



No. 53B

N° 53B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 3 April 2006

Lundi 3 avril 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

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L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 3 April 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 3 avril 2006

The House met at 1845.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to allow for the deferral of any recorded divisions on the budget motion until Tuesday, April 4, 2006, at deferred votes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Colle is seeking unanimous consent to vary the order to—I'd better get the right wording—defer the vote until Tuesday if there's a recorded division on the main motion. Is it agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2006 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 28, 2006, on the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): It's my understanding that on the last occasion Mr. Bisson had spoken, and questions and comments, so it would now go for further debate to the member from Northumberland.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I will share my time with my good friend the member from London—Fanshawe. We make a real good tag team.

It really gives me great pleasure to spend 10 minutes—and I know we could probably use a lot longer—talking about the budget that we're debating. The budget was introduced in this House a couple of weeks ago. It has been good news, and I'm going to talk about it a little bit later. I'm also going to address some of the challenges that our local farming communities brought forward after our budget, and I'm going to address some of those later on as I think it's really important that we get the whole context and what it means to the people of Ontario and what it means to the people in my riding of Northumberland.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): What's happening at World's Finest Chocolate?

Mr. Rinaldi: My good friend from Peterborough reminds me that World's Finest Chocolate in Campbellford has been bought out. There's no interruption in business. They're going through the process right now, and that's good for industry.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Where's that, Lou?

Mr. Rinaldi: In Campbellford; World's Finest Chocolate.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Good chocolate.

Mr. Rinaldi: Good chocolates; the best.

I'm going to start this evening talking a little bit about what a member of the opposition brought to our attention just at the end of last week, before we recessed for the weekend, about the lack of context in the budget in my own riding. That was the honourable member from Leeds—Grenville, repeating certain things that he picked up in a press clipping that the riding wasn't being served well. So I tell my honourable friend from Leeds—Grenville that he shouldn't be so selective when he talks about somebody's riding. I think we need to talk about the context. Yes, there are some challenges in agriculture, and, as I said, I'm going to talk about that today.

When I talk about the riding in Northumberland, including the majority of the city of Quinte West, let me tell you what some of the local leaders had to say on the day of the budget. I had the pleasure of phoning them the next morning. Here are some of the comments.

Mayor Peter Delanty from the town of Cobourg, a former warden of the county of Northumberland, had this to say in the Northumberland News on March 24:

"This provincial budget appears to have taken the plight of cash-strapped municipalities seriously." The mayor goes on to say, "Certainly it's the first in a very long time that he"—meaning the Premier—"has listened to a budget that reflects the province reaching out to help municipalities. I tip my hat to the province." That's what Mayor Peter Delanty had to say.

1850

In the same article from the same reporter, they quoted Christine Watts, a spokesperson for the Northumberland Coalition Against Poverty, who comments on increases to student grants for both low- and middle-income families as, "Wonderful, as is the plan by this government to ease student debt loads by forgiving student government loans that surpass \$7,000 a year."

I would also like to quote from the Port Hope Evening Guide dated March 27. It says that our new county treasurer, Steve Austin, "also compliments the funding directed towards infrastructure," specifically referring to the almost \$7.6 million in my riding to help defray some of the costs from those downloaded highways of the previous government. So it's a big help.

My good friend Mayor Bob Campney from the city of Quinte West was quoted as part of the editorial in the Trentonian on March 27. Basically, to capture his quote,

it says it's "welcome news." The editorial goes on to say—and these are not my words; they are from the editor of the newspaper—that the budget was good news. Although we might lose some child care spaces from the former federal government policy, we're committed to maintaining 14,000 child care spaces. So that's happening. And access to post-secondary education has been made a lot easier. I can tell you—I talk to families every day—that kids could not go to post-secondary, but under our plan they can.

These are words that people are saying in my riding.

I want to continue because there this is really exciting. In an article published, again, in the Port Hope Evening Guide, on March 23, the mayor of Port Hope, Rick Austin, who also happens to be the warden of Northumberland county, was clear in stating, "I think they" (this government) have helped us out in terms of ambulance services and with the gas tax." I can tell you that the imaginary math that the previous government used—the 50-50—in my riding was 67-33. The money that we brought them just this past week, with ambulance as part of our budget, is going to reduce the county tax levy of the property tax bill by 1.2%. It's uploading 1.2%.

Let's see who else I can quote from. The list goes on and on, but I want to make sure that the member from Leeds-Grenville understands all this, because he's taken such a big interest.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): He's not here.

Mr. Rinaldi: I'm sure he read Hansard.

On March 29, the Brighton Independent quoted the mayor of Trent Hills, Mayor Hector Macmillan: "Terrific." Mayor Bill Finlay of Alnwick-Haldimand township was quoted in the same article, "The funds are needed and we do appreciate it."

I really could go on and on. I'm almost running out of time, and I've got so much to say.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Lou delivers.

Mr. Rinaldi: We deliver.

Two weeks ago I had the opportunity to announce a brand new CT scan machine for Trenton Memorial Hospital. That was one of those hospitals that the former government was thinking of closing. Not only that, but we delivered in my riding two family health teams. We also announced a community health centre. Do you know where that was? In Port Hope, where they closed the hospital.

So that's what people are saying.

I would be remiss, before I run out of time, not to talk about some of the challenges that my farming community has. They are real challenges. I meet with these guys every day, with families, with groups, and there are some real challenges. I think we're making some inroads in trying to understand. They're finally going to Ottawa this week. We need that partnership. Some \$125 million will be put forward.

Interjection.

Mr. Rinaldi: Yes. I hear it's not enough, but it's a commitment that we made regardless of what the federal folks did.

I'm working alongside my local farming community—I spoke with one of them this morning—to see what I can do to influence my federal member. I subsequently met with my federal member and gave him a letter to make sure that the present Minister of Finance and the Premier understand what the farming needs are, not just in Ontario but all of Canada.

The saying of the local farmers is, "Farmers feed cities." In a global economy, farmers feed the world, not just cities, and not just in Ontario and not just in Canada. So they need all the support we can give them. We're at the table, we want to work with them, and I am confident that our federal counterparts are going to have to come across to help them.

There is just so much that we can say. Let me tell you about some of the comments and some of the things that have happened, in a couple of seconds. The COMRIF in the first round: \$2 million in my riding. The new Ontario municipal partnership fund: When we revised the former CRF funding, what did it bring to my riding? An extra \$3.5 million. We invested in infrastructure in this budget, long overdue and long needed, as we have crumbling bridges and roads with potholes. Or we could have given a \$200 rebate to each citizen of Ontario. What they're telling me is to invest in long-overdue infrastructure needs.

I'm going to close by saying that I'm proud to be part of the government that we have here today that's so forward-thinking on education, health care and infrastructure. I tell you, this budget is well received, and I certainly look forward to further debate.

Now I pass it on to my good friend from the riding of London-Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Thank you to my seatmate, the member from Northumberland, for his speech about the budget and for explaining to the people of Ontario about the great budget we just talked about a couple of weeks ago. I believe it's very important to inform all the constituents across this province about the great things coming out of this budget.

People thought that when we got elected in 2003, we had one deficit. As a matter of fact, we had four: a fiscal deficit, an education deficit, a health deficit and an infrastructure deficit. That's what we were facing when we got elected. It was hidden, it didn't appear to the public, but we knew and the people of this great province gave us the chance to get elected and fix these issues, to tackle it and help them get out of it in a good and healthy way.

That's why our first initiative was to fix health care. We tried to work with all the doctors across the province of Ontario. We increased funding for hospitals. I know my great riding of London and area got more than half a billion dollars to finish the infrastructure that was started with the past government. The past government gave them a rubber check with no money. That's why they were facing so many difficulties. Our government came

to the table, listened to their concerns and funded and helped them to complete those projects.

We doubled the residency spots across the province of Ontario. My great area of London got almost 47% extra for residency to help eliminate the waiting times and help the people of this province get more doctors and family physicians if they need them.

We didn't just stop at health care. We went on to another phase: education. Our government invested heavily in post-secondary education. We invested \$60.2 billion in post-secondary education because we know the value of this investment, because we know about the future of skilled workers, of talented people, about the surge in innovation, because this is going to face us in the future. That's why we need people who are able to take us to the next phase in the future of technology, innovation and research. This budget also had more than \$400 million extra to support that initiative.

1900

The Minister of Research and Innovation set up a program. For the next five years, they are going to invest \$1.7 billion. In this year's budget there was almost \$334 million for research and innovation, because we value research. We believe that without research we cannot continue, we cannot keep prospering, we cannot maintain our good productivity in this province. That's why we invested more in research and innovation and job creation—good-paying jobs.

Besides that, we created peace and tranquility in the public system. We invested more in infrastructure, hired more teachers. We brought all the people to the table, from the teachers to the parents to the government, because we believe—

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): Lower class sizes.

Mr. Ramal: We lowered class sizes. Almost 75% of classes from grade 1 to grade 3 in the province of Ontario have around 20 per class. I think that's a very important initiative, because we know that with crowded classes you cannot have good education. You don't have a good chance for the students to learn and be managed. That's why we invested more in education.

We moved on infrastructure. Everybody knows that in the past no government in Ontario invested in infrastructure. In our estimation, we need almost \$100 billion—\$100 billion. That's big money, a lot of money. For a long time nobody paid attention to this area. We met with industry people, with manufacturers, with factories, and they told us it's important to update the roads that connect us with the United States through Windsor and Sarnia. That's why we invested more than \$600 million to create a more accessible road.

I was astonished last week when I heard that the exit from Windsor to Toronto is not even an Ontario road; it's just a city road—

Interjection: A municipal road.

Mr. Ramal: —a municipal road being used by hundreds and hundreds of trucks on a daily basis. It's not acceptable. That's why we want to invest more, to make

it accessible for all goods to flow back and forth, to have a better chance for access, because they told us that when they are delayed on the highways, it costs them more money and makes them less competitive. That's why we want to invest more money in this area,

Also Toronto—our city of London benefits from Toronto. It has a great investment in Toronto, because when the people of greater London want to come to Toronto, they want to come within a limited time, and not waste three or four hours on the highway because of the gridlock in Mississauga and Brampton. They want to come and go on the same day, but due to traffic and gridlock, they have to come the day before. Do you know how much that costs people? Tons of money, a lot of money, and that's not a good way to treat people.

Also, the flow of goods back and forth to Toronto and also through Toronto: The manufacturers, the factories, the industries asked us to solve that problem. I think the best investment is to eliminate gridlock around the Toronto area and also from Toronto to outside Toronto.

We also believe in a partnership with municipalities, because we believe that Ontario cannot be stronger without working together. From smaller municipalities to larger municipalities, from rural to urban municipalities, all of us have to work together in order to maintain our prosperity and our unity, and to be able to be productive and grow stronger and stronger for the next century.

The past government downloaded so many services. The great member from Northumberland was talking about the gas tax. We give 2 cents per litre to the great people of Ontario. My riding of London gets \$7 million on a yearly basis. From our shared responsibility to upload some services, London got more than \$13 million this year. From our investment in infrastructure, London got \$14.3 million, unlike what the Leader of the Opposition was saying last week: "London got nothing."

Hon. Mr. Watson: Who is that?

Mr. Ramal: John Tory. He doesn't know the calculations very well. Because of our government, our initiatives, this year alone London got \$35 million between uploaded responsibility, the gas tax and land ambulance. Land ambulance saw great things too. In 2000-01, the past government downloaded all the land ambulance service on the municipalities, costing them a great deal of money. Our government, as part of this budget, announced almost \$1 million last week for Middlesex county to share that responsibility. I believe the share will be 50-50 by 2008. This is our commitment to the great people of this province, for the great municipalities around us who work on a daily basis in order to maintain good services for the people they represent.

We believe that by working together—

Mr. Wilkinson: St. Thomas too.

Mr. Ramal: St. Thomas, Stratford, Chatham, every-one, every municipality, every small and large municipality, urban and rural areas get a share of this wealth of this province in order to help them, to connect them, to link them together, because that's what we believe. By working together, by a partnership between the province

and municipalities, we believe we can create a great province.

There are many good things in this budget. Many great things happened. I believe that if we work together and all members from both sides, the opposition and the government, vote and support it, we'll get great things done.

Before I leave, I want to talk about child care spaces—my seatmate talked about it a few seconds ago. The past government signed a national child care agreement: 25,000 spots across the province of Ontario, almost \$1.9 billion. What happened through the present government? They cancelled it. But because we are committed, we're going to maintain 14,000 as our responsibility. We're going to continue to work with the great people of the province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to respond to the speeches by the member from Northumberland and the member from London–Fanshawe on the amendment to the budget motion.

I know that the next speaker from the PC Party is going to be our tourism critic, Ted Arnott from Waterloo–Wellington, so I want to focus, to begin with, on tourism. I'm looking at the actual budget papers, page 95. When we look at the tourism budget, we see that it goes from \$261 million in 2005-06 to \$161 million in 2006-07, a \$100-million cut in the tourism budget. I say that this is bad planning. If this money was spent wisely in partnership with the private sector, there could be net benefits to the province in terms of revenues that would be generated from economic activity that would result.

I was in the tourism business for 30 years, and I understand from the member for Waterloo–Wellington that the tourism industry was looking for a \$30-million boost in the marketing budget. Instead, they've had a \$100-million cut to the tourism ministry in the budget. As yet, I have heard no explanation from the Minister of Tourism as to why this \$100-million cut has happened, and this is in times that are difficult for the tourism sector, when we see the US dollar depreciating a great deal in the last number of years and when there are large challenges happening. The Premier responded to the tourism critic, when asked about this \$100-million cut, and said the money is basically all going to Toronto. I say, what about Parry Sound–Muskoka, what about Kenora, what about London, what about Niagara, what about Ottawa, the Premier's own home riding? Why is he ignoring the rest of the province for the benefit of Toronto, and why is he ignoring the tourism industry?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments made by the Liberals, I have to point out that this government has a huge credibility gap when it comes to talking about child care. This is a government that, in the last election, promised 300 million new dollars in child care to start the Best Start program. All the money that has gone into child care in Ontario since that time has been federal dollars. This government hasn't anted up

one single red cent of new money for child care in the province of Ontario.

Better yet, in the budget that's before us, the projection for the child care budget is a 22% cut in funding thanks to the Liberal government. So you people have a lot of problems talking about Ottawa when you have failed miserably to live up to the promise that you made to put \$300 million of new provincial money on the table for child care. Maybe if you lived up to your promise, you'd be on better ground to fight the federal government.

1910

Secondly, I waited to hear this group talk about children, particularly the poorest children in the province of Ontario. I'm not surprised that I didn't hear anything about that because this is a government that continues to fail to live up to the promise made by Mr. McGuinty to stop the clawback of the national child benefit. You see, he and the current Minister of Comsoc had so much to say about how unfair it was that the previous government clawed back this money. Yet here we are: This government continues to claw back \$1,500 from every family, every year, money that should go to them to get them out of poverty. Shame on you. A \$3-billion surplus and you couldn't even put \$220 million on the table to end the clawback.

Hon. Mr. Watson: In the short time that I have I just want to comment on some of the aspects of the budget and why the city of Ottawa, in particular, and Ottawa West–Nepean are going to be well-served by this document: \$32 million in unconditional grants to the city of Ottawa for infrastructure, which is well overdue; \$200 million starts flowing now for the light rail project, the single largest investment in public transit in Ottawa's history; \$11 million in cultural facilities, including the Great Canadian Theatre Company. My thanks to Arthur Milner, the project director, and Mark Sutcliffe, the chair of the board of GCTC, and all of their great volunteers.

We've got a fourth cath. lab at the Ottawa Heart Institute. Premier McGuinty and I were there for the opening. It was the first new lab in 20 years coming to the city of Ottawa.

The Premier was in my riding not too long ago announcing approximately \$140 million in doubling the cancer care centre. People like Tom Schonberg, president of the Queensway Carleton Hospital; Dr. Jack Kitts; Dr. Hartley Stern—very appreciative of this government's investment. Half that centre will be going to the Queensway Carleton site, the other half to the Ottawa Hospital. By the end of our first term in office, over a half-billion dollars in capital projects for health care facilities will be in place.

The business community is benefiting as a result of us moving forward by two years the capital gains tax cut by 5% to January 2007. Some \$160 million in the Ministry of Research and Innovation is going to help the high-tech sector. My riding of Ottawa West–Nepean is crucial to the high-tech sector. Nortel is located in my riding.

Jeffrey Dale, the president of OCRI, is very appreciative of the investment in research and innovation.

We've got money coming in for land ambulances. I had the pleasure of announcing the funding, along with Phil McNeely, of \$5.3 million to bring us to the 50-50 agreement.

So all in all, good news for the people of Ottawa and for the city of Ottawa.

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I listened intently to the comments, as I did listen to the tabling of the budget. There's no question that every budget, by definition in this province, has something good in it. But I think the members opposite, the government members, have to realize that there were some very clear and obvious concerns for Ontarians that needed to be brought to their attention, and they're literally pleading for some attention.

In the community of Burlington and the region of Halton, we've had one quarter of all of our acute care hospital beds cut at the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital. One quarter of all the beds in our community, in our hospital, have been cut and closed, and we're still running a \$1.5-million deficit; the problems associated with a high-growth hospital in a high-growth community and they're not even expressed in a budget with a \$3-billion surplus—in my view, it's criminal. The fact that waiting lists are not reducing themselves in our region, as the minister is fond of saying—in fact, those waiting lists are actually growing because one of our key orthopaedic surgeons left our community. Mr. Leal is here tonight. He's arrived in Peterborough and he's going to Peterborough because in Burlington our hospital can only give that orthopaedic surgeon two and a half hours of surgical time a week. He can't make a living on two and a half hours a week, and we've got two full-time operating theatres vacant and empty and unfunded in our hospital. It's a two-year wait to get hip and knee surgery in the community of Burlington.

So I listened carefully to what the honourable members opposite are saying. I understand they're proud of their budget and they have their marching orders, but quite frankly, there's clear evidence, when it comes to children's services, whether it's autism or our local hospital, that this budget failed.

The Acting Speaker: Response, the member for London—Fanshawe.

Mr. Ramal: I was listening carefully to all the members commenting on what we said, but I'm proud. When the member was talking about London, London got a great deal of money from this budget: almost \$35 million. It never happened in the history of London. It never happened at any time of a different government. We've got a lot of money to spend in our infrastructure, the gas tax, transit and many different elements of our society.

Also, I want to respond to the member from Nickel Belt when she was talking about our budget, and the member from Burlington. When he was talking a few minutes ago, he said that no budget on earth can respond

to all the points people are asking for, but at least our budget tackled the main important issues: health care, education, infrastructure, child care.

The member from Nickel Belt was talking about the money from the federal government. I want to remind her that this money is our money. That's what we sent to Ottawa. We want it back. We want some of it back to reinvest it in health care, child care and all these elements which the past government agreed to invest in. Despite that, I wish the member could convince her leader, Jack Layton, not to bring down the government until we pass all the stuff we agreed on.

That's why we strongly support and are going to continue to support all the initiatives to force the federal government to come back to the table and support child care, because child care is important not just to us in London but to everybody in the province of Ontario. National child care is very important.

As the province of Ontario, despite the federal government, we're going to continue delivering and supporting the Best Start program because we believe it will support the children in this province. As a result of that, we have 14,000 spots we are going to maintain.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak in support of the budget.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Before I recognize the next speaker, we're getting a little rowdy. So if you'd just lower it a little.

The member for Waterloo—Wellington.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo—Wellington): I'm glad tonight to have this opportunity to participate in the debate on the 2006 provincial budget that was tabled on March 23 by the Minister of Finance. My comments tonight will be relatively brief, providing an opportunity for the member for Burlington to address this matter before the House as well before the debate on the budget motion concludes this evening at 9:20 p.m.

As I begin, I want to congratulate newly elected members Christine Elliott and Lisa MacLeod, soon to be known in this place as the members for Whitby—Ajax and Nepean—Carleton. We all look forward to welcoming them to the Legislature and to our Progressive Conservative caucus.

I also want to congratulate Peter Tabuns, who won the by-election in Toronto—Danforth. As you know, he'll be taking his seat as the eighth New Democrat MPP, which reminds us of that 1970s TV show "Eight Is Enough."

The timing of this budget was, to some degree, intended to give the Liberal Party a boost in these three by-elections. In this sense, the budget was an abject failure. This provincial budget, the third budget presented to the Legislature by the McGuinty Liberal government, constitutes another sorry chapter in the thickening book of Liberal broken promises.

In the coming year, Ontarians will continue to be paying more and getting less from their provincial government. Ontarians continue to pay much more in taxes under this government. The image is still etched in

our memories of the face of the Premier, who gazed into a TV camera during the 2003 election campaign, blithely reassuring voters that what they feared most about tax-and-spend Liberals was not true about him. He gazed into that camera and into the homes of millions of Ontarians and he promised them that he would not raise their taxes. Of course, the Liberals won that election, and in their very first budget in 2004, he betrayed all who had voted Liberal and broke that promise with almost gleeful abandon by bringing in the largest tax increase in Ontario's history. That particular day, almost two years ago, voters will never forget.

1920

By the time of the second Liberal budget, in 2005, a clear trend had emerged: Ontarians were paying more and getting less. Ontario's farm families were among the most pronounced examples. They got much less. In response to the 2005 budget, I characterized the cuts to agriculture as being a kick in the teeth to Ontario's farm families. It was no wonder to anyone on this side of House that farmers brought their tractors here to Queen's Park 11 days ago to demonstrate, coincidentally, on the day of the third Liberal budget.

In Waterloo-Wellington, the initial response of farmers was shock, and it is palpable anger that the budget was not more supportive of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The Minister of Finance now knows that farmers are exceedingly unhappy with his government's lack of support for agriculture, a message he received loud and clear when he tried to leave an event in Whitby during the by-election last week, until he was finally convinced by the member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey to get out of his car and talk to the farmers.

In this budget, they have also chosen to continue to break another key election promise, that being their commitment to balance the books. Even if you believe the Liberal line that the cupboard was bare when they were elected, you would have to agree that after three years in office, this year's deficit belongs to them. This government had the best chance this year they've seen yet to fulfill their promise to balance the budget. In fact, the member for Guelph-Wellington was quoted in the Guelph Mercury acknowledging that the budget could have been balanced this year, but a conscious, deliberate decision was made not to balance it.

The "pay more, get less" budget contained but a fleeting reference to the manufacturing jobs issue. They had little choice but to say something, and the budget documents try to depict a government that is doing something to respond to the crisis in our manufacturing sector. However, they offered no plan or vision. I first raised the issue of manufacturing jobs nearly a year ago with a resolution in the Legislature. I recommended that the all-party standing committee on finance and economic affairs immediately begin an investigation into Ontario's industrial and economic competitiveness and develop an action plan to maintain and expand our domestic and international markets in the coming years. It was intended as a plan to save jobs. The issue was raised by our

leader and our caucus in two opposition day debates in the Legislature and we have been raising it ever since.

This issue hit home two months ago when it was announced that the BF Goodrich tire plant in the Kitchener part of Waterloo-Wellington would close its doors this summer, putting 1,100 people out of work. I've received scores of letters from those displaced workers. They expressed concern about the loss of manufacturing jobs in Ontario. These workers deserve nothing less than a government providing leadership and the best possible plan for their economic future.

Whether we're talking with farmers in Wellington county or factory workers in Kitchener, we hear the same thing: This McGuinty Liberal government just seems to be fixated on Toronto and doesn't really care about the rest of the province.

Ontario's tourism leaders have every right to feel the same way. I'm proud to speak on behalf of our caucus as critic for the Minister of Tourism. We're advised that Ontario tourism is a \$21-billion industry. It directly employs about 213,000 people. A major source of our tourism revenue comes from our friends and neighbours to the south. American visitors have traditionally represented 90% of international visits to Ontario, but a dramatic decline in visits by Americans is threatening the future economic viability of Ontario tourism. The industry still hasn't fully recovered from the setbacks resulting from the negative perceptions after we endured the SARS crisis in 2003, nor the changes in the United States since the devastating terrorist attacks which we now call 9-11.

The impacts on tourism are as troubling as they are astounding. In 2005, annual entries from the United States reached their lowest level in 33 years. The number of visits plunged from a historic peak of 30 million visitors in 1998 to just over 19 million last year. That's a decline of almost 11 million US visits, with a negative impact on the tourism sector approaching \$1 billion a year. This means lost tax revenues for the province of \$110 million a year.

I don't think I'll be accused of spreading doom and gloom when I tell this House that it looks like the problem is about to get much worse. Think about the challenge we face when every American will be required to carry a passport or other specially acquired security document in order to get back home after they've been here. The US-led Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative means that passports or special pass cards will be required starting in 2007 for air and sea travel and 2008 for travel by road. As it stands now, few Americans have passports—less than 25%—and most have never even thought of needing one to visit Ontario. Because of our close relationship with the United States, generations of travellers haven't needed a passport to cross the border.

Members need to know that I raised this issue in the Legislature last year and called upon the Ontario Minister of Tourism to demonstrate that the government was aware of the potential impacts, and asked him to outline the steps that the government intended to take over the

coming months to deal with the issue. An impact study by the Ministry of Tourism has confirmed that a further decline in American visits is likely as a result of the passport issue. Nothing has changed. The cumulative impact is estimated to be a drop of 3.5 million American visits by 2008, and the ministry estimates that there will be a significant loss of jobs as a result.

I'm aware that the government was thoroughly briefed on these issues and the storm clouds that are looming on the horizon. The minister was told clearly that something had to be done to counter the pending decline in American visitors unless something is done. We needed an investment of \$30 million in the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp. in the budget. This would have been used to develop new marketing programs, programs through marketing initiatives that have yielded a handsome \$9 to \$11 return on every dollar invested.

What did Ontario's tourism industry leaders get from this government in the budget? It was callous indifference. The passport challenge was ignored in the budget speech. When I raised this issue with the Premier during question period last week, the Premier seemed fixated on Toronto in his response. Ignoring the substance of my question, he rhymed off a number of capital investments that the government expects to make in our cultural attractions—all in Toronto—all of which are well and good, but will do nothing to attract tourists to north-western Ontario, northeastern Ontario, eastern Ontario and many other regions of the province, all of which are dependent on tourism for their local economic success.

To further demonstrate that the budget was Toronto-centric, I'd like the Premier to consider the following advice I have received. Toronto is the largest tourist destination in Ontario, with around 18.5 million visitors recorded in 2004 out of a total of about 118 million to the province as a whole. So I would ask the Premier, what about the 100 million visits that the rest of the province generates? That question must be answered in the coming days along with many others from those who were left out in this 2006 provincial budget. Let us hope that the response of the people of Ontario will force the government to rethink their cynical plan as the next 18 months draw to a close and then this Liberal government moves back to the opposition benches, where, after these three budgets, they deserve to be.

Mr. Jackson: I want to commend my colleague for his opening comments on this, the 2006 Dalton McGuinty budget. As I said earlier, in response to another member, I've been in this House for, I think, 22 different budgets—one year there were two, so it's probably 23 different budgets—so I can tell you that no one's ever totally satisfied with what they find in a budget. But I have never, ever had the experience as a legislator in 22 years of seeing a \$3-billion surplus in a budget. So it's very obvious to everyone, not only in this chamber but across Ontario, that that has become the object of a lot of discussion, speculation and analysis as to how that money was handled.

For those people watching tonight's debate, it would be fair to say that this \$3 billion was essentially—in the last few weeks of our fiscal year, which closed on March 31, there was a spending spree. They couldn't get all the money out in certain of their priority areas, but the government saw fit to place a substantial amount of money into a trust account for some future construction predominantly for Toronto and for York region, and a very little bit of that as well to go to Brampton.

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There are many groups of people across Ontario who are asking the questions: Why have their concerns fallen off the table, or why have their needs fallen further back on the government's agenda? I'm not going to get into what you promised and what you didn't deliver; those are well known and well documented. Frankly, the people who appreciate that debate the least are those people who relied on those promises, and who are extremely frustrated that they did not see evidence in this budget that this government was either (a) going to honour the promise or (b) listening to the concerns that were legitimate prior to the last election and, in their opinion, are even more serious today. So my brief time to discuss the budget and the budget amendment is to go over some of those items on behalf of the region of Halton and the city of Burlington, its taxpayers, its children and its seniors.

I want to start first with the Halton public and separate school boards. They relied on the government's word that they were going to have a moratorium on school closures and that there would be sufficient capital made available to meet the growing demands. There are 70-some school boards in our province, and 60-some of those are not experiencing growth. But there are 10 school boards that are experiencing severe growth—severe enough that schools are opening in one year and within six months are projecting as many as 15 portables to be added to them. This is not uncommon in the GTA, but it is a feature which has apparently escaped the attention of the government. In Halton, the Halton public school board has in fact proceeded with \$100 million worth of additional capital on the hope, the strength and the belief that the government will honour that commitment.

I have spoken to the Minister of Education, and I hope that whatever poor health has taken him from this House to be with his family is not of a serious nature, and we wish him and his family well.

I have spoken to him about this concern, because not only is the Halton school board using all of its reserve dollars to build schools that were promised to them, but there are boards across the GTA which have engaged in a similar kind of activity. I am led to believe that the amount is about \$1 billion worth of capital that's currently under construction and in one form or another of completion. Yet the government has remained silent on the funding formula, on the amount of the monies that are being transferred to the school boards. They have been silent on the moratorium on school closures. They've lifted it, but they haven't told them what the guidelines

are, and yet today school boards are closing schools because they cannot get an answer from the government. Of course, they have no real guidelines to follow in terms of what permitted uses this government will allow for their vacant school places. So this is a very, very serious problem facing the Halton board.

This is the second year that the Halton public and separate school boards are projecting rather large deficits. Although the government gets full marks for personally stepping in, in spite of the legislation, and overriding the authority and the responsibility of trustees and undertaking the negotiations directly with elementary and secondary teachers in this province, giving them a rather attractive package that satisfied their needs, we now find today that there isn't enough money to put into our schools for things such as the increased cost of heating our schools. The Halton board of education has a half-million-dollar extra cost associated just with heating its schools this year—half a million just for the increased cost of gas. That doesn't include books; it doesn't include the increased demand on special ed, as we identify more and more children with learning disabilities and not being able to provide them with program funding.

School boards are desperate for an answer about where the funding levels will come. What we're hearing is that school boards are being told, "Look, there is no more money, and because there's no more money, you should keep a lid on things. The fact is, your teachers are happy. They've got their package, and that's all well and good. But now if you need to find extra money to manage, find it from your special education budget, find it in your transportation budget, find it by closing schools and finding efficiencies. That's where you'll come up with your money."

This budget signals to school boards that, "You're not going to get the increases that you were looking for for all the other things." The monies in this budgets barely cover the costs of the collective agreements that the Minister of Health—I'm sorry; I keep calling him the Minister of Health—that the Minister of Education, Mr. Kennedy, personally negotiated with the teachers' unions and bypassed the school boards. And so on a day when we were earlier discussing amendments to the Education Act and giving trustees additional authority and recognizing that they deserve more pay, it sort of conflicts with the notion that the government was stepping in and negotiating their collective agreements; in fact, taking over one of their major and most important responsibilities.

Other groups in our community are concerned at the oversight on the part of the government not including whole segments of service delivery that we rely on to keep our communities safe—child protection issues with our children's aid societies. This is the third year in a row that children's aid societies are again projecting to run deficits, and the government has said, "Go ahead and run your deficits." This is a time when child protection issues are becoming even more important. In a couple of weeks I will be speaking to the issue of Kevin Latimer, who

passed away. My colleague from Brant has raised the issue of young Jared, who died a couple of weeks ago. If we get underneath these issues, we find that the cash-strapped children's aid societies cannot do their job and function properly given the funding framework and the pressures this current government is putting on them. Do we not think that children who are suffering with autism deserve the support from that \$3-billion surplus? Do we not think that children who have child protection issues are important enough that they should be included in this budget? This is a government that was able to find 12% over three and a half years for people who work at the LCBO, and yet persons who work in the developmental disabilities sector and others are getting a 1% increase to their budget this year, as they did last year. That's no way to run a government.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Before I do questions and comments, I would appreciate a little quiet.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: In response to the comments that were made by the Conservative members, I want to say, particularly to the member from Burlington, who talked about what's going to happen to children's aid societies, if he takes a look at the estimates that the government tabled as part of their budget document, it's very clear that we're looking at an \$82-million cut in children and youth services. We're all wondering what that cut will be and who will be impacted and how negative that impact will be. We wait to see what comes forward from the government in that regard. We certainly know that child care and child care spaces are going to take a hit. That's already clear, because we've seen that that cut is about 22%. But there will be some others, and we will look to see who else is going to be impacted by a significant cut in that ministry.

Secondly, he talked about school boards and their ability to do or not do certain things. I think it's important to point out that much of the money that school boards were trying to put into, for example, either special education programs or English-as-a-second-language programs is money that has had to be diverted to pay for utility bills, for electricity bills, in so many of our schools. Why is that? The reason is that this government has not changed the funding formula to reflect the increased costs of running the physical plants which are our schools. People for Education pointed out, for example, most recently that significant monies that should be going into special education, significant monies that should be going into English-as-a-second-language programs, are in fact monies that are having to be diverted by school board officials to pay the bills just to keep the lights on, just to keep the heat in place. This is a Liberal government that promised changes to the funding formula to reflect actual costs. We haven't seen that change, and as a result, funds needed for other programs are being diverted just to pay for basic needs in schools and school facilities.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I had the opportunity earlier to talk about some of the investments this budget is bringing to the city of Ottawa when it comes to health care, and I just want to talk about education.

It's unfortunate that the member from Lanark–Carleton is not here, because he had criticized the government for not doing enough for Ottawa, yet today when he had his opportunity to speak, what did he speak about? He wanted a higher mileage rate on his annual visit to his riding.

I am proud of the education commitment that this government has put into education. Under the Tory government there were 26 million school days lost as a result of strikes. How many under Premier McGuinty's leadership? Absolutely zero as a result of teachers' strikes.

We have turned the corner, in terms of co-operation with our school boards, with people like Lynn Graham, chair of our school board who does such an excellent job in Ottawa, and Margaret Lange, Riley Brockington and Alex Getty, three trustees who serve the west end of the city and represent an area that I have the pleasure of representing in Ottawa West–Nepean.

The Tory track record on health care is abysmal. They closed the Riverside and Grace hospitals. They tried to close Montfort and the CHEO cardiac unit. They downloaded services. I certainly was a victim of those downloads when I was mayor of Ottawa. We've turned the corner because we're uploading services.

I was with Mayor Chiarelli and Councillor Deans just last week, announcing \$5.3 million as part of our contribution for the 50-50 land ambulance cost, which has gone over extremely well.

We have a track record in this government of delivering public services. We're not afraid to say that public services are important to the people of not only Ottawa and eastern Ontario but all of Ontario.

The investments in community health centres: I was pleased that a community health centre is coming into Nepean, headed by a very capable Patricia Pepper and her group of board members and volunteers. We wish them well. That money is in the budget this year and it's going to do good things for the people of Nepean.

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from Waterloo–Wellington and the member from Burlington on the budget amendment this evening.

I note that the member from Waterloo–Wellington congratulated our newly elected MPPs. I would like to add to the congratulations, particularly of course the PC MPPs, Christine Elliott and Lisa McLeod, who were both victorious in recent by-elections, and I would like for a moment to talk about some of the issues they were talking about.

One of the things that bothers me most about this budget is the fact that it is not balanced, that in times when the government saw an extra \$2.2 billion in revenue and then another \$700 million, I believe it was,

in savings and interest this year—over \$3 billion in revenues they hadn't planned on, \$3 billion extra, and yet they still didn't balance the budget. In 2002-03, I think the revenue for Ontario was \$68.8 billion; this year it's projected to be \$85.7 billion—a \$17-billion increase. And yet this government has not balanced the budget.

Times have been relatively good. What happens if we have a recession? What happens if things go downhill in the United States and it spills over into Canada and government has to spend money? What happens then? The government has no choice but to run larger and larger deficits, so they're taking a big risk for the whole economy and the well-being of all of us by being irresponsible and not balancing this budget. Certainly the single, most bothersome thing about it for me personally is that they've been so irresponsible in good times.

Once again, for the third time, they have broken the promise, as was pointed out by the member from Waterloo–Wellington. Dalton McGuinty promised not to raise taxes and to balance budgets, and for the third year in a row we're seeing him break that promise and again run a deficit.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I too wanted to make a few comments on the remarks made earlier by the member from Waterloo–Wellington and the member from Burlington. I have to say that I too was disappointed, as was reflected by the two members speaking previously about this budget. I was disappointed because I think the government had the opportunity to do some very positive things, particularly when we acknowledge the fact that they were awash in dollars this time around and had a real chance to perhaps begin to keep some of those promises that the people of Ontario expected them to keep, oh, maybe last year, maybe the year before that. But at the very least, they could have done it this year. Of course, they didn't.

I think what's most disturbing for me is the retreat from their commitment to the children of this province that's very clear in this budget. The member for Burlington specifically talked about children's aid societies and the budgets that are still straining at the edges to meet the needs of children needing care in the province of Ontario. But I have to tell you, if you look at any of the services for children, you'll see that this government has made real choices, but unfortunately the choices are going in the wrong direction. They are choosing to withdraw their supports from children in so many ways. So it's not only lack of funding or lack of expansion for children's aid societies, but children's services centres as well are in extremely difficult situations trying to meet the needs of children who need services, particularly because of special needs and other considerations.

You'll know that the government has not been able to keep its commitment—has refused to keep its commitment, has decided it's not going to keep its commitment—for funding of child care at the provincial level. So the \$300 million that they talk about so many times around child care from the province of Ontario, they have not invested.

They have not invested in children by taking away the clawback of the national child benefit that they promised they would take away, which would help so many poor children, so many children living in poor families, just to make ends meet and have a little bit better quality of life.

They have abandoned children this time around.

The Acting Speaker: Response, the member for Burlington.

Mr. Jackson: I'd like to thank the member for Nickel Belt, who underscored the fact that this government has cut \$82 million from children's services. I'm sure that this causes a lot of consternation for the former Minister of Children and Youth Services, a champion in her own right. She must be just beside herself knowing that those significant cuts are going to be across a whole host of organizations. The member for Hamilton East helped enumerate those. There's actually a cut in the amount of dollars being spent in this budget over the last budget in the government's commitment to child care. The clawback of the child tax credit is, honestly, cruel and unusual punishment to some of the poorest families in our province who are struggling to raise children above the poverty level.

The Minister of Health Promotion was very clear to talk about buying labour peace, which is what his government did. The budget clearly demonstrates for us just what the price of labour peace was. The price of labour peace under Dalton McGuinty's Ontario means that there will be fewer resources in the classroom for those teachers. There will be fewer resources for children who are having emotional difficulties and who are being jettisoned out of our schools in increasing numbers because schools are hiding behind the Safe Schools Act, and all it takes is for a small problem to flare up with a child. I am seeing cases in my community of Burlington of children in grade 1 and grade 2 being sent home for suspensions indefinitely because they are swearing or because they're acting out in the classroom. Is there any recognition of this in this budget? No, not at all. The money went to salaries, and that's where the priorities are.

Again, I must reiterate that Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital has had 48 beds cut. One quarter of all the beds have been cut because of this budget.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Martel: It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate this evening. I'm going to focus on one issue and one issue only, and that is going to be this: In the face of a \$3-billion windfall that the Liberal government experienced in the fiscal year that just ended, why is it that even one child with autism has to sit on a waiting list in this province, desperately hoping to get intensive behavioural intervention or IBI treatment? That's what I'm going to focus on this evening.

My involvement with families with autistic children began probably in January 2001. At that time, I received a notice of a press conference from one Norrah Whitney, whose son, Lucas Burrows, was being terminated from his IBI treatment by the former Conservative govern-

ment. As you will know, Speaker, the Conservative government set up a program to provide IBI services. It was a limited program budget. It was discriminatory in that when you turned age six, you were arbitrarily and summarily cut off, even if it was clearly proven that continuing that service would be beneficial to the child. And so Ms. Whitney sent a notice of a press conference inviting representatives from all three political parties to join her at the human rights commission, because she was going to file a complaint that her son was being discriminated against on the basis of his disability.

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I didn't know very much about this program. I wasn't the children's critic or the health critic at the time. I was interested, however, in the issue and the appeal that she was making, so I decided to attend. I did that. I went down to the press conference. I was the only representative from any political party. I listened to what she had to say and to what her lawyer had to say and heard about her son, who had been making tremendous progress at New Haven, who was getting 40 hours of IBI a week, and who had received a letter from the former government to say that regardless of the progress that he had been making and regardless of the fact that his senior psychologist and the consultants who worked with him at New Haven said full well he needed that IBI to continue in order to learn—the government of the day at that time had sent her a letter saying he was six, that was the end of all funding. So she was challenging that through the commission.

Do you know that even today that case has not finally come to resolution, that she is before the tribunal and has been before the tribunal, and that this government has sent lawyers, often four lawyers at a time, to the tribunal, day in, day out, when it sits, to try and argue that the case shouldn't be heard? Before the Auton case came down, the government lawyers argued that the case shouldn't be heard because the Auton decision at the federal level in the Supreme Court would have an impact on the case, that the case shouldn't be heard because the Human Rights Tribunal didn't have jurisdiction to hear the case, and on and on and on. This is what has happened to one parent and one child with respect to their complaint.

After Ms. Whitney went forward and launched her complaint, some 112 other families also followed suit. They have joined their complaints with hers, so now all of the cases are being heard together. But isn't it a sad state of affairs that in the province of Ontario, these many years later, the tribunal has yet to render a final decision in this important case, primarily because this government, through its lawyers, has done everything it possibly can to stymie this case from going forward?

After I met Norrah, I met many other families with autistic children whose children were also being cut off IBI treatment at the age of six, even though they needed it. Before the last election, a number of those families very courageously came to Queen's Park, sat in the gallery and allowed me to use their example and the case of their son or daughter to point out to the previous

government how unfair, unjust and discriminatory it was that a child who needed treatment should be cut off that treatment merely because they turned age six. Members who were here before the last election would remember those parents being here, would remember the questions I raised, first to Mr. Baird and then to Ms. Elliott. In fact, a number of them who were here, if they were sitting on this side, in the Liberal benches, would remember agreeing with me and arguing with the ministers of the day, Ms. Elliott in particular, that it was unfair and discriminatory for these children to be cut off their treatment at age six.

I think it was because so much public attention was focused on these families and their plight, and how unfortunate it was and how many of them were facing financial ruin because they were trying to pay out of their own pocket the \$55,000 that is sometimes necessary to get 40 hours of IBI treatment for your child—it was because of that attention that was paid to this issue in the media that the McGuinty Liberals promised in the last election that they would do something different. Very specifically, in a letter to Nancy Morrison, who at that time was the parent of five-year-old Sean, who has autism—in a letter to Ms. Morrison, who wrote all political parties and asked us what our position was with respect to funding IBI and with respect to the cut-off at age six—Mr. McGuinty, right in the middle of the election campaign, September 17, 2003, wrote Nancy back and said this:

“I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six. We are not at all confident that the Harris-Eves Conservatives care to devise any innovative solution for autistic children over six—especially those with best outcome possibilities that might potentially be helped within the school system with specially trained EAs.

“In government, my team and I will work with clinical directors, parents, teachers and school boards to devise a feasible way in which autistic children in our province can get the support and treatment they need. That includes children over the age of six.”

I have no doubt, because parents have told me this subsequently, that many parents with autistic children voted Liberal on the basis of that promise. To their surprise and to their shock and to their dismay, no sooner had the Liberals gotten their votes and formed the government than these same Liberals broke that election promise and carried on with the same discriminatory policies that had been put in place by the Conservative government; that is to say, to continue to arbitrarily cut children off IBI treatment as soon as they turned six.

I want to read you a letter that was sent by Cynthia and Bradley Boufford of London to their MPP, Mr. Ramal, early on, because they voted Liberal in the last election and then, after the Liberals formed the government, their son Jordan got cut off IBI, just as if it were

the Conservatives who were in place. This is what they had to say to Mr. Ramal:

“You are very aware that our son was discharged in May, from the IBI therapy program he was benefiting from. Do you care that over the summer, he had no IBI therapy? Do you realize that during that time, he lost skills, and did not continue to make the progress he was making with IBI therapy? Every day that passes that Jordan does not get IBI therapy is a lost opportunity for our son. He needs IBI therapy to progress. He is not learning (as we were told he would) from his peers to ask, why, how come, etc. The great Liberal plan to put a handful of consultants in the school board will do nothing for him. His needs are immediate. With IBI therapy, our son would continue to learn and progress. We do know what is best for him. We have seen how he learns. We have witnessed first-hand the progress he made with therapy and the lack of progress he has made without it....

“It is quite unfortunate you have neglected to fulfill your election promise to help our son and the many other children who have autism. You simply used us to gain votes and now think that in attending and speaking at fundraisers, we will be placated. It would be much better if you spent your time advocating for changes, which would enable children to receive therapy based on their needs, not the fact that they have reached six years old.”

What else did the government do? They arbitrarily continued to cut kids off. They kept on with the court case that had been launched by the Deskin-Wynberg families under the Conservative government and proceeded under the Liberal government. In fact, it's interesting because I have had more than one occasion to attend the court hearings under the previous government and then under the current government, and had a chance to talk to counsel for the plaintiffs, Ms. Mary Eberts, who I have the greatest of respect for. Ms. Eberts told me very plainly, and said very publicly, that this Liberal government was fighting her and these parents even harder than the Conservative government did before—this from a party that said they were going to stop the discrimination against autistic children over the age of six.

What else happened? The wait-list continued to grow. I have some information about wait-lists that I want to put into the record here this evening. The Liberals are now in government, and have been for some time. As of March 31, 2005, there were 399 children eligible to receive IBI and waiting on a wait-list for it to commence. At the same time, March 31, 2005, there were 287 children waiting for an assessment to determine if they would be eligible for IBI services. Do you know that at the same time, the government was servicing about 675 children? The fact of the matter is, under the Liberals, by March 31, 2005, there were 686 children who were eligible to receive treatment and waiting for service, and in that same group, another group was waiting for an assessment. There were more children waiting for an assessment and waiting for services than there were children actually receiving the IBI treatment that they needed.

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When I hear this government talk to me with their platitudes about how much they have done for autistic children, I have to shake my head, because it is the same group who, after getting the votes of parents and families with autistic children, betrayed them directly by continuing to cut their children off when they turned six. It's the same Liberals who continued spending taxpayers' dollars—yours and mine—money that should go into treatment instead being spent to fight these families in court more aggressively than the Conservatives before you. It's the same group who, despite putting money into the system, had waiting lists that were longer, and are longer today, than the group of children who are actually getting served. What a legacy.

In the face of those waiting lists, do you know that at the end of the last fiscal year, March 31, 2005, we discovered that the Minister of Children and Youth Services underspent the IBI treatment budget by \$2.7 million? Do you know that in the face of 399 kids on a waiting list who had qualified and were just waiting to start to get some treatment, she diverted \$2.7 million that could have gone into treatment and instead put it into protection services for kids? No doubt we need protection services for kids, but a lot of those kids we're trying to protect are kids who have autism, and if they got some IBI, they probably wouldn't be in that system. She diverted \$2.7 million somewhere else when there were 399 kids on a waiting list, ready and waiting to receive treatment.

Let me deal with the court case, the very one that the Liberals have spent so many taxpayers' dollars on trying to fight these parents. That case was very revealing. I give credit to Justice Kiteley, who did a thorough and exhaustive review. Months were spent on this; much evidence was presented. Many people made submissions, including an 11-year-old boy who had autism, who talked about how IBI had helped him.

In her decision, which was released just a little over a year ago, she said a couple of things that I want to read into the record:

"Parents or other caregivers from more than half of the families gave evidence. Virtually every one of the parents described circumstances of the children that personalized the clinical descriptions in a manner that could only be described as heartbreaking."

Heartbreaking, because none of these kids got IBI, and these parents were doing everything they could, including mortgaging their homes and having a second mortgage to try to pay for it.

She also said, "I find that the age cut-off," first in place by the Conservatives, then in place under the Liberals, "reflects and reinforces the stereotype that children with autism over age six are virtually unredeemable.... To deny the plaintiff children the opportunity to have ... IBI after the age of five is to stereotype them, to prejudice them and to create a disadvantage for them."

She also said the following in her judgment: "The absence of IBI" in the schools means that children with autism "are excluded from the opportunity to access learning, with the consequential deprivation of skills, the likelihood of isolation from society, and the loss of the ability to exercise the rights and freedoms to which all Canadians are entitled."

Her decision, which was fundamental, which was so important, was the following: She ruled that this government violated the charter rights of autistic children on the basis of their age and on the basis of their disability, and further, that the Minister of Education violated the Education Act because of failing to ensure that appropriate special education programs and special education services were available to all exceptional pupils without payment of fees. In particular, the Minister of Education failed to develop policy and give direction to school boards to ensure that IBI services are provided to children of compulsory school age. Indeed, the actions and inactions of the Ministry of Education and the minister created a policy barrier to the availability of IBI in schools. The absence of IBI means that children with autism are excluded from the opportunity to access learning.

That's what Justice Kiteley had to say after months of hearing this case. That's what she had to say about the Minister of Education in particular after this government promised during the election that they were going to work with school boards to make sure that IBI was delivered in the schools. This government is not delivering one bit of IBI in the schools. They have not forced school boards to do that, and so many autistic children are falling behind, are falling through the cracks, are out of school and being home-schooled as a result.

I want to just go back to the Bouffords, because here's what they had to say about the government's consultant-in-the-school program, which has been such a joke. This is Cindy Boufford again: "I asked at my son's school if an ASD consultant could come in and provide some training to the educational assistants who work with several students with autism in the school. I was told that these consultants consult with board staff, not the staff working directly with the kids, and do not provide training. They are available only to provide consultation if there is an issue that can't be dealt with by the existing staff, meaning they have tried everything and failed. There is no actual service available to my son from these so-called consultants, absolutely none."

This government's school program with consultants that go into the school and give some direction to parents is an absolute joke, and it isn't what the government promised in the last election. This government promised that there would be IBI in the schools and this government should deliver on that promise.

Today, in answer to the question I raised with the minister, she said, "Well, this government is providing IBI services to children over the age of six," as if the Liberals had finally decided to make good on their promise. Do you know that the only reason this government is pro-

viding IBI to children over the age of six is because of Justice Kiteley's court decision, a court decision which says you violated the constitutional rights, the Charter rights of these children, and until such time that another level of court deems otherwise, her orders in that decision stay? That's the only reason the Liberal government is providing IBI to children over six today, not because they changed their minds and not because they decided to live up to their election promise. No, the court ordered that it be done, and unless and until the court of appeal changes Justice Kiteley's decision, then IBI needs to continue to be provided.

That leads me to the final point: a \$3-billion windfall. In the face of the waiting lists of kids over the age of six who are still on the program, of those kids who are under six waiting for treatment, of those kids who got cut off under the Liberals but could be reinstated because of Justice Kiteley's decision, did the government use any of the \$3 billion to get any of these kids off a waiting list? No, they did not. Shame on this government.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I had prepared for the budget this evening more on the infrastructure aspect. So that's the part that I will start dealing with now. It has to do with whether the infrastructure spending that was made in the budget by our government was realistic. I think when you look at any of our major cities, there was a report out recently from the federal government that deals with the cost of lost time as a result of post-1995 funding cuts by the former government. It was 75% for public transit up until that time, and post-1995 that support for public transit was taken down to zero. That was what the Harris Tory Conservative government did, and we're feeling that today.

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Today, transit in Toronto carries 11% of daily trips. It's down 30% from what it carried in 1986—a 30% reduction in daily trips. The TTC carried 117 trips per capita. That's down 11% from 131 in 1986. The buses are 3% slower than in 1986 because of congestion.

This is a report, by the way, that has been prepared by Neal Irwin, IBI Group, presented at the fourth annual GTA transportation summit, March 22, 2006. It shows a terrific cost to cities of not having the proper transit. If you look at the cost, it's about \$1.1 billion a year now for people sitting in congested streets. If we keep doing the same for the next 30 years, they're projecting that \$4 billion a year is going to be the cost for people sitting in traffic.

That \$4 billion is the way that we were going with the Tories. We're going to change that around. I just wanted to start that way. Ten minutes from now, I'll speak to this subject.

Mr. Jackson: I want to respond to the passionate and insightful comments of my colleague from Nickel Belt. As always, I share with her her concern about children's services in the manner in which she presented her case this evening.

She made some very important points about the difference in the two court cases. I was in the House the day that she asked the minister a question about the court case. We got this answer, which sent shivers up our spines, and that was that, in the opinion of the government, they didn't think that intensive behavioural intervention and the methodology being used actually worked for kids over the age of six. That frightened me to the extent that, if that's the way this government is fighting this court case, to say, "We don't doubt that it would be discriminatory not to give it to them, but frankly, it doesn't work"—the truth of the matter is that the teachers' union has indicated to the school boards and to the Minister of Education that under no circumstances will they allow anyone to do work in a classroom unless they have a teaching certificate. That's what the real battle is here.

I sat at a cabinet table when we agonized about extending the services. We'd only had the program in place for a couple of years, and in those days, the problem was that we didn't have enough money. Today the problem is not that we don't have the money; it's that the government wishes to continue this court case against children with autism in this province under the guise that it doesn't work. But the truth of the matter is, the teachers' union has told this government that under no circumstances will they allow these professional therapists into the classrooms, where they are needed desperately in this province, immediately.

Ms. Horwath: I wanted to take a few minutes to also comment on the remarks by the member from Nickel Belt. I have to say that when I was running in the by-election, I had an opportunity—this was a couple of years ago now—to meet some of the local families in Hamilton and actually from other areas in the southwestern part of Ontario who were challenging the government, who were part of these actions and these initiatives that the member from Nickel Belt has been so intimately involved with.

I can tell you, we can talk in this House about the battle that's happening on the legal stages, we can talk in this House about the policy battle, we can talk in this House about the funding battle and whether there's enough money or there isn't—and in fact, it's only a matter of whether or not you prioritize these particular children and their need for services beyond age six. But I have to tell you, if you sit with those families, you will know that that IBI treatment is so extremely important, not only for the children but for the well-being of the families as well.

I can tell you that it took a lot of heart-wrenching effort to sit with those families and hear the kinds of challenges that they have on a day-to-day basis as they watch their children lose their skills, as they watch their children deteriorate right before their eyes. Why? Because they reached an age that for some reason, somewhere, somebody decided all of a sudden that because of that age, they are no longer eligible to receive the learning and skill supports that that IBI treatment provided. I can tell you, it was a huge eye-opening experience for

me, and any one of the members of this House who cares to actually sit down and talk to any of these family members will right away know that it's not a matter of policy or dollars or court cases or anything else. It's a matter of humanity; it's a matter of decency. It's a matter of making sure that these families get a fair shake and that these children have a chance to develop some basic skills, the way that anybody would expect their own children to have the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Leal: I did listen very intently to the member from Nickel Belt articulating her views on the budget that was delivered on March 23.

In my time as a member of the provincial Legislature representing Peterborough, I have met with many families, particularly those low-income families who have children suffering from type 1 diabetes. I note that in the budget, for the first time, I understand we're the only jurisdiction in North America that will be funding insulin pumps and related supplies for about 6,500 children by 2008-09. I take that as a very significant accomplishment in the province of Ontario, indeed throughout North America. Our colleagues Mike Gravelle and others were determined to make this come about, because many of those families, as I understood it when I had a chance to meet with them, were cutting strips in half; they were scrimping in other areas to make sure that their children had an opportunity to have those costly insulin pumps and related supplies. So I happen to think that this is part of the budget that needs to be applauded and supported.

Secondly, the investment in infrastructure in northern Ontario: I had the opportunity a number of weeks ago to be in Timmins, Ontario. The group I was chatting with was involved in the mining industry, and one of the issues was expanding roads in northern Ontario, because there are, right now, tremendous increases in costs, in prices of commodities, because of pressure throughout the world—China, India and other countries. Indeed, they need the investment in good roads to make sure that they can get those commodities to market.

I appreciate the comments from the member for Nickel Belt, but there are other areas in this budget that do support children.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Ms. Martel: I want to say this in response to the comments from all the members: It's three years in, three budgets for this government, and still the promise that was made to parents of autistic children, before the election and during the election, has been failed to be met by this government, and this at a time when in the most recent budget this government had a \$3-billion windfall.

The election promise by Mr. McGuinty was very clear: "I ... believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six." Furthermore, "The Ontario Liberals are going to work with school boards, we're going to work with teachers, and we're going to make sure that IBI is provided in the schools."

None of that is happening with the third budget of this government.

In fact, while the minister said today that they are extending treatment beyond the age of six, she failed to mention that the only reason that's happening is because the court ordered it. She also failed to mention that when the government sought leave to appeal the Deskin-Wynberg decision last April, the government lawyers, on behalf of the Liberals, went to court and argued that Justice Kiteley's decision should be set aside; it should be struck down. If that had happened, those children over the age of six would have been cut off. So, you see, your commitment to these kids is pretty slim at best, because your agents in court have been doing everything they possibly can, on the instruction of the Attorney General, to make sure that these parents don't win. You have spent millions, and I mean millions, of dollars fighting these parents in court, at a time when those millions of dollars could have been used to deal with all the kids on the waiting list.

Look, folks, you had \$3 billion. You've got hundreds of kids on a waiting list. They're not getting treatment. You promised to provide it; you should have. Shame on you for your treatment of autistic children.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Leal: I want to say at the onset that I'll be sharing my time with my good friend the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

I'll start off by saying that just yesterday the Peterborough Petes won their first round of the playoffs against the Ottawa 67's, and we certainly look forward to starting our series Thursday night against the Sudbury Wolves. I'm sure that will be an interesting clash. We'll have two brothers, Staal against Staal, competing.

I'd also like to acknowledge my good friend, the coach and general manager, Peterborough native Bob Gainey, of the Montreal Canadiens. He's got the Canadiens on a six-game winning streak, and we look forward to going into the playoffs.

Also today in my riding, Jim Balsillie, a Peterborough native and co-CEO of RIM—Research in Motion—from Waterloo, donated, along with his wife, \$600,000 toward the building of a new family Y in Peterborough. We certainly want to acknowledge his great contribution.

I'd also like to indicate to members that we look forward to seeing each and every one of you when the International Plowing Match is hosted in the riding of Peterborough, in the municipality of Otonabee-South Monaghan, in September. We look forward to seeing you all there.

I've had the opportunity in the last couple weeks to review what is happening in the riding of Peterborough—the good news. We have an unemployment rate right now of 5.9%, which is one of the lowest in recent memory.

We talk about opportunities in the manufacturing area. PepsiCo Quaker, Tropicana, Gatorade certainly have had many ads in the Peterborough Examiner looking for new employees in manufacturing. GE Canada, which has a

substantial operation in Peterborough, small motors and nuclear products, is also on the hunt right now for new employees, creating new opportunities. Numet Engineering, which is involved in the nuclear products field, just recently embarked on a large expansion of their operation in Peterborough, and they will be bringing about new hires.

Minute Maid orange juice, a subsidiary of Coca-Cola in Atlanta, Georgia, has a major expansion in Peterborough. They're doing so because the investment climate is a good one right now in the province of Ontario.

On the retail side, I know many shoppers in Peterborough are looking forward to Costco building new operation in Peterborough come this spring. For those of you who are familiar with Peterborough, Lansdowne Place is a major mall in Peterborough and will be expanding to some 30 stores in the near future. That also bodes well that the retail climate is well and healthy in the riding of Peterborough.

I want to spend some time today talking about what I think is very important, as a former municipal politician in the city of Peterborough: the fact that announcements just prior to the budget and contained in the budget are starting to go a long way to upload some of those exorbitant costs that municipalities of Ontario had to face when Mr. Harris downloaded them in 1997 and 1998. As I've indicated on previous occasions, I was at that famous AMO meeting in 1998 when the Premier of the day came in. He got a standing ovation when he announced that downloading is going to occur. Many individuals who were in that room that day thought, "My goodness, this is a great day for Ontario," but they knew that many of us who took a different view at that particular time realized that that was a ticking time bomb.

Now we've started the uploading in the public health field, which is so very important. Secondly, a major announcement was made by the Premier at the Good Roads conference this year that the land ambulance will be brought back to a 50-50 split. As was originally put forward when the downloading occurred in 1997-98, in some municipalities in Ontario, the provincial share went from 50% down to 35%, and in some municipalities across the province as low as 33%. We know when it dropped, those municipalities that were at 35% and 33%, that that burden was directly shifted to the property taxpayer. We've announced, I think, a fairly ambitious target to bring it back to 50-50, which will certainly reduce the pressure on municipalities across the province of Ontario.

I have two copies here of the Peterborough Examiner. The first one is dated Tuesday March 28, 2006. It's the editorial that says, "Ontario Budget Good News for Cities" in the province of Ontario. It said, "Premier McGuinty deserves a lot of credit for starting the uploading of many services in the province of Ontario, and he's done so in a very ambitious way."

We rejigged the policy with regard to the gas tax. Now it will allow municipalities not only to use it for capital issues but also to look after some of their operating costs.

I think it's a great day for municipalities as we've started that process to go forward.

Then there's another editorial in the Peterborough Examiner, Friday, March 31, 2006. It's talking about the county budget in Peterborough. It says, "Room for" tax "Relief." Why is there room for tax relief? New provincial funding could be used to keep taxes down. This budget—

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): What?

Mr. Leal: I say to my good friend Mr. Murdoch, here they are right here. Peterborough Examiner; I'll give you the copy, sir, if you want to read it. The other one says, "Good" news "for Cities." Good news for Peterborough. That's what the editorial says.

Not only that, the county of Peterborough will be getting \$2.2 million and each municipality in the county of Peterborough will get an allocation to do bridge and road work, something they asked us for when we all met at ROMA a few short weeks ago. I say to those members from ridings that don't want the money, if they don't want the money, they can contact their local mayors and reeves and get the cheques back and bring them back here to Queen's Park, and rest assured we'll find a very good use for them.

I want to touch upon agriculture for a moment. We hear a lot about agriculture. I do want to bring something of interest to the Legislature's attention. Some time ago I asked Jerry Richmond—Mr. Richmond is a research officer with the Ontario Legislative Assembly, an independent third body—to do a review of the agriculture budgets from 1995 to 2003, just to give me an independent analysis of where agriculture budgets have been going during our predecessors' government. I want to quote page 7 of the report. It says, "On July 21, 1995, Mr. Eves, the Minister of Finance, as part of the government-wide fiscal overview in spending cuts, announced an operating reduction target for the agriculture ministry of some \$13 million and a capital spending reduction target for the ministry of some \$1 million." It goes through, was implemented. "Permanent operating reductions of \$13 million were also announced. These included (1) the cancellation of \$2.5 million for the Niagara tender fruitlands program; (2) reductions in the private mortgage component of the agriculture investment strategy; and (3) reductions in the foodservice component of the Ontario Foodland program." These were implemented. He goes on to say that there were some other serious reductions in the ag budget—talk about closing agricultural offices across the province of Ontario. And over the profile there was a commentary in December 2000 from the Ontario Corn Producers. I'd just like to get their commentary into the record.

"First came the ravaging of OMAFRA extension services, with the closing of most county/regional offices—indeed, effectively closing them all, since the remaining offices no longer have local service mandates. Government spokespersons may pretend that the skeleton structure remaining is an 'improvement', but it's not.

Gone is the front-line delivery service—and provincial [agricultural] specialists are being drawn in to help fill local voids, meaning that provincial specialists have less time to concentrate on new innovations and ‘big picture’ issues, as should be their role. They’re too busy answering questions and dealing with the local crises which were formerly handled by local staff.”

There were a number of other closures during that time. They closed an office in Brighton, Ontario. They closed the local ag office in my riding of Peterborough and, frankly, over a period of time, they also closed—and the member for Northumberland should know this—the Brighton veterinarian lab, the milk utilization audit program was cancelled and the foodservice component of Foodland Ontario was reduced. When they’re talking about agriculture, the proof is in the pudding that they reduced agriculture and we’ve increased their budgets.

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Mr. McNeely: I’m pleased to rise in my place to speak about a budget that was delivered in this House—and not outside of this House, but right here—on March 23, 2006.

Being one of the members of the seven Ottawa ridings, I specifically wanted to emphasize how fair this budget was to the whole province, but especially to Ottawa. In the Ottawa area, and specifically in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans, we are proud to see new and increased investments in our city.

As a former consulting engineer, I spent 35 years dealing with infrastructure in municipalities. I have a special interest, and I believe an insight, into the infrastructure and how it was covered in this budget. The McGuinty budget addresses the infrastructure deficit left to us by the Tory Harris legacy after eight years of slash and burn in this province. We have seen that lack of investment in public transit has led to a huge decrease of 16% in the transit supply, seats per kilometre, and an 11% decrease in transit ridership, moving in a different direction than we should be going if we’re going to have sustainable cities in Canada, in Ontario, like Ottawa and Toronto.

I’d like to also talk about the health care in Ottawa. I remember in the Harris Tory days when the Grace Hospital was closed. My four children were born there. It was an excellent hospital, but it was closed by the Tories. Riverside hospital, a great hospital that cared for my mother in her sickness—it was closed. The Tories tried to close the Montfort Hospital. Minister Meilleur knows that. Gisèle Lalonde and the francophone community kept that hospital open by winning a court decision. That was the only way that it was kept open. Now that hospital is being doubled in size with over \$150 million of provincial money going in. It’s a great hospital in the east end of the city, one of the most efficient hospitals and certainly one that we cherish in our community.

We had the cardiac unit at Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario; they tried to close that. They brought in a supervisor for the Ottawa Hospital. I think he’s now the

Minister of Health, federally. But after spending six or eight months there, he decided that it was underfunded.

That was the story in health care in Ontario, but you never knew what the story was, because the government of the day would not measure to see how well we were doing across the province. That’s why we had this ICES report. It’s a fairly large report that came out last April. It’s the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences. It does an evaluation of health care in Ontario. What it did was it measured 16 or 18 specific procedures. Lo and behold, something that we knew in Ottawa all the time: We had less than half the MRIs per capita that they had in Toronto; we were the 14th out of the 14, the absolute worst. Under Sterling, under Baird and under the Tories of those years, Ottawa had the worst wait time out of 14. That history was there. It was shown in the April 20, 2005, report by ICES.

What did they say when I brought that up to both of them? They said, “Well, it’s because of Quebec.” I said, “What do you mean, Quebec?” In the 1970s and 1980s, Ottawa delivered the health care for the Hull region, which is now Gatineau. That was gone in the 1980s, but these guys sat there in the 1990s and they let the per capita health funding stay the same, even though we’d lost all those revenues from Quebec. All they could tell me in 2004 and 2005 was, “It’s because of Quebec.”

That went as far as the Citizen Reporter. I said, “Well, what do you think of this? Ottawa is 14th out of the 14, the absolute worst. We wait over a year for an MRI exam.” Of course, the reporter for the Citizen said the same as they did: “It’s because of Quebec.”

Thank God the new Minister of Health, George Smitherman, is doing a great job. He understands what the ICES report said. He understands there should be equity in health care in Ontario, and he’s moving ahead very quickly to bring us that. We now have 42% more MRIs in the Ottawa area in just over two years. It’s certainly a big change from what we’re used to. Now we’re getting representation and equity for the whole province, and that makes a big difference.

There is more than \$500 million going towards projects in Ottawa: a new expanded cancer centre with sites at the Ottawa Hospital and Queensway Carleton Hospital that will reduce wait times for cancer treatment to three weeks; a new Royal Ottawa Hospital, publicly owned and accountable; an expanded Montfort Hospital, double its size, is going to be great for our community; an expanded Queensway Carleton Hospital, a new emergency wing; expansions at the civic site of the Ottawa Hospital, with new emergency services; a new critical care wing at the Ottawa Hospital, general site; expansions at CHEO, including an ICU wing with oncology and ambulatory care. So every hospital has these cranes at them now. We’re expanding all the hospitals in Ottawa, an area of investment that the Tories would not do, that the Tory cabinet minister in Ottawa would never get for us.

We’ve had investments in education. We know that investments are all across the province. Thanks to

initiatives brought forth by the McGuinty government, class sizes are smaller, we have numeracy and literacy specialists in our schools, and we have parents, teachers, unions and government working together for the benefit of our youth. Our recent initiative to keep kids in school by offering skills training co-operation between colleges and high schools will help provide our children with skills and training to reach their potential.

In Ottawa this year, funding for post-secondary education was significant, with Algonquin College expanding; also Carleton University, La Cité collégiale, the University of Ottawa, a new Deslauriers high school for the francophones and increased funding for local school boards through Good Places to Learn.

Teachers are telling us that they have more time in the classroom and that there's a much better attitude in the classroom. That's one thing I do get quite often in my community, that the education at the lower-school levels is really much better, and I know it is as well.

In the last budget, Ottawa got \$32.8 million from Move Ontario, of \$400 million across the province for roads and bridges, as the member for Peterborough said, something that the municipalities asked us for. Certainly, those dollars are going to come in very handy, for sure.

The Harris administration withheld support for public transit. That has just left a mess in our cities. It's not only Toronto; it's in Ottawa. I remember the member for Lanark-Carleton told us the other day that he came down to present a cheque for \$17 million. I think I was there when Minister Meilleur was the chair of the transportation committee. Sure, he brought one cheque, but that was the only cheque I saw him bring down for public transit. After six or seven years in government, they came down with one cheque. Our buses were old and our public transit was decrepit.

Now we hear from the Conservative leader that we should have balanced the budget, that we shouldn't have put this money into public transit. We have to make those investments in public transit in all our cities. Ottawa is getting over \$400 million—\$200 million in light rail transit. That is the start of our major expansion: \$200 million there, \$200 million from the federal, and the city will be putting in \$325 million, for a total of \$725 million. As Minister Jim Watson said earlier, it is the biggest project that Ottawa has had.

We've really done well in Ottawa in this budget. The gas tax alone was \$83 million, with \$18 million last year, \$27 million this year and something like \$40 million next year, for a total of \$83 million. As part of the recent 2006 Ontario budget, Ottawa received \$22.9 million in one-time funding for transit vehicle purchases. Just that one expenditure is more money than the Minister of Transportation in the former government ever brought down to the city of Ottawa. I recall seeing him only once. I think that was the maximum number of times that he came down.

Our city received more than \$123 million for health care, which will go towards the Roger's House palliative care centre, for new land ambulances. I was with

Minister Watson and we delivered a cheque for \$5.7 million for the land ambulance just last week. But we're going to upload the cost of land ambulances, not download it as the former government did.

Two new MRIs at the Queensway hospital and the Montfort Hospital have made a big difference. They gave the hospitals that had existing MRIs enough money to run them 24 hours a day. I took my wife in at 1:30 in the morning for an MRI. That wasn't an inconvenience to me. But the Tories could not come up with the money to run those MRIs to give us equal care in Ottawa. There's a new replacement MRI at CHEO.

We've reduced wait times for hip and knee surgeries, for cardiac surgeries, for cancer treatment and cataract surgeries. We've had a 21.5% increase in base funding at Queensway Carleton. I know the SCO, the Sisters of Charity, who have a long-term-care facility in my riding, got a \$5.7-million increase in their base funding, just to bring them up to the same per capita funding they were getting in other parts of Ontario.

I must say that this government is treating Ottawa the same as the rest of the province. We're getting good investments in health care, education and job creation, and I'm very proud to stand here today and to say that we do have a budget that's good for Ontario and good for Ottawa.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I'd like to make a comment. The member for Peterborough made reference to issues agricultural. It just so happened that in my desk I had some e-mails from a farm community just north of Peterborough, in the Sunderland-Lindsay area. It's hard to tell with e-mails exactly what area they're coming from. They made reference, lamenting the fact, really, that farmers had spent four days out front. They did feel neglected by this government and they felt insulted and, by extension, that small-town and rural Ontario had been neglected and insulted.

Just looking at these e-mails, they indicate that if the present government had balanced the books, they could perhaps accept some of that. It would be a tough pill to swallow, not getting the support they required, but they would accommodate that if they had known the government was at least trying to balance the budget or if they had made cuts to reduce the deficit. Farmers indicated they could have accepted that and tried to accommodate that and tough it out, on the understanding that at least this government was treating everybody equally.

I suppose these e-mails from north of Peterborough—they perhaps would have been involved with some of the tractor rallies during the Whitby by-election. They clearly were of the impression that the budget was moved forward two months. They knew the Minister of Finance was at the Whitby Curling Club two days before the election, presenting his budget figures. From their perspective, it was designed to buy votes. They consider that an outright insult, again, to not only agriculture but to rural Ontario and to the Ontario—

The Acting Speaker: I'm afraid your time has expired.

Ms. Horwath: I did listen carefully to the members from Peterborough and Ottawa–Orléans, both of whom spoke about cities and infrastructure. The member from Peterborough spent some time on agriculture and the member from Ottawa–Orléans spent some time in terms of health care issues.

There's no doubt that some cities will see some benefit as a result of this budget, but the thing I think that is most frustrating from a city's perspective as well as from the agricultural perspective is the lack of sustainability and the lack of predictability in the direction in which this province is going in that regard. For example, the city that I come from, yes, saw some relief from the government after coming cap in hand saying, "We still have a problem with our out-of-whack funding." The government still has not taken action to deal with the fact that the funding relationship with cities—and you'll know this very well, Mr. Speaker—is not sustainable. It's not appropriate to have many of the costs that are currently borne by the property taxpayer at the local level at that level. In fact, we're unique as a jurisdiction in the types of programs that are being funded off the property tax base. It's simply wrong and it needs to be fixed. If the government would take the time to actually fix the problem with the formulas, then every single year the same cities wouldn't have to be coming back, cap in hand, begging the government to fix their fiscal problem. There needs to be a full-scale systemic change that includes massive uploading of programs and a massive re-shift of who pays for what at what level.

I thought it was also important to acknowledge and recognize that, notwithstanding the government's remarks around health care, we have to recognize that this government is privatizing health care by leaps and bounds in this province. It's not only a matter of private hospitals; it's a matter of competitive cutthroat bidding through the LHINs process; it's a matter of being concerned about the reduction of the things available to people through OHIP, like chiropractic and physiotherapy, and many more issues that I'll speaking about a little later.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I want to begin by congratulating my two colleagues, the member from Ottawa–Orléans and the member from Peterborough, for their fine presentations tonight. They outlined the positive benefits of the budget for their communities. Indeed, I think most members in the Legislature could stand here this evening and talk about how this budget will directly have a positive impact on where they live.

Certainly in Waterloo region there's a tremendous amount to talk about. Perhaps one of the highlights of the budget was the commitment by this government for \$100 million to go to two outstanding research institutes in my community, the Institute for Quantum Computing at the University of Waterloo and also the Perimeter Institute, which is an independent research centre located in downtown Waterloo.

Just to spend a minute on that, I don't think people realize that when we talk about some of the research that's going on in this province, certainly in the Waterloo region area, we're not talking about the best in Ontario; we're not talking about the best in Canada; we're talking about the best in the world. We're talking about centres of research which are attracting people from some of the best universities, from the best research centres across the world, to have this knowledge cluster.

What impressed me about this budget, what impressed me about the Minister of Research and Innovation, who happens to be the Premier, is that they looked ahead and saw that we had this capacity within Ontario, that we are the best in the world, and that by making a significant grant of this \$100 million, we could ensure that we continue to be leaders in these areas of pure research. Not only will it be of tremendous benefit to my area in terms of ensuring that we're seen as a world-leading research cluster, but it's also going to be an incredible benefit to Ontario and to everyone in terms of the types of findings that they come up with. All the discoveries that we see marketed today started as pure research, and this grant will help see it through.

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the member from Peterborough and the member from Ottawa–Orléans on the budget amendment debate this evening.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant also was speaking about his favourite topic, which is farmers—farmers who were, sadly, left out of this budget. No matter what fancy accounting the government may throw at you, the clear facts are that this year, there are going to be \$244 million less spent on agriculture than last year, despite the fact that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mr. Miller:—this is getting some of the government members riled up a bit—despite the fact that farmers were here for three days, roaming around Queen's Park with the tractors, which didn't seem to get the attention of the government. The farmers were ignored once again.

In the few minutes that I had an opportunity to get out of this place, I went to the library and scanned through some of the northern papers. Overwhelmingly, in the northern papers—I read half a dozen different editorials. The message was, the government should have balanced the budget. They should have balanced the budget when they had an extra \$3-billion more revenue than they planned on a year ago. It's absolutely, simply irresponsible of this government to not balance the budget when they had an extra \$3 billion. Where did the money go? Perhaps—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: We have been doing very well all night till now. I would ask the members: please, it's 10 to 9, we're nearly finished the debate, and the member has the floor.

Mr. Miller: I asked, "Where did the money go?" The member from North Bay and Nipissing is getting riled up

again. Where did the money go? Perhaps it went—we learned today there have been some 7,200 new civil servants hired in the province of Ontario. Well, this is exactly what happened back when David Peterson came into power. I remember that my father had been the Treasurer. For the five years leading up to that, there'd been a 5,000-member reduction in the civil service. Then the year after Peterson came into power, they hired 5,000 more back, in the tax-and-spend Liberal ways.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr. McNeely: I'd like to thank the members from Peterborough, Kitchener Centre, Hamilton East, and Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I'd like to get back to what the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka said, and that's what we found out, that the leader said as well: "Do more and spend less and balance the budget and do more." It wasn't the way that it happened.

I just want to go over the Tory legacy for the factors driving congestion increases from 1986 to 2001. This is a report: GTA Travel Congestion Costs and Long-Term Strategies, by Neal Irwin, IBI Group, March 22, 2006. This was given just two or three weeks ago. This is the legacy of not funding public transit, and that's what we had to do. If you look at the major expenditures, whether they're in Ottawa or in the greater Toronto area, they're public transit. Lower auto occupancy: The number of people per vehicle was down 6.9% under their government. Increased auto modal share—that means cars as overall transit, overall passenger numbers—up 6%. Rapid growth in vehicle trips: autos up 57%, trucks 38%; roads up 34%, but transit down 16% during those years of that government. That's what we were faced with and that's what this government was looking at.

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We're looking at the annual costs of people sitting in traffic today just for the greater Toronto area—but it's true right across this country and right across Ontario—\$1.11 billion. That's 10 bucks an hour for sitting in traffic. I don't think anybody likes to get paid 10 bucks an hour for sitting in traffic. But the worse thing is that in 30 years, if we don't do anything, \$4.36 billion, and that starts adding costs to all our trucking etc. So we're in tough shape here because there was nothing done for eight years, no dollars spent. Under the Tories, public transit was a bad idea; people should pay for their whole costs. So I'd just like to say that if you're in gridlock today, thank a Tory.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Barrett: I'd like to address this budget amendment, and I'll be splitting my time with the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

It is becoming increasingly clear that what we're really debating is a "pay more, get less" budget. I think the member opposite referred to it as a "do more" budget. I do know that at the London farmers' rally today there were a number of signs on tractors that would disagree with the "do more" statement. In fact, the signs stated "Dalton—Do Nothing." This was seen to be the theme

today at the London rally, and of course lots of signs of "Pinocchio" along with the "Farmers Feed Cities," the bright yellow and black signs that we're all so familiar with.

So it's a pay more, get less budget. I would hate to have someone try and switch that one around. In fact, we've been paying more and getting less for several years now, certainly since 2003 with the advent of the McGuinty government.

It's no secret that the farmers are furious. Just recently I read some of the e-mails that I've been receiving from farm leaders. I do encourage members to attend some of these farm rallies. The rally this morning was right by the side of the 401. I'm sure that a number of MPPs in this Legislature drove right by that rally in London—certainly those members representing ridings to the west of London. To get to Queen's Park, they would have driven right by. I was there for a few hours in the morning. I couldn't stay for all of the rally, and I'm just hoping that the members to the west paid tribute to the farmers and would stop in and try to understand—

Mr. Murdoch: Especially those London members. You'd think they'd all show up.

Mr. Barrett: They would be very close, because the farmers took their rally to the city, right through the centre of the city. I know they were intending to visit Kellogg's; they were intending to visit Casco.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Visiting your friend Mr. Harper.

Mr. Barrett: I will be going to Ottawa tomorrow. Again, I do sincerely hope that the Ottawa area-members will be at the Ottawa rally. It goes on for a couple of days. If people aren't going, I'm sure they'll let farmers know they won't be able to attend, or send their regrets.

But as I say, I've just come from that London rally this morning. The one in Ottawa, that's the big one. I can't predict what's going to happen after that, because there is an undercurrent of rage, anger, hopelessness—

Interjection.

Mr. Barrett: I hear the member opposite attempting to blame this on Harper. We've just jumped from a Liberal debate that blamed everything on Mike Harris. Now we see the members opposite blaming Stephen Harper.

Apart from this blame game, we've all had time to take a look at the numbers in the budget. We all know the Ministry of Ag budget has been slashed by 21%. This has been mentioned more than once today. In real numbers, that is a cut of \$244 million. Last year's budget was raised by one of the members opposite, and the cut last year was \$167 million. We are all aware of the ad hoc announcement that was made before the budget of \$125 million; \$80 million of that was for grain and oilseeds, and that represents a 52% cut to the grain and oilseed producers compared to last year.

If you look at these numbers, it clearly is a formula for disaster. If you add up the numbers, we are paying more—certainly paying more in taxes. And I don't think

anyone opposite here is going to walk away from their responsibility for implementing the health tax.

Very clearly our farmers are getting much, much less. The 2006 budget makes clear that the McGuinty government has perfected the art of turning opportunity into nothing but disappointment and bitterness. The budget was a chance for Premier McGuinty and the present Minister of Agriculture to show farmers, certainly farmers rallying in front of Queen's Park, that government had heard their plight and was ready to act. Instead, our very weary farmers are met with cuts to agriculture spending, more neglect, more blame and blame game from this provincial government.

When Ontario's Minister of Agriculture is faced with questions about her ministry's second-class status within this McGuinty government, we do get the "blame Ottawa" refrain—just a few minutes ago I heard the "blame Harper" refrain—rehashed numbers and a smattering of feel-good pronouncements with respect to rural Ontario. The minister tells us she's listening and working on behalf of farmers. I just read some e-mails in tonight: Farmers are telling me that she's not.

Further to that, I'd like to quote the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Ron Bonnett. I'll just use one word, and I quote Ron Bonnett. That word, with respect to the budget, is "shocking." That was his reaction to news that this government had slashed agricultural support again. If people opposite would listen to farmers, they would understand what's being said out there.

Last week, the finance minister had an encounter with the very farmers that this government seems hell-bent on destroying. The Minister of Finance went to the Whitby Curling Club during the Whitby by-election. It was two days before election day. His goal? To peddle his budget for a few extra votes, but, as we saw on the by-election day itself, Ontario residents aren't buying.

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: You almost lost the election.

Mr. Barrett: Someone said that one of the candidates almost lost. Well, in this game it doesn't matter whether you almost lost or not. There is really only one person who comes out in front. I would think the president of the Liberal Party would know how that works.

What we saw from the people in those three by-elections was one big "no, thank you," and in particular in Whitby.

When the Minister of Finance saw the group of angry farmers out in front, he did try to escape, if you will, in his limousine. As we know, Mr. Tory was able to convince the Minister of Finance to say a few words to those assembled. Sadly, the Minister of Finance repeated the same mistake he made on budget day, blindly blaming the federal government for his own inaction. Farmers are getting tired of the blame game. Essentially what they see are endless insults from this government.

Six months ago, in estimates, I asked the ag minister about the prospect of ministry staff working with farmers to come up with a viable risk management program. To

her credit, she did pull her head out of the sand for a while and indicated, "CAIS has not worked"—

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to know how parliamentary accusing a minister of taking her head out of the sand is. I think that's very disrespectful to the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

The Acting Speaker: I have to tell you I would take no umbrage from such a statement. I've heard it many times in this House and I've never had a complaint.

Please continue.

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Mr. Barrett: I don't know; there are so many age-old expressions. "Had the blinders on": Maybe I'll use that expression. She took the blinders off long enough to say, "CAIS has not worked well for grains and oilseeds." But a simple admission of guilt from the Minister of Agriculture doesn't put money into the pockets of farmers.

Again, with this particular budget and, one would hope, the influence of the lead ministry on the budget process, it does raise the question: Has the ag minister forgotten that she recognized that CAIS is not working? Has she forgotten about the farmers? The evidence would suggest that she has, in fact, forgotten.

I have reminded the minister several times about the farm income crisis. I've certainly reminded her in the Legislature here. I can run down: on March 28, March 27, March 23, March 1, February 23, February 16—these are all instances when this has been raised in the Ontario Legislature either in question period or in statements—February 15, February 13. This is just a sample of times when I, for example, have proactively warned the minister of the damage that we see, and again, damage not only to farmers but to rural Ontario and small-town Ontario. It's all in Hansard.

Again, we see a government that has turned its back on farmers. We do expect more rhetoric. I wish to read into the record—and we're going to hear this—"We're waiting for the federal government." I stress the importance of members opposite trying to make an attempt to get to Ottawa this week. We've had enough of the blame game. We'd like to see some action. We're looking for some leadership. For example, where is the Ontario government proposal?

Interjection.

Mr. Barrett: I should wrap up shortly.

Mr. Murdoch: Well, you could, yes.

Interjection.

Mr. Barrett: Just to wrap up—and I want to override some more blame game here: Where is the proposal for risk management? Where is the proposal for self-directed risk insurance? Where is the proposal for an exit program for our tobacco farmers?

I will yield to the honourable member.

Mr. Murdoch: It's my pleasure to have a few minutes to speak on the budget that we're all talking about. Before I start, though, I'd like to mention to the member from Kitchener Centre: Didn't those mighty Rangers fall pretty hard when Owen Sound put them to the—

Interjection.

Mr. Murdoch: I just thought he'd like to know that. And the member from Peterborough was in here bragging about his team. Well, I hope they get to the finals, because Owen Sound will be there waiting on them; that's for sure. I just had to put that in.

Mr. Milloy: Wait till next year.

Mr. Murdoch: He says, "Wait till next year," and then they'll blame the federal government, but that's okay.

We're here today to debate a motion, an amendment to the budget. Let's read this motion. "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:

"recognizes 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," and I will stop there.

A lot of promises have been broken, guys. I notice that a lot of you talk over there, and you like to blame the previous government. Every government does that. That's fine. Now you've got to a point where you want to blame the federal government. You know, fellows, that won't work. We even did some of those things when we were over there. Do you know something? We're sitting over here now. That's what's going to happen to you guys if you keep sticking up for things that, in the Premier's office, they want, when you know they're not right. You know you had a big budget, and you had all kinds of money to balance that budget. It's one of those promises that was broken.

It goes on further:

"Using questionable accounting tricks to inflate an artificial deficit that suits their own political agenda"—oh, I missed a sentence there.

"Not living up to its promise to balance the budget and actually making strong efforts to avoid doing so"—that was another line that was up ahead.

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

I know it's been talked about here, and there's disagreement about whether that's right or wrong. Well, it's in your budget. We're just going by what you printed. Again, if you're telling us that isn't right and that you want to reprint the budget, well, maybe we could look at that.

Let's go on here:

"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"—You guys mentioned going up and up. We're going down and down, fellows, and you've got to recognize this.

Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't be a guy to do this, but we're almost short of a quorum; not quite, but it's getting there. Whoever is the whip over there today might want to ring a few alarm bells. It's getting pretty close, since some of the other opposition left. Anyway, I just thought I'd help them out a little bit.

"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."

That's what we're debating here. If you want to stand up for your constituents, for your area, for rural and northern Ontario, you'll vote for this. Tomorrow it's a free vote. I'm sure you'll vote for this, if it's a free vote.

Interjections.

Mr. Murdoch: Some of them laugh over there. You're right. I know; there has not been a free vote since you took over. That was another promise broken. "We were going to have free votes. We were going to work with the opposition over there. We were going to help the opposition. We were even going to listen to backbenchers." They never listen to a backbencher, not even to their own, which is unfortunate, because I'm sure there are some of you from rural Ontario over there. There's got to be. If you like this budget, you can't honestly tell us in this House that you like rural Ontario. We've seen what you did to give to Toronto, and you forgot about the rest of us out there.

You didn't even want to balance the budget. You may have wanted to do that. Then you come up with this promise to municipalities: \$400 million for roads and bridges. Do you realize that \$15 million paves about 25 kilometres? That's not going to last long, fellows.

I sometimes don't agree with the NDP, but the NDPer who ran in Huron-Bruce last time was on the radio the other day and said, "You know, folks, it's great that the government gave enough money to a few municipalities to build a couple of bridges, but who's going to be left in rural Ontario to drive over those bridges?" Nobody, after you guys get rid of us. This is what has happened. You forgot rural Ontario and northern Ontario. You just sort of left them.

Now there's a big movement in northern Ontario to go to Manitoba. There are mayors up there saying, "That's where we should go. It's far better for us." Isn't that fun to have, guys, on your agenda: lose half or three quarters of the province to Manitoba? Manitoba says, "Come on, guys. Come on over." That's on your watch and that's what's happening because of budgets like this.

I want to say, there are a couple of good things in it: insulin pumps for children and some more gas tax to people who happen to get it, if you get it. Not everybody gets that, but it's nice if they allow it. At least there were

two good things in the budget, so it wasn't a total disaster—almost a total disaster, but a couple of good things.

Folks, you've got to vote for this amendment tomorrow if you want to be true to the people you represent. Remember, some of you folks, you come from rural and northern Ontario. You can't keep dumping on them in this place. You've got to stand up for yourselves. Don't let the mandarins and the people out of the Premier's office tell you what to do all the time. That's what happened to a lot of people in our government, and they're not here today. That's exactly what happened. They were told by the Premier of the day, "Do this," and they did it, and they're not here. I see the same faces, the ones who beat them, doing the same thing they did, and that's what is going to happen to you. If you want to come back and sit over here after the next election, that's your prerogative, but don't let them run you from the Premier's office. That's what has happened if you vote for a budget like this. You can't keep breaking promises and expect to get re-elected. There's just no way that's going to happen, folks. I've been here for a little while, so I'm trying to help you out a little bit.

Interjection.

Mr. Murdoch: There's the man from Kitchener again. He's going to get excited, like those Rangers. Boy, they're really good.

One of the things that really bothered me was, you didn't take back that clawback. Why didn't you get rid of that, guys? That was such a simple little thing in here, yet the people who have to pay that aren't very happy.

Interjection.

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Mr. Murdoch: Don't blame us. We're not over there. You are the government. This is really funny. You keep blaming the other government. Do you know something? We did that too and look what happened to us. We tried to blame the NDP for everything. You know, when you're the government, you've got to sometimes suck it up and do the right thing, even though the ones out of the Premier's office tell you you're wrong. Don't let them beat you. That's what happens to you. You won't be here—I'm guaranteeing you—if a lot of you don't start speaking up in caucus and telling them, "We won't let stuff like this come out here. We're going to have better bills. We're going to help people rather than taking more money away. We promised."

You got elected on promises. Do you not understand that? When you go out and promise people things, you can't break all the promises. I know a lot of people think that happens. "They're politicians. They can do that." But when the other politician comes along, you're not going to be here. I can count the faces in our government who would have been over there if this hadn't happened. So, folks, you'd better start looking at this budget and say, "This isn't right. We can't let this go," and you may have to turn it down, stand up. You'll all get up and they'll go across the rows and everybody will say, "Yes." That's really unfortunate. That's not what democracy is

supposed to be about. You're not the only ones who have done this, but one of those big promises was that you were going to be so different. You were going to work with everybody—backbenchers and everything.

We won't get into the things that happen in my riding that your government does and they don't bother to tell you. "You're on the other side; it doesn't matter." Well, it does matter. When you learn to keep your promises, you'll know you will get re-elected.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: I enjoyed the remarks of the members from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, particularly the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and his very sage advice for the government members of the Legislature.

I think I heard from both members the frustration that the government didn't pay enough attention to the issues that concern them and the ridings that they represent, particularly deep concerns over the lack of direction that the budget has got in terms of solving some of the ongoing problems in the agricultural community. I think the member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant raised those issues very well and had some very wise criticism of the government's lack of addressing some sustainable solutions for the future of our agricultural community, the agricultural sector of our economy. I think the government would do well to take some of that advice and start making some real, long-term plans. Certainly people in the agricultural sector need to make long-term plans themselves if they're going to continue to successfully operate farms and if they are going to successfully feed cities. We all know what their campaign was all about, not too long ago.

Also, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound expressed his real concern over what appears to be a lack of acknowledgement of the importance of smaller communities, of rural communities, of smaller towns. Although the government spent a great deal of time and effort on Toronto, particularly, on some of the other bigger-city issues, the member brings a sense of the total ignoring of those other communities and the importance they have to the fabric of our province, and the fact that ignoring those issues and not hearing the concerns that come from those communities will be done at the peril of the government, or certainly at the peril of some of the members from the government side who represent similar communities.

All in all, I think both of the members did a good job of raising those issues in terms of the budget.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I'd like to comment on the statements of the members. It's interesting, the Tories haven't changed. They stand up on that manure spreader, that famous Tory platform, and then they just let it rip. Mitch Hepburn said that about the Tories 70 years ago and the Tories are still at it.

Last year at budget time, "The sky is falling. Oh, you've cut the agriculture budget." They do not understand how to read a budget. There are two budgets within the Ministry of Agriculture. There is the operating budget;

there is the one-time extraordinary. Last year you screamed that the sky was falling. The McGuinty government has been there to support our farmers in the past and we will again in the future. Last year you complained that there was nothing there. If you look at the fiscal year-end, \$277 million in additional support for farmers, including the \$125 million that was announced for our grains and oilseed farmers.

History lessons come out. I can remember Brian Coburn going around the province as Minister of Agriculture: "We've got the made-in-Ontario solution." We never saw it. The demise of market revenue in SDRM: That nail was put in the coffin by the former minister, Helen Johns, when she signed on to the APF in June 2003, because that's when the federal government said, "We are no longer going to fund companion programs in this province." So you can't blame this government for that. You signed on to that. You're the ones who set that direction in motion.

I reiterate, we have been there to support our farmers. The budget went up. We've provided an additional \$800 million in support for Ontario farmers. As you should know, historically, the safety net programs have been cost-shared on 60-40 basis. We need the federal government to take a lead. I am very confident in standing here and saying that if the federal government shows their commitment, I can pretty well guarantee you, Ontario has been there in the past and we'll be there again with our 40% share.

Mr. Jackson: It is truly unfortunate the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London didn't speak up this strongly for farmers when he was the Minister of Agriculture. The truth of the matter is, he didn't. To make matters worse, he couldn't even get the Minister of Agriculture in the federal Liberal government of Paul Martin—the past government that just lost the election—to concur to increase support for farmers in Ontario.

The fact is, it's bad enough that as a government you insult the bottom line for every farmer in this province. You're now insulting their intelligence by telling them they can't read a budget. These people are clever enough to figure it out. They look at the bottom line. What is the total amount of money you spent last year in agriculture and what's the total amount your budget said you're going spend in the next year? The truth is, it's \$244 million. You may come up with some emergency money 12 months from now because you're desperate to win an election and save a few rural seats. They are at risk by virtue of what you put in this budget and what you did not put in this budget.

You're cavalier. It's not just farmers that you are cutting. It's not just farmers you are picking on. You are picking on children in this province, cutting their services by \$82 million: support for children and youth services, children with mental health challenges, children with developmental disabilities, children with autism. So it's farmers, children, and the other one that keeps being overlooked: support for seniors in long-term-care facilities. In two years, in two budgets, you put \$1 a day in support

for seniors in this province. You are still dead last in this country for support for seniors in long-term care.

Mr. Milloy: The two members spoke a bit about promises. "Promises" makes me think back to the last election, when I, as a young Liberal candidate, went out. People used to say to me, "When it came to education, the Tories didn't have much of a record. When it came to health care, no, they didn't have much of a record. One thing they could do is balance their books." For a year, I had to hear about how the province's books were balanced; I had to hear about how great a job the Tories had done.

I wasn't just hearing it from local Conservatives. I was turning on the television to see debate after debate between the leaders and hearing then-Premier Eves say, "The budget is balanced." In August of that year, the public accounts came out and said, "Yes, there have been some problems here in this province"—there was SARS and a few other things—"but not to worry; the budget is balanced." They went to the voters of Ontario and said, "Vote for us because the budget is balanced." They went on TV and said, "The budget is balanced."

Then what happened? We came here and we found out that they had left us with a \$5.6-billion mess, and they have nerve to stand here and talk about broken promises. If they want to talk about broken promises, the Conservative Party should look in mirror and see the type of fiscal mess that they left us. Thank goodness that over the past three years we've had a series of finance ministers—Mr. Sorbara and Mr. Duncan—who have brought this fiscal mess back into line and under control. The deficit in this province has been reduced by 75% and is on the way to being balanced. Most importantly, we're going to have the auditor come through and show the state of the books before the next election so we never have a fiasco like this again.

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The Acting Speaker: Response, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant.

Mr. Barrett: It was a honour to share my time with the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I appreciate the comments of the member from Hamilton East and her references to the agricultural community. People in the large cities like Hamilton do appreciate the fact that farmers feed cities and farmers provide smokes for Hamilton, pharmaceuticals and all kinds of good things, legal and illegal, come to think of it.

The member for Kitchener Centre made mention, and I'm pleased that he made mention, of the four years of balanced books under the Mike Harris era. As I recall, that was probably the first time in 100 years that that had occurred.

Interjections.

Mr. Barrett: I do wish to point out or yell out over the din that Liberals in the province of Ontario have never balanced the budget. Isn't that something?

I would be remiss if I didn't make comment on the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. I will convey a message to our present minister: Farmers can't wait any

longer. It is time for your government to take a leadership role. It's very important to do something about CAIS.

The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London signed off on the CAIS program with federal minister Lyle Vanclief. We now need a plan to replace CAIS. We have to undo the damage that has been done. We need a made-in-Ontario plan—now there's a concept—that would include risk management, a plan that would include self-directed risk insurance, something that would replace the MRI program that was eliminated by the stroke of a pen by the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

The Acting Speaker: It now being past 9:20 of the clock, in accordance with the rules of the House, I must now put the question.

On March 23, 2006, Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government."

On March 27, 2006, Mr. Tory 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:

"recognizes 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 first question to be decided is the amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr. Tory's amendment to the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There being more than five members, pursuant to the agreement of this House earlier tonight, this vote is deferred until tomorrow at the time of votes in the afternoon.

It now being 9:25 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

The House adjourned at 2125.

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