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of Ontario
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 27 March 2006

Lundi 27 mars 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 March 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 mars 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

ESTIMATES

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Mr. Speaker, I have a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2006, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): One hundred and fifty thousand full-time and 350,000 part-time college students will be returning to class in the next two days, three weeks after their teachers went on strike, having been without a contract since last summer. During that time, the McGuinty government chose to sit on their hands, and its first response was to raise tuition fees on the second day of the strike.

The Premier told the Ottawa Citizen on March 10, "Don't count on the government to intervene in this matter." For 10 days, while half a million students sat waiting to go back to school, the Premier and his minister did nothing. On March 15, the Toronto Star told the minister to take PC leader John Tory's advice to call both sides together and resume bargaining talks.

Last year, McGuinty was buying labour peace and education with a blank cheque; this year's strategy was to get tough with labour, and the college students are the ones paying for the Premier's new makeover.

What's worse, college students are asking, "Where is the promised post-secondary education funding, and why does the McGuinty government continue to widen the funding gap between colleges and universities?" For every operating dollar that Ontario colleges receive, universities get about \$2.73, creating a growing gap of more than \$1.5 billion. This gap has widened by 45% since the McGuinty government took office.

Despite what this government says, the facts are very clear. The Liberal strategy continues to impoverish col-

leges over universities, since Ontario colleges are still dead last in per capita funding behind each and every province in Canada.

PEEL REGIONAL POLICE

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I rise in the House today with great pride to acknowledge what I believe to be one of the greatest police services in the province, the Peel Regional Police. As a resident and member representing the riding of Mississauga East, I know the level of hard work and dedication with which the Peel Regional Police serve the community.

Having participated in a ride-along with the police last fall, I've experienced first hand their professionalism and commitment to the communities they serve. However, you don't have to take my word for it. I stand before the House today because the Peel Regional Police has been recognized as a flagship organization by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. The commission is an international organization that evaluates police services. Their flagship program acknowledges the achievement and expertise of the most successful commission-accredited public safety agencies.

Peel Regional Police is one of only 10 flagship police organizations worldwide. Peel Regional Police became this province's first commission-accredited police service in 1994. Peel was reaccredited by the commission in 1999, 2002 and again in 2005, joining the ranks of just under 1,000 accredited police services around the world.

I think it is not only important to acknowledge the Peel police for their outstanding achievement, but also to take a moment to thank the men and women who serve on police forces all across our great province.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Dalton McGuinty promised to make agriculture a lead ministry, but his Minister of Finance just cut the agriculture budget by 21%. That works out to \$224 million less than last year, which was \$167 million less than the year before. This budget tells the rest of the province that Mr. McGuinty doesn't need rural Ontario. Apart from cutting agriculture spending by 21%, I repeat, there was nothing in the budget for the 650,000 jobs dependent on agribusiness.

For weeks Stephen Webster, a dairy heifer exporter, has been camping out in front of Queen's Park. Last week, as we know, farmers descended on Queen's Park

for the budget. All we get is the blame game. We're told to go to Ottawa.

The protests consist of the usual signs: "Farmers Feed Cities," "Equity with US Farmers," "Study, Stall, Study."

The Minister of Finance will be in Whitby tomorrow for the by-election. He'll be met with the farmers he insulted and neglected on Thursday. At 11 o'clock, at the Whitby Curling Club—that's at 815 Brock Street North—there will be another sign. The word "farm" has taken on a new meaning for this McGuinty government: F-A-R-M. Tomorrow those letters will stand for "Forget About Re-election McGuinty."

GEORGE ASSALY

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): Today the community of Cornwall and many others along the St. Lawrence River will pay their final respects to George Assaly, a dedicated businessman, tireless community advocate and true gentleman.

Born in 1925, George had the distinction of serving in all three branches of service during the Second World War, an early indication of his lifelong habit of getting involved in every capacity he could, in any project he believed in. His efforts saw him decorated with the Citizen of the Year Award for his home community of Cornwall, the Businessman Achievement Award, the Chamber of Commerce Lifetime Achievement Award, the National Shoe Council of Canada, the Helen Keller Award and many others.

Even when diagnosed with terminal cancer, George would not give up his community involvement, giving 110% every day to the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, of which he was chair, and to the community he loved so dearly.

His daughter, Jo Ann Langstaff, called him "friend"; his fellow businessman and Lions Club member Paul Lefebvre called him "a fantastic person"; our colleague Jim Brownell considered him a mentor. As a visionary, he worked hard as an advocate for the Cornwall Heart of the City project. To all those whose lives he touched, he will be remembered as truly being the heart of the city of Cornwall.

Repose en paix, George. Tu l'as bien mérité.

1340

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I am very pleased to rise on behalf of the citizens of Durham and put on the record, as was stated in the Toronto Star, "Durham Wonders Why it Was Excluded" from last Thursday's budget.

I say to the Premier as well as to the Minister of Finance today that there are three critical areas that should have been addressed and were not addressed in this budget. One of them would be agriculture, which the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant has alluded to in referring to the dismal effort in recognition of the hard,

patient and respectful protests that were here at Queen's Park. You simply refused to listen. You have no plan for agriculture; that's clear.

Another one was the hospital strategy. You know that Lakeridge Health is one of the few hospitals serving a growing population. There wasn't one cent in this budget to recognize the growth pressures not just in Durham but in the GTA. You know that the funding per capita is the lowest in this province. You have no plan for health in Durham region.

Another issue that I think is going to be discussed this afternoon, and it's a shame, is the transit debate. The transit issue in Durham, as Roger Anderson said—"Durham region is one of the fastest-growing regions within the GTA and yet there was no mention at all for transportation issues to be dealt with" in this budget.

Minister, I say to you, and to the Minister of Transportation as well, Durham has a plan. We're a fast-growing region, and certainly this government here has no plan.

I say to the people of Durham, and specifically to the Whitby–Ajax riding, they can send a message this Thursday by looking at Christine Elliott—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Members' statements.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–Baie James): Ce qui commence d'être de plus en plus clair, avec des années de ce gouvernement McGuinty, est que la communauté francophone se trouve de plus en plus laissée en arrière quand ça vient aux services pour la communauté francophone. Moi, je vois, comme critique en matière des Affaires francophones pour le parti néo-démocratique, des agences à travers la province qui me disent qu'elles ont des problèmes, et quand elles apportent leurs problèmes aux ministères pour les faire régler, ils disent qu'il n'y a rien à faire; quand elles appellent la ministre, M^{me} Meilleur, ou d'autres ministres pour régler leurs problèmes de financement ou des problèmes en outre, ceux-ci sont dans la même situation, qu'il n'y a rien qu'on puisse faire.

Deuxièmement, ce qu'on voit avec le délestage des services de la province aux municipalités est que de plus en plus d'agences qui ont reçu ces services se trouvent dans une situation où elles donnent des services, et des fois—oops—elles oublient de les donner en français. Même dans un comté comme le mien, Timmins–Baie James, où on est dans la majorité, il y a certaines occasions où on se trouve, avec des agences qui ont reçu des services délestés, sans services en français.

Je dis à ce gouvernement que vous avez une responsabilité, et non seulement sous la Loi 8 mais aussi envers vos engagements de la dernière élection que l'on a eue il y a deux ans et demi. On vous demande de garder votre promesse et de nous assurer que les services en français soient respectés non seulement provenant de la province mais aussi ceux qui ont été délestés par le gouvernement provincial aux municipalités ou autres. Ce qu'on trouve

est complètement le contraire : un gouvernement qui oublie ses engagements.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion likes Ontario's 2006-07 budget. Madam Mayor's thoughts bear repeating: "I think it was a very positive budget—extremely positive. Today was a good day for Ontario, in my opinion. It's a step in the right direction. As I've often said to the Premier, you can't turn things around overnight, but if you can see progress to try to offset the costs that have been downloaded to municipalities, I think it's a great step forward."

Mississauga needs to move without choking on our volume of cars and their exhaust. Through \$65 million of funding in Move Ontario, the government of Ontario will assist Mississauga with its bus rapid transit, enabling people to not only park the car in Mississauga but skip the traffic en route to work. That's a great step forward.

GO Transit has scheduled the start of the new Lisgar GO train station to begin this year, and an additional \$25 million for this and other projects are in GO's budget. That's a great step forward.

Credit Valley Hospital, Trillium Health Centre and the University of Toronto at Mississauga are working together to train the new doctors our community needs so much. That's a great step forward.

This 2006-07 Ontario budget accomplishes this and so much more, and it does it without any new taxes or any increase in existing taxes. That's a great step forward.

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I'm proud to stand today to show my support for the 2006 budget. This budget clearly builds on the priorities of this government: to improve the Ontario advantage by investing in infrastructure, health and education while staying on track to eliminate the fiscal deficit we inherited.

One of the cornerstones of the 2006 budget is the \$1.2-billion Move Ontario plan. My community of London gets more than \$14.3 million to repair and build roads and bridges: \$14.3 million towards safer roads for London drivers. It also, of course, means more jobs.

Public transportation in London will continue to improve with the existing gas tax investment. In 2004-05, gas tax funding for London was \$4.5 million. This year it increased to \$6.8 million, and it's expected to increase again next year. This funding is critically important for my community because it means a public transit system that moves quickly, safely and efficiently.

We're also investing in cities through the Ontario municipal partnership fund. Over the last two years, London has received over \$26 million. Previous to that, it was zero.

This budget shows a commitment to responsible spending and improving the lives of all Ontarians in every part of Ontario. Every community, including London, will benefit from this budget. I'm proud to be

part of a government that has delivered a budget that speaks to all Ontarians.

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I am proud to rise in this House today to recognize the positive support that we have received from the mayor of Hamilton with our 2006-07 Ontario budget. To quote the front page of the Hamilton Spectator, Mayor Di Ianni said, "We have a lot to be thankful for." In a political arena generally charged by negative commentary, our mayor demonstrated true leadership in recognizing the sincere efforts the McGuinty government has made to address some of the challenges currently being faced by one of Ontario's most historic and dynamic cities.

The Ontario government has committed more than \$42 million to Hamilton. The budget answered Hamilton's request for special funding that will address the social service costs as well as acknowledge the infrastructure needs of a mature city with crumbling roads and bridges. Funds are also being forwarded to Hamilton that will assist with their transit, health, and education needs. All this will contribute to the city of Hamilton's bottom line.

Mayor Di Ianni has been quoted as saying that this is a community budget that is needed and that our community has been well treated by the Ontario government.

The Hamilton that my colleagues and I envision will be self-sustaining, innovative, creative, diverse and, above all, a healthy and successful community. The McGuinty government is giving us the support to achieve our dream, and we say thank you.

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise today to tell you and the members of the House about a great accomplishment by a very special member of this House.

On March 9, the member for London North Centre successfully defended her doctoral thesis in social demography at the University of Western Ontario. Deb returned to the University of Western Ontario as a mature student—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I am certain that a member's statement will take care of that on a future date.

1350

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would ask the indulgence of the House to allow the pages to assemble for their introduction.

From Hamilton East we have Elyse Airth; from Essex, Justin Barrette; from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Charlotte Curley; from Timmins-James Bay, Zacharie Fogal; Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Shelby Heinbuch; London North Centre, Ben Hyland; from Don Valley East, Sharmarke Ismail; from Thornhill, Cameron Jesudasan; Kitchener-Waterloo, McKenzie Kibler; Timiskaming-Cochrane, Raelene Knight; from St. Paul's, Olga Krakovna; Mercedes Mabee is from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey; from Sudbury, Mark Mancini; from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, Meghan Rourke; Ottawa

West–Nepean, Trevor Sadler; Halton, Andrew Sturrock; from Stoney Creek, Maura Wasilewski; from Parkdale–High Park, Leah Watson; from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Jenna Zwambag; and from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Roman Zyla.

Let us congratulate our pages.

Applause.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would like to acknowledge in the members' west gallery a former member of this House who served in the 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st Parliaments: Ian Deans from Wentworth.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPLY ACT, 2006

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2006

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006 /
Projet de loi 82, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2006.

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

Does the minister have a statement?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): No.

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): 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. Oraziotti and Mr. Wilkinson exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Oraziotti assumes ballot item 37 and Mr. Wilkinson assumes ballot item 51.

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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 the membership of certain committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the following substitutions be made to the membership of certain committees:

On the standing committee on estimates, Mr. Wilkinson replaces Mr. Kular, and Mr. Zimmer replaces Mr. Milloy; on the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, Mrs. Sandals replaces Mr. Wilkinson; on the standing committee on general government, Mr. Brownell replaces Mr. Dhillon, and Mr. Flynn replaces Ms. Matthews; on the standing committee on government agencies, Mr. Milloy replaces Mr. Berardinetti, and Mr. Wilkinson replaces Mr. Oraziotti; on the standing committee on justice policy, Mr. Balkissoon replaces Mr. Brownell, Mr. Berardinetti replaces Mr. Delaney, Mr. Dhillon replaces Mr. Flynn, Mr. McMeekin replaces Ms. Mossop, Mr. Oraziotti replaces Mr. Qaadri, and Mrs. Van Bommel replaces Mr. Racco; on the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, Ms. Mossop replaces Mr. Balkissoon; on the standing committee on public accounts, Ms. Matthews replaces Mr. Balkissoon; on the standing committee on regulations and private bills, Mr. Levac replaces Mr. Kular, and Mr. Sergio replaces Mrs. Van Bommel; on the standing committee on social policy, Mr. Kular replaces Mr. Craitor, and Mr. Qaadri replaces Mr. Racco; on the standing committee on public accounts, Ms. Matthews replaces Mrs. Sandals.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved that the following substitutions be made to the membership of certain committees—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Shall the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I rise to share news about a landmark event with all members of the House. Earlier today, I participated with our colleague from Toronto Centre–Rosedale, Minister Smitherman, in the launch of work on an historic groundbreaking on the west Don lands, one of the most important urban revitalization projects in the province of Ontario.

Toronto's west Don lands is a waterfront precinct as big as London's Canary Wharf, or as large as New York city's Battery Park. I am confident that it will become one of the most dynamic neighbourhoods in the city of

Toronto. Where derelict buildings stand today, people will be living, working and shopping. Where there are barren lots, children will play in parks and pools and have access to daycare centres. This affordable, accessible community will attract families from diverse economic backgrounds. It will be Toronto's first major sustainable community in years, and it's being built on land owned by the people of Ontario.

1400

The 80-acre west Don lands is Ontario's top waterfront revitalization priority, the centrepiece of a 2,000-acre waterfront project. This government has shown strong leadership and support for the revitalization of the west Don lands and for Toronto's waterfront.

Last September, I was honoured to sign the west Don lands memorandum of understanding, making the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corp. the master developer and setting out an important collaborative role for our land agency, the Ontario Realty Corp., in supporting those revitalization efforts. Ontario is the first jurisdiction to put together such an agreement with the waterfront corporation.

This government will also be introducing legislation, as outlined by the finance minister in the budget presentation on Thursday, to enable tax increment financing to assist, finally, with brownfield redevelopment and public infrastructure investment. This new municipal fiscal tool would be introduced on a pilot basis, allowing for its prudent review. If the legislation passes, one of the pilots would be the west Don lands. The west Don lands is an example of how our government believes modern communities should grow, as outlined in the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe, to be released later this spring. It follows the important principles of growth planning, from affordable housing to brownfield revitalization and transit-oriented development. The west Don lands project symbolizes our commitment to the restoration of Ontario's public infrastructure.

The McGuinty government inherited an enormous infrastructure deficit, and we delivered and developed a comprehensive \$30-billion ReNew Ontario investment plan to address how we will pay down that deficit. Now, today, we have begun to implement this plan. Just as work begins at the west Don lands, so too are shovels going into the ground in over 2,000 infrastructure renewal projects across this province. This makes me incredibly proud, both as Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and as a resident of the city of Toronto.

Speaker, thank you very much.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I rise in the House today to talk about something vital to everyone in Ontario: the state of our roads and bridges. As my colleague Mr. Duncan pointed out in tabling his budget last week, quick, reliable and safe transportation is vital to our economic success and quality of life.

Our government has made the safety and reliability of Ontario's transportation infrastructure a priority. We have created Move Ontario, a new one-time \$1.2-billion

investment in Ontario's public transit system and municipal roads and bridges.

I was pleased to be in Mississauga last Friday with the Premier to announce \$65 million for the Mississauga Transitway. This is on top of the \$25 million that GO Transit is contributing to this project.

We want to help move people and goods faster, create jobs and build a stronger economy. Move Ontario means \$670 million to extend the TTC subway to York region, \$95 million for the Brampton AcceleRide program, and \$400 million for municipalities primarily outside of the GTA.

We have listened to municipal leaders in communities across the province who have asked for more money to help repair and upgrade roads and bridges. This is a one-time \$400-million investment that municipalities may use for these kinds of projects, communities such as Hastings county, which will receive more than \$1.6 million; London, which will receive more than \$14.3 million; Hamilton, nearly \$21 million; Sault Ste. Marie, nearly \$4.7 million; Kitchener, more than \$4 million; and Ottawa, nearly \$33 million. Our investment is spread across the province, with an emphasis on rural and northern communities.

I know that municipal leaders in Durham region will be happy to hear that the region will receive more than \$10.7 million.

These communities will determine their own priorities, including how and when to spend the funding. It will be provided immediately so that high-priority projects can be accommodated as soon as possible.

Move Ontario is in addition to other major programs that support municipal infrastructure, programs such as the \$900-million Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund and the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority.

Move Ontario projects are in addition to our five-year, \$30-billion ReNew Ontario infrastructure plan.

Let me also remind the honourable members that ours is the first Ontario government to offer municipalities a reliable and stable source of transit funding. The provincial gas tax program is a huge success and is now into its second year. As of October 1, 2005, we increased funding from one cent to one and a half cents for every litre of gasoline sold in Ontario. This year, 83 transit systems, serving 110 municipalities, will share \$232 million in gas tax funding. That is up from the \$156 million we gave in the first year of the program.

I'm proud that Ontario has the safest roads in North America. Our government is committed to maintaining and improving upon that record.

We are doing what needs to be done to help communities across the province ensure that Ontario's roads, bridges and transit infrastructure are among the best in the world.

Here is what people are saying about Move Ontario. The president of the Canadian Urban Transit Association, Michael Roschlau, says, "These transit projects will help ease congestion and air quality and improve the economic vitality of Ontario's communities."

The president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Len Crispino, says, "Border, urban and northern communities will all benefit from this government's focus on improving infrastructure."

The president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Roger Anderson, says, "Funding for municipal roads, bridges and public transit is welcome news."

Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion calls our budget a "very progressive budget."

The chair of the Toronto Transit Commission, Howard Moscoe, says, "It's great news, terrific for transit, and what we are seeing is the government honour its promises, and that is great."

A news release from the CAA says, "This budget shows that motorists matter."

I am sure that all members also will support Move Ontario and agree that quick, reliable and safe transportation is vital to our economic success and quality of life. It's vital to ensuring that the \$1.2 trillion worth of goods carried on Ontario highways every year get to market on time. It's vital to ensuring that we spend more time with our families, doing the things that really matter to all of us.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

RENOUVEAU DÉMOCRATIQUE

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I rise today to tell this House of an important step in advancing the most ambitious democratic renewal agenda in Ontario's history. In order for Ontario to be strong, our democracy has to be strong. Our government is taking the necessary steps to renew Ontario's democracy and make it stronger.

This morning, I launched the next step in our ambitious democratic renewal agenda. I announced the process for the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform and introduced the chair.

L'Assemblée des citoyens donnera aux Ontariens et Ontariennes, pour la première fois dans l'histoire de l'Ontario, la possibilité de participer à un débat ouvert et complet sur notre système électoral.

1410

That was my first time in French.

At the end of the process, the assembly will make a recommendation on which electoral system they think would best serve our province. If the assembly recommends a change to our current first-past-the-post electoral system, then we'll put that recommendation to a province-wide referendum.

The assembly will be comprised of 103 Ontarians chosen at random from the permanent register of electors by Elections Ontario. It will be made up of 52 women and 51 men—one person from each of Ontario's ridings. At least one member of the assembly will be of aboriginal ancestry. All members will contribute their unique perspectives, their creativity, their talent and their range of experience to the work of the assembly.

The assembly will be a citizen-led process of learning, listening and deliberating. Beginning in September, the members of the assembly will gather at Osgoode Hall Law School's state-of-the-art moot court facility at York University two weekends a month. Together they will learn about our system and others. They will consult with a broad cross-section of Ontarians and they will determine whether they want to recommend that Ontario keep its current electoral system or exchange it for another. They will issue that recommendation on or before May 15, 2007.

With today's announcement, our government is clearly communicating its belief that the shape of Ontario's democracy is a matter for Ontarians to decide and that the role of the government is to ensure that the public's voice is heard loud and clear and that the will of the people is implemented. An undertaking of this magnitude requires tremendous skill to bring it to fruition, so I was very pleased this morning to announce that when the assembly meets this fall it will be under the skilled guidance of Mr. George Thomson, who was appointed chair of the citizens' assembly by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

George Thomson brings a lifetime of public service, a commitment to social justice and a strong reputation as a leader in education and public policy to his work with the assembly. Throughout his distinguished professional life as a lawyer, a teacher, a judge and a deputy minister with the provincial and federal governments, George has built a reputation for fairness, integrity and inclusiveness. In his role as chair he will oversee and facilitate the work of the assembly. He will also lead the independent citizens' assembly secretariat, which will support the operation of the assembly process. In the months ahead, under Mr. Thomson's leadership, all Ontarians will be invited to participate in this unprecedented examination of our democracy.

Cet examen, j'en suis sûre, nous permettra de mieux comprendre la démocratie et son impact sur notre société.

That is an exciting day for Ontario. It marks that this launch of a historic process will empower citizens as never before and determine the shape of our democracy going forward. Thank you. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Response.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Briefly, the minister of infrastructure renewal was talking today about the west Don lands improvement. I would support that. I think that every one of us here would like to see a more beautiful waterfront, but what they really say here is another promise, and when the Liberals promise something you've got to be very suspicious.

What they don't want to talk about is the by-election in Toronto-Danforth. In Toronto-Danforth they're fighting the issue of the port lands, and I think this is a bit of a deflection announcement today to take the attention off.

It's well evidenced that Ben Chin is taking a beating, and technically I think the only clear choice is Georgina Blanas in that riding.

What I'd like to say on the Minister of Transportation's announcement: It's yet another promise. He mentioned in his remarks several times that it's \$1.2 billion of one-time funding. The money's there, but there's no delivery. It was an old saying, an axiom, that if something is true you can observe it, and in this case, all the Liberal promises—you can never envision, you can't even see, any of the actualization of that infrastructure on the ground. The plan is too cute by half. In fact, one of the reports in the media was cited: "The subway expansion is a mirage." That pretty well sums it up. Most of the promises are post-dated cheques beyond the next election.

Getting down to the real commitments, what I hear on my commute every day is more gridlock. He promised that the routes would be quicker. Well, they're slower. I've seen rising transit fares right across the board—on GO Transit, TTC. My constituents in Durham are outraged. There's the leaked budget information on the transportation announcement, which I'm sure will be debated in this House, and there's the suggestion of interference on the Windsor border file as well by certain members of cabinet.

The GTTA, the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, is perhaps a good idea, but with a questionable composition, a questionable mandate and questionable funding. We'll certainly hear more about that in the future.

If I even look at the comment on the \$400 million committed to rural Ontario, in fact, one of the reeves said, "By the time you divvy" up the fund, "there isn't enough to do anything." So it's one-time funding, we won't see any of it happen in our lifetime, and it's clearly a disappointment.

Once again, if you look at the Whitby–Ajax riding, what's being said in that riding, quite clearly—Christine Elliott wants to send you a message. Roger Anderson was quoted in the article I cited earlier from the Toronto Star. It says, "Durham Wonders Why it Was Excluded." In fact, you'd have to say that Durham region was left wondering; that's what Roger Anderson said. In fact, Richard Gauder, president of the Whitby Chamber of Commerce, said, "Durham region is one of the fastest-growing regions within the GTA," but there was no mention of any issues to be dealt with in this area.

I'm disappointed by the actions, not just by the minister's commitments here today but by the evidence in the budget. If you can actually believe anything the Liberals say, it'll be a new day.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I'd like to respond to the minister's statement with regard to the setting up of a committee on electoral reform.

I am continually amazed by this government's arrogance with regard to this issue. There was not a call from

the minister with regard to whom they were going to pick to head up this particular committee. I have no trouble with the Honourable George Thomson; he's a very able representative. But I would have thought that when we're going forward with reform in this Legislature, all parties would be involved in some aspects of reform.

We have objections to the question that's being asked of the citizens' committee. We do not have objection to having a citizens' committee, but we think that a very narrow question as to how MPPs are elected here will not solve our democratic deficit. We believe much more strongly that reform is necessary in our institution of Parliament, and that the confidence of the public will only be gained if elected officials start to behave in a more appropriate fashion when they in fact get elected to this place. In this current climate of public distrust, something this McGuinty government has only aggravated by breaking election promise after election promise, this will not solve the problem.

FINANCEMENT DU PROGRAMME DES INFRASTRUCTURES

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–Baie James): Le gouvernement annonce justement dans le budget de cette année un programme de transports appelé Transports-Action Ontario. Quelle action? Un programme qui va donner seulement une année d'argent dont on a vraiment besoin pour les transports en commun dans toutes les municipalités de la province.

Écoute. Ce dont les municipalités ont besoin, c'est de l'argent qui va continuer année après année, pour s'assurer que non seulement la ville de Mississauga ou de Toronto a de l'argent pour l'infrastructure des transports en commun, mais d'autres communautés hors de la ville de Toronto telles que Timmins, Thunder Bay et autres.

C'est une des critiques qu'on a, que le programme est seulement d'une année, et deuxièmement, qu'il vise vraiment le sud de la province, où la majorité de l'argent va être dépensée.

The other thing that is really ironic about this particular announcement is that not only does it fall on the heels, but just afterwards, there's going to be a fare increase for riders of the Toronto transit system. Imagine those people who take the TTC every day, especially the people from Toronto–Danforth, who are going to be in a by-election on Thursday: If they were voting on Sunday, they'd be mad as heck. Why? TTC rates are going up.

This government is doing nothing to deal with the ongoing costs that are associated with running a subway or bus system in the city of Toronto. There used to be a time when those programs were cost-shared between the province and the municipal government and fares were much lower. What we have now is a government that's saying, "We'll give you money for only one year, and you guys can go and do what you want outside of a by-election."

This is nothing more than an election ploy. Don't buy Dalton McGuinty's line. He has lied to you before. He will do so again.

Sorry; I take that back. I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Member for Beaches–East York.

1420

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): First, to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal: We would gladly welcome the development down on the Don lands. We think that any time there is development on brown-field sites anywhere in this province, it is a good thing, and we support the development of a new waterfront park that all Torontonians and all Ontarians can enjoy. But I would like to quote what the Acting Premier said three years ago, because I think the same thing is true today: "He's been sitting on this money. He's been waiting for a politically opportune time to announce it. While he has done that, people across this province have suffered. That's the kind of cynicism you get from that government and that's why they need to go"—George Smitherman in this Legislative Assembly, December 12, 2002.

The same thing is absolutely true here. The people in Toronto, particularly in the east end of Toronto, are suffering because this government is forging ahead in the port lands. They are going ahead with a project that the community does not want, that the mayor does not want, that the council does not want, that the waterfront czar has spoken to the Premier about, saying that he does not want it. As a matter of fact, there isn't a single, solitary institution or individual or professional in this city that has come out in favour of what you're doing.

Now you're trying to cloud the whole issue by saying, "Here is a waterfront park. We're going to put in some things. We're going to make it beautiful." How can you do that with a mega gas-fired plant across the waterway from them? How can you do that with the pollution that is going to be caused? How can you do this when your own medical officer of health has told you that this is going to increase pollution in Toronto enormously? I fail to understand it. I believe it's cynical, and I believe it has nothing to do with anything except with the by-election that is taking place on Thursday.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): To the minister of democratic renewal, I would gladly be persuaded, and I think the citizens who are going to come forward would gladly be persuaded, but you have an obligation first to tell them, when they go through all of those months and those agonies of the days of trying to find a better system, if there is, in fact, a better system—and then it's going to go to a referendum. But you will not tell, and you have not to date told, the people of the province or the people who are about to be chosen the percentage that is going to have to take place in the referendum.

We saw what happened in British Columbia. Those people worked for over a year to have their recom-

mendation put before the people of British Columbia, only to have it completely go for nothing because the level was set artificially high. It was set at 60% plus two thirds of the ridings. You have to state that in advance.

I was not at the press conference this morning, but I was told that was requested of you and you were asked, and it was not there. The people cannot be expected to put in all of that work for something that is impossible.

The committee—boldly, I think—said that it should be 50% plus one, and we expect that from you. We also expect that the list should be updated in advance so that new Canadians and younger people who were not on the list 11 years ago, when it was last updated, have an opportunity—

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

VISITORS

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like you to join me in welcoming the members of the Human Rights Advisory Council from Morocco: Dr. Mohamed Berdouzi, Dr. Badiia Mellouk and Dr. Salah El Oudie, accompanied by the head of the Moroccan community in Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, and welcome. That, of course, is not a point of order.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Could you please tell us how much money will be spent on the York subway expansion in the 2005-06 fiscal year? That's this year. How much money will be spent on that project in this year?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The entire amount we spoke about is being set into trust. It has had the full scrutiny of the Provincial Auditor. Though he can't do an opinion on it yet, he's been part of the loop all the way along. So the entire amount is now set aside and committed to public transit for the greater Toronto area.

I should say that is an appropriate investment, one that we're proud of. We're proud to partner with Toronto, we're proud to partner with York region, and we look forward. The ball is now in their court to make sure that this happens as quickly as possible. Their provincial government is in support of them, and we're going to work with them to ensure the best possible public transit in the greater Toronto area.

Mr. Tory: First of all, the truth of the matter is that the auditor doesn't have any details of your trust at all yet. The other truth of the matter is that the government will actually be spending very little money this year on

the project itself. It won't crack ground, as you know, for several years to come.

You and your spendaholic government are so intent on creating a deficit this year, you're so opposed to balancing the budget, you are so addicted to buying votes that you are going to be booking money that is not even going to be spent. You should have made the commitment to support the transit project, paid for it as it was actually built, and used the windfall that you have to balance the budget this year, right now.

My question is this: Can you tell us what the annual net interest charges will be to fund the money that you are putting into this trust fund, while it sits there and the subway is not yet being built? What is the annual interest charge on that?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The annual interest charge will be a lot less than the charges associated with them cutting taxes while the budget was in deficit; a lot less than that.

Let me tell you about another deficit; it's the infrastructure deficit. We're proud of our investment: \$1.4 billion in Move Ontario. What I am most proud of is that we are eliminating that deficit. We're confident that the economic benefit to the greater Toronto region and the economic benefit to the entire province of Ontario will be so great, over time, that that economic deficit that economists have talked about—you yourself said, "I don't give a hoot who paid for the subway as long as we get it built," Toronto Sun, November 6, 2004.

The Leader of the Opposition wants to have it both ways. The Leader of the Opposition says, "Balance the budget. Give more money to the farmers." The Leader of the Opposition wants to cut taxes—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need order. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: I hope the Minister of Finance is equally proud of the fact that the bogus accounting, and his desperate desire to make sure that we don't have a balanced budget this year and that we do have a deficit, will cost the taxpayers \$50 million; \$50 million so that you can play political games. That's enough money to provide a lot more help for farmers or to hire 480 nurses. That's \$50 million so that you can set up this gimmick trust and pretend you're spending the money now, when you're not. There are no shovels going into the ground. There is no money being spent. It is irresponsible, and it is playing politics.

I ask you to stand in your place now and say, "Yes, we will build the subway, but we will expense the money when it is needed and we will not put the taxpayers through an expenditure of \$50 million a year of their hard-earned money," to support your political gimmicks.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: For the leader of a party that said it had a balanced budget and left a \$5.5-billion deficit, it takes a lot of chutzpah to talk that way.

Let me tell you, we're proud of that investment, and we're proud of the trust we've set up. What we need now

is for the federal government to come to the table with their share. Do you know what? If the federal government comes to the table with their share, that construction can start right away. That's all we're waiting for.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition, I met with Mr. Flaherty. I've spoken to Mr. Flaherty. The Premier has spoken to Mr. Flaherty. We are glad that you've offered to make the phone call. The sooner that call happens, the sooner the federal government money flows, the sooner it will be built.

I hope they're at the table in their budget. I hope construction gets going. In the interim, we've set aside that money for public transit to improve the economic efficiency and economy not only of the GTA—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Tory: My question is also to the Minister of Finance. I could ask you, why, when you had a multi-billion dollar revenue windfall, you didn't balance the budget or even come as close as you can, but it's actually worse than that, and it's really an offshoot of the same thing we were just discussing.

Why did you, exactly as the budget leak speculated, do everything you could not to balance the budget and in fact create a deficit which will have the result of costing the taxpayers of Ontario tens and tens and tens of millions of dollars in additional debt charges? Why did you try as hard as you could not to balance the budget? Why did you do that?

1430

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition wants to have it both ways. He says to balance the budget. So I say to the Leader of the Opposition, what would you not have done? Would you not have given \$125 million to the grain and oilseed farmers? Would you not have provided \$114 million to keep Stelco active? Would you not have provided support for the forestry sector industry? Why wouldn't you support applying that money to public transit in the greater Toronto area?

The Minister of Health just reminds me of the cost of gridlock to this great metropolis and to the surrounding areas: more than \$2 billion per year. We made a strategic and prudent choice to invest in public transit.

We have eliminated 75% of the \$5.5-billion deficit that that leader and his party left this province. We're proud of those investments and they're right for the people—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Tory: The creation of this phony deficit and the creation of this gimmicky trust fund is not going to get one train on the tracks any sooner and it is not going to get one car moving any faster. It is simply going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario \$50 million of their hard-earned money per year to finance your political chicanery.

Another thing you could have done to balance the budget is to look for more savings and efficiencies. Last year your predecessor said he had so far found \$407 million out of a total target of \$750 million—a weak-

kneed target of \$750 million—in savings over the term of the government.

This year, in your budget address, I say to the Minister of Finance, the number still stands at \$407 million, meaning that in a whole year you didn't find one additional cent of waste and inefficiency. In your mad dash to shovel money out the door, have you given up on finding any efficiencies or eliminating any waste in your fat, bloated government?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The only thing that's fat and bloated is the rhetoric of the Leader of the Opposition. We have achieved \$407 million in efficiencies in two and a half years. That's on top of a budget that had a \$5.5-billion deficit, in spite of the fact that they said it was balanced. So unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we're investing in public transit and we're proud of it: \$400 million to roads and bridges, to municipalities throughout the province, and the money started flowing this week.

Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we've provided \$800 million to our farmers to provide assistance to the family farm. He says we shouldn't have done that. We're proud we did it and we wish we could have done more.

This budget has eliminated 75% of the deficit we inherited. It invests in public transit. It invests in health care and education. We're undoing the deficits that he and his party left saddled to the province of Ontario just two and a half short years ago.

Mr. Tory: The minister obviously has nothing to say on the subject of trying to find efficiencies and find waste in the government, and therefore I think your answer also confirms that in one year, from last year to this year, you found not one cent in additional savings, in additional efficiencies in the government.

Interjections.

Mr. Tory: Well, then, explain why it's at \$407 million two years in a row.

And I would ask you, are you prepared to table the list of the \$407 million? It's not \$408 million, it's not \$406 million, it's \$407 million. Table the list of the \$407 million in the House and tell us what you found this past year, because the number is exactly the same. It's pathetic that you couldn't find one dollar in additional waste in this government. Will you table the \$407-million list in this House today? Will you table it?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: What we're proud of is investing in public transit. What we're proud of is eliminating the health care deficit that we found when we came here. What we're proud of is 4,300 new teachers in schools across the province; 600 special education teachers teaching gym and art and music. Imagine that: gym and art and music back in our schools, with \$1 million for new textbooks.

We're slowly but surely removing the health deficit, the education deficit, the infrastructure and indeed the financial deficit that was left by Mr. Tory and his party. In two and a half short years, the achievements we have made are just the beginning. This government remains committed to public health care, public education, better infrastructure, and prudent and responsible fiscal man-

agement, something that was absent when your party was in office for eight long, painful years.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Can you tell the people of Ontario why the McGuinty government is still clawing back the national child benefit supplement from the poorest children in Ontario?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'm happy to take this question. I will perhaps refer any supplementaries to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Let me tell you how disappointed I am that after calling for the support of the leader of the NDP and his caucus in securing the \$1.9-billion agreement for early learning and child care that our government struck with the government of Canada on behalf of families in Ontario—including families of lower income who need the support that we want to provide to them, in terms of high-quality child care spaces and income subsidies, so that they can have the opportunity to go out, study, go out, work, improve their opportunities to be able to support their families better. I know there are some members of the Tory—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker: Be seated, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, this is the McGuinty government's election platform: Before the election, you said it was wrong to take money from the poorest children in Ontario. In fact, I can quote the Premier. He said, "The clawback is wrong and we will end it." Four hundred and forty-three thousand children live in poverty in Ontario—one in six children—under the McGuinty government. We see that last year your government had a \$3-billion revenue windfall. You could easily have afforded the \$220 million to end the clawback, to stop taking money away from the poorest kids in Ontario. Can you tell those children and their parents why, when the McGuinty government had a \$3-billion revenue surplus windfall, you continue to take \$1,500 a year away from the poorest kids in Ontario?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: The doublespeak on behalf of the leader of the provincial NDP is really quite disappointing. If he really cared about children in Ontario, he would be supporting our request that the government of Canada honour the \$1.9-billion agreement which would have served to benefit the same children that he claims to be supporting. That's \$1.4 billion that he wants us to leave on the table rather than standing by even his federal colleagues, who are on the same page that we are on, supporting children and families in Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, maybe you need a briefing from your officials, because it is the federal government

that established the national child care benefit. It is the federal government which sends \$1,500 a year to very poor children and their families, and over \$2,000 a year where there are two children in the family. But it's the McGuinty government that takes that money away from those children. It's got nothing to do with the federal government giving this money and taking it back; they've given it. It's the McGuinty government that's taking it back from the poorest kids, despite the specific promise of Dalton McGuinty that he was going to end it because it was "wrong." You had a \$3-billion revenue surplus last year—a \$3-billion revenue windfall. You could easily have afforded it. Tell those poor kids and those families why, under those circumstances, you continue to take \$1,500 away from those poorest children in Ontario every year.

1440

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: We know that families in Ontario are a lot better off than when we took over this government in 2003. I know that my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services is really eager to add to this debate.

Interjection.

The Speaker: No, you—

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: All right, Mr. Speaker, let me tell the leader of the NDP. A single parent with two children in this province is now more than \$1,600 per year better off than they were when we were elected to lead this government in 2003—a 15.6% increase over 2003-04. Now, is there more to be done? Yes, there is more to be done, and we look forward to doing more for these families, as we have been doing in the first two and a half years of our government.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Minister of Children and Youth Services, you may say you're putting in \$1,600. What they see is that you're taking \$1,500 a year out of their pockets—families that can barely afford to pay the rent and put food on the table.

But I want to ask you about your budget cut to child care. Your own budget document shows that in this coming fiscal year, 2006-07, you're going to cut \$186 million from child care. There has been \$3 billion in surplus revenue this past year, but in the coming year you're going to take \$186 million out of child care—a 22% cut.

Tell me, with so many families waiting for child care, with those surplus revenues you had last year, and even larger surplus revenues headed into this year, how do you justify cutting \$186 million from child care?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): The leader of the NDP again continues to mislead people. You know—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): You need to reword—

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I withdraw that. I'd like to suggest that what the leader of the NDP has just said is grossly inaccurate.

Of the first three years of the five-year agreement, our target was to extend the capacity of child care facilities in this province by 25,000 new spaces, new spaces that clearly reflect the demand for this kind of facility. As indicated by the progress we have made to date, by September 2006, more than 14,000—in fact, 14,783—new spaces will have been provided. I look forward to responding to supplementary questions.

Mr. Hampton: What I think people have a hard time swallowing is that, once again, this is the Dalton McGuinty election document, where you promised you were going to put in \$300 million a year of new provincial funding for child care. Now, what we see is that you had \$3 billion of surplus revenues last year, you're going to have even more revenues in the fiscal year that we're going into, and yet the McGuinty government isn't going to put in \$300 million of new provincial funding for child care; you're actually going to chop \$186 million of money that was already there. Tell me, when you make these promises in your election document, when you clearly had surplus revenues coming in last year and even more coming in this next fiscal year, how do you justify cutting \$186 million from child care?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: Again, the leader of the NDP is not being accurate in his statements. Let me give you a sense of what we're doing.

We are ensuring that the additional capacity in the child care system here in Ontario will be sustained, that we will be able to support the 14,783 spaces that will be added by September 2006, while we continue to fight on behalf of families in Ontario who have said they need this kind of support. We are very pleased that our government was able to secure a five-year agreement with the government of Canada. If the leader of the NDP really cared about families and children in Ontario, he would be standing beside us, just as his federal colleagues are standing beside us, in support of the federal government honouring that agreement.

Mr. Hampton: I support my federal leader, Jack Layton, in the fight for a national child care strategy, but this is about your budget. This is about your election promise, where you said that you were going to put \$300 million of new provincial money into child care. Yet here we see that in fact there's no \$300 million of new provincial funding—not last year, not this year. With surplus revenues last year, you didn't put \$300 million into child care. With even bigger revenues going ahead in the next fiscal year, which begins on April 1, you're not putting \$300 million into child care; you're cutting \$186 million, 22% of the child care budget. I simply think that all those hard-working parents who are waiting in line for child care deserve an explanation from the McGuinty government. Why are you cutting child care by \$186 million—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: The Minister of Finance would actually like to address this.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I would refer members to page 95 of the document. This looks at the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. I will point out to the member opposite that since this government took office, not only have we exceeded \$300 million, we're over \$900 million. Now, I could be disingenuous like the leader of the third party—that has a lot more to do with things other than child care—but I'm not going to be disingenuous like that. That's not the right way to have this debate. It's true; the amount of money available for child care has gone down because we lost \$1.4 billion from the federal government.

I was just reminded that they scrapped 6,000 daycare subsidies when they were in office. Here's what Kerry McCuaig had to say. "The NDP government killed provincial child care."

This budget saves provincial child care. It invests the money that we have to keep 14,000 of 25,000 spaces—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): My question is for the Minister of Finance, and the Acting Premier. At an \$800-a-ticket Liberal fundraiser in early March, the former Minister of Finance, Mr. Sorbara, reportedly tipped off at least one guest to the fact that you'd be announcing the York subway expansion in last Thursday's budget. Of course, we all know that tip was absolutely correct. You know the financial implications of this kind of leak, and it's your responsibility to ensure the integrity of the budget process. So I ask you again, can you confirm for this House that you've referred this important matter to the OPP for investigation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): We are proud of the Move Ontario plan that we tabled in this House last Thursday. We're proud to be responding to the first priority of the Toronto Transit Commission; we're proud to respond to York region's first priority. We're proud that a subway expansion that was fully documented and an environmental assessment are moving ahead. We're proud to say that we're going further than that: We're going to the Vaughan Corporate Centre, and we're very proud of that. We're also proud of the fact that this government keeps its commitments on public transit and invests properly.

The budget process is out in public. The speculation that was there before was all a matter of public record prior to the budget. This investment's going forward; that subway is going to be built. They can try all they want to stop it, but we're moving forward. It's the right thing to do.

1450

Mr. Wilson: I would just say to the minister and to everyone here that there seems to be a pattern developing around swanky Liberal fundraisers, the former Minister of Finance and land north of Toronto. Last year, it was a

multi-million dollar exemption from the greenbelt that was handed out following a \$10,000-a-plate fundraiser at the Sorbara mansion. Now, at an \$800-a-plate Liberal fundraiser with Mr. Sorbara, highly sensitive and potentially lucrative information about the budget is leaked weeks in advance.

In Ottawa, the federal Liberal Party is under investigation by the RCMP for potentially leaking lucrative financial information a few days in advance of an announcement. The subway leak took place weeks in advance, giving those who may have known about it ample time to take advantage of it. So I ask you again, why haven't you done the right thing and called in the OPP to investigate this matter?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Journalists will do a good job to try to get public information as quickly as they can, and there's always speculation on budgets. In fact, let's have a look. The 2003 Magna budget: We all remember that budget, don't we? I remember that. That was out at Magna. We decided not to do ours there, even though Belinda is with us now. But let me tell you, it was a budget full of tax cuts, and that was published weeks before the budget. Did you call an OPP investigation? No.

Headline: "Tax Cuts to be Jewel of Ontario's Non-budget," *Globe and Mail*, March 27, 2003. Did you have an OPP investigation? No.

Headline: "Putting Eves's Defence to a Reality Check," *Toronto Star*, March 26, 2003. Did you put that to an OPP security check? No.

By the way, just so we don't forget, it happened in 2002, 2000, 1999—oh, and in 1991 in the NDP budget: "Corporate Tax Plan on Hold, Official Hints." Was there an OPP investigation? No. That was a tax leak. In the 1992 budget, headline, *Globe and Mail*, April 23: "Ontario"—

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

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Acting Premier. Perhaps we can get a better answer than we just got from the Minister of Finance.

On March 8, Vaughan Mayor Michael Di Biase told reporters that, weeks before the budget was unveiled, former Finance Minister Greg Sorbara informed him that a subway expansion into Vaughan would be included. Days later, Mr. Sorbara, a member of your caucus, denied that the conversation ever took place and insisted he knew nothing about the budget at all. My question to you, Mr. Acting Premier: How do you explain the discrepancy?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm very proud as a Torontonian who has been around the subject of an expansion of that subway line north to York University and beyond for at least two decades. In fact, I had the privilege of serving, in a prior life in politics, as chief of staff to Barbara Hall, the mayor of Toronto, who at the time was a member of Metro council before the amalgamation of the city of Toronto. At the time, the NDP government was in office. I believe that the proposal in discussion at that time was

for a five-fold expansion of subway lines in the city of Toronto. Most certainly at that time, the conversation with respect to the expansion to York University and York region beyond was front and centre. My colleague was the chair of the Toronto Transit Commission during the same time period. This discussion was ongoing then. Accordingly, I think it's just about time that the honourable member in the back row over there figured out what most of us had figured out a good decade or two ago.

Mr. Prue: Perhaps the Acting Premier has forgotten that I was a mayor then too, and I was part of the same discussions with his boss. But my question is about the discrepancy. I'm going to say it again: My question is about the discrepancy. The former finance minister says he knew nothing about the budget items, but the mayor of Vaughan has clearly stated that Mr. Sorbara did know the details and shared them with him. Then on budget day, the Globe and Mail reports that Mr. Sorbara's family stands to pocket a substantial amount of change once the budget goes through.

It doesn't look good for this Legislature; it doesn't look good for your government; it doesn't look good for the process of the budget. Mr. Acting Premier, are you going to take any steps to clear the air, investigate the matter and reassure the public that everything here has been done properly?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I would strenuously assert that what doesn't look good is that the honourable member, part of a party that used to have a commitment to public transit, instead has demonstrated very little more than a commitment to mudslinging. To draw into the conversation land holdings that people may or may not have had over a period of decades is, I think, the best example yet that there are some of those out there who want to manufacture circumstances that are really quite unconnected.

The reality is very, very clear. Anyone connected to the reality of the greater Toronto area, of its growth and of the challenges associated with moving people in it, knows well that the issue at hand is not a matter of just the last week or two weeks, but rather a matter that has challenged our region for a couple of decades. Accordingly, I'm—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Canada's farmers are in a dire position. Environmental concerns and economic factors have left them in a tough spot. I was very pleased to see our government's show of support in the form of the \$125-million package targeting the hardest-hit sectors. Ontario is the only province in this country to show that kind of support to its farmers. I know our government has held the position that a multi-year risk management program, in partnership with the federal government, is the direction that needs to be taken. This government continues to do what it can, but it

simply cannot compete with countries like our southern neighbour. The federal government has to come to the table. Minister, you have been tireless in pressing this point to your federal counterparts. Can you tell us if you have received any commitment from the federal government yet?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I appreciate the strong advocacy of the member from Huron–Bruce for the agriculture community. She raises a very important point. Our government has been meeting with farm groups, certainly since we've come to government, and I have since I've come to this portfolio. Last fall, we had a plan that we wanted to bring to the federal government. We've been listening to farmers and they say that they want a multi-year strategy. They want to stop the one-offs that governments have provided to them up until now. They want a multi-year strategy that includes the provincial government and the federal government.

I've had the opportunity to bring this to the attention of the federal minister. There is a commitment out there, a campaign commitment from the federal government, that they are prepared to spend \$500 million. I have not had any resounding response that they are ready to do this. I called the federal minister just this morning to again press to meet with him because this is—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. There may be a supplementary. Supplementary?

Mrs. Mitchell: I would encourage all members here, and especially the members over there, to press their federal counterparts to live up to their obligation to our farmers. While many of the factors that affect farmers are addressed on the federal level, we can and we must continue to do all we can for our farmers and our rural way of life in Ontario. The tradition is integral to the identity of this province and of this country. The recent budget addressed this need. Can you tell us this government's commitment to our farmers? It shall continue, Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I believe that the budget document in many ways demonstrates our government's commitment to farmers and to rural Ontario. Again, the budget of agriculture, food and rural affairs has increased. But I think what's most important in this document is that it is clearly stated that our government is committed to a multi-year strategy with the federal government. It's time they came to the table with the money. Our Premier has made it very clear that we are at the table. We are ready, with our sleeves rolled up, to work toward a plan that will stop the one-offs and will bring the sustainability to this industry that it's been asking for and that it deserves.

It's time folks on that side of the House pick up the phone, call their federal members and tell Mr. Harper this has to be a priority. Agriculture needs to be added to the five priorities at the federal level. We need action now for farmers in Ontario.

The Speaker: New question. The Leader of the Opposition.

1500

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Finance, following up on both that very interesting self-congratulatory question and also the minister's answer, where she indicates—I think in fact what we have, and I asked the Minister of Finance about this, is 244 million ways in which this government has demonstrated its lack of commitment to the farmers of Ontario, and that's the cutback of \$244 million you've got in your budget for the farmers of Ontario. So I want to know, in the midst of all this largesse, that you can afford to be putting hundreds of millions of dollars in phony trust funds for stuff that isn't even needed this year in terms of the actual spending—the spending is not needed. The spending will not happen this year—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: The spending is not needed this year. On top of that, we've established that it's going to cost \$50 million in interest charges for you to set up this phony trust fund for money that won't be spent this year, won't be spent next year, does not need to be booked now. So my question is this: When you had this mountain of additional revenue, why did you choose to put money into the phony trust fund and cost taxpayers millions in interest and leave the farmers faced with a \$244-million spending cutback on the part of your government?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I would refer the Leader of the Opposition to page 95 of the budget. For this year, which we are still in, 2005-06, the leader of the opposition will be aware that three weeks ago we announced \$125 million. That is included in this year's line.

Next year we're going to be looking at all these issues, as we have every year. We've put \$800 million into our farm communities through income supports in three years. But let me point out one other number to the leader of the third party. That's the last full year you were in office, when you spent less than \$650 million on agriculture. We're up to over a billion dollars this year, including \$800 million for income support.

When there's a problem on the family farm, we all have a problem. We're standing behind our farmers, and I say to the Leader of the Opposition, please help us with the federal government—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: The Minister of Finance is so much wanting to refer to page 95, and in fact, it does show, for 2005-06, total spending of \$1.14 billion. Here it is right here—tell me which part of the math is wrong: total spending for 2006-07 at \$896 million, a reduction of \$244 million to the farmers of Ontario.

We phoned the Agricorp toll-free number today. They said that, out of all this money that you've committed in the current fiscal year, not one red cent of the new money recently announced has flowed. You play this blame

game, you and your colleague, with the federal government. Their money is actually flowing to farmers today. The money that's not flowing is only because you haven't supplied them with the crop data they need to know which farmers should get so much. So why are you dragging your feet, why are you cutting back \$244 million, why are you delaying sending them the crop data, and why aren't you getting any cheques out the door, as your own toll-free hotline confirmed this afternoon? It's because you've turned your backs on the farmers in Ontario. It's a disgrace.

The Speaker: The question's been asked.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Year over year, expenditures have gone up both on the operating basis and on the contingency basis.

Interestingly enough, when our farming community was having problems in 1997-98, was there any one-time extraordinary money? No. In 1998-99: No. In 2000-01, there was a bit; still not even close to what we've put in. In 2001-02, nothing. In 2002-03, nothing. And by the way, that \$125 million we've booked this year, which we gave three weeks ago—you said we shouldn't have done it. You said we should have balanced the budget. You're trying to have it every which way. You tell the farmers one thing; you tell the financial community another thing.

This government stands behind its farming community. When there's a problem on the family farm, we all have a problem. Now it's time for the federal government to come to the table—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I heard the Minister of Labour utter a completely unparliamentary remark, and I would ask you to ask him to withdraw it.

The Speaker: I didn't hear it, but if he did, he has the opportunity to withdraw.

New question.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Inquests across the province have repeatedly asked your government to restore counselling services, tighten restraining orders and, in the case of the Gillian Hadley inquest, change bail provisions. Yet you've failed to act. Two weeks ago, Fallon Mason, a 23-year-old Brantford woman, was reportedly murdered by an ex-boyfriend. Brantford police believe that her death could have been prevented. Minister, how many more women must die before your government takes the necessary measures to fight and prevent violence against women?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): The member opposite will know how proud this government is of the domestic violence action plan that we tabled in this House months and months ago. Encompassed in that plan are four significant areas for change and improvement. The member opposite should also tell

us which of those she disagrees with, because they are significant.

In the first area, training, for the first time we are funding training of front-line people, professionals involved in domestic violence. For the first time ever, the Ontario government is involved. In a significant area, for the first time, the Ontario government is involved in public education to actually change attitudes around the area of domestic violence. A significant part of our plan is enhancements to community supports, and this member opposite should appreciate that with the number in her own riding that have benefited. Fourth, and very important, is the justice sector and the significant amount of work that is being done to improve the—

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

Ms. Horwath: The minister must know that she promised \$68 million for your domestic violence action plan, yet only \$26 million has actually flowed, most of it in pilot projects. According to the Ontario Women's Justice Network, your program direction itself is vague, despite the detailed recommendations you have had from coroners, from inquests, from stakeholders and even from your own advisers. Minister, you're nowhere near keeping even half of your promises to women. In your budget you had the chance to truly protect women. Why didn't you?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: Let me say this: The information that this member opposite is suggesting is absolute nonsense. Let me tell you that our plan is a \$68-million commitment over these four years of implementation, and a significant amount has gone out the door already. She should know this, because she was busy calling my office for the details all last week. And we gave them all of the information that they needed to present accurate information in this House.

Let me talk about these incidents in Brantford over these last couple of weeks, because this is a tragedy that Ontarians face on a regular basis. We need this to stop. We need this to change. Last week, I met once again with the new federal minister responsible so that we could discuss issues like the changes to the Criminal Code, which is a federal responsibility and which may be the only place where we actually have common ground with this new national government, and that is the discussion of reverse onus on bail. It is a significant issue that I would appreciate help—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1510

TORONTO WATERFRONT

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): My question today is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Earlier today, Minister Caplan made an announcement regarding a groundbreaking for a new community to be built in the west Don lands on the Toronto waterfront. This news was a long time coming, for many reasons, but largely because previous provincial governments dragged their heels and did not act. Toronto resi-

dents really want a waterfront that's vital and thriving. Could you explain, Minister, how this plan came to fruition, and what role this provincial government had in making it happen?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): It is a delight to be able to answer this question because it was my great honour this morning to, at long last, set in motion real, tangible action to deliver on a vision of a waterfront revitalized here in the city of Toronto. After decades of unfulfilled expectations, today marks a historic turning point. Waterfront renewal has truly moved from planning to implementation, with the beginning of the first major sustainable community. The reason for that? What made the difference? In a word, leadership: the leadership exemplified by Premier McGuinty and our government when we signed in September 2005 an MOU with the waterfront corporation and our own Ontario Realty Corp. We led the way to unlock the jurisdictional gridlock that has held up waterfront renewal for generations.

I want to acknowledge the determined support of our colleague the Honourable George Smitherman for his stewardship in the initiative of Toronto Centre-Rosedale and the many residents and advisory groups who have never given up on their mission of building a better community. I also want to recognize the city of Toronto and—

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

Ms. Wynne: I think it's important that we do recognize the federal government and the city of Toronto in moving this plan forward. I'm sure that every member from Toronto in this House and in fact every member will support the ideal of a strong and vital waterfront in Toronto because if Toronto's waterfront is to be an integral part of the city, if it's to draw residents and tourists and business to the city, we must do what you've begun today. We know that this is vital to the city, Minister, but could you outline why this is so important to the whole province of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: It's important as a showcase for the many priorities of the McGuinty government. The west Don lands will be an exemplar of how modern communities should grow. As we outlined in our proposed growth strategy for the greater Golden Horseshoe, the west Don lands will be shaped by the broader principles of brownfield redevelopment, affordable housing, environmentally sustainable and transit-oriented development, and open park space. The west Don lands will include 6,000 new residential units—1,500 affordable units—for over 10,000 new residents; 25% of the community will be parks and open space, including an eight-hectare Don River Park; a new light rail transit line within a five-minute walk of all of the new homes; two child care centres; a community centre and pool; and a new elementary school. The west Don lands initiative is Ontario's highest Toronto waterfront revitalization priority, and I am proud to stand before you today and tell you that it has become a reality.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Essentially your budget ignores one of the fastest-growing regions not just in Canada but certainly here in Ontario in the areas of transportation, agriculture and health care. For example, you extended funding for the York region subway at \$670 million; \$95 million to the city of Brampton for transit; \$65 million for Mississauga. Conspicuously absent from the eastern GTA is the Durham region. I quote Roger Anderson, who is the chair, and he says he's left wondering why they're excluded: "Durham ... is one of the fastest-growing regions within the GTA and yet there was no mention at all for transportation."

Minister, I'm quite familiar with the issues myself as I talk to my constituents each day and I listen to the people. I've read the Toronto Star article on this. Why have you ignored Durham region in your most recent budget?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I had the chance to talk to Judi Longfield about this just last night. Let me tell you what I told Judi Longfield. We have redeveloped the Ajax and Pickering hospital to increase emergency room capacity by 60,000 visits and expand lab and mental health services—something you didn't do in eight long, painful years. We invested \$5 million in 2006 to support public transit in Durham. What did you do for public transit? You cut all money out of public transit. One hundred and ninety new teachers hired at local public and Catholic high schools; 190 new teachers to teach kids in Durham region. Some \$93 million invested in 18 Whitby-Ajax long-term-care homes; \$4 million to support violence against women agencies in Durham region; \$18.8 million for Durham affordable, high-quality child care spaces. That's an enviable record—

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

Mr. O'Toole: Minister, what I'm actually hearing is that you're paying more and getting less. It could be no more evident than just driving around Durham region. In fact, the chair once again said a lot of money is going to the west of Yonge Street, very little east of Yonge Street.

In fact, in the agricultural sector, Ron Bonnett, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, said, "The province keeps talking about the need to have a vibrant economy, but does not reflect this with action" in agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture, as has been stated by our leader, John Tory, was slashed by \$244 million.

You mentioned health care. You know, if I listen and look at health care, what's actually the evidence there is that cancer surgery waiting lists are up 67%, angioplasty is up 213%, hip replacements are up 59%, and the list goes on.

The main issue for me and the people of Ontario is that there's a chance to show this government something

this Thursday, to look at Christine Elliott, to send a message to the Minister of Finance.

Interjection: Who closed Whitby General Hospital?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Yes, who closed Whitby General Hospital? The Tories did. That's who closed Whitby General Hospital.

Let's see:

—\$2.3 million for 140 housing units under the affordable housing program, something you slashed completely;

—50 additional police officers in Durham region and 31 crown prosecutors to fight crime; and

—the greenbelt: 1.8 million acres of protected land in Durham. You were against that.

In the budget, \$22.5 million in road and bridge funding is going to Durham region this week. Why? Because unlike them, we're not suggesting these decisions should be political. What we're saying is that we responded to Toronto's top priority. We responded to York region's top priority. Durham region would be well served by Judi Longfield speaking up in a manner that he knows nothing about in terms of being a strong voice for—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, there are thousands of hard-working farmers across Ontario who are in danger of losing their livelihood and their farms. They have met with your government time and time again to tell you that they have not recovered from the BSE crisis, to tell you that the American subsidies to grains and oilseeds are putting more and more Ontario farmers out of business. They asked you for a risk management strategy. They asked you for some help for farmers who are still struggling with the aftermath of the BSE crisis. Yet, when they looked at your budget, there was nothing. In fact, there was a cut. Can you tell those farmers, farmers like Stephen Webster, who continues to live in his car here at Queen's Park to protest your inaction, why you've turned your back on hard-working Ontario farmers?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I think it is very important that I take this opportunity to set the record straight and remind the people of Ontario that this government has increased the budget at agriculture, food and rural affairs. A cut to agriculture would be what happened under your government, when, over your term, you cut the budget at Ag and Food by over 25%. We increased the budget.

I have been meeting with farm leaders since I've come to this file, and this is what they're asking for: They're asking for a multi-year partnership program with the federal government. Our government did provide them with short-term help to the tune of \$125 million: \$80 million for grains and oilseeds, \$35 million for fruit and vegetable growers, and \$10 million that will support the livestock and poultry industry in this province. Our

government has a record of supporting the agriculture industry when—

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

Mr. Hampton: It seems the new answer for the McGuinty government on every issue is to now blame the federal government. Minister, if I look to Quebec, Quebec has established a risk management strategy for their grain and oilseed farmers. If I look to Alberta, they have established a risk management strategy for their grain and oilseed farmers. Yet when I look at the Ontario budget: nothing. Not only that, but when I look at communities across rural and northern Ontario, when they look to see what was in the budget to address their needs: nothing. Pickle Lake, for example, told your government that the downloading of policing is literally bankrupting the community. Was there anything to address that? Nothing. The community of Sioux Lookout told you the same thing, that the downloading of Ontario provincial policing was essentially bankrupting the community. Was there anything for them? Nothing.

Tell me again, Minister: When so many communities are in need and when the McGuinty government had \$3 billion in surplus revenue, why did you turn your back on northern and rural Ontario?

1520

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: First of all, I want to correct the honourable member. We're not blaming the federal government; we're looking to the federal government to come to the table and work with us. I know that's a novel concept, but that's exactly what farmers have asked of us and that is exactly what we are committed to do.

In the short term, until we get a multi-year partnership strategy with the federal government, we have invested \$125 million to support farmers. Those cheques will be out within weeks.

That's the kind of support our government has shown for the agriculture community. We have been there, and we will continue to be their advocate with the federal government for the kind of deal they have been asking for.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. My community recently has been rocked by two high-profile tragedies: the death of a small boy and the death of a young woman as a result of domestic violence.

Eight-year-old Jared Osidacz was stabbed to death last Saturday by his father, Andrew. He died while protecting two women who were under attack by his father. They were able to escape because of his heroic sacrifice.

Fallon Mason, a 23-year-old mother of two young children, died a few days earlier in, regrettably, the city's first murder of 2006. She was also a victim of senseless domestic violence at the hands of her ex-boyfriend.

Contrary to what has been said, a review of the protocols in place indicated that no fault should be placed on our local system.

Minister, what actions has our government taken to combat domestic violence across the province?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I think it's apparent to all in this House that every one of us takes these issues extremely seriously and personally because they affect every one of us. To the entire Brantford community, we extend our greatest sympathies in what they are facing today, led of course by our own MPP from Brantford, who himself has been a huge supporter of Nova Vita house in the Brantford area and has often brought that campaign here to the House for full provincial support.

We have worked diligently in this area since we became the government in 2003. We are moving forward with additional changes, enhancements and supports. We need everyone on side to implement our domestic violence action plan, and we intend to do just that.

Mr. Levac: It is clear that all of us here are on the right track. The organizations in my community are grateful for the funding that previous governments and this government have provided, but much more needs to be done.

Many of these organizations and others have said that men need to be better educated about domestic violence. We need to teach our sons that it's not okay to raise your hand to your sister or to your mother. Men need to know that it's not acceptable to strike their partner. Cultures, no matter where, cannot accept the disgrace of hitting their partner. Our daughters must not accept physical or verbal abuse from their boyfriends. A change in culture is needed by men, for men.

Minister, what have we done to support programs and organizations that are working to change the culture of violence?

I every challenge every man in this place to do one more thing to eradicate domestic violence.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I think that this member points to the very, very important work that is currently being done on two fronts in this domestic violence action plan. A very significant part is public education, where for the first time we really are leading the charge to bring organizations together and fund them to provide public education opportunities to actually change attitudes. That's what the member from Brantford is speaking about: We need to bring forward programs so that young girls understand that they are equal in gender, and that they grow up to be strong young women and strong women, so that their relationships are, in fact, equal, because every case is about a power struggle in domestic violence, and young women need to know that they will enter into relationships that are, in fact, equal. That's only going to happen when we change attitudes in Ontario.

We're prepared to take the lead. We have said from the beginning that we need everyone on board to be

doing this: friends, families, neighbours, agencies, the provincial government, the federal government, municipalities, all members of this House. We intend to make a difference, even in this first term of our government.

PETITIONS

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I have a petition here on behalf of my colleague Frank Klees to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Interestingly enough, there are many people from my riding who have signed this petition for Mr. Klees.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas 1,920 Ontarians are currently on a waiting list for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas the number of Ontarians waiting for an organ transplant has virtually doubled since 1994; and

“Whereas hundreds die every year waiting for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas greater public education and awareness will increase the number of people who sign their organ donor cards and increase the availability of organ transplants for Ontarians; and

“Whereas the private member’s bill proposed by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees will require every resident 16 years of age and older to complete an organ donation question when applying for or renewing a driver’s licence or provincial health card, thereby increasing public awareness of the importance of organ donation while respecting the right of every person to make a personal decision regarding the important issue of organ donation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 67, the Organ and Tissue Donation Mandatory Declaration Act, 2006.”

I support this petition and so I affix my name to it.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I’m pleased to introduce this petition to the House. I just want to quickly mention the name of Marg Walkden, who in less than two weeks put together over 2,500 signatures on these petitions; 174 pages. So thank you, Marg.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the people of the city of Niagara Falls deserve and have the right to quality health care; and

“Whereas the people petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and”—in particular—“the Niagara Health System to cease the closing of 11 hospital beds scheduled for the Greater Niagara General site; and

“Whereas the people of Niagara Falls feel that further cutbacks at the Greater Niagara General site will have a ... negative impact on the delivery of patient care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the Ministry of Health ... and”—in particular—“the Niagara Health System to cease all cutbacks and provide the citizens of Niagara Falls with ... health care that was once present in the city of Niagara Falls.”

I’m pleased to submit this petition and sign my signature to it.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by a great number of people from Oxford county and from ridings around the province. It is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas 1,920 Ontarians are currently on a waiting list for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas the number of Ontarians waiting for an organ transplant has virtually doubled since 1994; and

“Whereas hundreds die every year waiting for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas greater public education and awareness will increase the number of people who sign their organ donor cards and increase the availability of organ transplants for Ontarians; and

“Whereas the private member’s bill proposed by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees will require every resident 16 years of age and older to complete an organ donation question when applying for or renewing a driver’s licence or provincial health card, thereby increasing public awareness of the importance of organ donation while respecting the right of every person to make a personal decision regarding the important issue of organ donation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 67, the Organ and Tissue Donation Mandatory Declaration Act, 2006.”

I affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

1530

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services.

“Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

“Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis....

“Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

“Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one’s good credit rating;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature on December 8, 2005, be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

“(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated ... form, protecting our vital private information, such as SIN and loan account numbers.

“(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

“(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit-inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.

“(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate.”

I submit this and I'm glad to sign it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I have a petition on behalf of Tamara Wilcox and others from the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase ... funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

I'm pleased to sign this in support of long-term care in my riding of Durham.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'm actually introducing this on behalf of the folks of Etobicoke Centre today. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

SPECIAL CARE HOMES

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

“Whereas hundreds of vulnerable adults live in homes for special care that provide them a warm and secure, stable and friendly environment which allows them to lead fulfilling lives; and

“Whereas the alternative for many of these individuals is a life of homelessness on the street; and

“Whereas special care homes have had only a single 3% increase since 1999, which in no way matches the rising costs they face; and

“Whereas the Liberal government promised Ontario in the election they would ‘significantly increase supportive housing options for those suffering from mental illness’;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the government to bring in an immediate increase in funding to homes for special care.”

I've affixed my signature to this.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I'm happy to bring this petition forward on behalf of Tony and Mario Codispoti from my riding of Mississauga East.

“Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

“Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

“Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients, with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

“Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Erbitux, Avastin, Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients.”

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition that Dave and Heather Dunlop of Owen Sound did a lot of work to gather the names for. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas 1,920 Ontarians are currently on a waiting list for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas the number of Ontarians waiting for an organ transplant has virtually doubled since 1994; and

“Whereas hundreds die every year waiting for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas greater public education and awareness will increase the number of people who sign their organ donor cards and increase the availability of organ transplants for Ontarians; and

“Whereas the private member's bill proposed by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees will require every resident 16 years of age and older to complete an organ donation question when applying for or renewing a driver's licence or a provincial health card, thereby increasing public awareness of the importance of organ donation

while respecting the right of every person to make a personal decision regarding the important issue of organ donation.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 67, the Organ and Tissue Donation Mandatory Declaration Act, 2006.”

I have signed this.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and I'd like to thank Vijay Kumar, Czarina Tang and Sanjiv Soni for gathering some signatures for me on it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers who work with the parties in the dispute; and

“Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West, and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

“Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

“Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

“Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services.”

I'm pleased to support and sign this petition and to have page Leah carry it for me.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I have a petition here on macular degeneration. I'd like to thank Dr. Timothy Hillson, from Orillia, who has helped put this together.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas age-related macular degeneration ... is the leading cause of blindness in the elderly and is present in some form in 25% to 33% of seniors over the age of 75. AMD has two forms: the more common ‘dry’ type and the ‘wet’ type. Although the wet type occurs in only 15% of AMD patients, these patients account for 90% of the legal blindness that occurs with AMD. The wet type is

further subdivided into classic and occult subtypes, based on the appearance of the AMD on special testing. Photodynamic therapy, a treatment where abnormal blood vessels are closed with a laser-activated chemical, has been shown to slow the progression of vision loss in both subtypes of wet AMD;

“Whereas OHIP has not extended coverage for photodynamic therapy to the occult subtype of wet AMD, despite there being substantial clinical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this treatment in patients with either form of wet AMD. Untreated, these patients can expect a progression in their visual loss, with central blindness as the end result;

“Whereas affected patients are in a position where a proven treatment is available to help preserve their vision, but this treatment can only be accessed at their own personal expense. Treatment costs are between \$12,500 and \$18,000 over an 18-month period. Many patients resign themselves to a continued worsening of their vision, as for them the treatment is financially unattainable. The resultant blindness in these patients manifests itself as costs to society in other forms, such as an increased need for home care, missed time from work for family members providing care, and an increased rate of injuries such as hip fractures that can be directly attributable to their poor vision.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of the occult sub-type of macular degeneration with photodynamic therapy for all patients awaiting this service.”

I'm pleased to sign this, and to pass it on to Mercedes to pass on to you.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to introduce this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the people of Ontario demand a quality public education system that will give our children the tools to compete with the world; and

“Whereas Premier McGuinty and the Liberal caucus are fighting for our future by implementing a positive plan to improve our public schools, including smaller class sizes;

“Whereas the Conservative Party and John Tory want to take millions from the public education to literally pay people to withdraw their children from the public system and send them to elite private schools;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support Premier McGuinty in his commitment to giving our children a ladder to success through excellent public education and not spend taxpayer dollars to benefit the few who can afford private school tuitions.”

I'm pleased to sign my signature to this petition in support of it.

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ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads,

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas 1,920 Ontarians are currently on a waiting list for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas the number of Ontarians waiting for an organ transplant has virtually doubled since 1994;

“Whereas hundreds die every year waiting for an organ transplant;

“Whereas greater public education and awareness will increase the number of people who sign their organ donor cards and increase the availability of organ transplants for Ontarians; and

“Whereas the private member’s bill proposed by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees will require every resident 16 years of age and older to complete an organ donation question when applying for or renewing a driver’s licence or provincial health card, thereby increasing public awareness of the importance of organ donation while respecting the right of every person to make a personal decision regarding the important issue of organ donation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 67, the Organ and Tissue Donation Mandatory Declaration Act, 2006.”

I support this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2006 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 23, 2006, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The leader of the official opposition.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I’d like to begin by explaining to the people at home and to the members of the Legislature this tie that I’m wearing today. It’s a Montreal Canadiens tie. In view of the very disappointing performance of my Toronto Maple Leafs in the last two outings, Mr. Murdoch has required that I should wear this tie here because he, very honourably, wore a Toronto Maple Leafs tie when, long ago, the Toronto Maple Leafs defeated the Montreal Canadiens. So it’s not a happy occasion for me, but I believe very strongly in keeping my word on these matters so I’m wearing the tie today.

I should say I believe very strongly in keeping my word on these and all other matters, as well. I say that for the benefit of my friends opposite.

I think it is—

Interjections.

Mr. Tory: They react so defensively to that.

I think it’s important, when you speak, as I’m going to do for the next hour or so about the budget, to start with some good news. There are always some things you can find, if you look hard enough, even in this budget, that are worthy of commendation. I want to start by saying what good news it is that the government of Ontario, under the leadership of the Minister of Finance and the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North, has decided to fund insulin pumps and other such equipment for the people who are suffering from that disease. It’s going to make a big difference, especially for a lot of kids, and I commend the government on making a decision which, as the minister indicated at the time of his budget speech, was one that was shared by all members of the House.

I would like to find one more—not just one more, but one more. I also want to say that I support and applaud the decision by the minister and the government to bring in some additional support for the digital interactive business. I’ve had an opportunity, as I’m sure the minister and other members have, to go to one of the movie production facilities downtown. When you walk in those places, you can hardly believe what you see. There are literally 300 people sitting at computer terminals, doing animation work that creates huge numbers of well-paying jobs for graduates of places like Sheridan and other colleges. It puts us at the forefront of a lot of this movie production which otherwise would not be happening in Ontario, quite frankly.

May I say at the same time that I welcome the decision by the minister to extend the tax credits that apply to other kinds of productions—I’ll call them non-digital or more traditional film productions—for another year. I hope that is followed by an extension for another year after that, but I realize you have to watch the marketplace and see what’s going on there. I think we’ve seen, from the time when I was urging the government to do just that a year or so ago, the difference it can make in terms of the number of productions that are here in the province of Ontario, creating jobs and maintaining an industry that is very important to us in many different respects.

That’s it for the compliments, I think.

Now let’s talk about what this budget is really all about, because what it’s really all about in the final analysis is like so much of what this government stands for. It stands for broken promises, in particular by Mr. McGuinty, who went around—it’s very clear now—signing just about any letter anybody would put in front of him, promising to do all kinds of things, whether it was help for autistic children who had a written promise that he would help them—nothing delivered so far, three years into the government; nothing in this budget. It’s an absolute disgrace that he would sign a letter like that and that there would be nothing in this budget to even acknowledge that he made that promise, a solemn promise, in writing.

Let’s move on from there. We have other promises that have been made that have not been kept. We have “pay more, get less.” “Pay more, get less” is such a good encapsulation of what this budget is really all about,

because we have people right across the province who are disappointed at the fact they are paying historically high levels of taxes. They are paying the biggest tax increase in history, imposed by the very same Premier who said he would not raise taxes at all, and they're seeing that they are getting less for their money.

In fact, the amount of revenue that is being taken in by this government, by the Liberals, just for comparative purposes, is \$6,600 per capita, for every person in this province. That compares to \$5,700 being taken in under the Progressive Conservative government and \$4,900 under the New Democratic Party government. So we have a situation where they're taking in a record amount, way higher than the two preceding governments, at \$6,600 a person, and yet we are still in deficit and we still have no results.

I think it was summed up very well—I'm going to quote people from all kinds of publications and places, but I'll start with a quote from John Downing, writing in the *Toronto Sun*:

"The McGuinty government's budget last week impressed few people other than desperate Toronto councillors. It was another example of why politicians are once again at the bottom of the credibility ratings for professions and trades.

"Why should we take any budget seriously when all the figures wilt under examination like a field of lettuce in the summer sun? We have just had another example where the Liberals collected more money than they predicted they would, spent less on debt than they estimated, and are hiding the \$3-billion surplus so they can do a better job of bribing us next year when there's an election."

Let's talk about the farmers for a minute. We have, and I'll quote, an article written by Matt Shurrie from the *Woodstock Sentinel-Review*. I'm sure the member for Oxford, who has been fighting so hard for the farmers, will know why he wrote this:

"It was a similar situation for the province's farmers, as they were all but forgotten in the budget. They barely received a mention, unless you count the slap in the face that actually indicated prospects for the sector overall are positive. Perhaps they've missed the four-day protest that gathered steam just outside of the provincial Legislature, or the numerous protests along the province's 400-series of highways. For whatever reason, Duncan simply chose to reannounce the province's commitment over the last three years. 'Shameful' does not go far enough to address how this government has all but ignored the plight of the farmers."

Boy, do they have that one right, because not only did they not do anything; they cut back the funding that's indicated on page 95. The famous page 95 of their own document shows a planned reduction in spending over this year. The numbers speak for themselves: \$1.1-some-odd billion for farmers in the current year that will end this Friday, and next year, \$800-and-some-odd million. Last time I checked, that's minus \$244 million for a sector that is struggling worse than ever.

Pay more, get less: Let's talk about health care. There's an area where everybody knows they're paying more, because they're all paying hundreds of dollars more in the health tax that the McGuinty Liberals imposed, this being the same government of Dalton McGuinty that said they wouldn't raise taxes at all. So they're paying hundreds of dollars more in health tax, and they were told that that money was going to produce a better health system for the people of Ontario.

What do they have? Twice in the last three days I have run into people who told me of the chaos they had experienced in places far apart from each other, in the emergency rooms of Ontario's hospitals, one here in Toronto and one elsewhere. They talked about waiting, in one case for six hours and in the other case for eight hours, to see a doctor. These people are paying hundreds of dollars more in health taxes and they go, as I did, to the Peterborough emergency room. It's absolutely pathetic, what's going on there under your watch, and when people are paying hundreds of dollars more in taxes. They have permanent numbers put up on the wall now beside the fire hydrants, beside the phones and beside the fire hoses to put stretchers so people lying on gurneys can be waiting there because they can't find a bed, because you can't find enough money to give them, notwithstanding that you are collecting billions of dollars from the taxpayers of Ontario through the health tax you said you would not implement. So we've got emergency rooms that are in complete chaos.

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We've got wait times. I stood in Durham last week, in Whitby-Ajax, with Christine Elliott. I stood in front of the hospital there and talked about the fact, going from memory, that for an angioplasty the wait times are up 213%; hip replacements, 56% up. These, again, are the good, hard-working people of Durham and Whitby-Ajax who are paying hundreds of dollars more each in your McGuinty health tax and are finding the wait times going up. There are other procedures I could have named where the wait times are going up substantially on your watch. Pay more, get less.

Drugs: I have a clipping right here from the *Globe and Mail*, March 27, 2006—that's today. It's talking about Velcade. You couldn't find any money for that. You're awash in money, you're just drowning in money that's coming in from hard-working taxpayers of Ontario, some of whom actually get sick with cancer and have a drug that elsewhere can be put to use to help them get better. Here's what the *Globe and Mail* had to say about that: "Doctors in Ontario say this refusal to fund Velcade, and the refusal to release Thalomid, has turned the treatment clock back a decade. Even more infuriating, the Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee, an expert advisory committee to the Ontario government, will not explain why it recommended that Ontario not fund Velcade when other provinces came to the opposite conclusion."

There would have been times when you would have said it was because you couldn't afford it, just like you've told everybody else you couldn't afford anything.

You can sock it to the taxpayers. Hundreds and hundreds—in fact, \$2,000—a taxpayer in all the different charges, many of which you personally, Minister, have presided over through the scandalous increase in hydro rates, the scandalous increase in taxes you said you wouldn't impose. And yet when it comes time to find a little bit of money, relatively speaking, out of your budget of billions and billions of dollars and the \$3 billion in funds that you took in this past year, for Velcade, no way. Sorry: no money available from the government of Ontario.

We then have the fact that you managed to find money for the LHINs. There's a big, popular cause out there. You had \$160 million to create a new level of bureaucracy in the health care system, including of course the now infamous \$2 million that you guys, the McGuinty Liberals, spent on new furniture and office design for those LHIN offices. I was in one. I actually found it open, miracle of miracles, when I went out there. And I will say they received me very graciously and very pleasantly. I did have a chance to see some of that new furniture in that office. Why you would feel the need to spend \$2 million on new furniture for the LHIN offices as part of \$160 million for bureaucrats for health care I will never understand.

Here's what Ian Urquhart had to say about that in the Toronto Star on March 25: "Cutting through the euphemisms"—he's talking about the LHINs and all the different things that are referred to in the budget papers—"this suggests money will be saved by closing and consolidating hospitals, contracting out union jobs and discharging patients quicker and sicker." I asked, during the time the LHIN legislation was being debated in this House, if nobody ever intended to use the power to close or amalgamate hospitals without any oversight of the minister whatsoever, no oversight by cabinet, no oversight by anybody, if you didn't intend to use that power, why was it in the legislation? If you didn't intend—

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): It is not.

Mr. Tory: It is. Of course it is, and you know it. I don't know how you could possibly sit in this House and say it's not. It's right there. The language is plain as day that there are powers there to close and amalgamate hospitals. They were not in the Public Hospitals Act from 1999 to 2005, and you know it. But that's fine; we won't get bogged down in that.

How could you spend \$160 million creating this? And why the powers to close and amalgamate and cut services and transfer unilaterally donations from one place in the province to another, donations voluntarily given by hard-working Ontarians who wanted to support their community hospital? You've put a power in this bill that will just allow, at the stroke of a pen, for that to happen and that donation to be transferred. No consultation with the donor, no scrutiny by anybody—it just goes right out of that community. Why would you do that?

Now we've got no less an authority than Ian Urquhart answering. He's got it figured out. That's exactly what

you're going to do, and yet this is the same government that is awash in \$3 billion of unanticipated revenue, that used it on phony trust funds that are going to cost the taxpayers millions more in debt interest charges, but there's no money available to sort out some of these other problems in the health care system.

The justice system: This year you will spend more than three times the total amount of the justice system, at a time when people are more concerned than ever about crime, on debt interest charges, which you are driving up.

You're very fond, I say to the minister, of saying that what's up is up and what's down is down and all the rest. Well, what's up is up this year, and that is, spending is up big time and debt interest charges are up this year big time on your watch. You're forcing them up by having an artificial deficit when you could have and you should have balanced the budget. You could have done it and you should have done it. So at a time when you're going to spend three times the amount on debt interest charges that are just going off to various people to pay interest on our debt that's going up and continues to go up on your watch, we have a situation where we will surely have you in here before too long, as you have done many times before, saying that we really can't afford to deal with the issues in the justice system, where one third as much money as you're spending on debt interest is being spent on the justice system as a whole.

Of course, under your stewardship, I say with respect, the debt interest charges now are approaching the entire budget for the Ministry of Education. That's where we've arrived at on your watch: The debt interest charges have approached the entire budget of the Ministry of Education. "Pay more, get less and no results." Speak to the people from the post-secondary community. The people from the post-secondary community, the actual college and university presidents, don't know, if there's this huge share of \$6.2 billion being advanced, where it is. They don't know where it is. They can account for the money that's gone to student aid, some of which I think is a step forward, and I've said that before. But the rest of this \$6.2 billion—and you should check your budget address. You used the statement that "we have invested" \$6.2 billion. Well, it sure hasn't been invested yet, and those people are the first people to say that they haven't seen that much of it, especially the colleges. They would argue, I think with justification, that they are not getting their fair share, and they still rank 10th out of 10 after your initial efforts in this regard over the last period of time.

The second thing I'd like to deal with after "pay more, get less and no results" is the whole question—and I will deal with this briefly, but I think it's important—of the integrity of the budget process. The questions were asked by my colleague from Simcoe-Grey and by the leader of the third party or the member for Beaches-East York about the leaks this afternoon. I think for you to have done what you did, I say to the minister, by just dismissing it and not even really trying to answer that question, was unacceptable. It has been a long-standing

tradition—long before I was born and before all of us were here—that you kept budget information confidential and secret so that private interests of any kind could not benefit from knowing information about government decisions and public monies and taxation changes and so forth and so on.

As was correctly pointed out by someone this afternoon—I think it was my colleague from Simcoe—Grey—there is right now an investigation taking place about income trust legislation and who might have had even just a hint of what was going on there. We've seen the speculation on how much private interests could have benefited from early access to that information. It's no different here. I've been very careful, in what I've said about this, not to single out any person or any piece of land or anything else, because it doesn't really matter who knew. If anybody knew, it's not right, and it's clear that people knew.

Ministers of the crown were swanning around—not you, but others—at the Liberal fundraising dinner giving out details of this project and saying that it's going to happen and stand by for the good news and so forth and so on. I know, because I've heard from people who were there, that the conversations that were going on were pretty specific in terms of what was going to be in the budget and what wasn't. If you're so confident, as you said today, I say to the minister, that nothing wrong happened, all the information was wrong and so forth and so on, then you should have no reason whatsoever not to refer it to the OPP and have them look into it or anybody else you want. Send it to the Integrity Commissioner, but send it to somebody. If you're so convinced nothing is wrong, sent it over, and I'm sure they'll give you a clean bill of health. I will stand up, if some objective person like that—the Integrity Commissioner or the OPP—gives you a totally clean bill of health, and say, “Thank you for the investigation. I'm glad the integrity of the process has been upheld.” But when you stonewall like this, when you say, “There's nothing wrong; trust us; we're the bunch that always are straightforward with you,” there are always people who are going to be left out there, including us, because it's our job to be skeptical about these things and to represent the public interest in terms of things that look like they should not be.

I think there are big questions that are going to be arising in the days ahead. I don't disagree with what the minister said about the fact that it's better to under-promise and over-deliver. You guys should know that lesson better than anybody because you have sitting next to you from time to time the world champion of promise-breaking. There is no one who has surpassed his record in this regard. But having said that, when I was running a business, I generally felt that you were best to be prudent in terms of the projections that you were making. But for you to have the kinds of discrepancies that you've had in the accounts of Ontario supposedly taking place sometimes within a few weeks, where all of a sudden hundreds of millions of dollars just materialize out of nowhere to be available for your phony trust funds and slush funds

and buying by-elections and buying votes from people and so on—I think there's a lot to be probed there. I think it is not, again, such a matter of politics per se; it is a matter of principle, that the people of Ontario are entitled to have transparency when it comes to their financial records. It's a concept you learn very well when you have senior responsibility in business: that people are out there making their decisions in terms of their investments based on the truth and transparency and completeness of the records that they have in front of them and the statements that are put forward by the corporations in question. I don't know why any different rules or any different practices at all—at all—should apply to the government. There should be no difference. Why are the taxpayers of Ontario not entitled to the same degree of disclosure and transparency and accuracy and so on that is now required?

1600

It is very interesting that at precisely the time when the standards are being increased, the scrutiny is being turned up, the amount of time that is being spent in the corporate world making sure that you get the accounts right and that you have all kinds of third-party validation of them and so on, we are going in the opposite direction in terms of accountability, transparency, reliability and stability of the public accounts. It just isn't feasible that we would have had swings of the kind we had that go between different reports that you've given to the taxpayers with respect to their money.

I want to comment for a couple of minutes on the trust fund and what you're doing in that regard. We can all have our jousting back and forth in question period. I made it very clear today and I'll make it clear again that the notion that you would have made in this budget a commitment for increased transit investment in the GTA—and elsewhere, by the way. I mean, there were communities, I will say parenthetically, that have been utterly left out of this. But having said that, the notion that some of these projects in the GTA should receive a commitment for public investment from the government of Ontario I understand and support. What I have taken issue with is how you've chosen to finance this. I think most of the taxpayers watching out there will understand what I'm saying, and I think most people in business would understand.

Let's start with the business example. I was just saying to the media outside that there's a very good reason why it is very, very rare indeed that you would ever see a business permitted to book a huge sum of money in the hundreds of millions of dollars and expense it just before the end of a given year, when in fact that money won't actually be spent on the project in question until years later. The reason for that, of course, is that when people are making their investment decisions and so on, what you have is an artificial depression, an artificial making worse of the results of the company in that year when the money is not actually being spent, and five years from now, when the money is being spent, the results will look better than they should. So there is not transparency,

there is not an ability to see what the state of affairs or the public's finances are at the time the money is being spent or not being spent. It has created the illusion, which I think has been punctured now by many commentators, including those of us over here on this side of the House, that you actually couldn't balance the budget when everybody knows you could have; and that you created a phony deficit for political purposes to help you out next year, when in fact you could have made the very same commitment, you could have made the very same announcement in your budget with respect to these transit projects and that you would fund them as you presently estimated the money would come due in the outlying years, whether it's three, four, five, six years from now; you would fund it at that time. But in the meantime, you would not be putting taxpayers' borrowed money into a trust fund that you have created artificially, but you would be using that money to pay down the debt, pay down the deficit and bring the province closer to a balanced budget.

We know—and you didn't deny it today when you failed to answer the question, but by failing to answer it you didn't deny it either—that there will be an amount of interest. Whether I had the amount just right doesn't matter, because the bottom line is the principle involved here, which is that you are taking borrowed money and you are going to cost the taxpayers, I feel very confident in saying, tens of millions of dollars net—and I was fair in saying it was the net number, because I assume whoever the trustees are will invest the money in some way or other and get some interest for that. But you have to pay interest, because you're borrowing at 6.1%. I think that's what your budget documents say. So you're borrowing the money and paying 6.1%. To use the household example that I mentioned a few minutes ago, who in their right mind in Ontario, which taxpayer, would go out to the bank and arrange a mortgage and borrow the money from the bank and then put the money in a bank account and buy the house three years later? And all the while, during the three-year period, they'd be paying the bank interest on the money they had borrowed, and maybe, if they had it in the bank account, they'd be getting half that rate of interest back.

Nobody would ever do that, because it doesn't make any sense. You did it for political reasons. You could have made the commitment to transit without engaging in this kind of bogus accounting. I think it is wrong that you did it, I think it is misleading to the taxpayers, and I think it does not give them a fair assessment of what the public finances of this province are. I think you should be operating on the principle that you expense the money in the public accounts when you spend it, and not this deal where you've done it in some other way, at some other time.

I think we had here a budget in which you had choices, you and the rest of the government and the Premier, Mr. McGuinty. We've seen him make choices. He chose to promise not to raise taxes, and then he chose to bring in the biggest tax increase in the history of

Ontario. He promised and committed himself and solemnly said that he would help autistic children, and then, when the election was over and he had a chance to keep his word, he chose to ignore the fact that he'd made that promise in writing. He ranted and raved about downloading when he was the Leader of the Opposition, and then, when he came to government, he chose to increase the downloading on the municipal taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

Here we had a series of choices that sat in front of this government as it deliberated and tried to decide what to do with respect to its budget for the forthcoming year. One of the choices we've just been discussing was the choice of either balancing the budget or engaging in a series of accounting tricks and political manipulation of the public finances of Ontario. I think that the wrong choice was made in regard to what you did there. I think it was wrong for you to manipulate the accounts of Ontario. It was wrong for you not to make an effort to keep another promise you made: namely, to balance the books of Ontario as soon as possible. You could have and should have done it this year. I've said it before and I will say it again before I'm finished, because it's fundamental, that you didn't bother to do it.

I want to just quote from somebody who used to be a good friend of yours; he used to be a good friend of yours. It's just so typical. This guy was a good friend of yours—and his organization—when it suited Mr. McGuinty to be arm in arm with him, shoulder to shoulder, signing the commitment not to raise taxes and the commitment to abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act, which you have junked since you came to office. You've totally disregarded it and totally just written off any kind of respect for the taxpayers at all. John Williamson is quoted in a column in the *Toronto Sun* dated March 26. He just says the following: "Any politician who cannot balance the budget with such riches of tax revenues is not fit to control the public purse."

The fact of the matter is that you did make a choice. I respect the fact that it was your choice to make and you're accountable for it, and it's my job to stand here and say, not just because I'm the Leader of the Opposition but because I believe it in my heart, that you made the wrong choice. I can tell you right now that while I know you could have, and I believe strongly you should have, balanced the budget when you had the \$3 billion in extra revenue, had you taken some of the money that you put into the bogus trust fund and various other places, where you have dealt with it in a way that is just meant to create these slush funds for your own re-election and in order to create a deficit—had you taken some of it and made a meaningful move towards balancing the budget faster, recognizing the fact that you were awash in all this hard-earned extra money that taxpayers sent you, I would have still stood up here and said that you could have and should have balanced the budget, but I would have said that at least you took a little bit of it, less than you should have, and made a move to get closer to balancing the budget, which is what the taxpayers expect you to do.

They'll expect us to do it when we get to government, and there should be no reason around that when you have the kind of money that you had.

When we talk about the choice you made, it wasn't just a choice to say, "Well, I'll ignore it or overlook it," or whatever. It was a choice that was made whereby you actually took proactive steps, as I said, to create a deficit and to make sure you didn't balance the budget. Again, you want to talk about whether there was a leak or not. You might recall, before the subway was even in the news, there was a story quoting someone close to you indicating you were working really hard to make sure that you didn't balance the books and that you did have a deficit. Guess what? That turned out to be true as well. So there was a lot of leaking going on with respect to information about this budget. I'd be the first to suggest that it isn't as important, because I don't know that anybody could have had a private benefit from knowing that there was not going to be a balanced budget, but the bottom line is, in principle it's still wrong.

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Anyway, we have here a quote from the Brantford Expositor, from James Wallace's column, in which he says, talking about the choices you had:

"Instead the province found some extra cash and shovelled it out the door before year-end to avoid a legal obligation to pay down the deficit.

"Some plan."

I agree with him: Some plan that is.

Again, let's go back to the example of hard-working taxpayers across Ontario. I've said this; you've probably read that I said it. I know that you don't read all of what I say with anywhere near the attention you should, I say to the Minister of Finance, with great respect and just a tiny bit of affection—just a tiny bit.

By the way, I should tell you that my wife of some 28 years is here to listen to this speech today only because, after a year in this business, she has now come to recognize that my idea of a hot date is for her to come down and hear me speak in the Legislature. But the other reason she is here is because I told her the nickname of the Minister of Finance was Spanky. She asked me why that was, and I said, "You'll have to come down and ask him directly. I'm not at liberty to discuss it."

In any event, there were choices to be made on the year-end spending spree and what could have been done with it. It's back to the discussion about the fiscal imbalance between the province and the municipalities. Again quoting from James Wallace on March 25:

"In opposition, McGuinty said using property taxes that way was a 'disaster' waiting to happen.

"Municipal officials maintain the disaster has happened, that downloading is largely responsible for high property tax hikes across the province and is killing their ability to pay for programs, services and infrastructure."

You had a choice. You could have addressed this imbalance that has been created. You people remind me all the time—with great respect to the member for St. Catharines, when people say to me that this was the

result, intended or not, of the policy of the previous government, I say, "That is correct. Let's not spend time debating history. What's done is done." I wasn't here, but I can tell you what I have committed myself to doing. What I have committed myself to doing, which is a lot more than the McGuinty Liberals have done, is putting in place a meaningful, long-term process to fix it.

I think what people are looking for in politics today is some honesty, where, if your party brought in a policy in the past that had a certain effect, you would say, "Yes, that effect was not intended and we're going to fix it," and then you stick to that and you do it. In opposition, I say with respect to the member from St. Catharines, you people ranted and raved—all of you did—about this. I could come in here and spend hours reading speeches you made about this. Then you get into office and what do you do? You make it worse. You've done nothing to help whatsoever.

Another choice you had, I say to the Minister of Finance and to all the members of the government, is that you could have decided you were really going to focus on value for money, as opposed to going on a wild spending spree. I believe that the most telling tale of all with respect to the question of the disrespect that this Liberal, McGuinty government has for the taxpayers, for their money and for the question of value for money is the fact that in one year, between the last budget and this one, they haven't found one cent in additional savings. Even for this group, that is a hard record to surpass. I am surprised you did that badly. I know you don't care about waste in government; I know you don't care about doing things better, faster, cheaper or in a more customer-friendly way—I know you don't care about that—but to actually have a record where in a whole year you wouldn't have found one dollar in extra savings is scandalous.

I would love to hear an explanation. First of all, I've asked the minister today—it's about the fourth time I've asked—about the famous \$407 million that you found a year ago and that you haven't improved upon since. I've asked that you table the list, because it's not a round number. It's \$407 million, so I'm assuming that there's a very precise list available of efficiencies you found that total \$407 million. If you could bring that list, we would really appreciate it, because it would be good to see what you have done.

I think of it as a weak-kneed accomplishment on a budget of \$75 billion. If you can't find better than that on a budget of \$75 billion, with all the help you could get from any front-line public service worker or from an awful lot of taxpayers who, day in and day out, experience the inefficiency, the duplication, the running around and the red tape of this government, if you can't find more than \$407 million, it's a big disappointment.

But the other question is, why did you find nothing this year? Or, if you found something, why didn't you tell us about it? You've got to have it one way or the other: Either you didn't find anything this year, in which case you should just fess up and say, "We were too busy designing bogus trust funds and ways to spend the money

and shovel it out the door at the end of the year,” or, “We have just run out of steam. We don’t think there is any waste; it’s all dealt with.” This from the bunch that has increased the size of the government phone book by 100 pages this year. So the phone book is bigger by 100 pages. Now, you tell me what that’s all about. It ain’t directory assistance instructions or ads for Pizza Pizza. It’s 100 pages of extra stuff you’ve got in there, and we’re going to get to the bottom of it and figure out what it’s all about, because it certainly isn’t you finding inefficiency.

I want to talk about another choice that the government had.

Interjections.

Mr. Tory: You have your way for a couple of minutes while I take a sip of water.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Tory: Mr. Speaker, the government people just can’t contain themselves. I don’t know whether they eat certain kinds of vitamins before they come in here to the Legislature, but I wish the taxpayers at home could hear all the interjections that take place during question period and other times. I think it would be very instructive for them to know. I raised the question in my budget speech last year of whether Mr. McGuinty has asked them to behave in a more civilized manner in the Legislature and they choose to ignore him, or whether he has told them it is okay to behave that way in this Legislature. I don’t know which it is, but it’s got to be one or the other.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): This from the guy who’s sending out private detectives.

Mr. Tory: The member for St. Catharines has got himself particularly exercised this afternoon. I’m not sure about what, but never mind.

Another choice that existed for the Minister of Finance was the question of whether you did any long-term planning in the budget or whether you just engaged in one-time, vote-buying exercises; one-year, one-time, ad hoc payments. The answer is very clear from the budget, whether it’s the farmers of Ontario, who got well less than they needed, but again, one-time, short-term—as the minister herself described it this afternoon—money that actually represents a cutback in terms of the amount that has been committed compared to what we are going to see, the cutback next year; whether you see that—no long-term plan—or whether you see what’s been done with respect to roads and bridges in Ontario.

Again, what kind of planning can you do if you are leading or participating in a municipal government, whether you’re an elected official or a public servant, when your provincial government—at the last minute shovelling money out the door like there is a contest to see who can give it away fastest—gives you an amount of money and says it’s one time only for roads and bridges?

By the way, as the Minister of Finance well knows, there is no condition on those governments that they have to spend it on roads or bridges at all, a subject which the

Auditor General commented on very unfavourably last year. Why did he do that? He said that when you’re shovelling money out the door like there is a four-alarm fire at the end of the year, with no conditions and with no accountability, you are going to reduce the degree that you and he and everybody else—us—have to make sure that money is well spent.

Again, I know from my experience in business that when you are making last-minute, hurried decisions under pressure, especially when it comes to spending money, you are not going to make your best decisions. You and the government, Mr. McGuinty, consciously decided that you were going to rush the money out the door, to just keep shovelling it out as fast as it came in, and in so doing, I absolutely believe that you are not going to have made the best decisions, that they are not going to be subject to the kind of scrutiny the taxpayers expect, and that you once again will have comments from the Auditor General this year, in his report on this year’s accounts, saying that this is not the kind of scrutiny or respect for the taxpayers’ money that I think all of us, including all the taxpayers watching, have the right to expect.

The money for Toronto transit: The Toronto Star—heavens above, they find lots of reasons to be favourably disposed to the policies of the current government—called it a one-shot deal. I’m talking about the money, the \$200 million, for Toronto. What kind of a way is that to run this relationship? What kind of a way is it to run a sophisticated relationship about a city where I share your view that we have to do things to make the city stronger? I share your view. I have lived here my whole life. This city’s being strong is important to Ontario, as it is, by the way—and I will come to this in a moment—for rural Ontario to be strong as well. But a strong Toronto is very important to the well-being of Ontario. What kind of a way is it to run the relationship where year after year—and I’m not saying you are the first to do it. But why are we carrying on every year with this notion that people come running up here, there is a crisis—again, it’s a four-alarm fire—and at the end the result is always the same: There is some cockeyed scheme to write a cheque or forgive part of a loan or sell some hydro poles or whatever. What kind of a way is that to run the public finances of this city that we all agree is fundamental to the health of Ontario? What kind of a way is that to deal with the public finances of Ontario and the taxpayers’ money: Just shovel a couple hundred million bucks out the door because it sort of fills in a gap that exists in the budget?

I was asked on an Ottawa radio station this morning why that number matches up exactly to a 3% increase in property taxes when, they said, “We got 3.9% and we didn’t get any offer from the Minister of Finance to make up the difference between 3% and 3.9%.” I had no answer for that question. I told him to call you. Nonetheless—

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Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Call the former mayor.

Mr. Tory: “Call the former mayor” of Ottawa. That’s a good idea. He has no answer either, though, so it doesn’t matter. It would be a waste of 25 cents.

I say to the Minister of Finance, he’s new to his job. He could have made a fresh start by putting into his budget the framework for a five-year plan or some other period of time like that to begin to meaningfully address the problems that exist, not just for Toronto but for all municipalities in the province of Ontario. But no, we had another—just like the roads and bridges for the smaller municipalities outside of Toronto and just like the transit money, we have the kind of one-time—and I think I was reading this and am recalling it now. On budget day, I noted with interest that it said in respect of the adjustment in social assistance that you would not require the municipality to pick up their share for 2006 only. So I’m assuming, for 2007, they will have to pick up their share. They have that pleasant surprise to look forward to next year, which will just make an additional contribution to the problem. I think I read that right, but you would know. It’s your budget.

So I think when it came to that choice—one-term quick fix, ad hoc one-year schemes—you chose those in every case and didn’t choose to do the long-term planning when you could nor to put in place a long-term fix for some of these problems that have been bedeviling these people for some period of time.

That brings us to the next choice you had. I’ve always believed—I’ve only been here for a year in this place, but I’ve been around politics as a volunteer for many other years and have been a keen student of politics—that when you were elected Premier of Ontario, you were elected Premier of all of Ontario, and when you were the Minister of Finance for the province of Ontario, you were the Minister of Finance for all of the province of Ontario. I said the day I became the leader of this party, on September 18, 2004, why do we always put ourselves in a position where we feel we have to make a choice, that the debate comes down to making a choice between saying, “Well, you can either give money to Toronto, the all-hated, nobody likes Toronto etc., or you can give money to all the other places in Ontario”?

I think most members of this House accept the fact that that is not the right question. The question is: How do you make sure that you take the available resources in an equitable fashion that reflects priorities and sound planning and proper stewardship of the taxpayers’ money, some long-term planning and so forth, so that you would balance the interests of all the different parts of the province of Ontario? I say with respect to the minister that I think the McGuinty Liberal government has failed that test, and I think they’ve failed that test in a fairly dramatic fashion.

I was out even this weekend, and I don’t go around—believe me, when I go and knock on doors, I have a message that I’m carrying to the doors, but it’s not generally to raise questions of how you think you did in the budget, because most people would look at you a bit funny, I think, if you asked them that question. I had

people volunteering to me in places outside of Toronto that they didn’t think they’d done very well, indeed, in this budget when compared to Toronto. I think that’s unfortunate, because they are simply feeding back what they’ve heard and what they’ve read and what they’ve seen in terms of what people have said. I think that there was a time, and it was now, that we should have addressed some of the very serious issues that exist in other cities, in other towns and in rural Ontario generally, where things are tough.

I’ve had the great privilege and the great opportunity, and will have for another 18 months, to represent a rural riding in Ontario. There’s no better learning experience than to sit face to face and to stand face to face, as many members here do, with people in the towns and on the streets, in the stores and in my riding offices, listening to them talk about the experiences they’re going through now. Whether it is the stores that are not doing well because the farmers aren’t spending money, whether it’s the farmers themselves, whether it’s the farm implement dealers, whether it’s the car dealerships, and on the list goes, or whether it’s the municipalities who are struggling to keep up in the face of what we’ve talked about earlier, none of these people is saying that they’re doing very well at this point in time. And yet, I really do think that these areas of the province outside the GTA did not do as well as they deserve to do, given some of the challenges they’re facing.

Let’s start with Durham, not just because there’s a by-election there, although that’s a good reason to talk about it. There is a by-election on, and people are going to have a very important choice to make on Thursday of whether they want to reward a government that has broken its promises fundamentally on taxes and a thousand other things, whether they want to reward a Premier who has dramatically driven up wait times after picking their pockets to the tune of hundreds of dollars on the health tax, dramatically driven up the wait times in Durham, has done absolutely nothing to address transportation on the east side of the GTA amidst this potpourri of announcements that were made here, and so on.

So I’ll quote no less an authority than Roger Anderson, chair of Durham region, quoted in the Toronto Star, March 25, 2006:

“One of these provincial governments are going to realize one of these days, to get into Toronto from the east, you have to come through Durham. It’s going to be a problem if they don’t start addressing it soon.”

He goes on to say: “Business will not be able to move their goods and services effectively. People will still be sitting in traffic and gridlock. We are extremely concerned with the lack of attention to this area.”

There is Roger Anderson talking about what he has to say about whether he feels that Durham was equitably dealt with. I think that’s something the voters out there will want to keep in mind on Thursday when we get to the by-election.

Let’s take a quote from the Niagara Falls Review. This is dealing with the issue of crime. It’s a quote from the

Niagara Falls Review, and it goes like this: “Premier Dalton McGuinty gave Toronto cops \$5 million in January to combat the city’s gun and gang violence.

“Later that month, Niagara Regional Police Chief Wendy Southall said cities outside Toronto—especially in border communities—needed financial assistance to counter the infiltration of the same problems plaguing Toronto.

“It was a good point then and still is. But Southall’s submission apparently didn’t register. Police weren’t mentioned at all in the budget speech.

“The way the Liberals dealt with infrastructure and didn’t deal with police ... suggests the rest of Ontario should watch how closely focused the Liberals are on Toronto.”

That’s from the Niagara Falls Review. I think that was, again, a choice that you made, and I think it was an unfortunate choice, because there are many needs that exist out there, whether it be crime, referred to in the Niagara Falls Review, whether it be the plight of a lot of municipal governments, whether it be their infrastructure needs, where I say what I’ve said before, namely, that they are participating, such as they can, in this lottery program where they spend thousands and thousands of dollars they don’t have, putting in applications for COMRIF, only to then find that one in 10 of them actually gets any money. What kind of way is that to plan our infrastructure going forward? I’m not talking now about transportation infrastructure but about the infrastructure that carries the water and carries the sewage away. And this is the kind of thing they’re confronting on a day-by-day basis.

You had another choice, I say to the Minister of Finance, and that was that you could have done something serious in light of the challenges facing our manufacturing economy and various sectors of our economy. It’s very interesting to me that when we have the discussions in here about the 80,000 lost jobs in manufacturing, it is only occasionally—I would say I was not being fair if I said it was one time out of 10 when we talk about it—that any words are expressed on the government side of the House with respect to the fact that these people actually have lost their jobs. There are 80,000 families in the province of Ontario where people have lost their jobs and a family is without at least one paycheque in community after community. We’ve listed them before. And your answer, when we ask you about it—and we’re just saying, “Well, what are you going to do for them, and what are you going to do in terms of the environment that caused people to make the decision to close those plants and move those investments and cut back on those jobs?” And the answer, I would say, nine times out of 10—I’ll suggest it’s possible that it’s eight times out of 10—is that you remind me—and you’ve reminded me often enough that I know it’s true and I always did—that there have been some net new jobs created in the province of Ontario. But that does not take away from the fact that 80,000 people in the past year alone lost their jobs. I think, actually, it is some com-

ination of insensitivity or arrogance that you don’t acknowledge that, that you get up and read back to me your same old cue sheets with respect to how many net new jobs. And when you use the expression “net,” of course that’s the clever way of saying that you’re referring to these people who are going through all kinds of heartache in some of those plants—I think I’m right in saying Domtar in Cornwall, for example, closes right about now, because they announced it three or four months ahead. And all we get is this net new jobs; don’t worry, be happy; all the news is good. Well, just think of how much better off we’d be in terms of your—well, let’s forget your accounts for a minute—how much better off we would be in the lives of those 80,000 families and the communities we live in if they still had those jobs.

But let’s then move on from there. That’s the most important thing: They would have the dignity of a job and the ability to support their families, and those communities would have that livelihood that has so many spinoff benefits to so many other people. But you would benefit. I think the estimates we calculated were to the extent of \$200 million of additional tax revenue that you would have. Now, I worry about that a bit, because you’d put it into a bogus trust fund or into some slush fund of yours for the election next year. But the fact is, you’d have the \$200 million and these people, more importantly, would have their jobs and the dignity of their jobs and the lack of heartache that they face today.

But you made a choice. You’re going to carry on with the same old taxing, the same old spending, the same old, you know, just shovel it out the door and don’t worry about anything, the same old level of regulation. And I am telling you, because I have sat with these business people—I know you have too, I say to the Minister of Finance—and they have told me—and I’m sure they’ve told you, because they’re not going to tell you a different story—that the regulations and the taxes and the WSIB premiums and the electricity prices and all of those things are factors in the decision to wipe out jobs in the province of Ontario. And many, if not most, of those things are under your control and they’re decisions you could take. They’re decisions you could take.

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Here you are again, awash in \$3 billion in extra revenue, and you did a 5% acceleration in the reduction you’re going to do on the capital tax, which those who are commenting on the budget have commented favourably on, except to say that if we really wanted to stimulate investment in the productivity of plants to save jobs and to re-equip plants to save jobs here so they can become more competitive and more productive at precisely the time when it’s very attractive to buy equipment, as the minister knows, because of the high level of the Canadian dollar—there are lots of things that don’t help us when the dollar is high, but one area it does help is in bringing down, in effect, the price of new equipment, and you could have made it even more attractive for people to go out when the dollar is high and buy now to re-equip those plants, and that creates jobs too, in the

province of Ontario. But you didn't. You opted instead for more spending, more taxing, more bureaucracy, higher energy prices, more red tape, more regulation, more WSIB premiums, and on it goes.

When people have asked me around this province, when I've gone on tours and sat in small business round tables and so on, what did I think you should do, I said the first thing you should do to try and get this economy on a better footing so that every one of your projections on the important stuff is not going down—job creation, down; economic growth, down—

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: Yes it is, over your projections from last year. Absolutely not.

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: Well, they're going up, but the trend line is that they're all down from where you said they would be last year, every one. Exports, job growth, economic growth—all down from where you said they would be last year, and you can't deny that.

Having said that, I say to people that the first thing you could do is stop doing some of the things you are doing: Stop with the high-taxing, high-spending, high-regulating, high-WSIB, high-bureaucracy government that you're giving people that is chasing jobs out of here and causing people to find it easier to make those decisions.

The last thing that I want to just make mention of, and I have already, is the situation of the farmers. I should say, by the way, I have a very excellent quote here, and I would want to share it with the people of Ontario, about the north. Because again, just on this whole business of regional inequity and the fact that you didn't do what you could have done to help other regions of the province—this is from the Daily Press in Timmins: "Doug West, a political science professor at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay ... said the Liberals clearly had next year's provincial election in mind when they drafted the budget, which he said offered virtually no help to northern Ontario.

"They're going to spend the money where the votes are, and the votes are in the GTA and the 905, the areas just around Toronto," said West." He goes on to say, "We don't have a lot of people, so we don't represent a lot of votes, and therefore we don't count—literally—in any electoral strategy, which this is part of." Amen. Professor West has got that one absolutely figured out, about why you have nothing that you are doing to help develop the north or to help it do better.

Last but not least, I think you can't mention the farmers often enough. I just want to quote from Joe Fiorito's column in the Toronto Star on March 27—today—where he's quoting a farmer by the name of William Matlovich, near Wallaceburg. He says, "Last year? I made \$15,000. I can't live on that.

"And then I asked him if he got depressed." This is Joe asking the farmer. "He paused. He looked away. He wasn't sure how to answer. He said, 'A lot of guys I know are on anti-depressants.'" And then later on, the

same farmer is quoted as saying this: "Last summer, we drove by a strawberry farm. The berries were rotting in the field. The supermarket we go to was full of California strawberries."

"He gestured to the other farmers"—the ones right outside the Legislature here—"mostly men, mostly older, mostly white." He said, "The bad farmers are long gone. These are good farmers. What you see here is the cream of the crop. If we can't keep the cream of the crop, there's major trouble."

That's what is happening on your watch. I went out to see them right after your budget speech on Thursday last. I have seen disconsolate farmers a lot in my short time in provincial public life. I've never seen a group looking more disconsolate than that group out there, because they expected that you would do better, they thought you could do better, and I can say here, in addition to saying you could have and you should have balanced the budget, you could have done more for the farmers and you should have done more for the farmers. You should be ashamed of the fact that you chose not to.

The last couple of minutes, broken promises: I should say that I don't know why anybody would believe anything that's in this budget, quite frankly, because the predictions and forecasts on revenue and everything else are so bogus, and I know you make them bogus on purpose so that you can confuse us and confuse all the taxpayers and keep us off balance so that you can create these slush funds and so on.

There are so many broken promises on everything to do with taxation and balanced budgets and all the rest, but just look at something as simple as the establishment of the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority. It has now appeared three years in a row in the budget that the government will move ahead to establish the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority. This is year three. I have no idea why we will be any more likely to see it happen, together with anything else in here, this year than we have any other year.

We've talked about the balanced budget. Agriculture: Remember the famous promise on agriculture from the McGuinty election platform that the Ministry of Agriculture was going to be a lead ministry. You know, you're leading us right over the abyss, down over the cliff into the pit, because the fact of the matter is that this year you're going to cut back on spending by \$244 million and leave the farmers and rural Ontario hung right out to dry, because you don't care about them.

I've said it before, and I don't say it with any disrespect to the rural members of the Liberal caucus, but even today we had another example of a question that I described earlier, and I'll describe again, as a self-congratulatory question, saying, "It isn't really so, Minister. Confirm it's not so. These people are being mean to say the farmers are being hurt. All the farmers on the front lawn are making this stuff up. We're doing everything we can for them; we're doing more than ever for them." The minister then stands up and says, "Yes, I can confirm that we're doing a fantastic job for the farmers.

That's why they're all so happy." It's time these people started to stand up on their hind feet in this Legislature and speak up for the farmers and say to the minister, "With the greatest of respect, you're not doing enough. These people are hurting. They need long-term plans. They need more help now." And you should get your money out the door, by the way, when the federal money has started to reach the farmers of Ontario and not a penny of your money announced two or three weeks ago has made it there at all.

So to conclude, I want to just say this, and then I've got to find this very excellent amendment—I have it here somewhere; here it is. That's the one. There is no long-term plan. I think that should be very disconcerting to people who are in business. I think it should be very disconcerting to people who work for business, who are employed in the province of Ontario. It should be very disconcerting to people who are looking to establish businesses here. It should be very disconcerting to people who are looking to expand businesses here. And I think it is. I think they're saying, "If we have a choice," and the Minister of Finance knows nowadays how many choices people have as to where they can invest, "between Ontario with its high-taxing, high-spending, high-regulating, sort of interventionist, short-term-fix type of government, we think maybe we'll go somewhere else."

They're talking with their feet. We haven't lost those 80,000 manufacturing jobs by accident. I think that is very painful because, going forward, we need those people in Ontario. We need them because they create jobs for our kids. We need them because they create spinoff activity for others. We need them because the taxation of their profits and the taxation of the incomes of people who work for them is the only place from which the money comes to finance health care and education on a go-forward basis without continuing to borrow that money, as the Minister of Finance continues to do even when he doesn't have to.

I have said before that I worry about the tactics that are being employed on the federal-provincial front. I do not think it is the right approach for this province and in the best interests of this province in resolving some of the issues we have with the federal government for the Premier, five or six weeks after the new Prime Minister has been sworn into office, to find every occasion he can to dump on him, when he said on day one that he would try to work with him. He said he would try to work with him, and yet since then we've not heard a word of that. We've just heard dumping. We hear it here in question period every day. There is no attempt made to establish a relationship with these people six weeks after they have come to office. I think the taxpayers are tired of it. I think they want to see their levels of government, regardless of what party stripe they have, working together, sitting together, working out plans for farmers and on various other subjects. I think that the approach the Premier has taken to dump on Mr. Harper from day one—well, after day one; he behaved well on day one, but since then it's been downhill all the way.

The second thing he did, which is a very questionable strategy indeed that I think will pay bad dividends for Ontario, is to have trumpeted the fact one day in front of cabinet, "Look, these guys have to get their act together, these other Premiers, these other sort of minions who come to the meetings with me, because we from Ontario are really the most important, don't you know? So they should really come and sit at my feet while I deliver the stone tablets from the province of Ontario and tell you how it's going to be." Last time I checked, you had to have the agreement of the Prime Minister and the government of Canada and the other provinces, or at least most of them, to get a new deal on the fiscal relationship between Ontario and Canada.

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I would just suggest to you that demeaning the other provinces of this country and belittling and dumping on the Prime Minister of Canada six weeks into office, before he's even delivered his throne speech and met Parliament once, I don't think is a strategy that is in the best interests of this province. I would suggest that there is nothing more important that we can do—aside from the investment climate I talked about earlier and what we can do to encourage enterprise, encourage investment and so on—than to effectively, constructively and in a balanced way address this issue that we have an opportunity to address. Mr. Harper, unlike his predecessor, Mr. Martin, who never really even admitted there was a problem, has said there is a problem and he's said he's determined to fix it. So why don't we take advantage of that and give him a chance to fix it and work with him instead of deciding that from day one we're going to dump on him and decide he is, before he's even met Parliament once, *persona non grata*.

I want to finish on this note before I move my amendment to the budget motion. I think this province is a place of absolutely unparalleled opportunity. We are not where we are today by accident. We have had good management over the years from many different governments. We've created an investment climate that made it attractive for people to come here. We've had an education system that has been a great equalizer and has helped people to move forward and get jobs and so on. We have had a very vital private sector, with people who take the risks, make the investments and make the innovations. That's where most of the economic activity comes from.

I'm optimistic. When people say to me at functions I go to, "What about Alberta? Are we all kind of worried about that?" I say, and I'm sure you say the same thing, "Look, I'm happy for Alberta that they should be doing well because of their resource riches, but if you ask me if I'm worried about the province of Ontario relative to that, not really." You have to take account of the impact of energy prices, but we have a wealth-creation machine in the province of Ontario that can create jobs for people, can raise the standard of living for people and can produce the revenues that the government of Ontario needs to make sure we look after our most vulnerable

people, as we should be doing, and as you missed the opportunity to do, by the way, awash in \$3 billion of extra revenue. But we have the ability to have that kind of wealth created so that we can provide excellent public services, redistribute that wealth and, at appropriate times, reduce the level of taxation so as to encourage more investment, more wealth creation and so on and to address the provincial-municipal fiscal imbalance and so on. It is only up to us as to whether we want to seize the opportunity to do that. You don't do that when you are doing short-term, one-off fixes. You don't do that when you're so focused on your own political well-being that you actually place it ahead of the public interest in terms of real long-term planning and real planning that respects the taxpayers, that respects their money.

People work hard to send their money down here, to Ottawa and to the municipalities, and I think when they see the Minister of Finance or whoever it is playing games with that money, they're disconsolate about that. I think it's one of the reasons why people have lost faith in politicians and why we rank at the bottom of the list of all the professions and all the trades. What a sorry statement that is. That's for another day, but I think it's in part because they see this kind of games-playing going on. They see the gamesmanship with the federal government instead of a real, earnest, genuine, sincere commitment to work together with the two governments.

So I think that at the end of the day we can do better. We have the fundamentals here in place in the province of Ontario, and that's not to the credit of any government. That's to the credit of the people of Ontario, who have worked hard for decades and decades. They've had governments of all parties over time that have made good decisions and, frankly, governments of all parties that have made bad decisions.

I think the question now is, are we prepared to look forward and do the kind of long-term thinking and long-term planning that places the public interest ahead of politics and says that we're not going to be engaged in this kind of one-term thinking, that we're going to look at the public interest and we're not going to try and fool the public? We are going to conduct ourselves in a prudent manner. We're going to work co-operatively with the other levels of government and with business and with labour.

I just see a lot of things that trouble me about this budget and that cause me to believe that we're not going in the right direction. Overall, there will be a price to be paid for this budget. There will be a price to be paid in dollars and cents in terms of increased debt charges and other charges to the taxpayers. There will be a price to be paid in public confidence because they think they're being fooled by games-playing and by bogus accounting and so forth. There will be a price to be paid in terms of more jobs lost as people see that you didn't do anything when you could to help create a more attractive environment for investment. There will be a price to be paid in terms of the most vulnerable people not getting the

kind of help you could have provided to them. There'll be a price to be paid in terms of people not having the kind of strength at the municipal level that we need to build the other infrastructure that didn't get talked about much in this budget. There are going to be a lot of prices to be paid for the choices that you've made. I think that's unfortunate.

It is unfortunate as well that, instead of standing up and saying that I second or will wholeheartedly get up and support the motion that calls on this House to support the budgetary policy of the government, I feel it is important, and incumbent upon me, to move the following amendment to the motion.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on March 23, 2006, "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words following the words "That this House" and adding thereto the following:

"recognize that the budgetary policy put forward by the Minister of Finance continues the McGuinty government's legacy of broken promises and demands more and more from taxpayers while delivering less and less, and that this House condemns the government for:

"Not living up to its promise to balance the budget and actually making strong efforts to avoid doing so;

"Using questionable accounting tricks to inflate an artificial deficit that suits their own political agenda;

"Failing to support Ontario farmers in their plight while simultaneously cutting the Ministry of Agriculture more than \$240 million;

"Suffocating the Ontario economy and competitiveness with out-of-control taxation, spending, and ill-advised electricity policy and allowing Ontario to fall further and further behind the rest of the country in economic success and growth;

"Losing more than 80,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs under their watch and failing to have an overall plan that will aid the many communities now affected by mass layoffs and plant closures;

"Allowing and implementing more than \$2,000 in government fees and charges to accumulate on Ontarians' pocketbooks under their watch and as a result of their policies.

"Therefore, the government has lost the confidence of this House."

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Tory has moved that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on March 23, 2006, "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words following the words "That this House" and adding thereto the following:

"recognize that the budgetary policy put forward by the Minister of Finance continues the McGuinty government's legacy of broken promises and demands more and more from taxpayers while delivering less and less, and that this House condemns the government for:

“Not living up to its promise to balance the budget and actually making strong efforts to avoid doing so;

“Using questionable accounting tricks to inflate an artificial deficit that suits their own political agenda;

“Failing to support Ontario farmers in their plight while simultaneously cutting the Ministry of Agriculture more than \$240 million;

“Suffocating the Ontario economy and competitiveness with out-of-control taxation, spending, and ill-advised electricity policy and allowing Ontario to fall further and further behind the rest of the country in economic success and growth;

“Losing more than 80,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs under their watch and failing to have an overall plan that will aid the many communities now affected by mass layoffs and plant closures;

“Allowing and implementing more than \$2,000 in government fees and charges to accumulate on Ontarians’ pocketbooks under their watch and as a result of their policies.

“Therefore, the government has lost the confidence of this House.”

Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The government House leader, Mr. Bradley, gives me no alternative but to move adjournment of the debate.

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

All those in favour will say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES
À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 2, 2006, on the motion for third reading of Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 210, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Does any member wish to speak?

If not, Mrs. Chambers has moved third reading of Bill 210. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

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

Orders of the day?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

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

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Tuesday, March 28.

The House adjourned at 1651.

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