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Tuesday 10 April 2007

Mardi 10 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 10 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 10 avril 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): When will the Lottogate blame game end? The Premier and the minister responsible for the integrity of Ontario's lottery games steadfastly refuse to accept any responsibility.

The first move of the OLG in addressing the evidence of insider fraud was to try to blame the CBC. Within days of The Fifth Estate story on Bob Edmonds being broadcast, four individuals with direct ties to the Premier were busily crafting a communications plan to discredit the report by hiring a statistical analyst to refute the numbers. Jim Warren, fresh from the Premier's office, long-time McGuinty advisers Bob Lopinski and Warren Kinsella, and of course Liberal campaign chair Don Guy were involved in the damage control.

The people of Ontario didn't buy their communication strategy, so the next move in the Liberal blame game was to get rid of Ontario Lottery and Gaming's CEO Duncan Brown and hope that offering him up as a scapegoat before the release of the Ombudsman's report would relieve the McGuinty government of its responsibility. No dice, as a gambling person might say. The headlines and breakfast table talk of average Ontarians still demonstrate that this province is not in the mood to be fooled again by the McGuinty team.

So in a desperately low attempt to change the channel, the Premier personally lashes out at the 140,000 employees of convenience stores across Ontario, saying they just can't be trusted. Will the Premier finally admit that it is his government that holds ultimate responsibility for its own failures? Will he, today, finally deliver the apology to all retailers and convenience store workers, who deserve it?

KARYNE MAISONNEUVE

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): Récemment, j'ai entendu parler d'un projet formidable commencé par une famille qui habite dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa–Orléans. Le but est d'introduire une source d'énergie renouvelable pour une école secondaire à Orléans. Le

projet est inspiré par une petite fille très courageuse qui s'appelle Karyne Maisonneuve.

Two and a half years ago, Karyne was diagnosed with cancer. Her family says she never lost her smile or her love of life as she courageously endured various treatments and numerous operations. But the efforts to save Karyne's life did not succeed. She died in her mother's arms in June 2006.

Karyne's family came to believe that her cancer was partly caused by pollution and other environmental concerns. Having reached that conclusion, the Maisonneuves decided to turn the tragic loss of their beloved daughter and sister into a project that will benefit the environment.

Marc, Paul et Élyse, les frères et la sœur de Karyne, sont étudiants à l'école secondaire Gisèle-Lalonde à Orléans. Avec l'aide des professeurs et des étudiants à l'école Gisèle-Lalonde, la famille Maisonneuve s'est fixé comme objectif de faire installer cette année un système de panneaux solaires et une éolienne sur le toit de l'école.

The initiative is known as Project Karyne and is currently searching for sponsors and partners to raise the necessary \$40,000 to \$50,000 to complete this environmentally friendly project.

Je voudrais féliciter la famille Maisonneuve, ainsi que les élèves et les professeurs à l'école Gisèle-Lalonde, pour leur courage et leur détermination en développant un tel projet au nom de Karyne.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): The convenience store owners deserve respect for the hard work and long hours they contribute to the economy of Ontario. Instead, the Premier heaps scorn on these people by blaming them for his government's Lottogate scandal.

Jean-Luc Meunier, vice-president, central Canada, for Mac's Convenience Stores Inc., notes the obvious irony of the Premier's damning retailers for the failures of his government's own program and rightly points out that the issue is not their competence or their morality. He's too polite to say what I've been hearing from retailers in my riding, but they go much further and ask what right the Premier has to accuse them of failing in their responsibilities when the Premier's only concern has been protecting his incompetent minister responsible for the mess by focusing on a communications strategy rather than taking real action to fix the problem.

All of these store owners are disappointed by Dalton McGuinty's remarks that they can't be trusted, according

to Dave Bryans, the president of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association. He expressed the hope that the Premier will reconsider his comments and give convenience store operators an apology. Elaine Abbas, who with her husband has owned and operated their store for almost 27 years, paid all their taxes, purchased various licences and complied to the letter of the law in all areas, all the while raising three children and working 14 hours a day, seven days a week, is insulted. She writes, "While Mr. McGuinty may question our integrity, our customers know us." She is absolutely correct. And now, with his stubborn refusal to offer his overdue apology to Ontario's 10,000 convenience store operators and 140,000 employees, all the people of Ontario know how the Premier lacks integrity and downright decency and respect for the hard-working people of Ontario.

UKRAINIAN CANADIAN SOCIAL SERVICES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): Today I want to highlight the work of a wonderful organization in Parkdale–High Park, that of the Ukrainian Canadian Social Services, an organization having its roots from after the Second World War.

They provide a drop-in centre all day Monday to Friday, including Internet access. They provide arts and crafts groups, bingo and a marvellous seniors' club on Wednesday, and on Friday a discussion and debate group. A traditional New Year's Eve celebration, Malanka, takes place under their auspices in January, and in the summer, day trips are arranged. Skilled counsellors and countless volunteers assist all year round with referrals, counselling, emergency food and financial aid, clothing, furniture and visits.

I was delighted to be able to contribute my raise in March to this example of community responsibility and involvement. Congratulations to the Ukrainian Canadian Social Services Association for over 50 years of service in Parkdale–High Park.

RICK SHAVER

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): Today I rise to congratulate Rick Shaver, the general manager and co-founder of the Seaway News, on his recent election as president of the Ontario Community Newspapers Association.

Rick was a student in my very first class at Viscount Alexander Public School back in 1969. He was active in school life then and remains a positive force in the community now. As just one example of his dedication to the community, he recently co-organized a very successful first annual Cystic Fibrosis East Front Literacy Campaign pizza party, which raised more than \$17,000 for these two causes.

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While there are many accomplishments of Rick's that I could talk about, I want to focus today on his weekly

newspaper, the Seaway News. Rick founded this paper back in 1985 with his colleague Dick Aubry. Since then, the Seaway News has brought important local stories to its readers on a weekly basis. To quote Rick's acceptance speech, "We tell the stories of our community, the stories of our readers. In our papers, the school bake sale doesn't have to fight for a space against the war in Afghanistan."

Community papers bring the news that is closest to readers' hearts, and there will always be a place for them in Ontario. I want to commend the Ontario Community Newspapers Association for the work it does and congratulate their new president, Rick Shaver.

As well, if I might, I would like to wish Rick an early happy birthday and also congratulate him on his 25th wedding anniversary with his wife, Brenda.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): From day one of the OLG scandal, the McGuinty government has refused to provide answers to our questions in this House. They have worried more about managing public relations than solving the problem. Within days of The Fifth Estate exposing this scandal, the action the McGuinty government took was not to investigate the high level of insider wins but to bring in spin doctors to do damage control.

The minister denied ever knowing there was fraud even though insider wins were a hot topic among senior OLG staff starting in August 2005, almost two years ago; even though the minister's chief of staff talked to the OLG about the CBC's freedom-of-information request in April 2006, one year ago. The minister claims he doesn't know anything about freedom-of-information requests in his ministry even though we know he has personally denied our own FOI requests.

If the people of Ontario are to have any faith in the integrity of the lottery system, they need an independent investigation to ensure accountability and transparency. If you have nothing to hide, why don't you call an inquiry?

ARTHUR CURRIE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): Born on a farm at Napperton, just outside Strathroy, Ontario, Sir Arthur Currie has been described as being an unlikely soldier, having had no professional military training when he enlisted in 1914, at the age of 38. But within three years he became lieutenant general and the first Canadian commander of all four divisions of the Canadian corps.

Currie was a brilliant and daring battlefield strategist. He distinguished himself as one of the key architects of the Vimy Ridge assault in 1917, when the Canadian corps won the first unequivocal allied victory, with Currie as lieutenant colonel of Canada's first division. After being promoted to Canadian commander, he led his soldiers through the remaining days of World War I. For

his efforts, he was knighted in 1918 by King George V. After the war he served as Inspector General of the Canadian militia and became the first general of the Canadian army. In 1920 he became principal and vice-chancellor of McGill University, where he remained until his death in 1933.

This Thursday, students at Strathroy District Collegiate Institute, where Currie was a graduate, will be joined by members of Strathroy's Sir Arthur Currie branch of the Royal Canadian Legion to commemorate Vimy Ridge and the rise of a local farm boy who became what many historians say was the best military commander that Canada has ever produced.

DIABETES

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): I think most of us in this Legislature realize that health care, along with the environment, are two of the top priorities of most Ontarians, and as legislators we spend much of our time dealing with these issues.

Diabetes and its complications is a serious ongoing public health issue. Currently 1.3 million Canadians, or 5% of the population, have diabetes, 800,000 of those being in Ontario. It is expected that there will be 60,000 new cases diagnosed annually in our province. This has serious implications for our publicly funded health care system.

Recently I had the opportunity to compete in a marathon in Rome, Italy, on behalf of the Canadian Diabetes Association. Many who participated fund-raised for the association, but more importantly helped to raise awareness of this impending health problem that is already a challenge to our health care system.

I would especially like to congratulate Thunder Bay team members John Trevisanutto, Trevor Clinker, Karen Dahl, Cheryl Ritchie, Tiffany Miller, Dennis Delyea, Cara Petrone, Jack Wagenaar and trainer Sandy Guthrie, who, in addition to raising awareness, raised \$55,000.

Our government understands the seriousness of this issue, as demonstrated by the establishment of an Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative, the Northern Diabetes Health Network, adding two new drugs to the ODB to treat type 2 diabetes and, of course, becoming the first province to fully fund insulin pumps for children as well as several other initiatives.

Our government gets it when it comes to health care and diabetes in the province of Ontario.

HYDRO ONE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): I rise in the Legislature to recognize the hard work and devotion of the Hydro One crews that helped to restore power to many communities in the riding of Huron–Bruce that were devastated by winter storms early last month.

Because of the storms, over 24,000 Hydro One customers were without power, in large part due to downed hydro lines which were caused by severe winter

weather conditions. However, thanks to the tremendous team effort put forth by Hydro One management, over 150 extra line workers and engineers, along with additional help from the Ministry of Transportation and the county of Bruce, the situation was rectified.

However, this work did not go unnoticed, as the Hydro One maintenance crews responsible were honoured with the prestigious international Emergency Recovery Award. This award is presented in recognition of outstanding efforts in restoring electrical service that has been disrupted by severe weather conditions or other natural events.

While the damage in the area was vast, the hard work and swift action by Hydro One helped to limit the inconvenience to the residents throughout the area. Hydro One proved that when a government agency has an immense task at hand, the results are often an example of some of the finest dedication and hard work possible.

I once again express my gratitude to Hydro One for the role they played in repairing and restoring power to a large part of the riding of Huron–Bruce.

VISITORS

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to take a moment to introduce some very special people in our gallery today in the west end.

I'm extremely pleased to introduce a former colleague of this House, MPP Ray Haggerty from Fort Erie. Welcome.

I'm also pleased to introduce two teachers, Giorgio Fragnito and Andrew Crober, who are here with their students from Fort Erie Secondary School, who have come to watch how we conduct ourselves in a very professional and orderly manner. Welcome.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, another special guest from Fort Erie is the president of Shorewalk, who is here with a large number of people to hear about the bill that's being introduced shortly by myself. Welcome, Garry Skerrett.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome Mr. Mark Nimigan to the House. He's on the Hamilton Police Services Board, and he serves us very well in Hamilton.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GREAT LAKES SHORELINE RIGHT OF PASSAGE ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE DROIT DE PASSAGE SUR LE LITTORAL DES GRANDS LACS

Mr. Craiton moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 202, An Act to create a right of passage along the shoreline of the Great Lakes / Projet de loi 202, Loi

créant un droit de passage le long du littoral des Grands Lacs.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): This afternoon I take great pleasure in introducing a private member's bill that will benefit all the people of Ontario who enjoy the natural beauty of Ontario Great Lakes and bays.

Entitled the Great Lakes Shoreline Right of Passage Act, 2007, this bill when passed will reserve a right of passage along the shorelines of the Great Lakes between the shoreline and the high-water mark. These rights will be limited to passage on foot and are designed to return to Ontario the right Ontarians have always had under British common law: the right to walk on the beautiful beaches of our province.

I also want to add that this bill will not harm any existing rights, property values or personal security, and it will protect adjacent landowners from frivolous liability prosecutions. In fact, it will reaffirm existing littoral and riparian rights, enhance property value by eliminating ambiguity, and, as in other jurisdictions, the presence of people will deter crime and vandalism.

It is time to return the shorelines and the beaches to the citizens of Ontario. I would ask the House to support this bill.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 10, 2007, and Wednesday, April 11, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 306. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil

Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Craiton, Kim	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Watson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Savoline, Joyce
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tory, John
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Ferreira, Paul	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	
Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 60; the nays are 25.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

ÉDUCATION AUTOCHTONE

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Since we were elected in 2003, we have taken enormous strides in publicly funded education in Ontario. We're restoring public confidence in the system, and we recognize that there's still more to do.

Last month, the Ontario government announced our education investment for 2007-08, which will be a record \$18.3 billion, an increase of \$781 million over last year. Since 2002-03, funding has increased by \$3.5 billion, the equivalent of more than \$2,000 per student, and we're seeing results. Class sizes are smaller, student achievement is on the rise, and more students are graduating from high school.

À mesure que nous travaillons à améliorer ces résultats, il importe que nous fassions tout en notre pouvoir pour tous nos élèves.

If we're going to reach every student, we need to continue to improve opportunities for our First Nation, Metis and Inuit students. That's why I'm pleased to announce that this year we are introducing a new grant as part of our overall education funding. This new grant, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit education supplement, is expected to provide northern school boards with more than \$5 million in 2007-08 to support aboriginal students in our publicly funded schools.

Applause.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: It's a very good thing. The grant will provide more than \$10.5 million to school boards province-wide. The new supplement is in addition to \$12.7 million invested in 2007 to support the implementation of the First Nation, Metis and Inuit education policy framework.

La subvention offre aux conseils scolaires des fonds pour soutenir les programmes qui aident les élèves autochtones.

It will help increase funding for native language programs offered in any of the seven native languages recognized in the Ontario curriculum, and the investment will provide more funding to help boards offer any of the native studies courses available in the Ontario curriculum. Courses like these enable aboriginal students to reconnect with their cultures and histories and also provide opportunities for all students to learn more about aboriginal people.

If we want to support achievement among aboriginal students, it is essential that they feel welcome and engaged in school and that they see themselves reflected and appreciated in the curriculum and school community.

It's actually been an exciting few months for aboriginal education in this province. In January, we announced our aboriginal education strategy with the launch of the First Nation, Metis and Inuit education policy framework. It will be a foundation for delivering quality education to aboriginal students who attend provincially funded schools in Ontario. It sets out strategies for the ministry, school boards and schools, strategies like putting more aboriginal staff in schools and encouraging teaching strategies that are appropriate to aboriginal learners. In November, we are holding a conference that will give educators a chance to come together and discuss how we can implement the framework and better support aboriginal students.

Our Six Ways website, which provides information about new programs in Ontario's high schools, is now available in five aboriginal languages: Algonquin, Ojibwa, Oji-Cree, Mohawk and Swampy Cree.

To further enhance support for our aboriginal students, the newly created Aboriginal Education Office at the Ministry of Education is now fully staffed, and half of the staff are aboriginal educators in the field.

Our aboriginal education strategy gives us the impetus to build upon this energy and carry it across the province to ensure that we are recognizing and meeting the needs of our First Nation, Metis and Inuit students, whether they are living in remote areas or in urban centres.

En collaborant avec les familles, les parents et les communautés autochtones, nous appuierons chaque élève, and we will enable our First Nation, Metis and Inuit students to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to complete their education and move on to future successes.

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

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to respond to the statement by the Minister of Education.

This investment in aboriginal education is good news for the First Nations communities throughout the province that are struggling to maintain an education system that is troubled with a lack of funding, aging infrastructure, and much-needed space.

Our current Lieutenant Governor is living proof of what a difference education and educational opportunity and literacy can make for those people living on reserves and for those aboriginals. Just recently, I had the opportunity to read one of his books, *Out of Muskoka*, and from reading that book learned a lot of his early years. I'm immensely proud of our Lieutenant Governor. He points out in his book how a wealthy American whose cottage he was helping to maintain in the summertime as a teenager sponsored him into his post-secondary education. You only need see where he is today, the wonderful achievements he has had in his life and the immense amount of good he is doing in his post as Lieutenant Governor for aboriginal and First Nations people around Ontario to demonstrate how education can be such a fantastic thing for aboriginal peoples.

I note that the Lieutenant Governor has just recently—he has written a few more books, but the most recent one is called *Raisin Wine*. It is about a boyhood in a different Muskoka. I'm sure, if it's half as interesting as his first book, it would be a very good read, and it supports a good cause as well.

Of course, our Lieutenant Governor has also had a number of projects he has been involved with, some very successful projects of getting books for remote First Nations. As I said, I'm proud of him for all the work that he has done. He knows from his own personal experience what a difference literacy and education can make in the opportunities for our aboriginal peoples.

While the announcement is good news, it is only a small step in the right direction. Much more needs to be done by the government to assist First Nations communities that are struggling with Third World conditions with respect to education, health and safety. The McGuinty government wants Ontarians to believe that they are supporting our First Nations communities. This announcement and their new aboriginal policy framework are meant to improve the conditions of our aboriginal communities, but this is far from the reality. Under this government and under the new and improved aboriginal framework, First Nation communities across Ontario are struggling with deplorable living conditions. We have disasters and serious concerns such as the ongoing events at Caledonia and the devastating events that have occurred at Kashechewan. This government continues to enforce policies, such as the new mining tax initiative, that work to negatively impact upon First Nations communities. You just need to look at Pikangikum and the conditions there. This remote northwestern Ojibwa reserve is a good example of the

conditions that First Nations people live under. They live in tiny wood-framed homes with no bathtubs and no toilets. The community does not have enough houses for a population that has doubled in the past 20 years. Some of these tiny, dilapidated houses are home to as many as 18 people. The one-storey clapboard school, built in 1986 for 250 students, has 780 students from JK to grade 12. Makeshift classrooms have been set up in portable trailers, as well as in the library and the storage room. Pikangikum is one of three reserves in Ontario with a drinking water crisis. This year alone, there have been 23 suicides on the 49 Nishnawbe reserves, including six in Pikangikum. This is the reality for most First Nations communities throughout the province.

1410

You just need to look at today's Globe and Mail to see the way this government is treating aboriginal communities. The headline is "Native Community Decries 'Tax Grab' at Diamond Mine—Ontario's New 13% Levy 'Lose-Lose' for First Nations, Chief Tells Government." This is a tax that was just implemented in the recent budget, with no consultation with or warning to the affected aboriginal communities, and, I might add, no warning to De Beers, the mining company that is opening this \$1-billion project. The representative of De Beers last week here at Queen's Park said this may be the only diamond mine that ever opens in Ontario because of this Third World taxation policy that was brought in with no warning to the First Nations or to De Beers, which are investing all this money to provide jobs and opportunity for our remote First Nations communities.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I am pleased to be able to respond to yet another attempt by the McGuinty government to pat itself on the back over education funding: a McGuinty government that says that class sizes are getting smaller, while in fact in the intermediate grades class sizes are exploding; a McGuinty government that says that student achievement is up, but when we talk to teachers, they say the EQAO test has been made easier.

But I in particular want to pay attention to this latest attempt by the McGuinty government to pat itself on the back, because while the McGuinty government tries to boast about funding for aboriginal students, when you look at those boards which actually have a lot of aboriginal students attending, most of those have had their budgets cut.

Let me give you an example: the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board. The McGuinty government pats itself on the back and says, "We're providing the school board with money for aboriginal education," but in fact, when you look at all the numbers, this board's budget has been cut by over \$120,000 over the last two years. So even as the McGuinty government shuffles money from one envelope to another, this board has less money for its schools, its students and its teachers than it had two years ago. What does this mean? Well, it means that in fact one of the schools in this board that has predominantly Metis

and First Nations students is being closed. The Wabigoon Public School is listed for closure by this board because the board says, "We simply don't have enough money to operate our schools." Some 75% of the students at the Wabigoon Public School are Metis or First Nations students. They will have to now travel 25 kilometres and in some cases 30 kilometres to school in Dryden. The McGuinty government says this is progress. I think the people who send their children to the Wabigoon Public School would beg to differ.

Then there is the Lakehead District School Board. Everyone knows Thunder Bay has an increasing aboriginal population. The McGuinty government boasts that it is going to provide \$177,000 in funding for aboriginal education for the Lakehead District School Board this year. However, when you look at the big numbers, the Lakehead District School Board is now receiving \$2.3 million less in funding from the McGuinty government as compared to two years ago. How is cutting \$2.3 million out of a school board with increasing aboriginal student enrolment a good thing for aboriginal students?

Then there's the board I used to teach at, the Rainy River District School Board, which will receive—and the McGuinty government boasts about this—about \$340,000 from the aboriginal education supplement. But when you look at the big numbers, the board is down \$125,000 from what it was at two years ago, which means in the overall picture less money for more need.

Then there's the Superior-Greenstone District School Board, which has received \$55,000 from the aboriginal education supplement, but it also is down by \$2 million from what it received two years ago.

So while the McGuinty government boasts, school board after school board that has significant aboriginal students attending is receiving less and less money. In many cases they are being forced to close schools which have a significant, if not a majority, aboriginal student population. But the McGuinty government thinks that as long as they confine the message to Toronto, they can boast about this.

Let me tell you that parents in Wabigoon aren't happy. They're angry. They're angry about losing a school that was focused on aboriginal students and Metis students. Parents from First Nation and Metis communities who are being forced to bus their kids 30 and 40 kilometres because the McGuinty government is closing their school are not happy. Parents who know that, overall, the school board budget has been cut—in some cases by \$2 million—see through this as well.

This means that these boards, which will have to operate schools, to pay for teachers, to pay for caretaking and for heating in the schools, actually will have less money from the McGuinty government than they had two years ago. I say that at a time when aboriginal students need more help, it is actually shameful that they are being cut in funding.

DEFERRED VOTES

2007 ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have a deferred vote on Mr. Tory's amendment to the budget motion.

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

The division bells rang from 1416 to 1421.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mr. Tory's amendment to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
DiNovo, Cheri	Martel, Shelley	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Tory, John
Ferreira, Paul	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael	

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

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	McGuinty, Dalton	Smith, Monique
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 26; the nays are 62.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

We now come to the motion of Mr. Sorbara that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1425 to 1430.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	McGuinty, Dalton	Smith, Monique
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
DiNovo, Cheri	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ferreira, Paul	Munro, Julia	Tory, John
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael	Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 62; the nays are 27.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It is therefore resolved that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONVENIENCE STORES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier and it concerns the lottery scandal. Last week, the Premier attempted yet again to dodge responsibility for the lottery scandal by putting blame on convenience store owners. It's always somebody, and on this occasion it was the convenience store owners. In his comments he tarred thousands of hard-working small business people with sweeping, careless statements which suggested that all convenience store people were involved somehow in the lottery scandal and would do the same with alcohol.

Will the Premier take this opportunity to apologize to the 140,000 convenience store employees he collectively insulted with his irresponsible comments?

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Read your own quotes, John.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Minister of Health. We're not off to a good start.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me first take this opportunity on behalf of the government to thank those men and women who devote themselves to providing convenient products at convenient times for the people of Ontario on an ongoing basis. In many ways, people who work in convenience stores, and particularly the people who own and operate those convenience stores, are part of the backbone of this economy. They employ over 100,000 people and they provide a very important service to the people of Ontario. Let me say on behalf of our government that we greatly appreciate those services offered by those people, day in and day out.

Mr. Tory: Well, of course, no surprise there: no apology, just as there's been a complete failure on the part of this Premier and this government to take any responsibility whatsoever for anything to do with the lottery scandal.

The Premier should stand in his place and have the decency to apologize and just admit that his latest attempt last week to deflect responsibility for the lottery scandal onto hard-working small business people was a complete failure and was a mistake to begin with—people like Elaine Abbas of Ottawa. She, with her husband, has owned and operated a convenience store for nearly 27 years, working 14 hours a day, seven days a week. She says, “Shame on Mr. McGuinty for blaming all small businesses for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. scandal involving a few unscrupulous retailers. To lump us all together is disgusting. He owes us an apology and, believe me, the next election results will reflect whether or not we get one.”

Will the Premier just get up and admit your comments were wrong and apologize to these 140,000 people whom you tarred with a dirty brush? Will you do it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I've just taken the opportunity to express on behalf of our government and indeed the people of Ontario our appreciation for the wonderful services provided by people who work in our convenience stores. But let me remind all Ontarians of something the leader of the Conservative Party said on November 23 of last year: “Ontario should consider banning lottery retailers from buying tickets in light of mounting accusations that clerks are winning a disproportionate number of prizes.” Not even the Ombudsman suggested that the right to buy those tickets should be removed from those people who work in our convenience stores, but the leader of the official opposition decided he was going to take it one step further and, with one wide stroke of a reckless brush, accused all people who work in our convenience stores of being unworthy of the responsibility they assume and the right to buy those tickets.

Mr. Tory: The vice-president of Mac's Convenience Stores, Jean-Luc Meunier, calls it an irony that this Premier should try to damn retailers for his own government's failures. He says, “The hard work and long hours

that convenience store workers contribute to the Ontario economy deserve more respect.”

Dave Bryans, president of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association, says, “It's not often that a Premier unfairly questions the credibility of an entire industry and its 140,000 workers.” He goes on to say that it's unfair to tar all convenience store owners for the lottery problems. “We hope,” he says, “that the Premier will reconsider his comments and give convenience store operators an apology.”

Will you stand in your place today and apologize for your comments that unfairly tarred this group of 140,000 hard-working small business people?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: But there's more. The leader of the official opposition also said, “Is it more important to let those 140,000 people buy their tickets and have some of the revenue from that than it is to maintain the integrity of the system? I think that integrity always comes first.”

The logical inference from that is that the leader of the official opposition is saying that you cannot have people who are working in convenience stores operating these lottery systems and have integrity in the system at the same time. We disagree. We have every faith and every confidence in our convenience store workers to continue doing the good job they've been doing on behalf of the people of Ontario.

1440

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. We have asked your government in connection with the lottery scandal to turn over all the documents from the minister's office and your office concerning the lottery scandal and you've said no. We've asked that an independent investigation be ordered into the activities of the Premier's office and the minister's office concerning the lottery scandal and you have said no.

There are 103 of us elected here. The committee process should represent another means by which the public can get some information as to what went on and we can reinforce the role of the member of provincial Parliament. In fact, in your 2003 election platform you said, “We will give more independence and powers to legislative committees.” Will the Premier consider referring the lottery scandal issues not presently being investigated by the police—namely, the actions of your office, the minister's office and the government of Ontario itself—to a committee of the Legislature for proper investigation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'll remind the leader of the official opposition that the OLG was before a committee in September. I will also remind him of something which he is uncomfortable in understanding and accepting, and that is this: First of all, KPMG was brought in to provide

some independent recommendations. It did that. The leader of the official opposition is not prepared to accept their independence. Then the Ombudsman came in and he provided a very thorough report complete with a substantive set of recommendations. Beyond that, we've now referred this matter to the Ontario Provincial Police.

It seems to me that this issue is heavily populated now with independent authorities offering independent investigations and independent recommendations. That may not satisfy the leader of the official opposition, but I think it does satisfy the people of Ontario, who are most intent on ensuring that we move forward and act on each and every one of these recommendations. That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Tory: The people of Ontario are much smarter than the Premier gives them credit for, in that what the people of Ontario know is that not one authority—dependent or otherwise—of any kind has as yet examined the activities of your government, your minister, your office and your advisers in all of this because you steadfastly refuse to let anybody look at them and stonewall day after day. It's unfortunate that your promise to give a meaningful role to MPPs and committees was obviously as meaningless as all the other promises in that platform.

In 1986, then-Premier David Peterson accepted the resignation of Elinor Caplan. In accepting that resignation, he said two interesting things. First, "A minister of the crown has to have the confidence of the House in order to carry on." Second, he said that it was best that the matter in question be probed by a legislative committee and not dragged on in the House. Those were two statements made by your predecessor. Will you take the advice and the words of your predecessor as some guidance and refer this matter of your government's actions, your office's and the minister's office on the lottery scandal to a committee of this Legislature?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I want to remind the leader of the official opposition that it was the Conservative government that stopped calling agencies before our parliamentary committees. We opened the door again to that.

I'm not exactly sure what the leader of the official opposition's objective is, but it is surely not to ensure that we restore confidence for the people of Ontario in their lottery system. I think what Ontarians want to know and are entitled to know is whether or not their government is doing everything that it should do to restore confidence in the integrity of their lottery system.

We have received solid recommendations from KPMG and the Ombudsman. We've taken an additional step, referring this to the Ontario Provincial Police, and we look forward to any findings, any recommendations, anything at all that might flow from their involvement in this issue.

Again, we will do whatever is necessary to ensure that the people of Ontario can have confidence in their lottery system, and specifically we will adopt each and every one of—

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

Mr. Tory: We should just amend that. Everything short of actually having anybody at all look at what your government did or did not do, when you knew things, what you did when you knew them and so forth—anything short of that, and if you wanted to do everything you should be doing, then you should look at precedent. I cited the precedent involving—

Interjection: It was Elinor Caplan.

Mr. Tory: —Ms. Caplan.

We have a second precedent in a majority government setting in 1992, when a legislative committee looked into matters concerning the member for Nickel Belt. A third precedent: that of René Fontaine, a former minister in the Peterson government. His matters were referred to a committee. The committee hearings took place relatively quickly in 1986. They were cited at the time for being cost-effective, and it allowed the public to see what was going on and enhanced the role of the MPP.

With all of those advantages, and your having said you want to do everything you should do to restore confidence, why won't you refer this to a legislative committee and let the public see what your government did, what it knew concerning this lottery scandal?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: This matter was brought before a parliamentary committee. Secondly, in each and every one of those instances, unless my memory fails me, I don't recall there having been a separate KPMG recommendation put forward, I don't recall the Ombudsman having looked into it, and I don't recall the government of the day having referred the matter to the Ontario Provincial Police.

If ever there was a government that's committed to doing the right thing, to ensuring that we follow up on every specific recommendation that we get from every independent authority, it is ours. Our word that we give to the people of Ontario, the hundreds of thousands who go out there and buy their lottery tickets, is that we will adopt each and every one of these recommendations so that they can have every confidence in the integrity of their lottery system.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. On March 24 of this year, your Minister of Health and Long-Term Care promised people that the price tag of the new North Bay Regional Health Centre was \$551 million. He said that that price is guaranteed, and he said, "One of the new things that we offered in health care infrastructure in Ontario is certainty with respect to pricing."

However, in a letter dated February 21, 2007, signed by Minister Smitherman himself, he says, "The actual total cost of the private, profit-driven hospital deal will be over \$1 billion."

Premier, why was your Minister of Health not forthcoming with North Bay residents and the taxpayers of Ontario? Why did he refuse to acknowledge that under

the profit-driven model, the hospital will cost two times \$500 million, or \$1 billion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I am pleased to report that after 20 years of waiting, the people of North Bay, because of the fabulous work performed by their MPP, are getting a new hospital. More than that, not only are they just getting a physical building, they're getting a 30-year warranty with respect to maintenance and renovations. That will ensure that they have a good, quality hospital in their community for 30 years.

Beyond that, the risk associated with any problems connected with the management of the contract, any costs that might go up with respect to labour or materials, all of that is assumed by the private sector. At the end of the day, the people of North Bay end up with their hospital. It's publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable, and they get a hospital that they've been waiting for for 20 years. We think they've earned it.

Mr. Hampton: Last week we saw where McGuinty's private hydro deal with Bruce nuclear is going to add an extra \$1 billion to people's hydro bills, because we're paying 44% too much. Now the Premier says that a hospital that should cost \$500 million is a good deal when it costs \$1 billion. It's a good deal when the profit-driven corporation gets to line their pockets. It's a good deal when the taxpayers of Ontario have to pay double for a hospital.

Premier, how is it a good deal when the taxpayers have to pay a billion dollars for a hospital that your Minister of Health himself admits should only cost \$500 million to build?

1450

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the people of North Bay are not just getting a building. They get a 30-year warranty with respect to that building, with respect to renovations, with respect to repairs.

There's more good news. We're not just not shutting down hospitals in the way that the previous government did; we're actually building new hospitals in the province of Ontario. We're getting new hospitals in Thunder Bay, Brampton, North Bay, Mattawa, Newmarket, Sault Ste. Marie, Sioux Lookout, Niagara Health System, Halton, Toronto with Bridgepoint, Mississauga and Toronto with the Humber River Regional, West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, Runnymede Health Centre in Toronto, Woodstock General Hospital, and Montfort back in my hometown of Ottawa. That's 15.

There are 85 other hospitals that are undergoing major renovations or expansions. We have in place for the first time in Ontario a government that is dedicated to building hospitals, expanding hospitals, and renovating hospitals to meet the health care needs of the people of Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, here is the issue. Here is your government's press release from March 24 which says the all-in cost of the hospital is \$500 million. Here is the letter from the Minister of Health that was leaked over the weekend, which points out that that hospital that you

say is only going to cost \$500 million, when you add in the private profit, when you add in all the other goodies that the profit-driven corporation is going to get, is going to come to \$1 billion.

I simply say this to you, Premier: Do you really believe it's good health care when the McGuinty government pays a private, profit-driven corporation \$1 billion for a hospital deal when the Minister of Health himself says the hospital should only cost \$500 million? Do you think that's a good deal, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I just made reference to the fact that there are about 100 hospital construction projects underway at present in Ontario. We are, in fact, building more hospitals than the five previous governments combined. I don't believe there was a single new hospital built on the NDP government's watch—not a single one.

But distilled to its essence, what this is really all about is ensuring that we can meet the health care needs of our communities. We've made a determination that it is unacceptable for us to allow this state of disrepair and this lack of hospital capacity in Ontario to continue. We're making some dramatic investments in our health care system, but particularly in our hospital system, so that our population, particularly our elderly population, which has a greater call upon our hospital services, has the lead—

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

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: We saw last week how the hydro ratepayers of the province are going to get fleeced out of \$1 billion thanks to your Bruce nuclear profit-driven private hydro deal, and now we see that people are going to pay an extra \$500 million for your private, profit-driven hospital deal.

In a press release issued April 9 by Infrastructure Ontario, your Minister Caplan, you quote a PricewaterhouseCoopers report. You rely on this report to justify your private, profit-driven hospital deals. Premier, did the PricewaterhouseCoopers report examine the cost for constructing a 100% public hospital instead of going down the private, profit-driven corporate road?

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

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): The member asks about PricewaterhouseCoopers. In fact, earlier on, the Montfort Hospital independent auditor showed over \$19 million worth of savings as compared to a traditional bill. In fact, PricewaterhouseCoopers did look at the alternative financing method compared to a traditional delivery model and concluded a savings of \$56.7 million.

That report will soon be on the Infrastructure Ontario website, and I invite all members of this House, and indeed all Ontarians, to take a look at it and to render their own opinion. But make no mistake: The people of North Bay, Sarnia, Sault Ste. Marie, St. Catharines and many, many other communities are finally getting a hospital with modern, state-of-the-art facilities so that we

can treat people closer to home. I understand that the leader of the third party would wish us to stop, but I want the member to know that I will be relentless in ensuring that Ontarians have access—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: This is the minister who said it was a good deal when people who bought lottery tickets got fleeced out of hundreds of millions of dollars. Now he says it's a good deal when taxpayers pay double for a hospital because the McGuinty government wants to put lots of money in the pockets of their profit-driven, private, corporate friends.

Minister, you keep relying on this Pricewaterhouse report. You keep relying on that, saying this is a good deal. You've commissioned this report, but you refuse to make it public. So my question to the Premier is this: Premier, will you today table the Pricewaterhouse-Cooper's report since you refer to it all the time in saying that it says these profit-driven, private hospitals are a good deal? If the report says that, table the report today so that the taxpayers of Ontario can see how paying a—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I wish that the leader of the third party would listen to the answer to the first question before he goes on with his previously prepared question because, as I very clearly indicated, the Pricewaterhouse-Cooper's report, the value for money report, will soon be posted for everyone to see on the Infrastructure Ontario website, just as the report on the Montfort Hospital is currently online.

One of the hallmarks of this government is transparency, the commitment to letting people know. In fact, I have support here from a former Attorney General in the province who says, "Toronto presents, in the longer term, some interesting possibilities for partnership with private developers. For example, it might be possible to construct courts and to construct commercial space, and to construct housing in co-operation with a private developer."

That was Howard Hampton, October 9, 1991. What happened to Mr. Hampton between then and now? Obviously, he didn't have the same regard for transparency and accountability as this government does—

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: This is the real evidence concerning the McGuinty government. They don't know the difference between leasing space in a vacant building and spending \$1 billion for a hospital that only costs \$500 million to construct. But I say to the Premier again, Premier, you're very fond of quoting from the PricewaterhouseCooper's report. If this report says what you want people to believe, then table the report here today. Otherwise, tell people what you have to hide. What do you have to hide in refusing to table the report, which you say justifies paying \$1 billion for a profit-driven, private hospital deal in North Bay that your Minister of Health says should only cost \$500 million to build? Will you table the report today, Premier?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In response to the first two questions, I'll give the same reply. The report will be on the website in very short order. In fact, the contract with Plenary Health is already posted on a website, as are the requests for proposals, as is the contract. This is a hallmark for transparency and accountability unmatched by any previous government, because those are part of our five core principles: that public interest is paramount; that we have and be able to demonstrate value for money; that appropriate accountability is maintained; that we have a fair, open and transparent procurement process; and most especially, that all infrastructure will remain under public control, and core assets like hospitals, schools and our water system will always be publicly owned. No previous government can make a claim like that because none of them—whether it was the P3 deals that the New Democrats began or that were started under a previous government—has had this kind of framework and this policy foundation. This government believes that the public has a right to know and should be—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1500

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a question for the Premier. Once again the Premier's Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal has distinguished himself for his failure to watch out for the best interests of Ontario taxpayers. First it was the lottery scandal, a scandal with huge implications to which he paid no attention. Now it's the North Bay hospital, a project that was supposed to cost \$221 million, but thanks to the delays of your government, is actually going to cost about \$1 billion.

My question for the Premier is this: Given this minister's colossal failure to protect the interests of lottery ticket buyers and given his colossal failure to protect the interests of the taxpayer with respect to the costs of the North Bay hospital, doesn't he think it's time for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal to step down?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: It's somewhat ironic that the member would have participated with colleagues in phony groundbreaking in North Bay in the year 2000 and the year 2002. There was not a single penny in the bank. There was not even a plan to deliver and build that hospital until Monique Smith, the member for Nipissing, came tirelessly and ensured that we had the delivery of this hospital. That is the truth and that is the legacy. This member should be ashamed of himself for foisting that fraud upon the people of North Bay and the people of the region, for suggesting the phony, bogus numbers that the member is coming forward with. The reality is this: The hospital, for \$551 million—we have shovels in the ground. The people of North Bay can expect modern medical facilities that finally someone has delivered for them, not only there, of course, but in Sault Ste. Marie, in Sarnia, in St. Catharines, in Hamilton, in Ottawa. Right across this province Ontarians are benefiting from the most ambitious capital program—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Miller: Well, Mr. Minister, this project was to cost \$221 million in 2002. Now—and I might point out that you’ve been the government for three and a half years—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. I need to be able to hear the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. He needs to be able to place his question.

Mr. Miller: To the Premier: Premier, this project was to cost some \$221 million in 2002. You’ve been the government for three and a half years. For three and a half years the people of North Bay have been waiting for this hospital to get going. Now we find out that the minister responsible for lotteries, the same minister who’s responsible for public infrastructure, has been asleep on both of these files, and we find out that the cost has gone from \$221 million to \$551 million—that’s what you had in the paper at the second groundbreaking—and now to \$1 billion for this hospital. I say to the Premier, is it not time that this minister who has been asleep at the switch on both these files step aside?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I’m very proud to compare the record of this government to Mr. Miller and his government. In the year 2002, as my colleague reminds me, they closed 28 hospitals. We’re rebuilding over 100 hospitals. In the North Bay hospital there was no design, there was no contract, there was no plan and there were no dollars. The question for Mr. Miller, Mr. Tory and his colleagues in the Conservative caucus is, how would they build the hospitals if they’re going to cut \$2.5 billion from our health care system? The answer is quite clear. We have a government of the day that is committed to repairing and rebuilding our health care capital. We have a party opposite that have phony plans, phony announcements, phony groundbreakings and have planned a cut for Ontario’s health care system. I’ll take substance over that phony baloney any day of the week.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. The Provincial Auditor’s report on the Bruce nuclear refurbishment deal reveals the dirty little secret of your planned \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme. When it comes to nuclear power, hard-working hydro consumers will end up paying for cost overruns either after the fact or through higher rates built into the initial agreement. At the Bruce nuclear station, it comes to a 44% increase in hydro rates over the going rate.

Premier, what are you going to tell Ontario hydro consumers when they’re forced to shell out an extra \$16 billion or \$17 billion in cost overruns on your planned \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): As is typical of the member opposite, there is absolutely no

factual accuracy in anything he just said. He has twisted numbers; he has interpreted numbers inaccurately and ineffectively.

The member opposite says there’s no need to redevelop power in Ontario. We say there is. There is a need to redevelop clean, renewable power. We’re doing that; he voted against that. He attributes comments to the auditor that the auditor did not make. He’s applying his own interpretation. In fact, if you read the auditor’s report very carefully, the auditor says specifically that you can’t aggregate those numbers, that you would then in fact be distorting the accuracy of the report. But that is common.

The reason this government asked the auditor to do that report and made it public two hours after we got it was because we had to make a good deal. We made a good deal. The people of Ontario are protected by this government, and they’re not well-served by distortion and inaccuracy in the member opposite’s comments.

Mr. Hampton: The Provincial Auditor is very clear: The McGuinty government is going to pay 7.1 cents a kilowatt hour for electricity that should only cost 4.9 cents a kilowatt hour at the Bruce nuclear station.

Tom Adams from Energy Probe is even more clear. He says that the McGuinty government tried to hide these figures by all sorts of manoeuvres. But however you cut it, that’s a 44% increase over the going hydro rate.

My question to the Premier is this: How do you explain to hard-working Ontarians who are paying the hydro bill that the first phase of your \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme means that they’re going to have to hand over an extra \$1 billion over what you told them initially?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The simple answer is that the numbers the leader of the third party just quoted are false and inaccurate—deliberately distorted, in my view. You cannot interpret the Auditor General’s report in that line.

It’s interesting to see the leader of the third party sharing common cause with Mr. Adams, who is a coal advocate. Mr. Adams routinely supports the expansion of coal power. Mr. Adams is also the individual who said that Mr. Parkinson was unfairly treated. I suppose he agrees with him on that. Finally, Mr. Adams also supports private power, fully deregulated. It’s good to see where you really stand.

I’d also remind the leader of the third party that since we signed the deal, we’re actually paying 6.1 cents, not 6.3 cents. It’s a good deal for Ontario. This government will keep the lights on.

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Order. I think this would be a good time. I’m going to remind members of a statement I made to this Legislature on December 4 of last year. I think it’s worth reiterating.

“I am disturbed by the increasing use of intemperate language. There’s frequently a stunning lack of regard for the traditional hallmarks of parliamentary discourse and,

specifically, respect for the Chair and the integrity of all members. To engage in such behaviour is to be destructive not just to the member or members targeted but to all of us and to this institution.”

I think we're going down that path rather rapidly in the last few weeks, and I would ask all members to take regard of our traditions and of our practices here in this place.

1510

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): My question will be asked very respectfully to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As the minister knows, agriculture in the Niagara Falls riding, which is my riding, is the second-largest industry, capable of yielding the highest return per acre of anywhere in Canada. We have flourishing greenhouse, cut flower, tender fruit and, of course, grape and wine industries.

I was particularly delighted to see our government make a major investment in re-energizing the Vineland Research Station, which after many years of neglect was dying on the vine, so to speak. I was also pleased to see that Niagara This Week, in its editorial, wrote a lengthy report stating, “Vineland Centre Rebirth Overdue,” and congratulating the governments for the investment.

My question to the minister is, can you tell the House how this investment will help the farmers and growers of my community?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I am very happy to receive the question from the member, who is a tireless advocate not just for the Vineland Research Station but certainly for the agricultural interests in his riding.

Vineland, by the way, has celebrated its 100th anniversary. I was there with a number of members from this Legislature in August to celebrate that, and it was at that time that I think everyone who had been focusing on that special event realized that Vineland was indeed a tired facility and needed some special consideration. So I set up the Vineland advisory panel to bring me recommendations on what would be necessary to make it a world-class, state-of-the-art facility. They brought me some excellent recommendations, and I'm very happy that last week I was able, in conjunction with my federal colleague, to announce an investment of \$12.5 million from the province of Ontario and \$15.5 million from the federal government. This money is going to contribute to the revitalization of Vineland that will make it a model for research—

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

Mr. Craiton: Minister, I'm glad that our government is building partnerships and supporting research that will improve the agri-food industry and the quality of life for rural Ontarians.

As you know, Minister, Brock University, Niagara College and the University of Guelph all play a role in

agricultural development of our wine industry. Can you tell us how Ontario's \$12.5 million will foster research and innovation for the Niagara grape and wine industry, and what roles will continue to be played by these educational centres of excellence in our community?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to have the opportunity to identify for the folks in Ontario who perhaps don't live in Vineland that our government is seized of the research and innovation agenda because of the leadership of our Premier. We have recognized that by investing in research and innovation, particularly in the agriculture sector, we are going to enable the industry for generations to come and make it more sustainable. We recognize that when the government makes investments, that enables the facility to leverage dollars from other levels of government and from the private sector. That has in fact happened at Vineland, as Flowers Canada and the Niagara fruit and vegetable growers' association have also now contributed to the research station. Donald Ziraldo, a private individual, has made a commitment.

After all of this, what we will have in Ontario will be a model for research facilities everywhere in the province and the country. We will have increased the capacity to serve the horticulture—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is for the Premier. We're joined today by yet another victim of the lottery scandal allowed to fester under your watch. In the west gallery, interested in your response to this question, is my constituent Mr. David Menzies from Richmond Hill.

On the very day that the Ombudsman released his scathing report on the scandalous goings-on of the OLG, Mr. Menzies spoke with Mr. Gough, the chair of the OLG, told him about his outstanding lottery ticket issues and received a commitment that he would immediately hear from the OLG's security department. That was now more than two weeks ago: not a phone call, not a letter, and Mr. Gough is refusing to take Mr. Menzies's calls.

What has changed at the OLG? Can you tell Mr. Menzies what he needs to do to get the attention of the OLG to look into his lottery scandal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me say that obviously, as a result of raising this matter here today, this has elevated it automatically as a priority, I'm sure, for the OLG. If there's anything at all that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal might do to draw this to the attention of OLG, I'm sure he is prepared to do that.

I do know that there have been more than 700 complaints brought to the fore at Ontario Lottery and Gaming. I believe that 500 of those have now been separately investigated, so I know that OLG is working as quickly as it can. We will ensure that this particular

matter, on behalf of this particular gentleman, is fully brought to the attention of OLG.

Mr. Klees: Mr. Premier, this is Mr. Menzies's second experience with the OLG.

As a winner of a perfect Pro-Picks sports lottery, Mr. Menzies had to threaten litigation with the OLG to be paid out on his jackpot, but only on the condition that he sign a non-disclosure agreement.

Here's my question to you: Why would a legitimate winner of a lottery be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement by a crown corporation to receive winnings that are rightfully his? If there's nothing to hide, why this kind of action?

Can I have your undertaking, on behalf of Mr. Menzies, first of all that that question would be answered—why the necessity for a non-disclosure agreement?—and second, your undertaking that Mr. Menzies will in fact have his rightful day with the OLG to look into his circumstances?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I can't speak to any specifics, but what I can do and what I undertake to do on behalf of the honourable member opposite and Mr. Menzies is to ensure that this is brought to the attention of the OLG, complete with a request that they do everything within their power to ensure that this gentleman is treated fairly.

I can say to Ontarians broadly that a number of changes have been put in place to ensure that there are more protections for the many, many Ontarians who participate in lottery games on a daily basis. In fact, as you well know, many, many recommendations have been brought to the fore now from both the Ombudsman and KPMG, who turned other matters over to the police. We will do whatever we have to do in order to ensure that people like Mr. Menzies and others throughout the province can have confidence in their gaming system.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Minister, let me share an excerpt from the government agencies committee report on the OLG. On November 29, 2006, Mr. Tascona, Ms. Scott and myself voted to reopen hearings. We were voted down by government members Mr. Gravelle, Mr. Milloy, Mr. Parsons, Ms. Smith and Mr. Wilkinson. I then suggested that a front page or a lengthy paragraph insert be included explaining that this was a snapshot report based on hearings held before the recent allegations came to light. That too was voted down.

Why did members of your government turn down this opportunity way back then to investigate the OLG?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I in fact do have a copy of some of the Hansard from November 22, where the member opposite says, "I would support that, and Mr. Johnston's"—the researcher's—"comments. We could be involved in an endless rewrite here, but I think we need to reflect where we were. We're making changes, but not substantive change at this

point." That's what the member for Parkdale–High Park said on November 22 at the standing committee on government agencies, an all-party committee at the Legislature in fact chaired by Mrs. Munro.

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The Premier earlier had indicated that the standing committee on government agencies had not met for eight years or called a government agency in eight years. That practice changed with this government because we believe in openness and transparency and giving members of this Legislative Assembly an opportunity to interview, to make recommendations. In fact, I can share with members that I have received not only the recommendations, but the members of the committee are receiving the responses, and the implementation is ongoing.

Ms. DiNovo: The letter of dissent is right in the report, and I invite the minister to actually read it. The government agencies committee is the place where the investigation of the OLG could have happened, should have happened and didn't happen, and it didn't happen because this government shut it down way back in November. I would like to ask you again and maybe get an answer this time: Why did you shut it down?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, the government agencies committee did take a look, I believe, at Hydro One, LCBO and OLG and made several excellent recommendations which are currently being implemented. And I would say that the response is coming back to the committee on the status report of those recommendations.

But it goes even further than that. An independent officer of this Legislature, the Ombudsman, had a chance to look into the particular matters that were alleged in the CBC's *The Fifth Estate* broadcast and issued I thought a very fair and balanced report complete with 23 recommendations. Taken with KPMG's 40, there were 60 recommendations in total, 17 of which have already been implemented, 25 will be complete by the end of June and the remaining 18 are ongoing. I look forward, with the board, to seeing the rest of those being implemented.

In fact, the Ombudsman does comment. He says, "I commend the minister and the government for their openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate"—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): My question is for the Minister of Education. On this side of the House we understand that to reach every student, we need to continue to improve opportunities for our First Nation, Metis and Inuit students. In fact Janet Wilkinson, director of education for the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board, recently said with respect to our support, "I am so proud of what this government has done by acknowledging for the first time that education for aboriginal students has to be recognized. There is recognition for the first time in the funding model for aboriginal

students, and the projects being supported will generate new approaches to ensuring aboriginal students have equal opportunity.”

I was pleased to take part in an announcement with Minister Ramsay this past week in Sault Ste. Marie outlining our new funding as part of our government's ongoing commitment to work with all aboriginal organizations and communities to build a better future for First Nation, Metis and Inuit children and youth. Minister, can you elaborate on the specific enhancements for aboriginal students in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education):

First of all, thank you for the question, to the member for Sault Ste. Marie. I want to acknowledge the work that he did when he was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. He worked to lay the framework for aboriginal education.

This is a very important change to the funding formula. It's very interesting that the leader of the third party made reference to the Keewatin-Patricia board, because in fact it is Janet Wilkinson, who is the director of the Keewatin-Patricia board, who has been advocating for this kind of change. Mordechai Rozanski said we needed to have a supplement in the funding formula, so we have made this change. What this will do is provide increased funding for native language programs. It will provide increased support for boards to offer any of the 10 native language studies courses that are in the Ontario curriculum and offer additional funding for support programs that assist aboriginal students. The Keewatin-Patricia board alone this year will get \$1.1 million. There will be no cuts to that board's funding this year. They will have increased funding and specific funding for aboriginal students. It's a very important change.

Mr. Oraziotti: I'm sure the First Nation communities were pleased to hear that this grant was one of three additional changes we've made this year alone to the funding formula. We're taking the flawed formula drafted by the previous government and making the necessary improvements to fix it. It reminds me of the MPAC disaster under the past government. We're providing resources for schools and students because we understand the unique challenges of rural and northern boards. In Sault Ste. Marie we have invested almost \$4.5 million in additional education funding alone, bringing our new investment to over \$18 million, boosting per pupil funding by over 30%, an average of \$2,800 per student in my community.

It's great to see the Liberal education funding formula working well in Ontario. Minister, what are the additional changes we've made this year, and how will they benefit students across the province?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: In addition to the new First Nations, Metis and Inuit education supplement, we've made two significant additions to the funding formula. The funding formula has to be changed and has been changed by adding more money. So \$3.5 billion of new money has gone into education since we've been in office. The members opposite want to minimize that, but

that is a significant amount of money that has bought more teachers and more resources.

What we did this year is add a new grant—the program enhancement grant, which is \$35 million—that allows boards to invest in things like outdoor education, music, arts and phys ed programs that allow a little bit of flexibility, which is exactly what boards asked us for. We talked to them. They said, “We have these programs that historically we have offered. We don't have direct funding for them. We need some flexibility.” So the program enhancement grant begins to address that issue.

The third area that we've added into the funding formula this year is the supported schools allocation. What this grant does is recognize the isolated schools in our communities. This is additional funding that will support 177 schools, and these are schools—both elementary and secondary—that are far away from other schools in their board. What this money does is guarantee that there will be a minimum number of teachers in both elementary and secondary—7.5 teachers in elementary and 14 teachers in secondary—so that programs can be delivered to their students.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

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

My question is for the Deputy Premier, I suppose. I understand the Premier had to leave.

Over the last several weeks we've seen a number of people from the lottery corporation as actual and perceived fallout as a result of the lottery scandal. The list includes former CEO Duncan Brown; former vice-president for security, Michael Sharland; and former chief marketing officer, Alan Berdowski. Will you provide the House with a complete list of people who have been let go or have opted to leave the OLG as a result of this scandal on your watch?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I can speak to the individuals involved. Mr. Brown and the board reached a mutual agreement that separation was appropriate. I can tell you that Mr. Sharland is currently on temporary leave with the corporation.

I would highlight to the member opposite that the Ombudsman has indicated exceptional and exemplary support and co-operation with his investigation. I would expect as well that with the OPP—they've referred the matter on to the Toronto police force to conduct the appropriate review—that the appropriate and necessary co-operation will be there. Of course, the Ombudsman does indicate, on page 68 of his report, “I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change.”

Along with the board, I want this member and all members to know that we will ensure that the Ombudsman's recommendations—

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

Mr. Yakabuski: It seems this government is always in a rush to sign a deal with somebody when it's the taxpayers' money.

This list is important because these are the people who will be able to provide the full picture of what actually went on between the OLG and the Premier's office and the minister's office during this scandal cover-up.

We know that the practice of the OLG, when they sign agreements with people like the late Bob Edmonds, is to have them sign a gag order. Will the Premier please advise the House as to whether or not those who have left the OLG in the wake of the lottery scandal have been asked to sign gag orders, and will those gag orders be enforced if these individuals are called in to participate in an investigation into what went on in this cover-up scandal?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The Ombudsman was very clear when he said in his media conference back a couple of weeks ago, on March 26, "I conclude that they"—the OLG—"put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in 2002." Of course, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke might not want to ask his colleague who sits right in front of him, just to the left, what role they did or did not have. I note that none of the members opposite want to in fact share what they did or what they didn't do. But the Ombudsman goes further. He says, "At that point, the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.' But a month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the Superior Court didn't apply. Then it became a slippery slope."

These were the actions and this was the corporate culture in 2002. Unfortunately, folks at the time turned a blind eye or swept this under the carpet. This government—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1530

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): In the absence of the Premier, I'll direct my question to the Deputy Premier. Concern is deepening over your government's lack of action in the avalanche of job losses in communities like Hamilton and surrounding areas. Thousands of steel and manufacturing sector workers have been thrown out of work, including another couple of hundred announced on the weekend by Stelco, which is mothballing its hot strip mill. Thursday's sudden closure of GenFast Manufacturing in Brantford adds 210 more people to the McGuinty government job loss column.

My question is very simple: Where is your plan for saving good-paying manufacturing jobs in communities like Hamilton?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): This is a very important question for the people in many regions of Ontario where there is more challenge today than before, especially in the manufacturing sector. We know this is a world-wide phenomenon. Our government is unique in that in these recent years there has not been a government providing this level of support to the manufacturing sector. I'd look forward to offering this list to this member, who has the nerve to ask the question, who has voted against every budget that our government has tabled—every budget, including our OAIIS plan, our AMIS program, all of these incentives for the manufacturing sector to invest. This is the same member who voted against every single measure. You've got a nerve standing up in the House and suggesting what you're suggesting in your question. You come on over here; I've got a list to show you.

Ms. Horwath: You know, it's really the unique support that this government is not showing that gives me the nerve to ask these hard questions that the minister refuses to answer. I don't think her answer was very good at all.

GenFast was company of the year in 2000. So much for your unique support that kept it here. It was bought by a carpetbagging Michigan company called MNP Corp., which then ran it into the ground under your watch and let it slide into receivership in order to shift production to the USA.

Your complacency in the face of so many manufacturing jobs being lost in communities like Hamilton and Brantford is alarming, to say the least. You refuse to pass the NDP's job protection act, which was designed to prevent exactly that kind of inexcusable corporate behaviour here in the province of Ontario, so what are you going to do, Minister? Where is your plan?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I really do appreciate the opportunity, but let me say one thing: You are one person I would not have on my sales team marketing Ontario as a place to invest. What we are telling the world right now and what we are doing—we're going to the world to invest in Ontario, because we do have the best skilled trades, the most educated workforce, including in this very member's own hometown. I think you should be proud of the workers of Hamilton and be proud of the message that we can send around the world that Hamilton is the place to invest because we can give those companies the opportunity to make a good business there, good for the communities. But this, I must say, is the same member who voted against every single measure that put half a billion dollars in the auto strategy, half a billion dollars in the advanced manufacturing strategy. What did this member do? She voted against those—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker: Sit down. New question.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): My question is to the Minister of Government Services and it concerns our government's efforts to combat government waste. As members are aware, every year the Auditor General issues a report containing observations and advice on how the government should be managing its resources.

When it came to the previous government, one area of particular concern was the use of private consultants. I'd like to quote from page 400 of the 2004 Auditor General's report:

"Over the five-year period from 1998 to 2002, there was a substantial increase in annual consulting services expenditures at Ontario ministries, from \$271 million in 1998 to \$662 million in 2002.... [C]onsulting services were not acquired and managed with due regard for value for money."

"There was a heavy dependence on the use of consultants. Hundreds of consultants were engaged at per diem rates that were on average two to three times higher than the salaries of ministry employees performing similar duties."

I'd like to ask the minister what measures our government—

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

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Well, I anticipate the question. I think it was, what measures have we taken?

Let me just say that we have looked very carefully at the use of consultants, and the auditor was right. What we found was that many consultants were used essentially rather than civil servants, at two and three times the cost. So we examined quite a number of positions. We found that there were probably about 940 people who were consultants who should have been public servants, at considerable cost. We repatriated those jobs, and we saved taxpayers \$38 million in doing that. We reduced consulting expenditures by roughly 33%.

There will continue to be the need for consultants, but what we did there, rather than the per diems, we've moved to fixed contracts. So we have a fixed contract. We are insisting that the government of Ontario and the people of Ontario get the best possible price from the consultant. That's written into our requests for proposals. We're putting stricter time limits on consultants.

So we've moved very aggressively in this area. I might add for the public's information that in our budget there are nine full pages that are worth reading, from page 106 on, on other measures we've taken to make sure that we are saving the taxpayers dollars while giving them the best possible public service.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to read a petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I'm pleased to sign that in support of this petition on behalf of my constituents.

1540

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly to regulate zoos to protect animals and communities:

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I have signed this and send it to the table by way of page Jordan.

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I have a petition signed by a number of members from the Cornwall Township Historical Society, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Premiers of Ontario have made enormous contributions over the years in shaping the Ontario of today; and

“Whereas, as a result, the final resting places of the 18 deceased Premiers are among the most historically significant sites in the province, but have yet to be officially recognized; and

“Whereas, were these gravesites to be properly maintained and marked with an historical plaque and a flag of Ontario, these locations would be a source of pride to the communities where these former Premiers lie buried, and provide potential points of interest for visitors;

“Now therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Enact Bill 25, an act that will preserve the gravesites of the former Premiers of Ontario.”

As I agree with this petition, I affix my signature and send it with Craig.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition signed by thousands of people in Parry Sound–Muskoka regarding lab services at Muskoka Algonquin hospital, and they read:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) has indicated its support for moving significant parts of its laboratory operations to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie; and

“Whereas MAHC has also indicated that it intends to cease doing community-based lab work if it does not receive \$150,000 more in funding from the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the impact of such decisions will negatively affect timely health care delivery to residents of Muskoka, while increasing the overall cost to taxpayers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain hospital and community-based lab services at the existing facilities in Bracebridge and Huntsville, including restoration of lab services that have

recently been contracted out to hospitals in Sudbury and Barrie.”

I support this petition.

SHORELINE RIGHT OF PASSAGE

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I am pleased to introduce a petition that has been signed by many students from Fort Erie and a number of residents from Fort Erie as well. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it simply reads as follows:

“Access for All Great Lakes Right of Passage

“We, the undersigned, support the MPP from Niagara’s right-of-passage bill which was just introduced today.”

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It’s always a pleasure to stand and to support my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls, with this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

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

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

It’s my pleasure to sign this petition and to ask page Cody to carry it for me.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

“Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

“Whereas Canada’s Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

“Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

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

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I'm pleased to rise today on a very important issue in my constituency. We're trying to get a new secondary school from the public board in Longfields and Davidson Heights.

"Whereas Longfields and Davidson Heights in south Nepean are some of the fastest-growing communities in Ottawa and Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board has voted to authorize the final design phases for a grade 7 to 12 school to serve the Longfields and Davidson Heights communities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has lifted a three-year moratorium on school closings in order to make way for new educational facilities;

"We, residents of Nepean–Carleton, petition the Parliament of Ontario to ensure that the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board continues with plans to build a new grade 7 to 12 school no later than autumn of 2008 to serve" the constituents of "the Longfields and Davidson Heights communities."

I present it to page Katrina.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I'm the only guy standing.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

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

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

I agree with the petition and I'll sign it.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have more petitions to do with community lab services at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of the communities served by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare ... wish to maintain current community lab services; and

"Whereas maintaining community lab services promotes physician retention and benefits family health teams; and

"Whereas the funding for community lab services is currently a strain on the operating budget of" Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare; and

"Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas the operating budget for MAHC needs to reflect the growing demand for services in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

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

"That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health increase the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to permit continued operation of community" laboratory services.

I support this petition.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): This petition is on behalf of my colleague from Niagara Falls. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

I agree with the petition. I put my signature on it as well.

1550

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I'm so excited to read this petition into the Legislature, particularly

since you're in the chair right now and you were able to visit this wonderful location I'm about to speak to.

"We Call on the Government of Ontario to Ensure Dickinson Square Remains a Public Place

"Whereas the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, a provincial regulatory agency, is scheduled to move out of Dickinson Square, Manotick, in the summer of 2007; and

"Whereas the designated buildings of Dickinson Square are steeped in Canadian and Ontario history and are the city of Ottawa's only and one of the few remaining working industrial heritage sites in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas these five buildings of Dickinson Square are now at risk to potential non-heritage use development; and

"Whereas recent public consultation has resulted in overwhelming support to retain all five buildings in public ownership and management; and

"Whereas community agencies have formed a non-profit organization, Dickinson Square Management, to build upon the successful management of Watson's Mill and create a vibrant, public-owned arts and heritage cultural space within the square;

"That we, the residents of Manotick and surrounding areas in the city of Ottawa, call upon the government of Ontario to take a leadership role in working with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority and the city of Ottawa in order to ensure the historic site of Dickinson Square remain under the auspices of public ownership and management."

I fully support this petition and present it to page Alistair.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today from the good citizens from the Niagara Peninsula who are very concerned about physical activity in our secondary schools.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools" in Ontario.

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Alyssa.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 4, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 187, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): For those who may be tuning in on the parliamentary channel, members are allotted 20 minutes during this debate. I could certainly spend much more time than 20 minutes critiquing the latest Liberal budget, but I am going to go quickly over a number of the highlights, or lowlights, as some may describe them, and then talk about some specifics related to my riding of Leeds–Grenville.

Some of the areas that we've discussed over the past couple of weeks that were not dealt with, in our view, in an adequate manner included the fact that Ontario has lost 120,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs over just the last two years. I suspect that number is much higher than that now, because we're seeing on an almost weekly basis new announcements about manufacturing job losses.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Another 5,000 last month.

Mr. Runciman: Another 5,000 last month, my colleague indicates. We certainly heard one of the NDP members today talking about significant job losses at Stelco in Hamilton being announced last week. That's a concern, and I will get into that in a little more detail later.

Another point: Disposable incomes in Ontario are growing at the slowest rate in the country. Ontario was dead last in economic growth among Canadian provinces in 2006, trailing the next-slowest-growing province, Prince Edward Island, by a substantial 0.6%. Ontario used to be the economic engine of this country, and now it appears under the McGuinty Liberal government that we've become the caboose. In the census which was just recently made public, Ontario reported a net loss of

30,000 people, and that's just in the last year alone. That's a record, with a record loss of almost 15,000 people in the third quarter moving out of this province because of the lack of job prospects and the significant erosion, the hollowing out, of the manufacturing sector in this province.

A couple of quick points: a \$22.4-billion increase in annual spending by this Liberal government since taking office. That translates into an understandable number for most Ontarians: a \$4,504 increase per year for every Ontario household. That's a staggering almost \$750,000 increase in spending for every hour that this government has been in office. Just think of that: \$750,000 for every hour they have been in office. It took 136 years, from Confederation until 2003, for the Ontario government's expenditures to reach \$68 billion, but Mr. McGuinty and his friends have single-handedly managed to increase spending to \$91 billion in the coming fiscal year. We know that program spending is increasing a little over 8% a year under the Liberal government. Economic growth has averaged 4%. So they've increased spending during their time in office by double what the average economic growth has been in the province.

A point which is of interest to us—not necessarily one that's going to grab the interest of the public, but I'll put it on the record anyway: From 2003-04 until the last fiscal year, Mr. McGuinty and his colleagues have spent close to \$22 billion more than they promised during the campaign, and they've taken in \$10 billion more than they expected to take in.

An estimated 1.2 million, or 10% of Ontarians, are without a family doctor. Despite all of this rapid-fire spending, that hasn't changed. Ontarians living in rural Ontario are particularly underserved. In 2005, the province suffered a net loss of 14 doctors to other jurisdictions. Contrast that with British Columbia, where they had a net gain of 113 doctors in the same time period.

Homeowners remain unprotected from property tax assessments. We've seen these promises in 2008 and this initiative under the budget, but in fact, like so many of the promises they're now making, which Ontarians are going to have a difficult time believing, they are all being postponed until after the election.

More than 8,300 children are on the waiting list for mental health services, and approximately 2,300 of those kids have been on that waiting list for more than a year.

More than \$6,000 in additional long-term-care funding was promised in the last campaign, as well as an additional 20 minutes of care, but those promises are not being met.

Numerous school boards have had to slash budgets and raid other spending envelopes, such as special education, to balance their books. Public education has suffered. Split grades are now common, and there are more portables. I saw that when I visited North Grenville. It's unbelievable, the growth of portables over the life of this government. This is probably because of their botched class size cap promise. We know as well that Ontario schools are less safe, and the principals' council

recently reported that safety is being jeopardized because of this government's education failures.

1600

Air quality is worse. In 2005 there was a record 15 smog advisories covering 53 days. The previous record was 10 smog advisories covering 27 days. In 2005, for the first time in our history, we had a smog alert during the winter.

There's a shortage of justices of the peace, and this is costing most municipalities millions of dollars in uncollected fines as court dates are cancelled and various serious Provincial Offences Act charges are dropped due to lack of available trial times.

The Ministry of Agriculture: To reduce the amount of money for safety net programs, we've reduced their budget again this year by \$100 million.

Tourism: Again, when we see the loss of manufacturing jobs, the fact that they're cutting the tourism budget just boggles the mind. If there's one thing we want to do to counter some of these job losses, it's to attract more visitors to our province. Mr. Speaker, you're very familiar with this issue. Last year we had the most significant drop in US visitors since we started recording that number. How do they address that? They're spending close to \$5 million on wasted advertising. No one knows what these ads are all about—full-page colour ads no one can comprehend. Instead of addressing the need to attract more visitors from south of our border—and that has to be the most significant market that we should be pursuing—they're not doing it. What they're doing is using this money, I guess, to try to enhance their electoral prospects, because there's certainly nothing there that is going to attract the expenditure of tourism dollars.

In my own riding, we have a number of community health centres. The very successful ones—I sat down recently with Portland Country Roads Community Health Center in the Merrickville district. They're having a great deal of problems in attracting talent, especially nurse practitioners. This is a challenge for them that the government has to take a look at because these are significantly important operations in rural communities, and certainly in my riding they are being impacted by the lack of funding they need to attract these professionals into these areas.

We all know about the problems with COMRIF. I'll use a couple of examples: North Grenville. I was talking to the mayor there, Bill Gooch, and Doug Struthers of Merrickville Wolford, where they've been turned down on three occasions. North Grenville is an example. This is a community that looked after itself in the past, kept their infrastructure in good shape and now they are being penalized through the criteria with COMRIF. This is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Ontario and they're going to be restricted in terms of their ability to meet those pressures because of a lack of support and assistance. Merrickville Wolford, with their water treatment, their sewage treatment plant, their effluent, is meeting the standards but they've been told that this plant could collapse at any moment. What would that mean to

that community and to the Rideau system that could be impacted? Yet again they've been rejected, and we don't get adequate justification for these rejections.

I want to talk a bit about the Brockville Psychiatric Hospital. We had the federal government now encouraged to take a look at one of the soon-to-be-vacant facilities there for perhaps the housing of federal inmates with mental illness. Hopefully, if the federal government has an interest, this will require a commitment from the provincial government through the Ontario Realty Corp. to spend monies to upgrade a building on that site. If you take a look at the secure treatment facility that's operating there now for provincial inmates with mental health challenges, it's been an enormous success. We have the expertise in place there. This would be an enormous economic boost to the area, to the region. Hopefully the provincial government will not once again be the impediment for this going ahead. We know the McGuinty government, despite Mr. McGuinty's promises before the election—on this site, we had three phases: the secure treatment unit and phases 2 and 3, which would have meant well over 300 good jobs to that region. Mr. McGuinty was in the area prior to the election, as the opposition leader—and we have this in writing; it appeared in the Brockville Recorder and Times—and he made a commitment in black and white, “Yes, I'm committed; our party is committed to completing phases 2 and 3 of that project.”

What happened after the election? One of the first things they did was cancel phases 2 and 3.

Mr. Hudak: There's a surprise.

Mr. Runciman: Yes, not much of a surprise, but certainly a disappointment to those people who believed that promise that the then leader of the opposition, now the Premier, made.

We may have an opportunity to grow jobs on this site through the federal government, but at the end of the day, this will still depend on the Ontario Realty Corp. I have to say that I'm not terribly optimistic. I sent the minister responsible for ORC, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal—

Mr. Hudak: What did he do?

Mr. Runciman: We toured those buildings, and the grounds of the psych hospital are deteriorating, roofs leaking, heaters shut off even though portable heaters were sitting there. We were told they were just abandoning those buildings. We're talking about heritage properties. I sent the minister over a list of photos that we took of the damage in those buildings. I met with his staff. Nothing happening. We phoned to ask ORC if they were going to do anything. Nothing. There were no RFPs—nothing. So we sent those pictures to the local media. We sent them to the local heritage preservation group. Then all of a sudden there was a front-page story about the damage to these buildings and all of a sudden Minister Caplan says, “Oh, we have an RFP to repair those.” We have an RFP responding to a front-page story in the Brockville paper, but of course, everything before that was no, no, no, deny, deny, deny. That's a message

we hear from that particular minister on regular occasions.

I'm hoping that in the future we don't have to embarrass the government by going to the media. We tried to work in a very co-operative way. That was our first effort. We tried to work with the minister, with the minister's offices. We provided him with pictures. And then he pulled that one on us. So in any event, we now believe they're going to be protected.

I talked about 120,000 manufacturing jobs. We've seen Domtar in Cornwall close—and I want to talk about eastern Ontario very specifically—Collins and Aikman in Gananoque, Mahle in Gananoque, Nestlé in Chesterville, Siegwark in Prescott. This is just a few; most recently, the Hershey announcement in Smiths Falls, 500 jobs in a community of 900 people.

The eastern Ontario secretariat—we've had a couple of very positive things happen. We've suggested to this government in a co-operative way an eastern Ontario secretariat, an eastern Ontario prosperity fund. There's nothing in the budget to deal with those. The feds, through FedNor, put about \$28 million into eastern Ontario in the last couple of years. That's leveraged another \$66 million in investments. We're getting nothing from these folks. In fact, they've cut the tourism budget, they've cut the agricultural budget, and I said they have effectively abandoned eastern Ontario or small town, small city, rural eastern Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Runciman: The member from Cornwall does nothing but sit in here and interject. Why isn't he doing something for eastern Ontario in a meaningful way instead of criticizing people who are fighting for that region of the province, like our colleagues are? Why hasn't he brought in an eastern Ontario secretariat? Why doesn't he stand up and fight for that? Why doesn't he talk about an eastern Ontario prosperity fund instead of sitting in here trying to upset my speech when I'm fighting for eastern Ontario and he's not doing the job for those people?

I talked about abandoning—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh to please come to order and allow the member for Leeds-Grenville to make his points. I'll look after you at the end of your speech.

Mr. Runciman: One of the newspapers in my riding talked about this and said, “While we don't necessarily agree with abandoning”—they thought that might be too strong a word. But I think “neglect” is certainly a word that stands up to scrutiny.

I only have four minutes or so left, and I want to talk about Hershey and the impact of that closure in conjunction with the closure of Rideau Regional, which the Liberal government has fast-tracked to close. That's going to have another significant impact. One of the things that I think this government could play a role in, if they really want to do something about helping a small community and that part of eastern Ontario, is talk to the

municipality and some of the employees with respect to the possibility of forming a company, and perhaps with government assistance and working with Hershey, see if there's a possibility of fulfilling contracts for specific product lines for Hershey and perhaps other chocolate makers like Cadbury and Nestlé.

1610

I raise this possibility because I've seen it in my own riding with Black and Decker: Former employees of Black and Decker were able to work out a deal with Black and Decker where they're now providing the Workmate product out of the Brockville plant. They rent space from Black and Decker, and they also bid on other Black and Decker product lines. These are former employees. The equipment was there, they worked out a deal to purchase the equipment and enter into contracts and I think there's a new contract coming up in a short while for the continuation of the Workmate product line.

Phillips Cables, which closed down in my community: A number of the employees were able to locate angel investors and purchase equipment from the Phillips cable company. They now have a firm called Northern Cables, which has taken part of the niche market from the Phillips company and is working with Phillips in a co-operative way. That's the sort of thing I think we should be exploring, because this facility is so important not just to Smiths Falls and the surrounding area, but also to eastern Ontario.

A lot of people don't realize that the Hershey plant has about 400,000 to 500,000 visitors—tourists—who come to that Hershey plant every year on an annual basis. It's a very significant tourist draw, so we should be looking at that. I believe that if we can maintain a chocolate-making operation—now, there's speculation in the paper that they're going to open a chocolate store in Smiths Falls. That's not going to draw anybody other than anybody with a sweet tooth; but people really want to go, they bring school bus tours, all sorts of folks—bus tours—into that site to watch the chocolate-making operation. If we work with Hershey—this is something that should be actively explored. There is, I think, a real role for the provincial government to play here in terms of assisting, not just through economic development but through the tourism ministry as well.

Obviously, I believe there should be a fund similar to what Mr. Sterling has talked about, similar to what the federal government is doing, and we will probably be able to quite successfully tap into that federal fund to assist in this initiative. It's something that should be explored. I am very strong on pursuing this. I'll be talking to the Minister of Economic Development; I'll be talking to the mayor; I've had a brief chat with some of the representatives of the employee groups about this. I haven't fleshed this out, but rather than simply saying, "This is a fait accompli; we throw up our hands"—and I saw a story in the Brockville paper dated April 7: "Hershey Closure Confirmed." I think folks have pretty well accepted that this is a done deal. I don't think we should accept this. We should explore other oppor-

tunities. If the provincial government is really committed to helping out this part of the province, this is an opportunity that they should not miss out on.

I want to talk to the Minister of Economic Development. Perhaps she can drive this. Certainly, I think the mayor, Dennis Staples, who is an outstanding community leader, will be interested in pursuing this and exploring it. I suspect most of the employees at Hershey, as well, would be prepared to get engaged and get involved. And I see no reason why Hershey itself would not be interested in exploring the possibilities that might be inherent in this kind of possibility. They're looking for the best product at the best price, and if we can do that through this facility with well-trained employees and excellent equipment already in place, we should be able to accomplish this. That was the primary message.

I want to close off. You're being generous, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate that. I'm just saying I think more attention has to be paid to my region of the province. Many communities are suffering and I call on the government to take up the slack here, to get off the bench and into the game.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments made by the member for Leeds–Grenville, when he talks about communities that are suffering, I know that if he had more time he would talk about some of those communities in northern Ontario that are being wiped out right now as we speak because of this government's high hydro rates, which are killing jobs right across northern Ontario.

I just want to put onto the record some of those communities and some of the job losses, because we have seen over 4,000 job losses in the forestry sector in northern Ontario under the McGuinty Liberal government, communities like Chapleau, 100 jobs; Smooth Rock Falls, 400 jobs—the entire mill shut down; Dryden, 520 jobs between the paper mill and the sawmill; Kenora, 400 jobs gone; Thunder Bay, 1,200 jobs gone between a number of plants in that community—they are taking a beating; Longlac, 300 jobs; Ignace, 75 jobs; Opatatika, 100 jobs; Timmins, 150; the entire woodlands operation at the Nairn Centre sawmill, then the Nairn Centre sawmill itself, which was another 150 jobs; the Espanola pulp and paper mill, 150 jobs; the boxboard mill in Sturgeon Falls; now we have St. Marys in Sault Ste. Marie with several hundred jobs on the verge of collapse, and the list goes on and on.

In this most recent budget, did the government do anything about the job-killing high hydro rates that are forcing the closures of these mills, sawmills and pulp and paper mills in northern Ontario? No, the government did not. So we have an incredible problem in northern Ontario. Jobs continue to be lost in northern Ontario while this government sits on its hands and does nothing.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I'm delighted to have a couple of minutes this

afternoon to respond to the member from Leeds–Grenville, the neighbouring riding.

Certainly in my riding there's more to coming to a riding, as he did just a couple of weeks ago, and standing out in front of an industry—Domtar—with signs that were purchased probably at a local store, that can be purchased anywhere, with “Closed” or “Sorry, we're closed.” There's more than that, and that's what I've been doing in the riding. It's more than that. It's encouraging businesses in my riding to expand, as Merrimac has in Cornwall. They've moved up to Iroquois to open a facility there. There's more than that. There's more to the efforts that I've made in my riding to expand tourism opportunities.

Certainly the member knows what was in the budget on page 87. All he has to do is open the budget book to page 87: A \$2-million annual increase to the St. Lawrence Parks Commission for the deficits in road construction, deficits in Upper Canada Village, Fort Henry and all those other operations where infrastructure was let go for many years. We've tackled that. We're going to put money into that and we're going to make sure that we have the shine back in the jewels on the crown of the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, and I'm proud of that. I'm proud that I tackled that issue and brought it forward to the ministry and that they've been so accommodating to that.

Remember, it was his government that in 1995-96 shut down the Eastern Ontario Development Corp. This was a corporation that provided those loans and the opportunity for expansion and for businesses to get off the ground.

The member can stand there and slam me for, he says, inaction, but all he has to do is come down to the riding and see what I've done. I can tell you that St. Lawrence Parks Commission staff are absolutely pleased and thrilled with what we've done as a government for that commission.

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to rise and support my colleague's comments on the devastation caused to the manufacturing sector in the province of Ontario as part of his presentation on the budget. I know our colleague from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh has entered into the debate as well, talking about the increased funding for the St. Lawrence Parks Commission. We always like to see investments in tourism. No doubt, as my colleague pointed out, the tourism budget is actually lower than it was in 2005-06. There's a lot of one-time funding in this budget as well, as opposed to general marketing initiatives to benefit the province as a whole.

I've heard criticisms as well from tourism operators in my area that the commercials now—a big spend on TV—look more like they're motivated to promote the government and create a feeling of security in the government as opposed to inducing people to travel in the province or to visit from border states. So I'm concerned about the motivation behind the new commercials, from the comments I've heard in my riding.

1620

Getting back to eastern Ontario and the Cornwall situation particularly, I think that if people were to

choose between a handout from the government to the St. Lawrence Parks Commission versus the well-paying manufacturing jobs that Dalton McGuinty has chased out of Ontario—the 1,000-plus at Domtar in Cornwall; Nestlé we've talked about; Hershey's in Smiths Falls—sadly, eastern Ontario has become the poster child for the manufacturing exodus in Ontario, some 5,000—

Mr. Brownell: It has not. Give me a break.

Mr. Hudak: If my colleague from Cornwall disagrees, then I suggest he spend more time in his community.

It's hard to imagine a community that has been harder hit than Cornwall, when you see a place the size of Domtar with its great history and the 1,000-plus jobs—I know my colleague said he'd blame it on Ontario consumers and that they should buy more clothes, although what that's got to do with Domtar, I'm not clear. But I do worry about the loss of manufacturing jobs in this province.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I know that the member for Leeds–Grenville, having been in this place for more than a quarter century now, has seen many budgets come and go from his vantage point on both sides of the House, so it was certainly revealing to be able to get his comments on the budget that we're debating here at this time.

The issue of job losses cuts across the rural-urban divide in my very own riding, which is an urban riding in the west end of Toronto. Over the past three years we've lost several hundred very well paying manufacturing jobs, so I can certainly echo the sentiments of the member when he speaks of job losses. What we're seeing is that these well-paying jobs are being replaced by jobs that aren't so well-paying. They are minimum wage jobs, particularly in the retail sector. In my riding, we lose several hundred well-paying manufacturing jobs at Kodak and they're replaced by a brand new Wal-Mart or perhaps a new fast-food outlet. Clearly, at the end of the day Ontarians lose out.

In our party's dissenting opinion following the pre-budget consultations, we put out a number of proposals, and one of those was to create a jobs protection commissioner for Ontario. That would address this issue, this crisis, in a very meaningful way. I would like to ask the member for Leeds–Grenville—I realize his time will be short—to perhaps offer his take on our proposal to create a jobs protection commissioner for Ontario. Perhaps he could expand and offer his party's views on whether he thinks that would be a viable initiative for the province when it comes to addressing the crisis in job losses across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Leeds–Grenville for his response.

Mr. Runciman: I thank all those members who participated. I have to indicate to you, if you were paying attention, that I did not interrupt the member from Cornwall while he was speaking. He said I was attacking him, but I was not going to even comment until he started

shouting very loudly and trying to interrupt my commentary.

Interjection.

Mr. Runciman: He's doing it again. It's truly unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that we can't have that kind of discussion and debate in this place without someone losing their cool. This is a Liberal—

Laughter.

Mr. Runciman: It's a big joke: 120,000 jobs lost, especially in eastern Ontario. They're laughing at it. I want all the viewers to know that Liberal members are laughing at this concept. They're interrupting us, not standing up and fighting it. But of course we know we have a Torontocentric government. Half the cabinet is from the Toronto area. We had the member from Ottawa, when he said he wasn't running again, indicating one of the reasons is that he's tired of serving for a Toronto-based government. That's what this is.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I did not say that.

Mr. Runciman: Well, something along those lines.

The reality is that we saw what they tried to do with farmers' markets, with church suppers. They have no understanding, no appreciation of what's happening in small-town rural Ontario. And the reality is that we're seeing the hollowing out, an erosion, of these good-paying, solid jobs that have been in many small communities for years and years. Where are our kids, our grandkids, going to go for these kinds of jobs in the future? That's a real challenge and they are not meeting it. They're not even talking about it. In fact, they try to shout down members who want to raise these very legitimate issues and concerns of the people we're here to represent. That's not right, and it's something that we're not going to stand for in the Progressive Conservative Party. John Tory and the PC Party will do something about it when we become the government this coming October.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ferreira: I will try to use my time wisely and I will try not to get stuck in the middle in this burgeoning rivalry between Cornwall and Brockville. We'll let that be settled on October 10, as the case may be.

I want to spend most of my time here this afternoon talking about housing once again. I had a chance last week when we rose to debate an important amendment to the budget. I spent most of my time talking about housing, and I'm going to do that again today because it is very much a top-of-mind issue in my riding of York South–Weston and with my constituents.

I have heard over the past three and a half weeks or so members opposite with the government repeatedly rise and mention the activities of previous governments. On the matter of housing, I thought I would do a little bit of research, and just for the benefit of the members opposite here's what I came up with in terms of affordable housing built in my riding between 1990 and 1995, because that's a period of five years that the members opposite like to reference on numerous occasions. In my

riding of York South–Weston during the term of that government, from 1990 to 1995, we saw the construction of more than 400 affordable homes: at the Hickory Tree Road Co-op, 73 homes; at the Chord Housing Co-op, 136 homes; at the Humberview Housing Co-op, 140 homes; at La Paz Co-op, 62 homes—more than 400 homes made possible by the affordable housing plan of the government of the day.

I ask, what have we seen over the past three and a half years in my riding of York South–Weston in terms of new affordable housing? Zip, zilch, zero, nada, not a single one. None. They're pitching a shutout. As we go into hockey playoff season, perhaps that's a term we can use. But they have not built a single one. So when I go around and speak to my constituents and I ask them which government is having the greatest impact on their day-to-day lives today, they talk about the present government, and when it comes to housing, this government has not delivered. It has failed, and not just in York South–Weston but across the entire province.

Last week, I started going down this path, and unfortunately my time was cut short, so I'm going to continue to pursue it with great vigour, I hope.

This government announced in its budget that it was going to spend \$392 million on housing initiatives. We know that that is all federal money. There is not a single cent—perhaps I'll go through the “zero, zilch, nada”—of provincial money. What's insulting to my constituents is that, of this \$392 million, they had to wait almost a year and a half to two years to even think about having this money utilized to help some of the most vulnerable Ontarians. Why did they have to wait? They had to wait because there was a sandbox squabble between this provincial government and their federal counterparts. So, in fact, there is no new money for housing in this province as a result of this budget. It's money that, frankly, should have been spent last year or the year before that.

Of the money that the government says it's going to spend, we've been told that \$127 million is to be used to rehabilitate and build new affordable housing. There is a problem with that figure, a very serious problem, because in this city of Toronto alone, the monies that are needed to rehabilitate affordable housing through the Toronto Community Housing Corp., TCHC, are \$300 million for urgent and essential repairs.

1630

I want to read a quote from a prominent tenant activist and TCHC resident with regard to the provincial government's plan to build new and rehabilitate existing affordable housing. This is her reaction to the monies the provincial government has announced:

“We know that the \$127 million for the entire province is insufficient to both create new affordable housing and rehabilitate existing housing. The Liberals said that they would do things differently but they are perpetuating the same policy of letting the homes of Ontario's poorest people fall apart. The government takes credit when it invests in new housing but lets our existing housing fall further and further into disrepair.”

That was a statement made by Kay Bromfield, who is with a group called Strong Foundations, Strong Futures, calling for a full investment in repairing the existing affordable housing stock here in the city of Toronto, which we know requires \$300 million, not \$127 million, as this government is putting forth.

In my riding of York South–Weston, just one property at 33 Gabian Way requires an investment of \$3 million to repair the building, and we're talking about essential repairs; we're talking about things like plumbing, heating and safety devices. These are things that make a real difference in the lives of people, yet this government, through its actions and through its lack of follow-through, is short-changing the residents of 33 Gabian Way in my riding, as they are short-changing the residents of affordable housing throughout the city of Toronto and indeed across the entire province of Ontario.

What's interesting, though, is that this government knows full well the extent of this problem. I was very interested to read that back in November 2005, in response to a couple of questions put forward by my colleague from Beaches–East York, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing acknowledged the great problem that exists. He said back then, on that day, when I was suppose it was convenient to do so, "There's no question about the fact that something has to be done about upgrading the social housing that currently exists out there." That was the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the same one we have today. He went on, then, to answer a question from the then-member for Toronto–Danforth: "Returning to the issue that the member has raised, there's no question about it: If we want to maintain the social housing stock that's out there, it's going to be necessary to upgrade that." That was the quote at the time.

Here we are a year and a half later, and what are we seeing? We're seeing negligence; we're seeing a lack of commitment. We're not seeing the level of investments we need to provide all Ontarians with good, decent, affordable housing for them and their children.

I referenced this last week when I referenced one of my constituents who's been waiting with her three children for affordable housing. They've been on the waiting list for 12 years. It's not a localized problem. I'm glad that the member for Peterborough is here this afternoon, because one of his constituents wrote to me and she talked about the lack of affordable housing in her community. She mentioned that the wait for rent-geared-to-income housing in Peterborough for a single person is up to 15 years long. So whether it's in Toronto, our largest city, or in a medium-sized centre like Peterborough, Ontarians are being forced to wait 12, 14 and 15 years for affordable housing. That's not acceptable to my party. It shouldn't be acceptable to any member of this Legislature.

Interjection.

Mr. Ferreira: That may well be the case, but as I stated earlier, in my riding of York South–Weston what we've seen is a bunch of empty promises. I will reiterate:

Between 1990 and 1995, more than 400 units built; between 2003 and today in York South–Weston, zero. York South–Weston, just so the member is aware, is one of the neediest ridings in this province, where the average household income is \$45,000, where the unemployment rate, as a result of this government's flawed job strategy, continues to creep up into double digits. In fact, the unemployment rate in my riding is about double what it is in the entire city of Toronto.

I want to go back to the—

Interjection.

Mr. Ferreira: The member persists. His government, in 2003, campaigned on a promise that they were going to build 20,000 units of affordable housing. That's what they campaigned on. We have heard from members of this government who have admitted that they have failed miserably on that front. The figure that they float is much less than 20,000; it is perhaps one third of 20,000. That's not good enough. The government has not delivered. But of course, it's just one in a lengthy, lengthy laundry list of broken promises. I can see my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke demonstrating the lengthy list of broken promises that we've seen this government deliver over the past three and a half years.

With the dearth of affordable housing that we have in this province, tenants and low-income, modest income Ontarians are forced to make some very difficult decisions in terms of where they can live, where they can afford to live. I've seen in my riding some of the deplorable conditions in which parents are forced to raise their families because it's the only kind of housing that they can afford. I've spoken of those issues and the terrible state of those buildings on prior occasions in this House.

Just last week, we heard of another deplorable situation in the city of Hamilton, where tenants were paying very good money to live in a building that was perhaps about to collapse. I want to read just a couple of lines here from a story that appeared in the Hamilton Spectator last week. The headline was "Unsafe Building Emptied," and I read: "Three dozen Hamilton apartment dwellers are homeless after their downtown building was evacuated yesterday amid fears of imminent collapse."

"The four-storey, 15-unit Ambassador Heights building on St. Joseph's Drive was emptied after engineers declared it unsafe."

Those are the kinds of conditions that tenants in Hamilton, in Toronto, in Windsor, up in north and eastern Ontario and perhaps even in Peterborough are forced to live in, because that's the only housing that's available at their modest levels of income. This is why we need a comprehensive plan to invest in public housing in this province. To that end, this government hasn't delivered. They haven't lived up to their promises.

I've got a few minutes left. I want to move on to a couple of other issues of concern to the residents of my riding, and specifically with regard to their city of Toronto. This budget fails the city of Toronto, no ands, ifs or buts about it. It does not address the needs of this

city for housing, for public transit, for social services, some of which were downloaded by the previous government, now the official opposition, but which this present government promised to alleviate. They promised to fix that downloading. What have we seen? Again, we haven't seen that promise delivered upon.

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But here, I want to read out some select quotes that appeared in the media shortly after this budget was delivered. It talks about how this government, which, as we know, presently holds the bulk of the seats in the city of Toronto—and they're going to have to account for that in October—has failed the people of Toronto. First of all, our mayor, David Miller, says, "This budget is an extremely disappointing one for the city of Toronto."

From the Toronto Sun, their city columnist, Rob Granatstein, writes, "For Toronto? Nothing. Thanks for coming out. Uploading social programs and provincial drug benefits from the city to the province as had been hoped? Forget about it.

"Toronto doesn't deserve to be hammered like this."

I go on. This was from an editorial from the Toronto Star: "Toronto also was disappointed on public transit.... Queen's Park has not restored its share of operating funding to the Toronto Transit Commission, which was cut by the Conservatives. Without such funding, service and long-term planning will continue to suffer."

This is another interesting quote, which comes from a member of Toronto city council who actually, I believe, is a Conservative, but I thought it would be a good quote to share with the other members here: "It's a terrible budget for the city—it leaves the budget next week in crisis"—he's referring to the city budget. "There are no solutions and we are hundreds of millions of dollars in the hole. We got zero. Nada. Bupkis. Goose eggs. Absolutely nothing. And the city's in a lot of trouble." That was Councillor Minnan-Wong, who I know was a former colleague of the member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): And a Tory candidate in the next provincial election.

Mr. Ferreira: Perhaps he is.

So the residents of Toronto are being faced with a fairly substantial hike in their property taxes as a result of the shortfall due to the failing of this budget for the city of Toronto.

I heard some comments about transit. Well, we've got vanity projects that are being rolled out: the subway up to north of Steeles. I'd say that there are perhaps a number of more worthwhile and more practical transit initiatives that have been proposed by the city of Toronto. Just a couple of weeks ago the Toronto Transit Commission put out an impressive plan for a network of light rail lines across this city. It calls for an investment of \$6 billion over the course of a couple of decades, but it would immeasurably improve public transit in this city and it would essentially assist the residents of my riding of York South–Weston. If we take a look at those plans, they call for a light rail line along Eglinton Avenue West;

they call for a light rail line going up Jane Street. That would enhance the quality of life for my residents.

What do we hear from this government on this plan? We hear nothing. There was no new transit money announced in this budget—not a single cent. But we do hear talk of publicly subsidizing private transit. Now, the members in this House will know that one of my favourite topics is the Blue22, the high-speed train that members of this government appear to be willing to ram through, to railroad my community with. I say this: The people of York South–Weston, the people of Toronto, want investment in public transit and we don't see that in this budget. We don't see investment in public transit, just as we do not see investment in affordable housing. At the end of the day, it's the residents of York South–Weston and the residents of Toronto who suffer and who lose out.

I've got a minute left and I also look forward to responding to the interjections of colleagues on both sides of the House. The province is at a state where it requires leadership. This budget document that was tabled in this House two weeks ago shows very little in the way of that leadership. It is devoid of solutions to meet the needs of some of the neediest Ontarians. Many of those Ontarians live in my riding and they have said to me on the streets of my riding, "Where is the money for affordable housing? Where is the money for public transit? Where is the money that will make a difference in my life?" They don't see it in this budget. This government has failed the people of York South–Weston and the province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It was indeed somewhat informative, I guess, to listen to the remarks of my colleague the member from York South–Weston. I appreciate that he got a letter from a constituent of mine in Peterborough, but I'd like to reflect on what this government has done over the last three and a half years in terms of housing.

After a period of time in my riding of Peterborough—a decade where there was no housing built—in the last three and a half years, we've had three major projects: The Woollen Mill project has come on stream, the River Ridge project has come on stream, and on April 20, along with my federal colleague, I will be able to attend the opening of the Maryland Avenue project—a very interesting one, which is a former convent of the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Peterborough, who, because of declining numbers in that particular cloister of sisters, sold off their property. A developer came forward to come up with a plan to take advantage of this government's commitment to provide new housing and, indeed, that project will be open on April 20.

It's interesting to see the actions this afternoon of the member from York South–Weston to not support our budget, to not support the increase in minimum wage, to not support the Ontario child benefit that has been endorsed by three former Premiers of the province of Ontario—the very distinguished Bill Davis, Premier Rae and Premier Peterson—who have looked at the new

Ontario child benefit and said, "This is the most impressive social initiative in Ontario in the last 40 years." It's been endorsed by June Callwood, who has been at the forefront of poverty in Ontario for the last two decades, Charles Pascal, a former deputy minister in their government and the chair of the Atkinson Foundation, endorsed this program, so it's time—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I'm pleased to rise to respond to the comments of my colleague from York South–Weston. I must say I was in the House last week when the new member from York South–Weston made his maiden speech. But the situation was that it was an opposition day and I had so little time left to speak myself that I didn't use any of it, and I told him, "I can't use any of that to congratulate you on not only your maiden speech, but your election to the House." So I'm going to take that opportunity now, to congratulate you for both.

There's one thing I can say about the member for York South–Weston. We are very different, in coming from different parts of the province and having to represent very different constituencies. But I will say that in a similar way, I very much appreciate the persistence and the passion with which he attacks the issues that matter most to the people he represents.

So many times that's going to be a reason for a gap and a schism between himself and myself, because the people who I represent have very different needs, and many times I will articulate the fact that the attention that is being paid to the needs of Toronto does not help the people I represent in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

What I do appreciate is that the member from York South–Weston takes that same kind of vigour and zeal in representing the people he is standing up for. He talks about, today, the woeful failure of this McGuinty budget of 2007 and, while some of those issues are of less gravity for me, he still points out many, many inconsistencies in this budget. What he points out over and over again as well is the fact that the government says one thing and does another—says one thing, does another. You could just play that tape over and over again, because it's an endless refrain; it will be repeated forever. This government says one thing and does another.

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Ms. Martel: It's a pleasure to make some comments on the remarks made by my colleague from York South–Weston. It's a delight to have him in this House and to have him as part of our caucus and it's great to see him here today standing up for the needs of residents in York South–Weston.

He focused on housing, and well he should, because the McGuinty Liberals made a very specific promise in the last election. They were going to build 20,000 affordable housing units. The member was generous in suggesting that perhaps a third of that has been built. Not even a quarter of that has been built, as we found out

through the estimates process when the former housing critic for the NDP, Mr. Prue, was asking questions of the minister. So not even a quarter of that 20,000 has been built in three and a half years under this Liberal government.

It's not as if the government didn't have the money, for goodness' sake. Over two years ago, \$392 million was allocated by the federal government to Ontario to build affordable housing, and because Mr. McGuinty was more interested in squabbling with the feds than he was in building affordable housing, that money didn't get spent when it could have been spent. The losers were those who continued to wait and wait in towns across this province for affordable housing. If you look at the budget, it says that only \$182 million of that \$392 million is going to be spent this year. So where is the balance, the \$210 million that was already allocated by the feds? How come the government of Ontario isn't spending the full \$392 million that it got from the feds this year? God knows there's a need. How come the government isn't spending the balance of \$210 million on affordable housing?

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's a pleasure to comment on the Ontario 2007-08 budget, a budget that shows something that in years past under previous governments had been decidedly lacking, and that is leadership.

One of the things this budget does, and does very well, is to correct a terrible inequity. This year the Ontario budget takes responsibility for social housing and social assistance currently funded by a device called GTA pooling, and it uploads them. So finally we have a government uploading and not downloading.

What is pooling? Pooling is a concept that was introduced by the Conservative government 10 years ago whereby funds are taken from municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto, without any benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of all those fast-growing cities around the 905 area. In the area that I represent in Mississauga, the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, and the intent of pooling was that somehow or other people were sending money into the city of Toronto, whereas in fact 60,000 people per day commute more into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga. So the end of pooling for the city of Mississauga relieves a tax burden of \$40 million over the span of seven years, each and every year. Over the span of seven years, that will go from a net drain of \$40 million a year to the taxpayers of Mississauga down to zero.

That's leadership. That's one of the things this 2007-08 budget does, and does effectively. That's one of the things that all of the cities in the fast-growing 905 belt have been talking about for ages and ages. That was one way in which this government listened, this government took action and this government fixed a problem.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for York South–Weston for his reply.

Mr. Ferreira: I want to thank the member for Peterborough, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—especially for his flattering words at the beginning—the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Mississauga West for their comments.

To the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I think in fact there are many similarities between the concerns of the people of York South–Weston and those of the people of his riding. They may be geographically separated, but I'll bet that at the end of the day the discussions around the dinner table are very similar.

The member from Peterborough, and I want to thank him, raised one of my other favourite topics. He brought up the issue of the minimum wage. It is this government's plan to increase that minimum wage, which was like a deathbed conversion, right? Before February 8, in York South–Weston there was not going to be an increase to the minimum wage, and then, following the government's defeat, two days later we had the Minister of Finance saying that poverty was now his issue, it was on his agenda and, lo and behold, now we're being told that the minimum wage is going to increase.

The sad reality is that Ontarians, those who work very hard for the lowest wages, have to wait three years to get up to \$10.25. In the year I was born, if the minimum wage that existed back then existed today, on an index to inflation, the minimum wage in Ontario today would be \$9.97, not three years from now but today, and what this government is saying to those very hard-working Ontarians who work for \$8 or \$8.50 an hour is that they have to wait three more years.

They're also saying the same thing, incidentally, to those who receive ODSP. The constituent from Peterborough points out that the 2% increase is woefully inadequate and too late. It doesn't even cover the cost of living, leaving us to fall even further behind low-income Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Delaney: Monsieur le Président, je veux partager mon temps aujourd'hui avec mon collègue le membre de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

What a difference four short years can make. Four years ago, at the doors, people honestly questioned whether Ontario would be able to have publicly funded, publicly delivered health care and education anymore. For more than eight years, the Conservative government had told them that health care wasn't sustainable, even as that government steadily slashed funding, fired nurses, closed hospitals and did all it could to cause people to lose confidence in health care and to turn to that government's real secret agenda, which was to be able to privatize Ontario's health care system and to turn it all over to insurance companies and HMOs.

In 2004, Ontario reaffirmed its commitment to publicly funded, publicly delivered, publicly accountable health care. In Mississauga and Brampton, that means capital projects at all three of our local hospitals: Credit Valley, William Osler and Trillium. I look forward to the groundbreaking on the phase 2 expansion of the Credit

Valley Hospital in the very near future, as this government keeps its commitment to health care in western Mississauga with those badly needed 140 new beds, with the new complex continuing care unit; with expansions to the maternity suite, with the ability to serve more people in the emergency department, with the already delivered new linear accelerator for cancer care, with the new family medicine teaching unit, and with the partnership with the University of Toronto at Mississauga, to teach young doctors in Mississauga so that more of them will practise medicine in Mississauga.

Contrast this action: promises made and kept to the citizens of western Mississauga with the type of reality the Tories would promote for Ontario.

I spoke to a good friend from Chicago recently whose personal circumstances tell Ontario what the Tory party has in store for them. My friend Rick had had a triple bypass not that long ago and just recently was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He can't even think about switching jobs because he knows nobody will consider him a good insurance risk and justify hiring him. His monthly health care insurance premiums are about \$600. That, for my Tory friends whose Magna budget four years ago showed they couldn't master enough arithmetic to calculate that a \$5.6-billion budget deficit amounts to an annual health care premium, after taxes, of about \$7,200. Ask Rick if he'd be willing to pay Ontario's top rate for health insurance and he'd calculate Ontario's top rate as an 87% saving on what he's paying now, and he is nowhere near the income bracket to pay Ontario's top premium rate. That's a sobering thought for any middle-class family even thinking of voting Conservative.

The US health care system just keeps on taking. There are deductibles on many medical expenses, and HMOs pay for things that Ontario health care providers just do not: executive salaries that run to tens of millions of dollars annually—they make Hydro look like a piker—sky-high malpractice premiums, litigation costs, shareholder returns, sales, advertising, marketing, uncollected debt, and the expenses go on and on. And who pays for these added administrative burdens, none of which so much as fix a cut finger? Why, the US policyholder, of course.

1700

That's why this budget of 2007-08 continues Ontario's progress towards a sustainable, cost-effective, well-managed, publicly run, publicly funded, publicly accountable health care system that is justifiably the envy of the world. And that's why, despite the fact that it serves and is run by fallible and very human staff and management, it's still by far the best system of its kind anywhere in the world. That's why this government and this budget reaffirmed their commitment to keeping Ontarians healthy and to curing them when they're sick. That's why Ontarians can see the progress they voted for in 2003 already. That's why the progress they will vote for in 2007 will keep them healthier longer.

That's why the baby boom supports this Ontario budget, because without the firm commitment of the

government they elected four years ago, that baby boom generation would be told by a Tory government that they're out of luck and they're on their own. That's why baby boomers, unlike Tories, can do the math. They know the chief cause of personal bankruptcy in the United States is the inability to pay catastrophic health care costs. Each year, some 500,000 American families need to declare personal bankruptcy because HMOs want to be paid. Those US families lose their homes, their savings, their retirement benefits and their assets and possessions. And I'll bet none of them would vote for the type of health care option that Tory budgets and Tory policies were leading us toward.

As a rule of thumb—and it's pretty accurate—what's true in the US more or less applies in Canada if you divide by 10. That would mean—500,000 divided by 10—an annual 50,000 bankruptcies if Canada ran according to Tory policies. That means about 17,000 of those bankruptcies every year would be in Ontario. With about 700,000 people, Mississauga makes up a little more than five and a third per cent of Ontario's population. Unlike the measures proposed in this budget and in the last three, a Tory budget would expose the 5.38% of Ontarians who live in Mississauga to those 17,000 annual bankruptcies. That means each year under the outcome of Tory policies, about 915 Mississauga families can expect to go bankrupt because they can't pay their private sector medical bills. Not a neighbourhood would be untouched by this entirely foreseeable and entirely preventable tragedy. But Ontarians can see the government's policies and those of its opponents very clearly. That's why they chose Liberal policies in 2003 and that's why they will choose Liberal policies and a Liberal vision again in 2007.

Earning the confidence of Ontarians with this 2007-08 budget means investing in the health of the 13 million people who make Ontario their home. They know that wait times are getting shorter even in western Mississauga with its strong and continuing growth. Unlike former governments that never even measured wait times, now people can see wait times across Ontario and they can also see progress in bringing them down. That's why of the 46 cents of every taxpayer dollar spent on health in Ontario, wait times, improving efficiency and accountability, promoting wellness, preventing illness, increasing access to doctors and other health providers and shortening wait times represent the very areas where Ontarians want their money spent. That means the multimillion-dollar annual management salaries and benefits packages will stay south of the border, along with the advertising, marketing, sales, litigation, bad debt and other expenses that we don't have in Ontario now and we don't need in Ontario ever.

In Credit Valley Hospital, we've been funded for more hip and knee replacements and more cataract surgery. The Ministry of Health has paid for more hours on our existing MRI machines and linear accelerators, and we got our fourth linear accelerator a full year ahead of schedule. I'm optimistic about what we can do at Credit

Valley in the future, because we have a management team that has shown repeatedly it can run the facility within its budget and build major projects on time and within budget. We have staff at Credit Valley who talk with one another and who keep their patients and their community first, as they should be.

We have more nurses working at Credit Valley and their jobs are overwhelmingly full-time ones. We have more foreign-trained doctors getting certified and working at Credit Valley, because Ontario set out to break the logjam and succeeded in getting more foreign-trained and experienced health professionals certified and working to help Ontarians. It took measures in four budgets and it got the results that people can see every time they walk into any of the three hospitals that serve Mississauga and Brampton.

This Ontario budget works for health care providers who remember that the trust and the resources of the people of Ontario mean their priority is always the people of Ontario and not themselves. That's why this budget is the fourth instalment of how health care in Ontario is working for the people of the city of Mississauga.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I'm delighted and honoured to be able to debate this very important budget. I've said to all the people in my riding that it's the best budget we have seen for decades.

I was surprised last week when I heard the member from Erie-Lincoln saying that nobody is talking about this budget. I was speaking to some of the media people after, and the answer I got was, "Mr. Lalonde, the budget is so good. Usually we would criticize something that is not too good, but this time the budget is so good, it meets the requirement of what we were told was needed in the province."

Our Minister of Finance had some consultations, and the standing committee on finance and economic affairs had 10 consultations across the province, and this is what we are seeing in the budget today. After doing the consultations from one end to the other, or from the four corners of this beautiful province, we came down with a budget that meets the requirements of low-income people. This is very important, especially when I hear the member from York South-Weston saying that his area is the lowest-paid area in the city of Toronto. I was able to do some door-to-door campaigning during the election and this was the word all along: that they want an increase in the minimum wage. Today, this is what we are giving to the people in his own riding and the rest of the province, and he's not satisfied yet. You know why? When I was talking to the media, the media said, "We'll do some coverage whenever there are some negative parts of the budget," but today they haven't found any.

One of the very important parts of that budget was the education tax. I have to tell you, I have a chart here which was prepared by the CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, way back in 2002 and 2004. Why is it that in some areas—where the Minister of Finance of the previous government was—for a

building with a \$500,000 assessment, the city of Cornwall today is paying 444% higher than the former riding of Mr. Eves at the time? When I look at Ottawa, it's paying 384% more than the people in Parry Sound are paying. When I look at my own riding, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, it's 321% higher than the other area.

We've always said, especially the municipalities bordering the other provinces, that they do give incentives to others we can't, but how can we attract industry when we turn around and we tell the investors that the taxes are so much over here? So this is what we have done: We went out; we have listened to the people and what they had to say. It's been going on for a long time. The previous government could not fix it. We are fixing it over a period of six or seven years; I believe that's what it is. We want to level that off to be able to attract industries in a small rural area. This is exactly what we have to do.

1710

Also, we said that we would balance our budget, definitely, especially after taking over from the previous government, with a \$5.5-billion deficit which was hidden. Again, the member for Erie–Lincoln said, “No matter that you are able to spend because you have more than doubled our budget.” It's not fair to say that. I have to say that even though in 2003 the budget was \$68 billion, they ended up with \$70-some million, really a deficit of \$5.5 billion.

We said that we would create jobs, and we definitely did. When I was looking at the statistics today, we had created 327,000 jobs in Ontario since the election of the McGuinty government in October 2003. But one thing we have to remember is that 82.5% of those jobs are full-time jobs, permanent jobs—82.5%; 70% are high-value positions. So what do we have to cry about? Seventy percent are high-value positions and 82.5% are full-time jobs.

We also said that we would look after the families with kids. When I look at this budget, nobody can criticize that. I could tell you that when I look at this budget, I see that as of July 1 this year, families with incomes lower than \$20,000 will receive \$250 per child. It goes right up to 2011: They will receive up to \$1,100 per child.

Mr. Yakabuski: Back to the future.

Mr. Lalonde: “Back to the future”—exactly, as the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is saying. Definitely, we want to make sure that these kids have something to eat and also are able to meet the others at school.

When I look at housing, we said that we would take care of that, even though they're saying we haven't done anything. But again, the member for York South–Weston said that during the Bob Rae government, they had built so many. But they built so much at that time in their area, the rest of the province didn't get it. We are a government that looks after the whole province. If we give some in one area, we will look at the others.

When I look at the list of all of those municipalities that received some grant on March 22, there was a total

of \$139,000,976 given out to 185 municipalities in Ontario. That's well received. It's not every year that you'll see this, but the previous government has never done that. When I say they've never done that, instead of coming out with a budget like this, they downloaded to the municipalities. Just in my own riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, there was a shortfall of \$23 million after the downloading. Today, everybody is paying. They are crying, “We haven't got any money to fix the roads.” Why? It's because the previous government didn't take care of the rural areas.

When I look, on March 20, the federal government came out with a budget. They were very happy to say, “We will reduce the paper burden for all small businesses by 20% by 2009.” In the last 15 months, we have reduced the paper burden by 23% already—that was at the end of February 2007—and we are aiming for higher than that. We are working every month. It is the Small Business Agency of Ontario that is working to meet the requirements of what the small business operators would like to see.

Another thing that we got stuck with is MPAC. When the people are crying about their residential assessment, who has put this in place? The previous government. And now they're trying to blame us. When I see some of the members in the front row on the other side saying, “The McGuinty government hasn't done anything,” we did a lot more than what they have done. We have stopped this. The next assessment won't come up before 2009, and then it will be done every four years. Any increase will be divided into four years, will be—I don't have the right word.

Interjection: The average.

Mr. Lalonde: The average will be divided into four years.

I have to say that this government knew what they were talking about, and that's why we have decided to consult. We have listened to the people and we did a great job. I have to congratulate the Minister of Finance for doing such a great job for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I listened with interest to the budget deliberations of the member from Mississauga West and the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. I find it somewhat telling: no mention of the Ontario government debt. I guess this goes without saying. No mention of tax cuts. No mention of the loss of manufacturing jobs across this great province and, in particular, rural Ontario and eastern Ontario. There seems to be no connection at all there with respect to what I consider an economic law that reducing taxes can boost the private sector and can boost job creation, in particular given the problem we have right now in losing jobs in our factories. So no mention of the debt. No mention of the WSIB unfunded liability, which is a debt, and I understand that particular debt is growing. I would hope the government would explain to us some of the figures on that. No mention of the kind of debt that

people see on their electrical bills, the debt that they are required to help pay down as consumers of electricity.

I guess I'm not surprised there would be no mention of Caledonia, no mention of the C word, with this particular government. A promise was made for fulsome compensation for people who have lost value in their homes and have suffered under this occupation, and nothing in this budget for that.

Another big issue is farmers. I think in particular of tobacco farmers. Nothing in this budget for tobacco farmers; no indication at all of any reaching out to the federal government to help out on that one.

Ms. Martel: In response to comments made by the government members, let me say a couple of things.

First of all, with respect to the minimum wage, it's a disgrace in the province of Ontario that someone working 40 hours a week at the minimum wage is living below the poverty level, and that is the reality today. Of 200,000 mainly immigrant and women workers who make the minimum wage now, 61% are adults; 64% are women; 48% have some post-secondary education. They are using food banks. They are using clothing banks. They are barely making ends meet. And there are another 1.2 million who are making below \$10 an hour working full-time.

What does this government hold out? This government holds out a minimum wage of \$10.25 an hour three years from now. I can tell you that with the cost of living at that time, those workers, at \$10.25 an hour, are still going to be living below the poverty level: working 40 hours a week and living below the poverty level. There is something wrong with that, folks, in a province as prosperous as Ontario.

Let me make a comment about the child benefit, because the member was quick to say, "These families are going to get a down payment of \$250 this July." If this government only lived up to the promise that it made in 2003 to fully end the clawback of the national child benefit, those families would be getting \$1,500 a year. But instead, this government steals back \$225 million of federal money every year from the poorest families in Ontario. Shame on you.

1720

People should look at this child benefit and think of it as another McGuinty promise just waiting to be broken, because that's exactly what it is. This was supposed to be a poverty budget. The poorest families in this province are falling further and further behind, and this government is doing nothing to deal with that reality.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I would like to thank the member for Mississauga West and the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for their fine comments on this budget.

This is a budget that Premier McGuinty, with his leadership, and Minister Sorbara, the Minister of Finance, should be very proud of, because it is touching all our communities, 13 million people in Ontario—children, seniors, injured workers—creating jobs, taking care of public health care, public education. Actually, the

leader of the official opposition, John Tory, came out after this budget and said, "I can't think of one thing I would reverse," and then today he comes and votes against the budget. What kind of wishy-washy type of leadership is he bringing forward?

The leader of the third party somehow drifted out of this chamber and would not vote on the budget, because the budget was one that passed the test. The people of Ontario said that this is a great budget. It is affecting 1.3 million children, who will be helped by the new Ontario child benefit. Some 155,000 injured workers on WSIB will see an increase of 7.5% over the next three years.

In the area of Mississauga, the inequity of pooling has been addressed. After being downloaded by the Conservative government, pooling is being addressed and the city of Mississauga will be getting \$40 million that it will be able to spend now on its social services, which is much needed. That's after many expenditures on our hospitals, on our community centres, on our infrastructure, on our transportation. This is a wonderful budget.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I am pleased to add some comments to the speeches from the member for Mississauga West and the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, better known as the goalie and coach of the Legiskaters hockey team.

One surprise item in this budget that I'd like to comment on is the new 13% diamond tax that certainly caught the miners by surprise. I had the pleasure of attending the Meet the Miners reception here at Queen's Park last week. There, De Beers, the diamond mining company, had a booth set up and a representative spoke right after the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The minister, in his talk, talked about how the mining industry was being consulted yesterday, the day before and last week and tomorrow. And then, right after, he was followed up by the representative from De Beers, who talked about this Third World taxation policy that caught them completely by surprise after they had spent \$1 billion opening this diamond mine, which is going to provide a lot of employment for the Attawapiskat First Nation and others, and generate revenue for the province of Ontario, and jobs, and how they were surprised because they weren't consulted; it came out of the blue. He made the comment that this Third World taxation policy may make this the one and only diamond mine that is ever developed in the province.

I note in today's *Globe and Mail*: "Native Community Decries 'Tax Grab' at Diamond Mine—Ontario's New 13% Levy 'Lose-Lose' for First Nations, Chief Tells Government."

It went on to say, "'We should have been consulted,' Chief Carpenter wrote in an April 4 letter to the Premier.

"'This increase constitutes little more than a tax grab by your government that will not benefit our First Nation or others,' he said."

This is the way that this government is consulting with First Nations. It's the way it's treating industry and the job and wealth creators in this province.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I look to the member from Mississauga West to reply at this time.

Mr. Delaney: I thank the members for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, Nickel Belt, Mississauga East and Parry Sound–Muskoka for their comments.

To the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, on the watch of his government, I believe his government added some \$28 billion to Ontario's long-term debt—\$28 billion. They cut taxes before they balanced the budget. That's pretty simple. This is the government that sold the 407, that created a crisis in education—the list goes on and on.

I do, however, want to reserve some comments for the member for Nickel Belt, who apparently doesn't seem to mind Ontario losing an estimated 90,000 jobs. I recall talking to a restaurant owner in Mississauga. I said, "What if the minimum wage were increased at a stroke, as proposed?" He said, "I'll ask my accountant on that." He came back to me and he said, "We calculated it, and if that measure actually passed, it would cost our restaurant \$2,500 each pay period, \$5,000 a month, \$60,000 a year." I said, "What are your options?" He said, "It's simple. I'd put the place up for sale and I would be out of business in a year. I cannot pass it along." That's the challenge facing so many other owners of small businesses, particularly franchisees, and especially in the area that I'm in. They simply cannot pass it along.

My colleague from Mississauga East said that he's proud of this budget. I sort of see that sentiment and raise it. I'd say we've had four budgets, and in those four budgets, this is a government that has made a difference in Ontario and put Ontario finally back on the track of being financially sustainable and responsible.

Finally, to my colleague and, if I may say, my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka: I'll play hockey behind Norm Miller any day of the week.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? I recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm pleased to be recognized, Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to join this debate on the budget, Bill 187.

You know, I've listened to members of the government speak today, and they talk about how proud they are of this budget, proud of the fact that they are the government that took spending in this province from \$68 billion when they took office to \$91 billion in this budget. They're a very, very fortunate group of people to have revenues that healthy through that period of time. But they've lost the opportunity and they've lost their vision and they've lost sight of their priorities in the province since they've taken office in 2003. That increase represents \$4,500 to every household in this province. When I travel around the province and in my riding and I ask people, "Do you see \$4,500 worth of return to you from the McGuinty government since they have taken office?" the answer is an unequivocal "Absolutely not." Absolutely not.

What else have we gotten from the McGuinty government? Some 120,000 manufacturing jobs gone in this province. These are among our best jobs. The high-paying jobs, fully benefited—they're gone. In my riding, Smurfit-MBI shut down in Pembroke—good jobs, high-paying, with full benefits and pension. Commonwealth Plywood is shutting down their round log veneer plant in Pembroke.

They're talking about 329,000 jobs created under this government? Well, contrast that to the almost 1.1 million jobs created under the previous government. So if you want to talk about the numbers, let's talk about the numbers. My goodness gracious, 329,000 jobs created, but they are not replacing the jobs that have been lost. Those are high-paying, quality jobs, fully benefited and with a pension, and you're replacing them with jobs that offer much, much less.

1730

I want to talk about cuts to tourism. Here we are at a time when United States visitors have dropped off tremendously—one of the lowest numbers on record in the last couple of years—and what does this government do? It cuts the tourism budget, but still has plenty of money to spend on the feel-good, "Vote for us" type of advertising. Look at this. This is unbelievable: This is Living. That's a full-page spread in the Ottawa Citizen, and it was in every single—

The Acting Speaker: I have to ask the member—
Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Come to order, please. I have to ask the member not to use any props while he's making his presentation. You're going to have to set that down.

Mr. Yakabuski: This here?

The Acting Speaker: Would you please set that down on your desk? Thank you.

Mr. Yakabuski: That doesn't say a word about where you're going in the province of Ontario. You know what that says? "We're the Liberal government. This is your money. Vote for us." That's where they're spending your money on tourism.

I've got another example here. I've got a great business in my riding. It's not really a prop, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking about Wilderness Tours in my riding. A full page, but does it say anywhere here—

The Acting Speaker: Perhaps you didn't understand me the first time. You can't lift up any ads or any props while you're giving your speech.

Mr. Yakabuski: Is the budget a prop?

The Acting Speaker: If you use it as such, it's a prop, and I'll ask you not to do it again. I recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: That's where this government is spending the people's money: full-page advertisements in the dailies across this province. I've got a few more examples, but I'm not going to show them. So there's your tourism cuts, but they've got money to spread around, saying, "Look at us." This is about making the people say, "Oh, wow, Ontario." But is that ad playing in the United States, in New York? Is it playing in Pennsyl-

vania? No, it's playing here in Ontario. How are you going to increase your tourism numbers to Ontario when you're spreading that only in Ontario? Goodness gracious, it is so unbelievably partisan that they would spend that kind of money on that kind of waste.

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): Where do you go for your vacation, John? Cuba?

Mr. Yakabuski: Never been there, Bruce.

Then we've got the cuts to the Ministry of Agriculture—over \$100 million. What do we get out of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs? We get a full, 27-page pamphlet produced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs telling us how wonderful things are in Ontario. About \$2 million was spent on that. They even sent it out to the members of this assembly. And here's the best part: A brand new publication, 2006-07, but what do they have on the front page? The old Ontario logo. They spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to pay somebody to design a new one and they don't even have it on their own publications. That's the kind of competence and waste of money that this government likes to do.

There's example after example. The Ontario Health Quality Council—I'm not holding it up, Mr. Speaker; I'm just reading from it. I've got seven weekly newspapers in my riding. Every one of them had this inserted inside. You're paying for it, ladies and gentlemen. You're paying so that this government can try to make you believe that they're actually doing something important with your money.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: There's the letter from the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, sent to each and every member, telling you what a wonderful province you're living in—27 pages. You're paying for it, ladies and gentlemen. Farmers in this province could use some of that money to help them, and what are we getting? We're getting partisan publications from the minister to try to make it so that people will vote the Liberals back in. As we've always said, they will pay anything and say anything to get re-elected.

I want to shift gears a little bit to my riding—well, no, not yet, but I'd better soon.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Okay, but what do we have in this budget? Not a word said about it in the budget speech. The Minister of Finance was trying to slide this one under by cover of darkness—but \$50 million to those poor, struggling Stronachs, \$50 million to Frank and Belinda. Do they not have enough money? Are they poor? Fifty million dollars to Magna to put a little kind of Frank and Belinda university there; \$50 million, and we're going to get something like—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: If you could take your seat, please.

I'm having difficulty hearing the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke because of the reaction of the

House to some of what he's saying. But he does have the floor, and we all need to acknowledge his right to speak. I look forward to returning to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

And don't worry. You'll get sufficient time to make your remarks.

Mr. Yakabuski: So we've got \$50 million for Magna. Apparently they're going to create about 60 graduates. Let me think: If you went to the universities in this province and said, "You know what? We're going to pay you \$1 million per graduate," they're going to buy into it pretty quick—\$1 million per graduate. But this is just payoff, payola, to Magna, to the Stronachs, some of the richest people in this country. Shame on this government. And they hide it.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: First of all I would ask the government members to come to order and allow the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to make his remarks. Secondly, I would ask the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to ensure that his comments are parliamentary in nature.

I return to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: We're concerned about this money being paid out to the Stronachs, yet the people—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Peterborough on a point of order.

Mr. Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to get your view on the use of the word "payola." It would be my understanding that that's a term that's not parliamentary. I would ask you to deliberate on that and ask the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to withdraw that remark.

The Acting Speaker: I return to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and ask him to ensure that his comments are parliamentary.

Mr. Yakabuski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could I ask that I get a little bit of extra time? That point of order obviously was not a proper point of order.

We're going to try to move on from that, because it seems to get under the skin of the Liberals. You know what? The member for Peterborough doesn't want people in his riding to know that \$50 million is going to Magna and the Stronachs, because I'll bet you that the people in Peterborough would like to get their hands on some of that \$50 million. I know that the people in my riding could use some of that \$50 million to help them in their concerns, to help them with the fact that the Madawaska Valley gets turned down for Infrastructure Ontario funding to rebuild their sewage plant, possibly the last one of its kind in the province, a flow-through system for which there are no countermeasures: If something goes wrong, the whole system goes. We could have a real disaster up there, but this government doesn't seem to think that it's a priority to fund that plant. But \$50 million to Magna, no money for Madawaska Valley: We know where this government's priorities are. We certainly do.

Let's talk about property tax assessments. The member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell talked about our

creation of MPAC. This government came to office promising to do something about it. What did they do? They buried their heads in the sand twice. Now, because the pressure is on—in fact, our party has come out with a policy spurred on by the member from Erie–Lincoln, Tim Hudak, that would bring some real reform to property tax assessment—what are they doing? They think they've handed the people some kind of real golden rod here. They're going to say, "We're going to spread that pain over four years." That doesn't cut it. Our party says, "A 5% cap on residential assessments," because we've got to get control of this situation where burgeoning assessments are putting people out of their homes in Ontario. And they only did it when the polls told them they'd better do something about it; otherwise Dalton McGuinty would have buried his head in the sand one more time.

1740

So I ask this government, do you really want to talk about rural Ontario? Let's talk about rural eastern Ontario. Where is the eastern Ontario prosperity fund? You talk about doing something for rural Ontario. Where's the eastern Ontario rural prosperity fund as put forward by my colleague Norm Sterling? Nothing in this budget. Where's an eastern Ontario secretariat under the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade? Nowhere to be seen. And where is a fair share—

The Acting Speaker: Point of order?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It was cancelled by the previous government.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. I'll return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke once again.

Mr. Yakabuski: Speaker, I don't need these ridiculous interjections on the part of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. It's cutting into my time and he knows it's not a point of order. He should be ashamed of himself. He's been here long enough.

Anyway, where's the fair share of the gas tax for rural communities? Where is it in this budget? It is nowhere. At least the federal government recognizes that we, in rural Ontario, pay an inordinate amount of that gas tax in order to get around, get to our jobs, get our kids to schools for after-school activities, get to doctors' appointments or whatever.

We pay an inordinate amount of that gas tax, and what does this government do? Nothing. Nothing for the rural people who pay far more than their fair share. You don't live in apartments in very many instances in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, or in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, I might add. But you do have to get into your vehicle and you do have to fill that tank and you do pay the gas tax, and this government is doing nothing for rural Ontarians in that regard.

Where is the recognition of the crown land issue and the amount of crown land that municipal governments have to deal with, the infrastructure issue surrounding it, the fire protection and the police protection for that land?

This government talks a good game. When the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus met with this government, they talked a good game about what they might be doing with crown land, but when the rubber met the road, nothing—nothing to deal with crown land, which is such an important issue in rural Ontario. In my riding, almost 50% of the land is crown land, and those municipalities have to deal with all of the problems and services associated with it, but they're not getting any help from the government.

The government put in \$10 million in broadband funding in this budget. That's a good thing, but they were the ones who cancelled the broadband funding in rural Ontario in 2004. They shut it down. So you're only replacing what was there before. You think you're doing a favour but you're three years late.

It's like everything else. It's like all of the measures in this budget: "Oh yeah, we're going to fix this, we're going to fix that, we'll fix that by 2011 or we'll fix that by 2014 or we'll fix that maybe in the next millennium or whatever." That's what you get out of this government. Everything is going to be fixed down the road, down the road. The people in rural Ontario can't wait for "down the road." They need some help from this government now and they're not getting it. They're getting a lot of hollow words from this government but they're not getting the help.

I heard my friend from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell talk about the downloading of roads. I know what I have said about downloading of roads.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Who did that?

Mr. Yakabuski: I wasn't here when it was done, and the system did not work, particularly in rural Ontario. But this government goes and does a whole lot of talking about the bad downloading of roads, and how many thousands of kilometres of roads have they uploaded since they took office? Don't say it all together, guys. Not a one. Not a thousand, not 900, 800, 700, 600, 500, 400, 300, 200, 100—not a single foot; not a single foot of road, and they want to criticize the past government. They're living like it's Shangri-La when it comes to the revenue—revenue is out through the roof—but they're not doing a darn thing to upload some of those highways back from the rural people.

So, you talk a good game but you're not delivering. Shame on you. My goodness, my people in rural Ontario are not impressed at all.

Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus: Doug Struthers. Can I read a newspaper article, Mr. Speaker, or is that a problem?

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Thank you very much. That was a newspaper article too. I wasn't sure of the difference. But I'm going to learn the rules sometime before I leave here. Somebody took my glasses here.

Doug Struthers, the chair of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus: "The 2007 Ontario budget fails to address major problems that 'threaten the economic health' of rural communities in eastern Ontario."

That is the crux of the matter. This budget does not address the significant problems in eastern Ontario that this government promised they would address, has done nothing to address and continues to ignore. In fact, everything they do is to try to drive a wedge, urban Ontario against rural Ontario. I can tell you that if I was one of you rural members sitting here, I would be very concerned. I would be in those caucus meetings and I would be raising Cain, because your Premier has made a calculation. He says, "I am willing to sacrifice the seat. I'm willing to sacrifice Peterborough; I'm willing to sacrifice Perth–Middlesex; I'm willing to sacrifice Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I'm willing to sacrifice these seats because I've got to make sure that this budget deals with Toronto and not rural Ontario."

So the people in rural Ontario keep asking themselves—and you know, my warden, Janice Visneskie, took over from Warden Bob Sweet, a great fellow. Bob is the past chair of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. But they just released what they call their prosperity plan, with 51 recommendations. When you have to make 51 recommendations to a government, you know what that tells you? The government doesn't know what it's doing. If you've got to make 51 recommendations, my goodness, where are they getting their information? The wardens' caucus has to tell them what to do in order to help eastern Ontario. Warden Visneskie says they have asked the province to recognize the unique needs of eastern Ontario. "We're hopeful that they'll listen," she said. "It may take some time, but the EOWC, and I, will never give up. A lot hinges on recognizing that our needs are different than those of other areas, including northern Ontario."

That's what we're asking for, that this government would take off the blinders and recognize that we've got real problems in eastern Ontario and do something to fix them.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: In response to the comments made by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I know that if he had had more time, he would have wanted to talk about the inadequate funding for long-term-care homes. So I just want to read into the record a press release that was put out by the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors on March 22, the day of the budget, headlined as follows: "Liberals Break Promise to 75,000 Residents of Long-Term-Care Homes." This is what they had to say:

"With virtually nothing in the provincial budget for long-term care, the McGuinty government will be headed into the next election without having fulfilled its pledge to the 75,000 seniors who live in these homes.

"For long-term care, the cupboard is bare....

"Unless the Liberals have a sudden conversion on the way to the polls on October 10, they will have to explain another broken promise—a promise made to long-term-care residents and their families across this province."

"During the last election campaign, the Liberals pledged a \$6,000 increase in annual care funding for

every long-term-care resident. But after four provincial budgets, the funding increase has totalled only about \$2,300.

"For the McGuinty" Liberal "government to deliver on its promise, it will have to inject an additional \$277 million into the operating budgets of long-term-care homes over the next six months." And we know that in this budget, they only gave them \$14 million.

"In the lead-up to the last election, the Liberals identified increased funding for long-term care ... as one of their top priorities. Today, they failed to keep their word. This is a huge disappointment, especially after the Liberals promised after coming to power that they would lead a revolution in long-term care."

"While the budget contained \$14 million for the hiring of nurses in long-term care, the reality is that with no money to keep up with inflation, homes will be forced to lay off staff. 'Homes have been given about 50 cents a day more to hire new nurses, but we needed over \$2 a day just to keep the ones we have. We will be laying off three nurses to hire one,' said Donna Rubin."

1750

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I wanted to just make some clarifications. I heard the third party member making some statements earlier which I thought were incorrect. I understand he's new in the House, but he should be reminded that this party has already increased the minimum wage four times and this party is committed to raising minimum wage three more times, when in fact we are going to reach \$10.25, which is higher than his party has even recommended.

In addition to that, it's imperative that this honourable House appreciates how satisfied the regions of York, Halton and Peel are in regard to the social service pooling—that the province of Ontario now is picking up that \$200 million, instead of those three regions paying to the city of Toronto. So Toronto gets the money while those three regions are not paying for it.

In regard to public transportation, the third party indicated there was no money in this budget. This is incorrect. Viva, the transportation system in the region of York, and others have received money. In fact, we received \$85-million-plus in this last budget. Those are monies that are needed to improve public transportation not only in the region of York, but also in the city of Toronto. Otherwise, more cars would come to Toronto.

In addition to that, when this government provided \$670 million last year, most of it, 60% of it, went to the city of Toronto, and only 40% went to the region of York. Those are real dollars, millions of dollars, given to Toronto for public transportation so that together, as a region—not just Toronto, but the 905 and Toronto together—we can have a better transportation system that all of us could use because it's available, it's efficient, it's clean and it's in our best interests.

That is the way public money should be invested. The chair, the mayor, the regional council, the municipality and the region of York are very happy about social service pooling, and I'm pleased with it too.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I'm very happy to join debate today and to thank my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He's a tireless advocate for eastern Ontario. I was pleased also to hear the thoughts from the member from Nickel Belt, who raised a concern that's very near and dear to my heart, which is long-term-care facilities and the lack of investment in this budget for the spaces that we so desperately need right across Ontario. In my city in particular, we need about 250 new beds.

The member from Thornhill was talking a lot about the 905 and Toronto, and how this budget is so great for them. But coming from a rural-suburban riding in eastern Ontario, this budget wasn't that great. That's what my colleague here from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was alluding to. There were several things that were omitted from this budget that are required for suburban and rural Ottawa and for suburban and rural eastern Ontario.

I look at the long-term-care facilities, for example. There was no direct investment for the Ottawa Congress Centre. There was no mention of upgrading or even funding infrastructure for the Highway 417 split. Water quality at Lynwood Park in Ottawa is still so poor that if the Minister of Agriculture would ever like to drop by there, I could give her a drink of the water and I could have an Erin Brockovich moment, because it's just not potable. Our Algonquin trade school: There was no investment for that, no money. The Minister of Agriculture again has presided over massive cuts to the family farm. The eastern Ontario secretariat and the Eastern Ontario Development Corp.: Despite the fact that every party in this Legislature voted to support both of those initiatives a week after I was elected, this budget had nothing for eastern Ontario yet again.

If they would like to continue to talk about what a great budget this was for Mississauga and Toronto, they forgot, yet again, eastern Ontario, which is shameful considering the Premier has a home there.

Mr. Ferreira: I enjoyed listening to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who certainly has a most unique and colourful style.

I want to raise some of the issues our party put forward that should have been in this budget which this government ignored: Introduce a \$10 minimum wage for Ontario, effective May 1, 2007, and that the minimum wage henceforth be set annually so the person working 40 hours a week at the minimum wage would earn an amount equal to or greater than the low-income cut-off for a single person living in Toronto, as determined annually by StatsCan. We proposed it; this government said no.

We proposed immediately eliminating the national child benefit clawback; this government said no.

We proposed having the government honour its promises in its 2003 election platform to invest \$300 million in new provincial money to expand Ontario's regulated non-profit child care system and to extend child care assistance to 330,000 children; this government said no.

Further, we proposed allocating sufficient funds for the expansion of health-related programs aimed at low- and moderate-income families, including enhanced prescription drug and vision care and dental care coverage; this government said no in its budget.

For the environment, we proposed cancelling all plans for new nuclear power plants and working with the appropriate agencies to allocate the savings into an aggressive conservation and energy-efficiency plan; this government said no to that.

We proposed allocating an additional one cent of the gas tax to municipalities for public transit; this government said no.

This government has said no to the priorities and the needs of Ontarians. This budget does not address the glaring needs of this province and some of its neediest residents. This government has said no to those people with that budget. That's why we say no to their budget.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: Can I get a couple of extra minutes there, Speaker, for the amount of time I was robbed during the debate? Apparently I won't get unanimous consent.

I want to thank the members for Nickel Belt, Thornhill, Nepean–Carleton and York South–Weston for their comments.

I just want to pick up on the comments of the member for Nickel Belt. I didn't even have time to talk about long-term care in my speech, because I was somewhat focused on eastern Ontario and my own riding. But you know, the previous government redeveloped the D beds in this province, and this government, even under the stark evidence of the need to redevelop B and C beds in this province, has put forth nothing in order to do that. What kind of message is it saying to our seniors and our vulnerable aged in this province when it will not put the investment into B and C beds?

Everyone knows that the need is growing, and it doesn't do you any good to bring out all kinds of regulations on long-term-care homes if you're not going to ensure that the facilities that are required to be able to provide that level of care to people are upgraded. We are going into a crisis in long-term care in this province, and this government has its head in the sand again. I appreciate the member for Nickel Belt raising that; I just didn't have time in mine.

I do want to reiterate one thing: If you want to talk about fairness for rural people in this province, you have to follow the lead of the federal government and give them a share of that gas tax. Their public transportation system is the roads; there are no alternatives. In order to be fair, in order to show that you care about rural people even a little bit, a share of the gas tax is imperative.

The Acting Speaker: It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until later on this evening at 6:45 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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