%, and just on Friday, Premier McGuinty and I announced that the Queensway Carleton Hospital's third phase of expansion, their capital project, is going ahead. It's going to be part of the five-year plan.

We're working with the health ministry to ensure that the Nepean Community Resource Centre receives some support for its health centre status. We've put more money into the Olde Forge to help senior citizens, great people like Barb Lajeunesse and Michael Mason, who do so much work for seniors. I'm proud to have the largest number of seniors per capita in all of eastern Ontario in my riding, and that's why I'm voting for this budget.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Trinity-Spadina has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Marchese: And there's so much to say. I thank my friends and foes.

I just want to remind you that this government has flatlined 15 ministries, meaning the increases to their ministries are frozen, and many other ministries have had to take cuts. One especially, native affairs, had to take a 22% cut. Is it any wonder that we have problems in some of these ministries? Is it any wonder that we have been dealing with the Kashechewan situation, where for two years the government has known there was a problem—known or ought to have known—and they've done nothing? It speaks to the wilful negligence of this provincial government and the federal government. It speaks to the jurisdictional indifference of this provincial government and the federal government.

The Deputy Speaker: I just caution the member to take it easy on the language, please.

Mr. Kormos: What the hell did you say?

Mr. Marchese: I said that I accuse this government of wilful negligence and jurisdictional—

The Deputy Speaker: I'm just asking the member—I didn't ask him to withdraw, I'm just asking him to watch it.

Mr. Marchese: So when you cut ministries such as native affairs, you've got to deal with these problems. So

when our leader says, “We put up \$48 million in a deficit economy”—you have a good economy; you put up not one cent. You’ve got 15 other communities under a boil-water watch, where their water is contaminated, and you’re doing nothing. You love to warm yourselves in jurisdictional indifference.

And then you’re all so cozy about the fact that tuition fees have gone up from \$2,000 to \$5,000, and they’re going higher and higher. You love the fact that tuition

fees are going to go higher and higher, and you think it’s great.

We’ll have the time to be able to debate these issues. There will be plenty of time to expose the problems of this government. I’m here to do that.

The Deputy Speaker: It being a little past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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