



ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 9 December 1999

Jeudi 9 décembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 CONCERNANT
LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

Mr Phillips moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 3, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about events at Ipperwash Provincial Park leading to the death of Dudley George / Projet de loi 3, Loi prévoyant une enquête publique pour découvrir la vérité sur les événements qui se sont produits au parc provincial Ipperwash et qui ont conduit au décès de Dudley George.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): This is a matter of extreme importance to the Legislature in Ontario. I remind us that four years ago, on Labour Day weekend, a land dispute took place between the OPP and our First Nations, who had strong reason to believe that a burial ground was at Ipperwash Provincial Park. It was the first time in 100 years that a First Nations person was killed in a land dispute in Ontario. It led to the conviction of a senior OPP officer for criminal negligence causing death, and it is a black eye on the province of Ontario. It is extremely important that we get a full explanation of what happened at Ipperwash Provincial Park and what led to the death of Dudley George. I might add that two of Mr George's brothers, Reg and Sam, are here with us today.

One reason that this matter is extremely important is that there is considerable evidence that the Premier, senior members of his cabinet and at least one backbench member of his government were directly and inappropriately involved in this action. The only way to clear the air is with an independent public inquiry. What could be more important in a democracy, when there are serious allegations against the head of the government and his cabinet, allegations backed by considerable evidence, than that these government members remove themselves from the obvious conflict—they are in a conflict of interest—and allow an independent public inquiry to be held into these events? When all of us are doing what we can to ensure that all the citizens of this province obey

our laws, we cannot allow a situation where the head of our government uses the power of his office to avoid a thorough investigation of clear evidence against him and his cabinet of inappropriate behaviour in a very serious matter. I remind us that there was the death of a First Nations person involved and the conviction of a senior OPP officer for criminal negligence.

Why do I say there is evidence of inappropriate behaviour? Let me read into the record a few examples. By the way, I have seven pages of what I regard as inappropriate behaviour and contradictory evidence.

The first I'll read is from Hansard. The question was asked, "Premier, what directions did you give to Ms Hutton before she went into that September 6 meeting with the OPP superintendent?" Mr Harris said, "None. I gave no direction."

We then find contradictory evidence of minutes taken at that meeting. Here it refers to "D. Hutton," the Premier's executive assistant, saying "Premier last night, OPP only, out of the park only—nothing else." Contradictory evidence: The Premier said he gave no instructions; the minutes say he did.

The Premier said this in Hansard: "I determined nothing. I gave no direction. I gave no influence on it. We left that entirely to the OPP." The Sarnia Observer headline on the day of the shooting said, "Queen's Park to Take Hard Line with Occupiers."

Another piece of contradictory evidence is an injunction the government sought. The Attorney General said, "Quite simply, this was a very standard procedure and a very usual procedure in these kinds of situations."

But here's what the police said. This was literally two hours before the shooting. The two senior OPP command officers said, when they heard what the government was going to do—the government changed directions from what the plan was two hours before the shooting—it said, and these are the two senior officers: "Well, that injunction surprises me. They"—the government—"went from that regular type of injunction to an emergency type, which you know really isn't in our favour. We want a little bit more time." The Attorney General is saying that it was usual procedure. Our senior OPP officers are contradicting the evidence.

Another piece of contradictory evidence: "At no time did the police receive any instructions from anyone that I know of within my caucus or my office or me from the cabinet."

Again, literally four hours before the shooting at the police command post, Marcel Beaubien is in the com-

mand post, where the police are trying to plan and carry out their operations. This is the local government member who was at the command post on several different occasions. This is what the police log said—this was at 6:42 of the night of the shooting, literally about four hours before the shooting took place—“Marcel Beaubien states to the police he doesn’t mind taking controversy. ‘If the situation can’t be handled by police services, something has to be done to handle the situation.’ Marcel Beaubien was in that night. He had talked to the Solicitor General and the Attorney General. They were comfortable.

1010

“Inspector Carson advised that Marcel Beaubien has been in contact with Staff Sergeant Wade Lacroix. He advised he was calling the Premier.” Constant interference in the operation of the police. Inappropriate, totally inappropriate.

“The First Nations went into the park because they have evidence of a burial ground there.” That was raised in the Legislature, and the Attorney General said, “That isn’t why they went into the park.” Well, there is page after page of evidence that they stated that’s why they were going into the park.

Guess what? The government ultimately found in its own files evidence of a burial ground and this is what the document says: “The crown has confirmed the existence of correspondence between the federal Indian Affairs branch and the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests which refers to the old Indian cemetery which is located within the territory now being developed as a park. It has been clearly indicated by Provincial Division judges at pre-trial that this defence will succeed in all instances.”

The government had to drop 23 charges because of that evidence. So I say there is clear evidence of serious wrongdoing by our head of government and by the cabinet, and yet the government has the tools to block an inquiry, to block an inquiry from happening. What could be more important than a clear airing of these serious allegations against the head of state, the head of our government and the cabinet?

The bill that we’re debating today does two simple things: It says the government commits to holding a public inquiry. So we no longer will allow the government to hide behind the lack of a public inquiry.

The second thing it says is, “The commission may defer beginning the inquiry if necessary to avoid prejudice to any person who is a party to court proceedings concerning matters which may be a subject of the inquiry.” In other words, we answer the Premier’s, I believe, stonewalling tactic by saying the commission, which will be appointed by the government, has the authority to defer beginning the hearing until satisfied that it would jeopardize no one’s right to a fair trial.

If Premier Harris has nothing to hide, he should have no problem with this bill. I believe a public inquiry would prove that he and other members of the cabinet were inappropriately involved in this matter. I believe they will try to perpetuate the cover-up by dragging out

the civil court trial for years, bankrupt the George family, which is a family of modest means trying to fight the government, and hope that the public runs out of interest in the issue.

I return to the central issue for all of us: What could be more important in a democracy than ensuring that when there are serious allegations with considerable evidence—these aren’t simply allegations. There is considerable public evidence against the head of our government and senior cabinet ministers. When they’re accused of serious, inappropriate behaviour, then we need to ensure that we remove them from controlling whether there is an investigation of that. They have a clear conflict of interest.

That’s what this bill does. It allows for a public inquiry with a respected person or persons selected by the government and they will have the power to conduct a fair, thorough investigation. I cannot understate the importance of this: Serious allegations against the government, the death of a First Nations person the first time in the entire century, the conviction of an OPP officer for criminal negligence, and the government is hiding. They are afraid to hold a public inquiry. If we want the public to have confidence in its government, we cannot allow the head of the government to hide from these serious allegations. We must have a public inquiry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I’m pleased to have the opportunity to speak firmly and clearly in support of this bill and the proposition contained within it. I can tell you that Gilles Bisson, our member responsible for native affairs, as well as Howard Hampton, our leader, will be addressing the bill as well.

It’s been an incredible history of events: four years and counting, Dudley George shot down, murdered, in Ipperwash and a succession of not just allegations but bits and pieces of evidence which point to and raise the clear spectre of direct government involvement—this government, this Premier, this Premier’s advisers and at least one of this Premier’s backbenchers as well as, perhaps, the Attorney General and Solicitor General of the day being directly involved, politicizing the role of the Ontario Provincial Police; Marcel Beaubien, the member for now Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and the comments attributed to him, “If they’re not out of the park something has to be done,” and the other now notorious comment, “Get the fucking Indians out of the park,” as well as a Premier who has stonewalled and resisted any fair and thorough inquiry into what was the murder of a peaceful and gentle—

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I realize the member may be quoting something, but I don’t think we use that type of language in this House.

The Acting Speaker: There is nothing out of order with the language. It may be inappropriate but that’s up to the member.

Mr Kormos: It is regrettable that native persons, First Nations persons, would be spoken of in that context and with that level of disdain and repugnant language. I regret having to refer to it, but the fact remains that it's a statement that has clearly been identified as having been made. Let's not ignore the realities here. Let's understand that this has not only been an injustice, a grave injustice, of course, to Dudley George and to his family, but a grave injustice to the First Nations people of this province and of this country and a grave injustice to the community, the members of this province and of this country, all of us as residents or citizens.

The Premier has very skilfully avoided attendance at examinations for discovery so that he can be compelled to give evidence under oath. Every indication is there that he will continue to use every legal means to the point of pettifoggery to avoid appearance for the purpose of examination for discovery.

Dudley George, his family, First Nations people and the people of this province deserve nothing less, and the call today is for nothing less than a public inquiry with the full disclosure of the course of events that led to the murder of Dudley George, and a clear result indicting those who will be found or could be found or may be found to be responsible for those unconscionable actions some four years ago.

1020

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): It's a great honour for me to have an opportunity to participate in the ballot item moved by my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. I think it's important to note that in working on this issue for quite some time he has prepared a significant body of evidence. The need is clear. It is to get to the bottom of the circumstances surrounding the death of Dudley George.

It seems to me that we in this House owe it to our First Nations community to ensure that justice is properly served and that we examine all the facts and all the serious allegations that had been made. There is, it would seem, a very strong body of evidence that suggests that members of the government—the Premier, members of the cabinet and government backbenchers—were directly and inappropriately involved in the first death in over 100 years of a First Nations person stemming from a land claim dispute.

The approach my colleague, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, puts forward is one that is independent. He has done work and has brought forward a body of evidence to us in this House to consider whether we should support the establishment of an independent public inquiry. We don't prejudge the results of that. This allows for protection of anyone before the courts. It allows for the government to appoint an independent public jury that would take a look at this issue and get to the bottom of it, to determine whether justice has been served for Mr George.

I would say that some members of the government should think very carefully about the way they decide to vote in this private members' hour today. To date, this

has been something the government has been involved in stonewalling. The Premier himself has avoided examinations for discovery. But failure by members of the government to support this initiative today involves you and implicitly supports a programmed cover-up on the part of your government. The Premier needs to live up to the responsibilities that we as public servants are expected to uphold. Public officials should bear a higher test in terms of the way we use the resources of government and the way we treat our citizens, and that has not been served here to date.

Page after page of very serious allegations have been brought forward. This issue has been discussed, and it has received considerable media coverage. But it is clear that justice has yet to be served in this issue. Mr George deserves nothing less than the support of this Legislature to determine the extent to which the government played a role—directly and inappropriately involved, we allege—in the death of Dudley George.

Again, we encourage the government members opposite not to involve themselves in what would seem to be a systematic attempt to ensure that all the facts do not see the light of day. I urge members opposite, in the name of justice and in the name of the highest calling, the highest level of public disclosure, to support this bill and allow an independent public inquiry to be established.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): First of all, as the critic for native affairs for the NDP caucus, I want to say outright and at this point that our caucus will be supporting this bill put forward by the honourable member, for a lot of reasons that were spoken to a little earlier and will be spoken to. But I want to say that we support to the utmost what he is trying to do here. Quite frankly, what we have seen over the past four years is a government that on every occasion has tried to duck out from its responsibility on this whole matter.

I'm not going to go through all the events that led to the unfortunate death, or I should say murder, of Dudley George. But it is fairly clear from the evidence as we see it, and as I think any fair-minded person would see it, that the police were basically influenced by the provincial government. The Mike Harris government—Mr Beaubien, Mr Harris himself and other members of his government—had their hands all over this thing. It was out of character for the Ontario Provincial Police to move in the way they did the night Dudley George was killed. We know, because the OPP were under directives from our government previously, that in no case and at no time should the OPP react the way they did. I know from talking to OPP officers since then that they felt a great amount of pressure on the part of the government on this particular issue. It was stated earlier, in the comments made by the Harris government in regard to its decision to send the police in and to kick “the [expletive] Indians out of the park,” and the influence by the local member. But I'll leave that for another part of the debate.

What bothers me in this debate is not only what has happened to Dudley George, as far as the murder of an innocent human being who was trying to advocate for

what was rightfully a very important issue for that community, but how the government has since handled this whole issue. Can you imagine what would happen in a democracy if a person was charged with murder and ducked out from being subpoenaed for discovery, ducked out from going to court, and at every turn basically ducked out from the due process of law? Can you imagine if you were put in that situation? If one of you in the gallery was charged with what should be charged in this case and didn't go to court, what would happen to you? They'd pick you off the street, drag you into court and put you in jail to make sure you testified to what you had done; you couldn't get away. But on three occasions, now, this government has wiggled out of its responsibility when it came to discovery.

First, the former Attorney General, Mr Harnick, was supposed to go to discovery in, I believe, September of this year and didn't show up—all kinds of legal wrangling. We know the Attorney General was involved in this process. I suspect that one of the reasons the Attorney General didn't run for re-election had a lot to do with what happened in this whole issue.

The second issue is what happened to the Solicitor General of the day. He too was served for discovery. Can you imagine what would happen if a citizen of this province got served for discovery and didn't show up time after time? Well, what happened was that the Solicitor General, the former top cop in the province of Ontario, got subpoenaed on this issue and didn't show. He used his lawyers to find all kinds of reasons why they can't do it on that day and why they shouldn't go. Then the Premier, the head of the cabinet, the head of the government of the province of Ontario, who is quoted as having said, "Get the [expletive] Indians out of the park," didn't show for his discovery, and instead spends millions of taxpayers' dollars to defend himself against an action he took. I find that quite extraordinary. If any other citizen of this province was put in the position that this government is, I suggest they wouldn't have gotten away with it as long as they have.

The second thing I find quite appalling this morning is the apparent silence of the government in this debate. If the government and government backbenchers feel so strongly that, as I suspect, they're going to vote against this bill, I would think that they would get up and say to the George family and other people watching today why they are going to vote against this bill. Look them straight in the face and say, "We believe, for the following reasons ... " and explain why you're not going to vote for this bill. I find the silence of the government, skipping the rotation in debate this morning, quite amazing.

I ask the government members to do the right thing for once. A person has been murdered, plain and simple, and justice has to be given. Up to now, justice has not been given because this government has been running away from its responsibility. I ask the government members to do what's right and to allow this bill to pass so we can have a full public inquiry into the issues. If they think they're innocent, then they've got nothing to hide.

1030

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I think it's extremely important that we bring closure to this question surrounding the allegations made with considerable evidence. The Premier and cabinet have a responsibility to allow an independent evaluation of the evidence.

I have been privileged to know numerous members of the native community within Sarnia-Lambton. There's a legacy of injustice towards our native communities that is unprecedented to any other communities of indigenous population. I understand this quest for getting to the truth. For eight years I have attempted to do the same in my own community, which ended up in a judicial inquiry regarding people who made decisions on our behalf.

An inquiry will bring out the truth and clear the air, and I would think that the government would be glad to get the air cleared on this. I suggest that stonewalling as much as the Premier has done begs the question, why? The life of Mr George is of great value. I believe it is incumbent on us and on the government to have an inquiry into this matter so that we can bring closure to the question surrounding the allegations.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to take part in this debate today, because there are a number of things that the government needs to realize and that the government members need to realize.

The first thing everyone needs to realize is that this issue is not going to go away. All the delaying tactics, trying to switch lawyers in midstream—again what I would term a delaying tactic in this context—are not going to work. The truth is going to come out. Whether an inquiry eventually is called here in the province of Ontario or whether an inquiry is called by the federal government, the people who want the truth to come out, who believe that there has to be accountability, are not going to go away. To the government members, who I suspect will vote to a one against this bill, I would say to you that at some point this will have to have a public airing. There will have to be public accountability on these issues.

The government and government members make much of trying to say that there can't be an inquiry because some of these matters are still before the court. I want to spend some time pointing out exactly all the issues that could be subject to a public inquiry now, could have been subject to a public inquiry some time ago, without in any way affecting the guilt or innocence of a particular party.

Let me point out some of the questions that need to be answered and some of the questions that need to be asked. Part of what is so puzzling about the events around Ipperwash and the fact that a government MPP was present in the command post of the Ontario Provincial Police—now, that in itself is highly unusual. It is highly unusual for an elected member who is part of the government caucus to be anywhere near a police operational effort. Not only that, but we know that there

was communication—in fact there were extended communications—between that government member and representatives of the Premier's office at the time when these matters were being dealt with, again highly unusual.

I would suggest that without necessarily inquiring into the guilt or innocence of a particular person, the question needs to be asked, what was a government MPP doing in the command post of the Ontario Provincial Police when these events began to transpire? That is a question that OPP officers want to have an answer to.

But there are some other questions that need to be answered. We know that the Ontario Provincial Police had a protocol and guidelines for dealing with these kinds of issues with First Nations. We know that their protocol called for them to engage in activities which lessen the possibility of conflict, which would tend to move away from conflict and move towards conciliation. Yet, at Ipperwash, the OPP apparently did not act according to their own protocol. Why? What would cause the Ontario Provincial Police not to follow, not to obey their own protocol?

Second, we know that in the utilization of police tactical units in the late 1980s and 1990s there were some very unfortunate accidents. This resulted in an inquiry, the Drinkwater inquiry. Douglas Drinkwater came forward with some recommendations on the utilization of police tactical units and those recommendations became part of the police method of operation. At Ipperwash, the OPP did not follow the Drinkwater recommendations either.

We also know that the Ontario Provincial Police have a training manual that all officers who go into the tactical units have to follow. They're trained in this. At Ipperwash, the OPP did not follow their training manual either for the utilization of tactical units. Why? What could cause the Ontario Provincial Police to not obey and follow three of their own things: protocols, training manuals and guidelines? Those are questions which should be answered by a public inquiry, can be answered by a public inquiry—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you; the member's time has expired.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): What I find perplexing in this is why it has come to this. If there had been an accident involving a tourist in the park when it was operating, there would have been an investigation of some sort, an inquiry to determine the individuals responsible for it. Given these circumstances, any rational person would have made the decision months or years ago to proceed with it, to determine what happened.

If everything is as presented by the government side, then what's the problem with an inquiry? It can't be money. I don't believe money can be an issue in this, because the government had \$112 million for advertising. Surely the life of a citizen would be more important than another ad on TV or an ad on an expressway. Since

everything else seems to be driven by money, we can throw that one out at this stage.

My wife and I have a son who's First Nations. Before he came to live with us, we assumed that though he may have a different cultural background there would be absolutely no difference in the way the community treats him. We found that to be the case for our neighbours, for the people I work with, for the people we shop with and associate with. The fact that he's First Nations has made no difference at all to them. But where we have found a bias is in dealing with governments. There continues to be a paternalistic kind of attitude that they know better than he does and that he's not able to make his own decisions and that he needs advice. Certainly he's a full Ontario citizen, but just not quite full. That saddened me, because I didn't believe that existed.

Twenty-one years ago there was no doubt in my mind that whatever the cultural background, wherever they were from, whatever their particular interests in life were, it didn't make any difference. But it does make a difference, unfortunately, to some people. If there are no problems, the fact is that we have significant numbers of people in this province who believe that there needs to be an inquiry, that there is a different treatment and we need to proceed and deal with it and get rid of that.

1040

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

I'm honoured to rise in support of this bill today in this Legislature. I want to talk about two things in particular. I want to talk about courage and I want to talk about cowardice, a family's courage and a government's cowardice.

I want to begin by saluting my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. Gerry Phillips is deeply committed to finding the truth, the truth about Ipperwash. His continuing and tireless efforts on this matter are a testament to his decency, his work ethic, and his commitment to doing, quite simply, what is right.

But the member for Scarborough-Agincourt would be the first to tell you that his contribution has been relatively small compared to that made by the George family. This is a family that has shown enormous courage. They suffered the deepest personal loss one can imagine when Dudley George was shot dead in a protest outside Ipperwash Provincial Park on September 6, 1995. They lost someone they love, and they lost him suddenly and without explanation.

One might understand if this family simply walked away to take time to heal, but instead they have taken on the most powerful interests in our province. They don't seek revenge, they're not seeking attention, and they're not seeking personal gain. All they seek is the truth, the truth about Ipperwash, and despite very, very modest resources, the George family has fought for the truth now for four gruelling years. They have fought in our courts and they have fought in the court of public opinion. They have fought tirelessly and courageously.

We have to ask ourselves, why is it that it has been such a long and difficult fight for this family? The

answer is, because of the cowardice of this government. Simply put, this government is afraid of the truth, and a government that hides the truth is not worthy of the people it is elected to serve.

The family was given no choice but to bring a lawsuit against the Premier and the members of his cabinet, but the ministers and the Premier continue to ignore our courts and to use stalling tactics wherever possible. The government's contempt for the courts is exceeded only by the contempt it has shown for the George family. It's ironic that a government that so overreacted to a roadblock at Ipperwash has now thrown up roadblock after roadblock after roadblock in front of the George family. This is cowardice of the worst possible kind.

You have to ask, what is it that the government is so afraid of? Ian Urquhart of the Toronto Star put it very eloquently this week when he wrote, "There is one downside to a cover-up, no matter how well it might be executed: It tells everyone that there is something to hide." If this government has nothing to hide, then surely it will support this bill, because this bill would set up a commission of public inquiry. The George family has said it will drop its suit if there is a public inquiry, because all, in the end, that this courageous family wants is the truth: the truth about Ipperwash; the truth about why something went terribly wrong despite the OPP's lengthy history of dealing with these situations peacefully and successfully; the truth about the government's hard-line approach; the truth about what orders were issued to, as the quote goes, "Get those Indians out of the park."

The truth, the truth about Ipperwash: That is all that the George family is asking for, that is what they deserve, and that is what we in this Legislature have a responsibility to give them. I am very proud to support this bill.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I'm pleased to join this debate but I'm not pleased with the commentary that becomes necessary. We stand here, in private members' hour, dealing with a moral and ethical issue that's drawn international attention, the unwarranted killing of a civilian in peaceful protest who happens to come from one of our First Nations.

We're supposed to be here in this forum as parliamentarians as the highest authority in this province, and not one of the members of the government will speak to this issue, will deign to give an opinion about this. We have a whipped silenced on the other side of this House, and what we have is an ignorance against the truth. It's only in that kind of society, where we can have that kind of grip on what people say, that we can't get at the truth.

What are the members opposite afraid of? What is there about that small group of people who were in that park—that was an Indian burial ground, as we found out later, that was known to the provincial government to have a basis for a peaceful protest. What is it about those OPP transcripts that mention the Premier's office? What is it about the MPP for Sarnia-Lambton who was in that command post, in that trailer in a very unusual way? What is it about the involvement of officials from the Premier's office or from the government that has silenced

the entire opposite side of the House on a moral and ethical issue, that does not even deign to pay respect to the legitimate concerns of Ontario citizens and of the whole First Nations community of this province?

I stand here to support this bill and the actions of the member from Scarborough-Agincourt, but not this government.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): As usual the member for Parkdale-High Park has drawn some conclusions about this side of the House that are wrong. I rise on behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House to say that the government has in fact decided not to debate this bill. Our reasons for this are consistent with our previous comments concerning the very sensitive nature of this issue. It's our position that the private member's bill from the member from Scarborough-Agincourt should not be before this House at this time.

Two criminal matters and three civil matters relating to the tragedy at Ipperwash are still before the courts. The Legislature's rules of debate, we believe, are very clear and should be equally as clear to the members opposite. Section 23, in part, says, "... a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she ..." says certain things, and I refer you to subsection (g) where it continues by saying the items for which a member shall be called to order. They include referring "to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding ... that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination."

With respect to the outstanding criminal cases, the Court of Appeal has reserved judgment. Regarding the civil action, the lawyers for the defendants sought assistance from the court in moving the matter forward. At the request of the lawyers for the defendants, a judge has been designated to hear all motions involved so that it proceeds as efficiently as possible.

Because this is still before the courts, we want to stress that everyone from the Premier to the former Solicitor General to the former Attorney General has every intention of co-operating with the courts. We are not ruling anything in or out with respect to a public inquiry. What we do say is that we on this side of the House believe that it is important to respect this place and to conduct our business in accordance with respect not only for the rules of this House but for the judicial system in our province. Under these circumstances no further comment, we believe, is appropriate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Further debate? There being none, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt in response.

Mr Phillips: I go back to my bill. The Premier has refused to ever, ever commit to holding a public inquiry. I say there is overwhelming evidence of the need for a public inquiry. I say that these are more than allegations, that there is evidence of the need for a public inquiry. The Premier has never, ever said he would hold a public inquiry. In my view he is deliberately stonewalling this issue in the hope that it will fade from people's memory. I will remind the Legislature that the Supreme Court of Canada indicated that an inquiry could begin when there

are still criminal matters before the courts. But even then, this bill says that the commission can defer beginning the inquiry if he or she has any concerns about the right to a fair trial for anyone.

What this is all about is that the head of our government has had serious allegations, with considerable evidence, made against him and many members of his cabinet. He is refusing steadfastly to hold a public inquiry into these matters, to even commit to holding a public inquiry. That's what this bill is all about. We want from the Premier an assurance that there will be a public inquiry.

Does anybody here believe there's not sufficient evidence that there should be a public inquiry? Does anyone here believe there's not considerable evidence that we need this fully aired? Does anyone here believe the Premier is not in a direct conflict of interest?

I say to the government members, do the right thing. Have this government commit to an inquiry. Give the government-selected commission the right to begin the inquiry when he or she is satisfied that no one's right to a fair trial is jeopardized.

The Acting Speaker: The disposition of this matter will take place at 12 noon. This House will stand in recess until 11 o'clock when I will retake the chair.

The House recessed from 1052 to 1102.

FOOD BANK ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ DES BANQUES D'ALIMENTATION

Mr Spina moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to ensure that food banks account for donations / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à assurer que les banques d'alimentation rendent compte des dons.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to discuss an issue of importance to my constituents and I think to many residents across Ontario.

Before I get into the details of discussing the Food Bank Accountability Act, I want to state for the record that I appreciate and understand the hard work and dedication of the thousands of workers and volunteers at food banks across this province. On behalf of government members, I want to say thank you for all your efforts.

I want to encourage all members to contribute to and support these hard-working, legitimate food banks and people in need, especially during this important Christmas season.

If passed, the bill will: require food banks to be corporations without share capital, at least under the current structure of the bill; ensure a food bank uses all donations that it receives for its intended purpose, which, of course, is the needy; require food banks to maintain records that account for all donations of money, food and other things; and make the above records available to the public where requested.

Locally in Brampton, I met with Morris Samson of the Salvation Army, as well as Roger Peddle, the chair of the Red Shield campaign, and Gary Cresswell, their operations manager, to go over my proposed legislation. They're supportive of the bill and its intentions. Of course, there are a few things we can improve upon in the bill, and if it got to the stage of going to committee, then we would certainly be willing to look at aspects to improve the bill.

Our local Salvation Army indicated that as a result of this case, Thanksgiving donations were down, the case being the incident that took place in Brampton back in September and early October, just before Thanksgiving, where a local food bank operator was charged with one count of defrauding the public and accused of taking as much as \$250,000 in donations and selling at least 10 skids of food for about \$80,000. The allegation, according to the police, was that the donated food was sold to liquidators, small grocery and convenience stores around the GTA and as far away as North Bay. Constable Harnden from the Peel Regional Police Service said his investigation, started in April, was sparked by information from a similar investigation at a Toronto food bank two years ago.

In October 1999, the operator of the Brampton Food Bank, as I said, was arrested and charged. They indicated that one of the main problems with the unregistered food banks is the lack of government regulation; and indicated that there's a need for government regulation in this industry as a whole. We do have some self-regulation, and I compliment the Ontario Association of Food Banks and the Canadian association, which oversee their members with internal guidelines and rules, such as a ban on bartering, trading and selling of food. However, the Brampton Food Bank, as many of us know, was not an association member—I will stress that—and was not a registered charity. It is also my understanding that membership in the OAFB is voluntary.

My legislation doesn't call for anything more than what the OAFB already does. I applaud the members of the association for their hard work and diligence in putting these policies in place, and I appreciate the fact that they took the time out of their schedule to join us today in the members' gallery. However, now it's time for the unregistered food banks to follow similar policies and practices.

When I introduced this bill, there were concerns raised by many people involved in food banks. I met with the association briefly, stating the reasons for introducing the bill. My intention, and I believe it was theirs also, was to find a way to clamp down somehow on the unscrupulous operators. We did not agree on the method of doing that, and I certainly appreciate their perspective. I will say publicly that I received a letter today, that I know was sent to many members and perhaps there will be some quotes from it today, making clear the position of the Ontario Association of Food Banks, along with the Metro Daily Bread Food Bank, expressing their opposition to the bill. However, I'm very pleased to hear that they

offered some alternative recommendations. I think that wherever this bill goes, we should pursue those objectives and those recommendations.

I'd like all food banks to operate under similar rules and regulations that members at the Daily Bread Food Bank and the other members of the OAFB already do. What's not helpful is when members of the opposition began ranting and raving that this is some sort of way for the government to go after food banks. We're going after unscrupulous operators. There are good people out there who donate thousands of hours to help the public.

There are concerns surrounding the timing of this bill, near the busiest season of Christmas, but the fact is that I don't get to choose my private member's time and we're not being asked to pass this law today.

I encourage all members to contribute and support these hard-working, legitimate food banks, especially during this very important Christmas season, and I assure you that I will continue to consult the stakeholders and receive their advice and input on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

1110

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I'm not very happy to have to stand up and speak about this bill. This is private members' hour. It's a chance for members to do good. This is not such a bill.

I do not for a second take away from the good intentions of the member for Brampton. However, there is an onus on all of us in public office to ensure we do no harm. This bill raises a spectre about organizations that have nothing to do with the intentions the member has.

Talking about food banks and fraudulent organizations in the same breath is simply wrong. It becomes more than wrong, it becomes harmful, when it happens during the Christmas season when 40% of donations to food banks are expected. It is damaging to food banks to have that occur. So I ask the member opposite to withdraw this bill.

I ask you for that because the food bank organizations affected, that serve importantly, are just like any other organization. They're not rejecting in any way the need for regulation, if there's a legitimate need. But in the course of a year, they serve 300,000 vulnerable Ontarians and 120,000 children.

We're talking about people who don't get enough to eat, children and families whose nutrition is deprived through no fault of their own. That may be a new concept to some of the members opposite. The profile of people using food banks: 32% have some college or university education, their last job was six years—not people who haven't paid taxes but people who have made a way for themselves and have found it difficult.

Today the organizations that are their lifeline—temporarily, usually about four times a year, but at the worst time of their lives—are again under attack, giving them less capability. And the reason is because they're being cast in a negative light.

This is not a bill to commend food banks for what they are doing and to work with them to see that illegitimate organizations are gotten rid of. That's not the thrust of the bill. It suggests a lower standard for food banks than exists today, than is endorsed by the Canadian Association of Food Banks. It provides for an inspector to come in and see if these organizations keep records, a terrible, terrible insult to organizations that have all kinds of controls built in.

Further, it doesn't even have a basis to tell between those who falsify accounting records and those who aren't. It doesn't require those organizations to be charities and, in that case, reduces the standards that are required for food banks to operate. In fact, it's so sloppy in its formation that it misses most of the food banks in the province, because they have to be giving out food directly. Most of the large food banks in this province, like food banks in Ottawa, Toronto and Hamilton, collect in a large warehouse and then distribute to other organizations. So those food banks are not even mentioned in this. In fact, the fraudulent organizations, the organizations that should be the focus of this bill, the charities that get away with pretending to be what they weren't would be missed in this bill and, simply by keeping fraudulent records, would be able to continue with the false imprimatur from the government that things are OK.

Simply put, this government has no basis to go after food banks on any grounds whatsoever. Food banks in Ontario are not funded by government. Food banks clean up after government. They clean up after reckless cuts to social assistance that take food off the tables of families. That's what happened. Food bank demand went up. These are interdenominational church groups, people from all parts of this House—there's no partisan reflection on food banks. The current chair of the food bank in Toronto is Alan Redway, a former Conservative cabinet minister.

There has never been that kind of reflection on those organizations. They've grown up as community organizations and, frankly, they see this as a slap in the face. They see this at a time when the police made a mistake in bringing up an organization in Brampton, an organization which incidentally was de-listed by food banks in 1990. If there's any place to look, it's at the public accounts of this province and the need to have a proper public trustee's office to make sure that charities—there's a law there already for charities of any type. One was masquerading as an animal shelter. Why attack food banks? Why not go after the animal shelter aspect if you really want to get at fraudulent organizations? Because it says "charitable purpose," it doesn't declare that the charitable purpose is feeding the needy, as most food banks do in their charitable objects.

It leaves open the possibility of visiting the homes of food bank officials, anyplace there could be records. This does not reflect a deep and abiding effort to get at the problems that exist in any part of the charitable world.

I do not want to just conclude with this bill. I think this bill is irrelevant to the lives of the people who are helped by food banks, to the people who volunteer at food banks, and the people who support food banks, except in the negative. What I want to celebrate is that many people—individuals, corporations, employee drives—are organizing this Christmas. I would enjoin the members of this House, who are in a situation to do harm, to convert that into something to do good, because the food banks need assistance at this time of year. There is, for example, an opportunity in Toronto to donate to food banks at any chartered bank between December 13 and January 7. There are all kinds of opportunities.

I just want people to reflect: The fact that people in this country have to beg for food is bad enough. The fact that the organizations that have to provide sometimes small plastic bags of powdered milk because there isn't enough food to go around to families for two and three days at a time—the only response, the only thing they hear from Harris government for the whole time it's in office is that one of their members wants them to have to account to the police, to an inspector, and face \$25,000 fines.

I suggest this bill brings disgrace to this House, unless the members opposite do the honourable thing, keep to their good intentions, withdraw the bill, talk to the food banks of this province and find a way to do some good.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It's an embarrassment that we should be debating this kind of subject matter, that we should be debating this bill as we approach Christmastime, as food banks across this province—big-city food banks, small-town food banks—find their shelves depleted and more and more families and their kids are looking forward to the bleakest and hungriest of Christmas seasons.

I come from the Niagara region, and one of the things that people are saying down there is, "What a remarkable revelation for this government, because at least the bill indicates that they acknowledge the reality of food banks and the huge communities of hungry and homeless people in this province."

This government doesn't want to support the hungry, and it doesn't want to provide comfort and shelter for the homeless. It wants to jail squeegee kids and panhandlers, and now it wants to strangle food banks like the food banks in the city of Welland or in Thorold that operate in small, modest accommodations and which struggle with a small group of volunteers on a daily basis to collect the modest cans and packaged goods that people are lined up for regularly, every single day of the week including Saturdays and Sundays.

Let me tell you, let me tell Mr Spina, the author of this bill, the one who promotes this philosophy: The people lined up at those food banks aren't there to rip off donors. Sadly and tragically, more often than not, they are there with their eyes downcast and fearful of being seen asking for that small package of food that's going to keep their kids' bellies a little fuller that weekend than they would otherwise have been. And the operators of those food

banks aren't doing it for profit. In most cases they aren't doing it for any remuneration at all. They are members of the various faith communities. They're just plain, simple folk who care about their neighbours and who believe we have a responsibility to ensure that kids don't go hungry.

You believe in eliminating red tape when it comes to your corporate buddies and when it comes to environmental polluters. You believe in eliminating red tape for the high-profit corporate industries. But when you've got small groups in small-town Ontario, volunteers working well beyond anything we should expect of them in terms of the amount of hours, the amount of energy and the amount of their efforts to take care of their neighbours, you want to regulate, you want to red tape. Quite frankly, at the end of the day, you want to put many of these operations out of business. You want them to shut down.

You've got an agenda all right. Your agenda consists of jailing the poor, imprisoning the homeless and making sure that hungry kids' faces aren't seen in public places so that the people of Ontario don't have to be reminded of your insensitivity to the poor, your insensitivity to women and to kids and of your callous disregard for the growing poverty in this province while you and your friends accumulate more and more wealth.

1120

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to join the debate with respect to Bill 20 that was brought forward by the member from Brampton Centre. The bill, if passed, will require food banks to be corporations without share capital; ensure that a food bank uses all donations that it receives for its intended purpose, the needy; require food banks to maintain records that account for all donations of money, food and other things and make the above records available to the public.

The goal of Mr Spina, the member for Brampton Centre, is simply this: to ensure that the food bank donations can be accounted for. I quote him: "I cannot sit by and watch people in need and the public being ripped off. We should not tolerate people profiting off the backs of the generous public and, more important, the needy."

What I've heard from the other side today is that they share those principles put out by the member from Brampton Centre, but all I've heard from the other side today is this: They're worried about the timing. The timing is their big concern, that this is going to affect food banks and that it's going to impact them. That's really all their concern is, the timing. They're into optics.

The member for Parkdale-High Park says, "It's an insult to keep records." An insult to keep records? The public demands and expects organizations to be properly run. It's not an insult to keep records.

The bottom line is that we have to open a dialogue. I agree with what the member from Welland says, that there should be a dialogue. The bottom line is, the only way to open up a dialogue is the way Mr Spina is opening it here today. There is a dialogue and I think it's high time. Something very serious happened in Brampton; the members on the other side can basically

make their criticisms and whatever, but something serious happened in Brampton. That's why the member from Brampton has brought it.

I look at the Ontario Association of Food Banks. They wrote a letter, and I've reviewed it. They have some very serious concerns about this bill. But they also have some alternatives to deal with the problem of fraudulent charities more effectively. They merit serious consideration.

I would just point out two that I want to look at. The first one would be amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada to make it easier to prosecute these cases. They say in brackets, "The police have discussed their frustration in this regard." Do you see the federal Liberals doing anything? Of course not. They don't do anything over there when it deals with protecting the public with respect to criminal matters. You're not going to see any amendments to the Criminal Code from the federal Liberals. What you're going to see is continued frustration on behalf of the police, and when situations arise, nothing is going to be done. At least the member for Brampton Centre is proposing an option here, an alternative. We don't hear anything from the other side with respect to this. The alternative is legitimate.

The other alternative, being suggested by the Ontario Association of Food Banks, is better enforcement of the existing Revenue Canada rules concerning charitable status. "The St Francis organization was continuing to issue charitable receipts after criminal charges had been laid against its principals and continue to solicit food donations even now when under another name." They make reference to that organization in their letter. That's very serious, obviously.

If you don't have any status as a charity and you're issuing receipts, you're misrepresenting to the public that you are a legitimate organization. That's very serious. The members on the other side should take it as being a very serious matter.

What we have here is a situation where, if Revenue Canada was more diligent in doing their job—another issue with respect to the federal Liberals if they're not doing their job, as usual—

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): We'll get you an audit.

Mr Tascona: I didn't say this. It's coming from the Ontario Association of Food Banks. They're saying the federal government is not doing anything to help the situation. They're undermining the legitimacy of food banks. They're undermining the legitimacy of trying to help people—the federal Liberals, as usual, are undermining the legitimacy of trying to help people. This is coming right from the Ontario Association of Food Banks. It's right here. Read it and understand it. Show some compassion on your side. You never want to do anything with respect to the federal Liberals. It's a do-nothing approach.

The member from Brampton Centre is trying to do something here. He is trying to open up a dialogue with respect to this issue.

I want to refer directly to the bill because I've read the bill, unlike some of the members across the way. The definition of "food bank": "means an agency that receives donations of food and distributes the food for free directly to people in need; ..."

One of the charitable objects of the bill, in section 4, is that, "A food bank shall use all donations it receives for the food bank's charitable objects." I'll repeat that because the other side is getting a little bit too noisy. Section 4: "A food bank shall use all donations it receives for the food bank's charitable objects." That's a tremendous objective.

The requirement for records: "A food bank shall maintain financial records and records accounting for inventory, ... in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles; and ... in accordance with prescribed standards, if any."

What is wrong with that? There's nothing wrong with that.

Mr Smitherman: Red tape for food banks.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Toronto-Centre-Rosedale.

Mr Tascona: The member for Toronto-Centre-Rosedale is talking about red tape. We're talking about accountability. There would be accountability and there would be greater ease with respect to the police in this issue if the federal Liberals did—they do nothing.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Hamilton East.

Mr Tascona: What we have right here is that the food banks association indicates that their organization adheres to a strict code of ethics. They don't think there's a necessity for food banks to keep good records and audited financial statements because it's done. All we're saying is that we want to make sure everybody does it. I think it's a laudable objective that Mr Spina is putting forth, that we have financial accountability. After all, the public, out of the generosity of their hearts, is giving food to these organizations and they expect it to be used properly. They expect it to go to the needy.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): What evidence do you have—

Mr Tascona: The bottom line is that all we're hearing from the member from Hamilton is that he's talking as usual because he protects the federal Liberals because they do nothing. He likes the status quo: Do nothing and don't have any accountability. But I'll say this: The member from Brampton Centre is trying to do something and I support him.

Mr Agostino: I'm angered that we're even having this debate this morning. I think my colleague from Parkdale earlier explained what is wrong with this bill, the fundamentals and the contents, or lack of, in this bill. But I think what is even more insulting is the blatant, brutal attack that this bill—it is not only on food banks. Let me suggest that thousands of volunteers and staff work at food banks. Let me suggest that it's a brutal attack on the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who donate to food banks. Let me suggest that, worst of all, it's another

brutal attack on the poor of this province who need and rely on food banks.

This is a disgusting bill. It does nothing to deal with the problems of food banks. It does nothing to deal with the problems of poverty. But once again this government and these members who are defending this bill continue to use it as another wedge issue to beat up on the poor. If you're poor in this province, it's a crime. If you're poor in this province under this government, you should be punished. I love this. Proper use of food collected: Where the hell do you think the food is going to? Do you think the workers take it home?

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm becoming continually annoyed and concerned with the language that is being used in the Legislature. I would humbly ask you to consider the words just used by my colleague opposite and rule whether that is appropriate parliamentary language.

The Acting Speaker: I agree that the language being used is bordering on being unparliamentary. The member would be wise to use more appropriate expressions. Perhaps the member would want to withdraw that word. If not, I think he can continue but consider yourself to be warned.

1130

Mr Agostino: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

What this bill is all about is nothing more than a blatant, sleazy attack on every food bank and every user of food banks in this province. There are organizations—St Matthew's House, in my riding, works out of a church basement. It collects food and distributes it to the single moms of my riding who, because of this government's actions, the third week of the month have no money, no food and are forced to turn to food banks in order to feed their kids. That's what this attack is on. It's an attack on the Neighbour to Neighbour food bank on the mountain in Hamilton, which does the same thing and feeds thousands of families every week who have no money, who run out of money because of what this government has done and their policies.

Instead of using this time as an opportunity to help food banks, to encourage food bank drives, the message we're sending out through this bill and through this government's actions is that somehow food banks are bad, that somehow food banks are wrong, that somehow food banks are misusing their donations. How does that encourage people to donate to food banks? How does that include—

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): When was Neighbour to Neighbour founded?

Mr Agostino: I'm sorry, I'm hearing the former Liberal from Stoney Creek mumbling something there about the poor people in his riding.

What this government should be doing is finding ways of helping food banks. There isn't one cent of government money that goes into food banks. Why are people relying, since 1995, in such greater numbers on food banks? Maybe it's something to do with the fact that

you've cut welfare benefits to 500,000 kids by 22% since you took office. Maybe it's the fact that you've changed the rules to kick many of these folks off welfare and on to shelters and on to the streets. Why don't you look at yourself in the mirror and understand and realize what you've done to the poor in Ontario; why people are relying on food banks now in greater numbers than ever in one of most booming economic times in the history of this province? It's because of what you have done to attack the poor.

I'm angry because this is a blatant, brutal attack that was not necessary, at a time when food banks are looking for the greatest drive of the year, at a time when food banks want to make sure that the kids have food for Christmas. Most of us can't relate to or understand that, but there are a lot of Ontarians who go through that every single day.

I would urge this government, I would urge this member to support the food banks, to support the good people who work at food banks, the Ontarians who donate to food banks, the people who use the food banks while we're drawing up this cheap, sleazy piece of cheap political legislation that does nothing to help food banks or poor people in Ontario.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): How low can members of this government force us to stoop in this House? What are we doing here today, debating this odious bill when we know that every month up to 125,000 people in the GTA must use emergency food programs, of which 50,000 are children? What we should be doing here today, I say to Mr Spina, is having a constructive debate about how we can help those people and how we can make sure that people don't go hungry in this province. That's what we should be here to do.

Rather than trying to deal with the causes of hunger, this government has chosen to attack food banks when we should be having a debate on how to eliminate hunger. At the same time that a member of this government would support, I'm sad to see, is talking about cutting red tape across the board for everybody else, business and industry, it's red tape when it comes to that. Here it's accountability when we're talking about the food bank sector. Different strokes for different folks.

This is a direct attack on the caring people in our society, most of whom are volunteers who are doing their best to pick up the slack where governments are falling down. I want to emphasize here that there's nothing new in this. Rather than looking at the issue of poverty and seeking solutions, this government vilifies those afflicted by poverty by welfare-bashing constantly, and by picking on homeless youth who are trying to earn money, and by getting rid of any kind of affordable housing in this province.

The mere existence of this bill stands to undermine public confidence in food banks. Perhaps the member is sincere when he says he didn't mean to do that, but it's very clear by now that that is what's happening. I wish that he had withdrawn this bill today so we wouldn't be disgraced in this way.

The introduction of this bill during the holiday season makes matters much worse. The reputation of food banks is being questioned at a time when those organizations are conducting the food drives that are so necessary to stock their shelves for the winter ahead.

Let's think about this for a moment. Food banks are the creation of caring members of society who realize that everybody has a right and in fact a need to eat. That's all. The only reason for their existence is to feed hungry people. So how can you possibly justify this attack today? Because that's what it is. It may not appear that way to you, Mr Spina, but that is what it is. I would urge you to withdraw the bill. You said, and you acknowledge, that you had a letter with constructive ideas for other ways to deal with accountability. Nobody disagrees that there should be accountability; in fact, there are laws already in place to deal with accountability.

I do want to say that there are people here today from the food bank sector. Some other people came later so I don't have all the names, but Sue Cox, Julia Banks, Devi Arasanayagan, Paula Thiessen, Loren Freid, Jim Russell and others are with us today. I want to take this moment to not only acknowledge their presence and their swift reaction to this odious attack on the work that they're doing, but for all the work that they've been doing, not only in feeding the homeless but by constantly and relentlessly bringing to the attention of the legislators and the public what a terrible crisis we have in Ontario right now with homeless people and hungry people, many of whom are children.

Mr Spina, I appeal to you right now to stand up and withdraw this bill and work with the people who are here today, and if there is a need for a little further accountability, to come up with some reasonable suggestions. Do that, Mr Spina, and get us out of this disgraceful debate that we're having today.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): It's a pleasure for me to speak today on the Food Bank Accountability Act, Bill 20. I applaud the member for Brampton Centre for initiating a bill that I believe is long overdue. I have a great deal of concern for those folks who are across who are speaking out against this bill. Do these people not believe in accountability? Do they have something to hide? Is the contributing public being taken advantage of? After what you saw happened in Brampton, do they condone theft? I get very concerned for that. In today's society, those who do things right have absolutely nothing to worry about.

In my riding of Peterborough there are anywhere from 14 to 15 or 16 food banks of various sizes; some are sponsored and registered charities and others are not. I think groups like the Salvation Army, the various church groups and the YWCA are getting concerned that legitimacy in various areas of this province with regard to food banks could be compromised. I believe complete accountability, having been in business for many years, is a necessity that must happen.

Over the last number of years, as more and more food banks endeavour to get additional support, the contributors are questioning their authenticity. Many food banks are encouraging the public to donate money and you have seen them collecting, whether it be on the street corners or at the liquor stores—whatever. People are very concerned and they are now questioning the fact that as they give cash dollars, records are not being kept well. I believe the public has the right to know; if their dollars are being given, they should have access to records and they should have access to make sure there is that complete accountability.

1140

Certainly accountability to ourselves is very important. I also believe accountability to various programs is indeed very important. If that accountability is not there, I am afraid that food banks and other charitable organizations that are needed these days will start to deteriorate because the public will not contribute.

These days, unfortunately, in our society there are a great many scams and much fraudulent activity going on. The public, needless to say, is becoming more and more aware of these types of illegitimate activity, and I believe the public wants accountability. I would suggest that all the food banks would endorse this type of legislation, certainly those who feel they should be accountable.

In the riding there have been rumours of various inefficiencies over the years. Granted, they are rumours, but rumours will lead to reductions and to less support for them. Let's squelch those rumours by making sure that the rules and regulations are in place to make sure that everybody is accountable.

It's interesting to note that in other jurisdictions they do have that accountability, they do have centralized control, they do have controlled distribution. I'd like to mention a couple of them; one especially is the state of Virginia. They have some very major rules that I believe could be used here:

That they hold current tax-exempt, non-profit status from the Internal Revenue Service.

That they provide food directly to the needy, ill or children in the form of meals or food boxes as an ongoing part of their program.

That they have regular days of operation.

That emergency food pantries must have been providing food assistance to people in need for at least three months prior to date of application.

That agencies serving cooked meals must process a current certificate of approval from the local public health authority. I think that is so very important, that we have food safety both in handling and in storage. We want to make sure that the food is healthy and that it is nutritious.

That they must not require any money, property or services from individuals in exchange for food.

That they must have proper storage space for the safekeeping of food products.

I think those are the kinds of regulations, as well as the accountability and records etc, that should be mandatory in this province. But I also want to make one other comment; that is, not only do we constantly increase the availability or the number of food banks, but we should also be looking at ways to help people help themselves. I compliment a number of organizations in Peterborough that have organized community gardens, that have organized collective kitchens, that have a program called Hearts Alive Gleaning. They also have food box programs. Again I suggest that we have to concentrate on helping those help themselves, because without that, we will be reliant on food banks for the next many, many years, and I don't think the people need that. I think they want to learn new ways of helping to process food, how to create their own food and how to grow their own food.

There's absolutely no doubt that we have to help the needy, but we also must protect the public who are giving funds and the dollars and the product to make sure that these food banks work. I'm a great believer in accountability, as I said, whether it's to ourselves or to others. I suggest to the member from Brampton Centre that this initiative should be in a complimentary fashion rather than those that I believe are condemning—well, actually condemn everything in society, and I do feel extremely sorry for them.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): If this really is private members' hour, then any member can bring forward anything he or she feels important. But before you do that, I think it's very important to do research, to involve the communities most directly affected, and I believe there's where the weakness of this bill is.

I suggest to the member from Brampton Centre that had he conferred, discussed and interacted with the people who are directly involved, some of whom are here today and others who have written you, you would not have brought this bill forward. There's the weakness of a government that doesn't involve the people who are most directly involved in something. There's the weakness of this bill.

For that reason, I think the opposition is asking for the right thing to be done, for the bill to be withdrawn. But the reality is that this bill is not going to be withdrawn. I would have only hoped that the member from Brampton Centre would have addressed the needs that he wants to try to get across, that he isn't getting across because he hasn't listened to the Ontario Association of Food Banks. He didn't listen to the Sudbury Food Bank chair either, when he wrote the member and suggested that the best thing that could happen is the withdrawal of this bill, that in fact he put the resources that this bill would create—and let me tell you and let the people of Ontario know that if this bill were to pass, there would be an enormous bureaucracy built up. An enormous cost would have to be incurred to ensure that volunteers do their job the way this government wants.

Let me deal with the Inner City Home in Sudbury that's run by Mary Ali. The stats as of November 30, as of the end of this past month, indicate that they assisted

10,534 people. Of those, 3,628 were children; 4,600 families were assisted; 6,906 adults were assisted. Imagine for a second the bureaucracy, the red tape that would have to be created to number, to verify that so many cans of dented tuna went out to the needy. Imagine the bureaucracy that would grow. Imagine the penalty in this bill: If you make a mistake and you're a small food bank, you get fined \$5,000 and a possible prison term.

It is ridiculous to suggest that this bill does anything except beat up, again, on not only the most needy but those people who want to assist the most needy to ensure that they have something to eat every single, solitary day.

There was an excellent editorial in *Northern Life*. It suggested that it's time to close food banks; that government should ensure, the way their tax dollars are spent, that food banks would be able to be closed as opposed to being mandated to govern, to create red tape, to be bureaucratic, to punish those who wish to help people.

I'd like to quote briefly from this article. "How's this for a Christmas card message at the end of the millennium: Our tax dollars should be spent wisely and humanely." I would suggest to you that this bill is neither wise nor humane, and that's why everyone in this House should vote against it.

1150

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I have some grave concerns about this bill as well in that it does a couple of things, from my perspective. Some may or may not know that before I came to this place I, with the help of literally hundreds of others in my community, set up and ran a soup kitchen. I have to tell you what this bill would have done to us at that time and what it will do to others across this province if it becomes the law of the land, is it will inhibit and it will put a chill effect into any of these groups. All these groups want to do, all we wanted to do when we set up the soup kitchen in Sault Ste Marie, was to become a conduit. There were people in the community that we knew had the wherewithal, had extra food to provide to those who didn't, and we were the conduit.

They gave us the stuff and we gave it out. It was as simple as that. No bureaucracy, no big reporting mechanism, no board of directors, no meeting after meeting after meeting. It was simply hundreds of people gathering in the basement of a church, taking food from those who felt that they had enough to give and giving it to those who didn't. I have to say to you that this bill, if passed today, will put a chill effect into that work that goes on that is so important, particularly in these days when the poor are struggling so badly in this province.

The other thing that concerns me about the bill is its attempt to criminalize, again, the poor in this province. They've done it over and over again in the four years that they've been in government. With this bill, they are now going to dump the people who actually provide services to the poor into that same bag.

I object to that and say that it's wrong and it's bad, and I won't be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to stand up and recognize the member from Brampton Centre and the legislation he has brought forward in private members' hour.

That being said, there has been debate whether or not this is an appropriate time and purpose in the legislation. But I think my purpose in standing is to pay respect to the many volunteers—

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'm sorry, but your caucus is out of time. It was my mistake.

Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was watching the clock as I spoke because I wanted to make sure that my colleague had enough time to put his thoughts on the record and we actually had over four minutes on the clock.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton West.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Let me say at the outset that I honestly don't believe that Mr Spina is trying to be cruel, or mean, or do something that might appear to be evil deliberately. But I say very directly that that is the effect of what you're doing if you allow this to go through. I'm going to begin and end on the same note as some of my colleagues and ask you, over the next few moments, to please consider withdrawing the bill.

If you're serious about what you want to accomplish, there are representatives from the food bank community. I'm sure we could find opposition members who are prepared to sit down and try to do something on a non-partisan basis that would achieve what you want without doing the absolutely incredible, horrific, collateral damage that's being done by virtue of you putting this on the floor.

If you don't do that and you have enough of your colleagues stand up and force this through today, you have done something that borders on evil because what you've done is sent out a message about food banks that isn't true.

You're leaving the impression that there's all kinds of fraud going on and all kinds of problems out there with food banks and that's why, boy, you're going to step in and crack down again. That's not the case. In fact, this bill wouldn't even deal directly with the issue that spurred this in the first place.

You are ignoring the fact that it's your government that cut the income of the poorest of the poor by 22%. Who do you think is using these food banks? The people that you've pushed to the margins of society. And while you—and you supported it—while your government cut the income of the poorest of the poor by 22%, we know from the release of the Growing Gap that the top 10 CEOs in Canada, the majority of them centred here in Ontario, had a 56% increase in their compensation. We're talking millions of dollars.

Whether you know it or not, member, you're leaving the impression in my community of Hamilton that perhaps Joanne Santucci, someone I happen to know personally and can speak to her credibility and commitment, who is the executive director of the Greater Hamilton Food Share program, and all the groups that work with her—Good Shepherd Centre, Neighbour to Neighbour Centre, Wesley Urban Ministries, Mission Services of Hamilton, St Matthew's House, Operation Blessing, Welcome Inn, Salvation Army. Tell me which of those you think is committing fraud. What is so disturbing about this is that you don't even know. You're so insensitive to the plight of those who need food banks that all you can do when you finally admit they exist is to say, "We've got to crack down," like there's some kind of mafia deal going on here.

This is despicable in terms of the message that's going out of this place today, and the only way to make it right is for you to stand up today and withdraw this bill.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Brampton Centre has two minutes to reply.

Mr Spina: I want to thank all the members for their comments, agreeable or disagreeable. It's interesting to note that they seem to think that the use of my name should be an insult. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. I'm proud of my name and of my heritage.

The interesting thing is that the member for Parkdale-High Park, who ran a major food bank out west and then came to Toronto—you know, I wonder what planet these guys are on. I didn't hear him talk at any time about turning back part of his six-figure salary into helping the food bank operate better.

Mr Kennedy: It wasn't six-figure. Point of privilege.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock. Members will take their seats.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Sit down. The clock will remain stopped while we take some points of order. The member for Hamilton East.

Mr Agostino: I will defer to the member for High Park.

The Acting Speaker: The member for High Park.

Mr Kennedy: Mr Speaker, the member opposite is impugning a member of this House, raising completely inaccurate information. I ask that member to withdraw that information, because I believe it compromises both the order of this House and my privilege.

The Acting Speaker: Will the member withdraw?

Mr Spina: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Broadview-Greenwood.

Ms Churley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've sat in your shoes and I know it's difficult, but our NDP caucus lost about a minute on the clock and—

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'm not aware that that happened. If it did, I'm sorry, but what's done is done. Now, the member for Brampton Centre.

Mr Spina: The member for Parkdale-High Park made an interesting point, which I think is good. He said the particular bank that was errant, where the charges were laid, was delisted in 1990. I understand that, but the criminal part of it is that this food bank, even though delisted by the association, was able to continue operating for another eight or nine years. The point of it is that, with due respect to the Ontario association, there are 90 members. There are between 400 and 600 food banks in this province. As the member has indicated, we're not looking to chase after the church food bank. What are they going to do? They're going to have to close. If they're affiliated with a recognized charitable organization, they're fine.

I ask the people to support the bill. I ask the public to please ensure that when they make donations this Christmas—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 CONCERNANT LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item number 3. Mr Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 3, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about events at Ipperwash Provincial Park leading to the death of Dudley George.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will take the other vote.

FOOD BANK ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ DES BANQUES D'ALIMENTATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Spina has moved ballot item number 10, second reading of Bill 20, An Act to ensure that food banks account for donations.

Shall 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. It will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 CONCERNANT LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Members take their seats, please.

Mr Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 3. All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Marchese, Rosario
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martel, Shelley
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martin, Tony
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	McGuinty, Dalton
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Caplan, David	Guzzo, Garry J.	Peters, Steve
Christopherson, David	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, David	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing until your name is called.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Skarica, Toni
Baird, John R.	Johns, Helen	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	O'Toole, John	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Young, David
Hodgson, Chris	Palladini, Al	
Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 41; the nays are 46.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost. There will be a 30-second moment where people may enter or leave the chamber.

FOOD BANK ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ DES BANQUES D'ALIMENTATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Spina has moved second reading of Bill 20.

All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until your name is called.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Hudak, Tim	Spina, Joseph
Dunlop, Garfield	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary

Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder

Maves, Bart
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al
Sampson, Rob
Skarica, Toni

Tasca, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wood, Bob

language services are enhanced and expanded in the city of greater Sudbury.

To make it simple for the government, we want no less treatment than any other person in this province.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise and remain standing until your name is called.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Baird, John R.
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Chudleigh, Ted
Churley, Marilyn
Clark, Brad
Cleary, John C.
Coburn, Brian
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Curling, Alvin

Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Ecker, Janet
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario
Marland, Margaret
Martel, Shelley

Martin, Tony
Martiniuk, Gerry
Mazzilli, Frank
McGuinty, Dalton
Mushinski, Marilyn
O'Toole, John
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Stockwell, Chris
Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The eyes are 24; the nays are 55.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair and will return at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The people in my city and my community grow continually concerned about the direction that the restructuring is taking. In fact, in a letter written by the greater city chamber of commerce in Sudbury to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the chair suggested, "It is unconscionable to expect the taxpayers of the Sudbury area to bear this load"—of transitional costs—"when other communities in the province that have undergone similar amalgamation have received grants from the province." To do so is to show that this government "is not only unfair and biased, but demonstrates partiality and inequity."

That's a concern of the chamber of commerce in Sudbury. That concern was echoed last night at regional council. Unanimously, they passed a resolution asking this government to ensure that transitional costs are picked up by the government. They also passed a resolution, unanimously, to ask and petition the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ensure that French-

IZETTA HOBBS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): On this, the day we celebrate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I think it's important that we put some skin on the bones of that very important document and talk about some of the people who have lived their lives accordingly and were inspired by that and other documents of its sort.

In Sault Ste Marie, recently we lost just such a person in Izzetta Hobbs, a woman who in Sault Ste Marie exuded all those very important Canadian characteristics: humility, courage, sense of humour, compassion and generosity.

In Sault Ste Marie, the contribution of Izzetta Hobbs was recognized in many ways. She was founder of Big Sisters in our community. She was founding member of the Heart Foundation, the Canadian Hearing Society. She belonged to the Order of Royal Purple. She took leadership in the United Way and just recently, before she passed away, was very active in the development of the teen centre—in fact, Sault Ste Marie's oldest teenager.

It's so important that we remember people like Izzetta, who was recognized by our Governor General as one of Canada's caring Canadians, by the province of Ontario with the Senior Achievement Award, with Sault Ste Marie's Medal of Merit, with the United Way of Canada's Chair of Distinction award and as the Business and Professional Woman of the Decade.

As we search for the heart and soul of this wonderful country we call Canada, let's remember the spirit and drive of Izzetta. Let's be inspired by her great sense of generosity, compassion and community.

HANUKKAH

Mr David Young (Willowdale): Today is the sixth day of Hanukkah, the festival of light, a joyous holiday celebrated by Jews around the world. Hanukkah is an eight-day celebration within the Jewish community. It is a celebration where family, warmth and light are central images.

History tells us that the Greek kings outlawed the Jewish religion and forbade the study of Jewish law.

The desecration of the Temple of Jerusalem represented a continuation of the effort to erase Judaism. The Maccabees led a revolt against their oppressors in defence of their faith. They were successful in regaining control of the temple. This represented the first miracle.

The sacred lamp that was to burn eternally in the temple only had enough oil to burn for one day but continued to burn for eight days, representing the second miracle of Hanukkah.

Hanukkah was observed in the concentration camps and ghettos of eastern Europe. The interred remembered

how God helped the Maccabees fight their enemies. Using margarine from their daily rations as oil and a spoon as a menorah, the prisoners were able to celebrate the festival of light. As the Hanukkah light burned, it kindled a glimmer of hope. If God had provided a miracle to the Maccabees, then perhaps another miracle could save them.

Today Jews around the world celebrate Hanukkah with different traditions and customs, but the message remains clear. The values of freedom, religious tolerance, hope, peace, community and family are passed from generation to generation. As Canadians, we are fortunate to live in a land where these freedoms can be celebrated and enjoyed.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to talk again about the ongoing health care crisis existing in Hamilton-Wentworth. Yesterday I mentioned in the Legislature that in the last two months 25% of the time the emergency departments were on critical care bypass—over 1,000 hours in two months. Let me update the House on what's happening at this point.

As of today, the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals are at a 98% occupancy rate. As of this morning, 42 patients are waiting in the hallways of Hamilton hospitals to be admitted to a bed, waiting in emergency departments.

There are 175 people in long-term-care beds who should be in a long-term-care facility, not in a hospital ward—175 people occupying beds because we don't have long-term-care facilities.

This government announced 600 beds as of last year. As of today, not one of those 600 beds has been built. Therefore the crisis continues and continues. As of this morning, three of the four hospitals in the city of Hamilton were on redirect, and this minister yesterday had the gall to stand up in the House and brag about how much money they have put into the system, brag about how well they have done.

Why don't we tell that to the hundreds of patients who are being turned away? Why don't we tell that to the 42 patients who have been stacked in the hallways in emergency departments because we can't get beds for them? It's a disgraceful record of a disgraceful government that has abandoned health care, abandoned Hamilton and abandoned patients. Frankly, they are risking the lives of Ontarians every single day by their arrogance and inaction in health care in this community.

1340

QUITCARE PROGRAM

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): Quitting smoking can be a very difficult task. That's why I would like to inform the House about the Homewood Behavioural Health Corp's program called QuitCare.

Homewood is a renowned psychiatric institution in my riding of Guelph-Wellington. They have joined with Boehringer Ingelheim and the Lung Association to create QuitCare, a new program that devises strategies for smokers to break the habit. This program begins by helping individuals understand when, why and how they smoke. This knowledge is then used to design individualized programs.

QuitCare was developed through years of clinical research along with input from smokers themselves. This program is part of our government's \$19-million commitment to prevention of smoking programs for the year 1999-2000, a \$10-million increase over the year before. Homewood was granted \$354,000 to pilot this concept.

Our government is working hard to assist people to stop smoking and discourage others from starting. This is an investment in promoting not only better health for smokers, but preventing disease and offering opportunities to reduce overall health care costs.

QuitCare is available free of charge to over 1,000 smokers in Waterloo, Wellington and Dufferin counties. For those interested, they may contact the following number: 1-888-710-1111.

My congratulations to all involved in yet another innovative program underway in Guelph-Wellington.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

MÉMENTO DU MILLÉNAIRE

Mrs Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): I take great pleasure in rising today to recognize and praise the students of Canterbury High School. Last week these students, as well as other students in the Ottawa area, took the initiative and blew the whistle on the Harris government. They launched an ambitious, region-wide campaign to alert the public to the government's misuse of taxpayers' money, over \$2 million, to send students a millennium memento, the booklet *My Ontario Millennium Memento*.

Tandis que les programmes d'art dans leur école, Canterbury High School, sont menacés par les coupures budgétaires imposées par le gouvernement, l'argent des contribuables est dépensé sur ce livre souvenir. Les étudiants et les étudiantes sont inquiets de cet état de choses.

They are concerned that money is being spent on a keepsake while they do not have the textbooks they need to complete the new curriculum. These are students who have taken an interest in the political process, spotted a wrong and made a determined effort to have their voices heard. We must be proud of them.

Je félicite ces étudiants et ces étudiantes pour leur engagement, leur initiative et leur travail de concert avec les écoles françaises et anglaises de la région d'Ottawa-Carleton. Et à tous, je dis bravo.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise today to applaud a young student from my riding. Jenna O'Connor, a grade 7 student in Peterborough, is the

author of a poem which appears in the My Ontario Millennium Memento book. As the MPP for Peterborough, I would like to tell the members of this Legislature how proud I am of the accomplishment of students like Jenna.

I compliment the 80-plus young people who contributed to the publication of My Ontario Millennium Memento. The enthusiasm and vision of our young Ontarians in making their contribution to a keepsake book that will become history in the future is commendable. Our children dream dreams to shape our future.

This book is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity where students can record some of their life experiences. It will become a lasting legacy of the millennium and something that can be passed on to future generations. It exhibits originality, creativity and innovation and shows diversity.

Student excellence should be shown, and is evident in this publication. Let's say thanks, let's say congratulations, let's say, "Well done, young Ontarians, we are proud of you. Your plans will make your visions a reality." This publication was created for our future and by our future: young Ontarians. In the words of Jenna O'Connor, "So that in the future, we will pass the torch to our daughters and our sons."

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Over 40% of the population of southwestern Ontario is considered to be living in rural areas. Since its election in 1995, the Mike Harris government has walked further and further away from rural Ontario.

This government has centralized services rather than providing smaller communities with some control over their own affairs. This government has closed their offices in small communities, forcing people to travel to get the services that used to be just around the corner. This government treats people in rural Ontario like second-class citizens.

Rural Ontarians have a much more difficult time trying to find a doctor, thanks to the shortage this government has failed to solve. Rural schools are being closed. The downloading on municipalities means a rise in user fees, erasing the gains made by your so-called tax cuts. Family support regional offices are gone, and families and children have to do their work by phone. Last week the government betrayed the province's farmers by closing the regional offices in southwestern Ontario. They have slashed over \$8 million from the OMAFRA budget.

Now we see the Harris government threatening to pull out of the federal-provincial farm assistance program. The ministers in other provinces are worried that Ontario will pull up the stakes and abandon the interprovincial agreements.

I guess the Premier is too busy worrying about the squeegee kids in this province to think about rural Ontario. The government's answer to rural Ontario is, "Call 1-800."

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I would like to speak about something the Liberals attempted to make an election issue several months ago: the debt and the deficit. Actually, I'm glad the Liberals tried to talk about fiscal responsibility, because everyone in Ontario knows that they have no credibility when it comes to this issue.

I remember the Liberals saying how the Mike Harris government would have been able to balance the budget sooner had we not cut personal income tax rates in our province. But we all know that tax revenues have increased. So their argument is quite amusing, but sad as well. Does anyone in Ontario really believe that a tax-and-spend Liberal government would have been able to pay off the debt? I don't think so, and neither did the people of Ontario.

I've heard the tired story many times myself, how back in 1989 it was the Liberal government that introduced Ontario's last balanced budget. But let's look at the facts. In 1989 the Liberals actually predicted a deficit of \$577 million. It was the federal government that made an adjustment in personal income tax revenue that gave Ontario an extra \$882 million. An extra \$882 million means we should expect a surplus of \$305 million, right? Wrong. Liberal economics meant \$270 million was wasted, and Ontario had a momentary budget surplus of only \$35 million.

Does anyone expect the Liberals to be able to balance a budget in this province? I don't think so. Their fairy tales of fiscal responsibility are simply false, and, Dalton McGuinty, no one is being fooled.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY), 1999

LOI CHRISTOPHER DE 1999 SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr Tsubouchi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act, in memory of Christopher Stephenson, to establish and maintain a registry of sex offenders to protect children and communities / Projet de loi 31, Loi à la mémoire de Christopher Stephenson visant à créer et à tenir un registre des délinquants sexuels en vue de protéger les enfants et les collectivités.

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

1350

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(YOUTH PROTECTION), 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(PROTECTION DE LA JEUNESSE)

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to require a driver's licence to be suspended if a motor vehicle is used when purchasing sexual services from a child / Projet de loi 32, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour exiger la suspension du permis de conduire d'une personne si elle utilise un véhicule automobile alors qu'elle achète des services sexuels d'un enfant.

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

The member for Sudbury for a short explanation.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): It will be a short explanation. It's a Highway Traffic Amendment Act, a youth protection act. Section 41 of the Highway Traffic Act provides for the suspension of a driver's licence of a person who is convicted of committing offences while using a motor vehicle. The suspension is for one year for a first conviction. The bill adds to the list of offences in subsection 1(4) the offence under subsection 212(4) of the Criminal Code of Canada relating to purchasing the sexual services of a person who is under the age of 18 years.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): It is with pleasure that I rise today in the Legislature to make a commitment on behalf of our government about the future of our children with special needs.

Earlier today I was joined in Mississauga at the Erinoak children's treatment centre by some of these families. We cannot begin to know just how difficult nor how challenging their lives are, nor can we know how every day can bring with it a new hurdle to be cleared. But we do know that these families teach us all about the true meaning of dedication, strength and courage. As a result, the success these children achieve brings joy and pride into everyone's heart.

We are providing an additional \$7 million for respite services. This new funding will increase respite care by as many as 175 hours per year for each of the 1,700 families caring for children who are medically fragile or technologically dependent.

Today I am also announcing four community initiatives that will look at best practices in order to improve the delivery of services to medically fragile and technologically dependent children being cared for at home.

Simcoe county, Halton-Peel, Thunder Bay and Ottawa are the locations which have been selected for these integrated services initiatives. Clearly integration is a key to helping our special needs children realize their potential. By linking social, health, educational and recreational services together, we can create a model that can result in improved access for these families.

Today, we are also announcing \$4 million in new annual funding for children's treatment centres. This funding will help improve access to health services for children with special needs and their families across Ontario, who count on these centres.

All children are a priority for our government. That is why we must, above all else, continue to listen, to support and to communicate with children who have special needs and with all those involved in the daily lives of these children.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Earlier today I introduced a bill that would, if passed, provide stronger, more comprehensive legislation to establish a provincial sex offender registry, the first of its kind in Canada.

Ontario's new bill would include the following features:

Sex offenders would be required to register with their local police service within 15 days of their release from custody. This means that police will have information on the location of sex offenders on probation or parole.

Individuals who the courts have determined have committed sex offences but who receive absolute or conditional discharges would also be required to register.

Police would have the power to arrest sex offenders who break this law. Police would be able to obtain warrants electronically on short notice.

This bill would also require convicted sex offenders residing in Ontario to register their names and addresses with the police in their communities and to update that information on an annual basis or any time their address changes. This means that Ontario will be the first province to give police the ability to track the whereabouts of sex offenders. The information would be placed in a sex offender registry maintained by the Ontario Provincial Police and would be accessible to local police services.

The provincial government, under regulations pursuant to the Community Safety Act, has already given local police services the authority to disclose the names of sex offenders to protect the public. The sex offender registry is one way of assuring that local police become aware of sex offenders who may move into their communities.

When this legislation was first introduced last spring, we were still hopeful that the federal Liberal government

would create a national sex offender registry providing protection for all Canadians. Since it is now clear that the federal government will not accept its responsibility in this matter, Ontario will do what is right and act to protect its citizens.

The proposed sex offender registry legislation would continue to be known as Christopher's Law in memory of Christopher Stephenson, an 11-year-old boy abducted and brutally murdered by a convicted pedophile who was on federal parole when he committed this crime.

I'm also pleased at this time to advise the House that Anna and Jim Stephenson are with us today in the gallery. They have worked tirelessly to ensure that others may be spared the fate of their son, and I thank them for their efforts and their support. Also in the gallery is Wendy Carroll, who is also an advocate for victims. I thank all three for being here today.

This government is committed to making Ontario a safer place. Christopher's Law would contribute to that goal, which I believe is a goal shared by the members of this Legislature. It would not only send a clear message to those who would prey unto the vulnerable members of our society but also honour Christopher Stephenson and others who have been victimized by sex predators.

1400

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I'd like to respond to the announcement by the minister responsible for children. The minister would like us to see this as a great leap forward, but it is indicative of a timid and half-hearted commitment to the welfare of children when we have one small step forward today on top of four steps back.

Let's look at it directly. There's an announcement of \$7 million when in fact the need was identified over two years ago as being \$13 million for the special services at home program; \$4 million for child treatment centres that have already been cut back, that have been languishing for years, unable to respond to the increased needs of the deinstitutionalization of families.

As we look at the pilot projects this government talks about, committing itself to today, we can only contrast that with the findings of the Fraser Mustard-McCain report last year. Everyone in this House knows that we have information today that could make a substantial difference in the lives of all the children of this province. Instead, special-needs families have to beg all over the place, as they have in this House in the last number of weeks, for the services just to recognize their obvious and ostensible needs.

Minister, we haven't heard enough from you about the well-being of children, because that should be front and centre of your government's agenda. Instead, we have sidebar announcements. There's \$106 million that has been cut from special-needs funding in this province for education. You should be advocating for that money. Those families are advocating, the selfsame families that

made use of that health care money that you're announcing today. In fact, you should be advocating for a co-ordinated system so that those families—you so aptly remarked on their courage and their struggle for what most parents in this province can take for granted. Instead, Minister, what they want from you is to see that they don't get penalized by community and social—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Come to order, please. Member, continue.

Mr Kennedy:—these families receive enough understanding from the government, through you, Minister, so that they don't get penalized going from one ministry to the other as they try to get the basic essentials for their children, because it's simply not happening.

A member opposite asked for a commitment on the part of the Liberals. We made a commitment of \$15 million to the special services at home funding two years ago. Minister, the need is greater today. What they need to hear from you, loudly and clearly and on a frequent basis, is what those needs are. Frankly, taking the money away that we've taken from children in this province, the money you've cut from social services, millions and billions of dollars off the plates of poor children, simply doesn't square with the little bit of sprinkling you've done today. We welcome it, but we want a lot more for our province's children.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I will be responding to the Solicitor General's introduction of his bill. I want to tell him in a solemn way that I stand to respond inasmuch to the bill itself called Christopher's Law. I want to express to the family my personal prayers and sympathies. I would also extend them from the caucus and indeed I would feel free to say to the family from the entire House how saddened we were with this news. I did not personally know the family, but any such loss is a tragedy in our province today.

I speak also in favour of the bill to let the minister know that any law that can protect our children and any law that speaks to the goodness of our population is accepted on this side.

I want to also indicate to you that it's a good signal to the police and to the investigators who are involved in these cases, to give them the ammunition they need to wipe out this tragedy that's happening in our province.

With those words spoken, I would offer to you a hand out, as I promised to do. My hand out to you is a bill that was just offered to us by the member from Sudbury to discuss and to clearly indicate our commitment as well that the Highway Traffic Act, section 41, be amended, and we ask for your support in ensuring that children under 18 years of age are protected to a degree that I know you feel as well.

In our discussions, I did point out, Solicitor General, that 1995 is a long time ago when it comes to putting these kinds of bills on the books; 1995 required action

then. I would challenge all of us in this House that when these types of bills are available we do nothing else but expedite their passage and that we do nothing else but put the needs of Ontario children first and that we do nothing else but ensure that the population of Ontario understands very clearly that we are acting in their best interests.

Finally, I would also suggest and respectfully ask of the government to stop the fed-bashing, to stop blaming the federal government for inaction. It's time for us to hold our hand out and make this country better than what we already know it is.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): To the minister responsible for children's issues, this is a welcome announcement in that anything that makes the lives of these children better is to be welcomed, but it's not nearly enough and the minister knows that. In a government that has done so much to hurt children, this is a drop in the bucket. This minister has such a pathetic reputation for advocating for children within the government that children continue to be put at risk, and we've got a Premier who thinks child poverty statistics are hogwash.

There are still lots of children with special needs who can't get their needs met in the classroom because of your cuts to educational assistants. Look at their long-term-care regulations that limit care to two hours a day and take away any flexibility that community care access centres might have in addressing real needs. Children are suffering in a major way from this decision. Your welfare cuts are hurting children in a major way. Your recent cut to child care puts another 8,500 child care spaces at risk in Toronto alone, and you've abandoned your promise to expand child care as part of implementing the Fraser Mustard report. Your gutting of rent control means families are spending more than \$1,000 more in rent, money they could be spending on their children.

Minister, you made this announcement today. It's time that you stood up and defended your actions and answered the tough questions we're asking you about these issues, instead of continually handing them off to other ministries. Shame on you, Minister. I hope the next time we address some of these very serious problems, you will take the opportunity to tell us what you, as the children's advocate, are going to be doing about it.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The New Democratic Party caucus is eager to see the Solicitor General's bill go to second reading and out to committee so that we can work with this bill and make it the best possible piece of legislation that could exist within the limited context of what it does.

I share the Solicitor General's disappointment that the federal government did not embark on this exercise. It would be more appropriately done by the federal

government, which has supervision of the Criminal Code and of records, and would provide that provincial database, but in the absence of their action, I submit it's entirely appropriate that this province, or any other for that matter, embark in this direction.

This is but one of the many recommendations made by the jury in the coroner's inquest into the horrible murder of the young boy over 10 years ago now. I can't begin to imagine the pain that Christopher's parents and other family members and his friends must continue to feel, but I can applaud the incredible courage they demonstrate, by struggling and advocating and trying over the course of more than a decade now to ensure that the incredible tragedy that young boy was subjected to can perhaps be alleviated.

Is the registry the only answer? Of course not. But as you read the jury's recommendations—and my copy is dog-eared and tattered—with each reading, you say, “My God, what if?” or, “If only.” If this registry can save but one child, it will be a success.

Solicitor General, you are well aware of my private member's bill, Bill 9, which is a response to yet another of the recommendations made by the jury that involves police records checks. The bill is still before the committee. I'm pleased that the justice committee has undertaken to continue to examine the bill, to perhaps flesh it out and make it more effective than it would be were it passed in its present form.

As a community, let's respond not just to the proposition of sexual offender registries. You know the shortcomings here. They are not faults, they are shortcomings, because inherently in the proposition there are shortcomings. Let's try to flesh this out. The government has made a commitment to a process regarding volunteer screening. Our committee is just beginning to understand the incredible responsibility that involves, because of the huge number of volunteers who have control over and access to youngsters. Let's begin working on that as well.

Let's make this part of a broad-based package to protect kids in our communities across this province, to set models for other provinces, and to give the cops the tools and resources they need to apprehend predators promptly. And let's give the courts the resources to make sure that predators are dealt with appropriately, so that the community remains safe from them.

1410

FOOD DRIVE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I rise on the following point of order, Mr Speaker: Yesterday I wrote to you about establishing food receptacles in this building for the collection of food bank donations. In my letter I requested that we promote food drives in this building and in our other public buildings, as has been done in the past, especially at key times of the year such as Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving. This is a matter that falls under your direct authority.

This morning I met with representatives from food banks to facilitate a generous donation of grocery gift certificates and boxes of non-perishable food from the United Food and Commercial Workers. Also, you will know that this morning we defeated what I believe was a very mean-spirited bill that besmirched our food banks at a time when poverty, hunger and homelessness have grown alarmingly in Ontario.

By defeating the motion, this House clearly expressed its support for our food banks. We should now put our money where our mouths are or, more aptly, put food receptacles where our votes are.

Speaker, my point of order is to seek your speedy approval for placing food-collection bins at Queen's Park and in other government buildings so that we can have such a program operating in time for the coming holiday season. I ask for your ruling on this matter.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member will know it's not a point of order, but I would definitely like to meet with the member and assist in any way possible in helping in the endeavour he talks about. I would look forward to doing that and to working with the member.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for a member of each party to talk about international Human Rights Day.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous agreement? Agreed.

Hon Mrs Johns: First of all, may I say to the Stephensons that it's certainly an honour to have them in the Legislature. I know they have done some incredible work for the children of Ontario.

Friday, December 10, 1999, marks the 51st anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is a landmark document recognizing the dignity and inherent rights of people.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a history-making document. It was signed just three years after the end of the Second World War, the bloodiest conflict in human history, in which some elements of humanity descended to the worst and most wretched abuses of basic human rights. The declaration has proven to be a model for a wide variety of human rights protection here in Canada and around the world.

Human rights spring from our desire for fairness and respect. This government values Ontario's diversity and encourages equal opportunity for all citizens of this province. We believe that job quotas are a poor instrument to advance the cause of equal opportunity. Instead, we believe in a society that embraces merit and rewards individual achievement.

Through partnerships with organizations, employers and employees, we can make the workplace and society

inclusive. As individuals from different backgrounds, we expect to coexist peacefully, we expect to be treated justly by government and we expect to be free from discrimination based on our race.

Ontario has played a defining role in the history of human rights in this country. The Ontario Human Rights Commission was established in 1962, making Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada to establish a human rights code and a commission of its own.

Since then, the province and legislators have not looked back. The challenge of ensuring that all members of society are fully valued for their talent and contributions has made Ontario a key player in defining human rights in this country. We continue to support the Ontario Human Rights Commission in its ongoing efforts.

Over the past two years, the commission has made changes to improve its ability to deliver human rights protection in an effective and a timely way. These changes are yielding exceptional results, resolving more than 70% of the complaints going to mediation, usually within six months.

The former Supreme Court Justice Gérard La Forest recently observed that mediation has been used successfully in Ontario and it is allowing the Ontario Human Rights Commission to deal with complaints far more quickly and effectively.

These are truly remarkable achievements, and I'm proud of the work that the Ontario Human Rights Commission has done.

The anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights represents an important challenge for the world. All Ontarians can take pride in our accomplishments in the field of human rights, but we must not become complacent. We must continue to foster a climate of improving understanding and mutual respect between all people.

We must encourage efforts to create a more just and equitable society, a society that will provide equal opportunities to all its members for generations to come, a society that treats all its members equally in an ideal that all fair-minded people share. We're not yet there and we have progress that needs to be made.

As we approach the millennium, we must be vigilant in our efforts to protect human rights. It is our duty to educate future generations to understand that in the words of the declaration, "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): In 1948, world governments committed themselves to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That was 51 years ago.

Human rights are God-given. Civil rights are man-given. Since the declaration of Human Rights Day, many speeches have been made and more will be made. It might be a significant signal in identifying a day on which we can pause and pontificate about the horrors and

abuses of individuals, and sometimes talk about our achievements, but failure to do something about this is a travesty in its own right.

Responsibility for the protection of human rights rests primarily with governments. However, every individual and organization of society must strive to promote respect for human rights and freedoms.

We, as parliamentarians, are human rights advocates of the highest order. We are assembled to make laws to protect the rights of others, whether they are business people or homeless. We abdicate our responsibility when we fail to protect their rights.

The increase of homelessness on the streets of Ontario's major cities is indicative of the failure of governments to address one of humans' basic needs, and that is housing.

Home is a place to go when you are whipped, down and out, disillusioned and discouraged. There are far too many in our society who are not given the support that is needed. Sometimes, government policies deprive people of access to affordable housing.

The high rate of functional illiteracy among our First Nation and francophone communities stands as an embarrassment to a nation that brags of its wealth. As we move forward in a time of advanced technology, millions of our people in our province and in our country will be left out due to their lack of the basic skills to read and write.

We continue to see organized efforts to deny foreign-trained professionals access to their trades and professions. Such denial robs the dignity of individuals to provide for themselves, their families and, very important, to the country as a whole.

1420

The Ontario Human Rights Commission continues to ineffectively address the needs of those individuals whose rights have been violated. The lack of adequate resources gives way to the perpetrators to continue their abuse. As I listen to the minister, I know that she is well-intended, but I'd ask her to visit the human rights again and see people who are waiting four, five, six, seven years for things to be addressed. She shakes her head and, I tell you, my daughter is one of those that is so. I say that without directly pointing fingers at any government, but the institution itself lacks the clout and the ability to carry out an effective way of addressing human rights.

We have thousands of francophones in our province and a country that recognizes English and French as its official languages. Yet in our capital there are over 120,000 French-speaking Canadians for whom the provincial government has failed to protect these rights.

In the same city, the hospital restructuring commission decided to close the Montfort Hospital and deny the French-speaking community services in their own language. Subsequently, as you know, the court has struck down this decision. Alas, this government is in the process of appealing that decision, challenging the basic human rights of these citizens.

Ipperwash hangs over our heads as a disgraceful example of the handling of a peaceful demonstration that led to the death of Dudley George. The call for a public inquiry has been ignored by the government of the day. The silence of this government is deafening. As recently as this morning a debate was held in this House, and while members of the opposition spoke with deep emotion and compassion of the situation, appealing for a public inquiry, it was denied. Members of the government side were silent, except for one. The action today speaks loudly of the lack of commitment to human rights. I can hear what this government is saying. This speaks volumes of the government's disregard for basic human rights.

We watch with amazement as the democratic process erodes, as the government routinely restricts expressions of citizens of the province and duly elected members. Members who are given the authority to speak on behalf of their communities are denied their basic rights in this chamber. The lack of consultation limits the place, and the time in which members are allowed to put their constituents' viewpoints is curtailed. That is one of the most basic rights that is given in a democratic society.

Human rights are God-given and civil rights are man-given. The basic civil rights of literacy, housing, freedom of expression and freedom to receive care in this country's official languages are constantly denied and challenged.

A country, it is always said, is judged by the way it treats its people, especially those who are most disadvantaged and, my God, we've got them. We have them on the streets, homeless. We have those who are illiterate, who are unable to access decent jobs.

Let us leave a legacy as parliamentarians, as strong advocates for human rights.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I am proud to speak on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus on yes, I suppose, a celebration of the Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, an expression at the time, perhaps, of a universal embrace of those principles. We as Canadians and as Ontarians are oh, so inclined to look around the world and point out those abuses of human rights and feel oh, so much better for having done so. At the same time, and by virtue of being able to do that, we often fail to identify those human rights violations occurring right here in our own communities and being perpetrated by our own governments and by institutions within our own society and culture.

At the same time, while we want to point out those abuses of human rights, we far too often neglect to intervene effectively or sufficiently to ensure that human rights are maintained not just in Ontario, not just in Canada, but across the world.

We're living in a time in the western countries, and very much here in Canada, like in the United States, where inequalities are growing in our communities and our nations, where the incredible gap between the very wealthiest and the huge, growing numbers of poor is growing at an incredibly and rapidly accelerating rate and

where the middle class is losing any sense of economic security because their future appears gloomier and gloomier. What's more, those who can benefit, celebrate; those who do benefit, rejoice in those increasing gaps, those increasing inequalities.

There's also increasing inequality among nations, with our so-called First World nations benefiting. It's inside of those First World nations that we're seeing those huge and huge gaps.

Let me explain this to you. One billion people, one billion of this earth's population, survive on less than the equivalent of one dollar a day. Another two billion people on this earth sustain themselves on less than the equivalent of \$750 a year. That's almost half the world's population that lives in the most desperate and cruel of conditions.

We like to look at them from afar and we watch CNN and perhaps we make the occasional contribution to the knock on the door as volunteers canvass for any number of relief funds. But we are in no way prepared to ensure that the incredible wealth—it is as well concentrated in the hands of so few here in Ontario and Canada—to ensure that some of that wealth, some significant portion of that wealth, is allocated to that half of the world's population that has no participation in the prosperity of that increasingly small and concentrated group.

For example, the top three Microsoft executives, three individuals together, as a trio, control more wealth than the world's 50 poorest nations. Three individuals control more wealth than 50 of the world's poorest nations. They have no interest in accepting any responsibility for the fact that in no small part their incredible wealth is a result of the incredible poverty and deprivation of so much of the world's population.

I found it interesting that it was a rather conservative American personality, Donald Trump, a very wealthy man, who made the observation and then the proposal that perhaps the response to the debt isn't to call upon the poorest people in your community or society to pay it down, it isn't to call upon working women and men. I'll tell you what Donald Trump's proposition was: Were there a one-time-only tax on the wealth of the richest Americans, those Americans who have net assets in excess of \$10 million, excluding their family home—you're talking about a very elite group of people—in other words, their net assets, excluding their family home, exceed \$10 million. Were these very wealthy Americans to pay a one-time-only flat tax of 14.25%, the American debt of trillions of dollars would be eliminated.

It took Donald Trump to understand that the debt has also guaranteed the prosperity of some of the very wealthiest and richest people in the American community, in the American nation, in their society, and I dare say in ours as well.

1430

We can speak with as much aloofness and, my goodness, self-accomplishment as we wish about human rights. We can take pride in signing the petitions. We can take pride in rising on a day like today and crying out for

human rights nationally and internationally. But it takes more than mere words, and that's one thing the world has learned since the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights: that it requires far more than words.

If we really want to have a conversation about not just protecting but, for so many, building human rights in the first instance, we have also got to talk about the incredible inequities suffered by so many internationally, nationally and indeed here in the province of Ontario, provincially.

At the end of the day, the guiding light seems to be the expansion of financial markets. At the end of the day, the primary driver of policy seems to be what's in the interests of corporations, increasingly those huge multinational corporations whose sole and primary interest and function is to create profits and which, by virtue of their nature, have no heart and have no soul. This drive to sustain corporate profits and to facilitate and accommodate multinational corporations brings with it huge new inequities and huge new breaches of human rights nationally and internationally.

Governments which preach against governments, governments which preach against governance, and governments which abandon democratic principles and practices inherently deny human rights but also deny their capacity to control and regulate so that better equities are achieved as compared to the incredible inequities that we suffer from now.

The politicians join in the profit motive. They talk about how the market will prevail, how the market will drive our economy—this has got to be said—how the market will create and provide for access by so many more to the good things that are there. Tell that to the people in Toronto and other cities of this province who increasingly find themselves homeless because rents are escalating beyond their capacity, and where the private sector, where the corporate sector, where the for-profit sector has no interest and no capacity to provide housing for low-income and other poor persons. Governments now insist that the market conditions must prevail and that they will serve the community.

Let me speak to you about what rural workers in Brazil, where they struggle against not just homelessness but against landlessness, say. They say that the state and the government may very well be the cage that holds the citizens but we must expand the floor of the cage so that we can all fit inside, because roaming outside of that cage are tigers. Those tigers are those huge corporations. So in fact those people who advocate less state, less governance, less government, are advocating for throwing the workers and the vulnerable and plain folk out of the cage to the tigers.

Here in this House we hear members protesting observations made by so many others, telling us that poverty among children is but a fiction, telling us that it's good to punish the poor, that we should give more to the very rich, the richest of the rich, while taking away those modest services that we all need in order to prosper as a community and as a society.

Here in the province of Ontario we still suffer from, and witness far too often, the blackness and bleakness of anti-Semitism. We see the growth of hate movements, of the neo-Nazi movements, and we see their expressions of anti-Semitism; we see the desecration of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues. We witness and suffer racism. We as Canadians want to be oh, so polite and insist that we're not really racist, but racism still permeates so many of our institutions and it indeed infects so many of our own lives.

This government recently acknowledged the rights of same-sex partners but didn't do it out of any celebration of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It did it because it was forced to by the courts of this province and this country.

We still see women suffering inequities in the workplace, suffering from continual violence by men; and their children. We see governments abandoning philosophies of employment equity, philosophies and principles that would protect those people who have been denied access to workplaces, women and members of minorities and the disabled. We see governments like this one abandoning those policies so that the doors, once again, are locked, bolted and barred to those people in our workplaces.

Let's not forget this province was found to be in violation of the UN's International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. I put to you that the human rights agenda here in Ontario has been set back by decades, and the UN's observer here noted that it has been done through legislation and practice by this government of Ontario.

Today this House was compelled to debate a bill that would punish food banks, those communities of volunteers that do their best to try to ensure that their hungry and impoverished neighbours are fed. Huge corporations, and governments which serve only them, don't respect, nor do they defend, nor do they understand or acknowledge human rights.

Child labour: The reality is that if child labour were legal here in Ontario, corporations would be utilizing it, and the proof is in the pudding because in places where it is legal they are forcing children to work for menial wages.

Environmental rights: If large corporations could get away with pouring gallons upon gallons of toxic waste into our lakes and rivers or into our air here in Ontario, they would, and they are, and the proof is in the pudding because in places where they can, they do. We need governments and politicians who will fight for the needs and the rights of average citizens, working people, their parents, retirees, for children and students, to protect all of us from the tigers.

We speak of human rights, yet this Legislature has ignored the right of adult adoptees to have access to birth information. Our colleague Marilyn Churley presented a bill in the last Parliament, and I'm confident she will pursue in this Parliament that same agenda. As we celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Human Rights,

please let this government make a commitment to ensure the human rights of those adult adoptees in Ontario who do not have the right, but should, and must, to access their birth records.

Promoting human rights is about valuing each person in our society, each person in this global community. To value a person, we have to provide an environment where every person, whether vulnerable or very powerful, can thrive to the best of his or her abilities. It means providing supports to ensure that she or he can meet the demands placed upon them.

Let's celebrate the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Let's celebrate the martyrdom and lives and courage and sacrifice of—I'll name but two—Leonard Peltier, from the American Indian Movement, who remains imprisoned on trumped-up charges. Let's celebrate the sacrifice and the courage of Mordechai Vanunu who, for over 10 years, endured solitary confinement after being abducted and tried secretly in Israel for disclosing plans and the de facto nuclear weapons development there.

Let's celebrate these people and understand that our commitment to human rights has to include a commitment to them and to others like them. It also has to include a commitment to each and every one in our families and in our own communities. It means not just speaking of human rights but ensuring them. It means calling upon those to make sacrifices to give effect to it.

1440

ORAL QUESTIONS

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Attorney General.

The Attorney General has a very important role as our senior legal official in the province. The minister will know that this morning a bill I had before the Legislature, that would have required the establishment of a public inquiry into the events around Ipperwash, to begin when all legal matters were dealt with, was rejected by the government. The government said, at the time, that it was their position that this bill should not be before the House because of section 23. I gather this is a legal opinion from you, Attorney General.

Section 23 says it shouldn't be "where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Speaker that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding." Minister, my question is: You have looked at the bill. I assume it was your legal opinion that allowed the caucus to reach this view. Is it your legal opinion that proceeding with my bill would create real and substantial danger of prejudice?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As was pointed out by the government whip, the deputy House leader, who spoke to the private member's bill—I might add that this

was a private member's bill brought by the member opposite. It was not a bill brought forward by a party or the official opposition or by the government. It was a private member's bill that was dealt with by all members, who vote according to their view of what their vote ought to be on the bill. Indeed, there was a division on the two private members' bills today, in which some members of different parties voted different ways on different bills, which is the right and privilege of members of this Legislative Assembly as the member opposite well knows.

The standing order to which the member makes reference refers to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination. Indeed, that's the essence of the difficulty with the bill. There is a very serious criminal appeal and cross-appeal reserved by the highest court in this province and currently under consideration by that court, the Ontario Court of Appeal.

Mr Phillips: The minister without portfolio, Mr Klees, said, "I rise on behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House to say that the government has in fact decided not to debate this bill."

I want to ask you again, Minister, because the reason the government has decided not to proceed with this bill and to debate it is a very serious legal matter, and I want you, as our senior legal official in the province of Ontario, to listen to this question very carefully. Have you and your officials reviewed the bill and have you concluded, as you indicated earlier, that it is in contravention of this section 23 of the standing orders and that my bill would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceedings? Is that, Mr Attorney General, your view and your department's view?

Hon Mr Flaherty: As the member knows, or I believe he knows, the principle involved here is a very serious one and requires members of the Legislative Assembly, I would suggest with respect, to exercise caution in what we say or don't say about matters that are sub judice, matters that are before the courts.

The reason for that is that the Legislature ought not to be seen, and we as members ought not to be seen, and the Attorney General ought not to be seen, as trying to influence in any way proceedings that are before our impartial tribunals and certainly before the judicial branch of government. I think that principle is fundamental and I'm sure—I hope—it's shared by the member opposite.

We have been clear and consistent. We will only consider other options after matters before the courts have been exhausted. That has been the position of the government throughout and it remains the position of the government.

Mr Phillips: Your cabinet colleague today got up and told the people of Ontario that you were not going to even debate the bill because in the government's legal opinion it violated section 23 of the standing orders. I remind you that that says it would be the government's opinion that it would "create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding."

You have a very unique position. You have a difficult and important one. You have to uphold the law. I assume, Minister, and tell me if I'm wrong, that you looked at the bill, that your officials looked at this bill, that it must have been your legal advice that the caucus and the cabinet sought. I say to you again, is it your legal opinion that this bill constitutes "real and substantial danger of prejudice" and will you agree to table the legal opinion you based that decision on?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I repeat to the member and to all members of the House that there's a very important principle involved when one is dealing with matters that are before either our courts or our tribunals. The member's bill referred to what might happen in the future. There are several civil proceedings and a major appeal and cross-appeal involving the liberty of the subject before the courts of Ontario, with a criminal proceeding having been argued and under consideration right now by the Ontario Court of Appeal judges, who heard the appeal.

We should show respect for that branch of government. We should give them the opportunity to express their views about the issues that are before them. That is why the standing order refers to matters, to issues that are pending in a court before a judge. The standing order, in my view, is there for good reason: as guidance for all of us in this place.

Mr Phillips: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: He is misleading the House.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: I withdraw that comment, but—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Take your seat. I'm going to listen to the point of order and I would appreciate if the government members do not shout, "That's not a point of order." I will be the one who will decide that.

Mr Phillips: This matter is of extreme importance, and the Attorney General will want to tell the people of Ontario that it says matters may be ruled out of order, and I'll quote the entire section:

"Refers to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding

"(i) that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination, or

"(ii) that is before any quasi-judicial body constituted by the House or by or under the authority of an act of the Legislature,

"where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Speaker that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding."

I don't believe the Attorney General can ever prove that.

1450

The Speaker: The members will know that this Speaker was not asked to rule on a point of order on that. Members can answer in private members' hour however they choose. I did not rule the bill out of order, however.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Very briefly, I would just refer you to your comments yesterday about the clock, what it means to the third party and what just happened.

The Speaker: Yes, I will try to move up very quickly. This time I will stop the clock.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If the opposition chooses to use part of the question period to enter into debate by raising points of order, then the clock should continue to run, in our opinion.

The Speaker: I thank the government House leader. I will decide when the clock runs and when it does not and I will stop it when I see fit.

Applause.

The Speaker: I appreciate the members clapping in support of a ruling. I also know there will be occasions when they won't be happy, and we don't want any booing in here, so I would appreciate it if all members wouldn't clap on my ruling, especially since sometimes there may be no clapping on my ruling whatsoever.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, I asked your predecessor a question last year, last fall, when the Provincial Auditor exposed probably the most scathing report, over the now infamous Andersen Consulting contract, in the history of the provincial government. At that time, when we asked this predecessor of yours the question, she acknowledged in this House: "We've certainly acknowledged that the management of this contract left much to be desired. It's one of the reasons why we have the third party review in, to help supplement recommendations from the auditor so we can ensure the taxpayers' money is indeed protected."

Yesterday at committee the Provincial Auditor once again reported on all of the events to date and gave you yet another review. We'd like to ask this minister today, agreeing that you had a bomb dropped in your lap by your predecessor, and the scathing report, what have you done to date to acknowledge that this contract should have been scrapped when we suggested it?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I'm certainly aware of the review that the Provincial Auditor conducted and his report of November 1998. The report that he issued this morning I think simply reiterates the concerns he raised in November 1998.

Like every other single member of this place, I was extremely angry when I saw that report last year. I was not happy then; I'm not happy now. My predecessor said, when commenting on the auditor's report last year, that the early mismanagement of the project was unacceptable, and I agreed.

We have responded to many of the auditor's recommendations. We conducted a third party review by Mr Hession, with Hickling, Lewis and Brod, who confirmed that there are hundreds of millions of dollars of benefits to the taxpayers that will accrue as a result of the project. We've improved the financial management. We've improved the contract compliance. We've made some strategic organizational changes and put an assistant deputy minister in charge of the project. We've strengthened project governance. I have a team of three ADMs leading up our efforts in this regard.

We want to build a better welfare system—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Mrs Pupatello: I wonder if this minister has been angry for six months, because that's how long you've been the minister, and the third party review came in in February of this year. That means before you were even named the minister for this position, the third party review was in.

That third party review said it is in substantial agreement with the findings of the Provincial Auditor. So you had the review in last February. You assumed your post this past summer. You've had it in your lap, apparently angry, for six months and you have done nothing.

The auditor this morning at committee said that the ministry has done nothing to improve the negotiated deal. That third party review told you that what we said in the House a year ago was true: \$180 million was the minimum. There are no caps. The expenses can go through the roof and you cannot control them. All of those elements should have been addressed.

Minister, don't tell me you've been angry for six months. Your ministry has done nothing. I want to know whether it is incompetence or whether you just continue to pay the private sector for what your own ministry could have been doing on its own.

Hon Mr Baird: I want to respond to the last comment the member opposite made, that the ministry could simply have undertaken this initiative on its own. We waited 10 years for the government of Ontario to take some action on a welfare system that was out of control, and nothing happened. Absolutely nothing happened. We inherited a welfare system that was out of control, a welfare system with more than a million people on it, a welfare system that was so out of control we found 3,000 people in jail collecting welfare.

For the member opposite to stand in her place and criticize this government's attempts to clean up an out-of-control system astonishes me. The only welfare reform policy that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party put forward in the last election campaign was to jack up the welfare rates and return to the money-for-nothing policies. This government won't go back. We won't turn back the clock.

Mrs Pupatello: Let's give the House the facts from this morning's committee meeting. What the Provincial Auditor told us is that you, defender of the taxpayer, paid

Andersen Consulting \$55 million out of your \$66 million saved. You took five-sixths of your money and handed it to the private sector. Do not come in here like you're some kind of hero for taxpayers. You handed over \$55 million to a private company after the Provincial Auditor told you that that was an inappropriate contract.

We are asking this minister again: Will you break this contract with Andersen? It is the right thing to do for Ontario taxpayers.

Hon Mr Baird: Even the Provincial Auditor hasn't said that we break the contract. What we did was bring in outside experts to help us get control of a welfare system that was out of control, a system with more than a \$6-billion budget and with antiquated technology that belonged in a museum.

As the member opposite has said, in the very early stages of this process the government, through the help of the firm we are working with, has been able to save \$66 million. Where did we save this money? We brought in this company, and they have been helping us root out fraud and abuse. We found one person on social assistance who had a gold credit card and who was making monthly payments in excess of the welfare benefit.

This government took action. We brought in outside expertise to help us get control of welfare fraud and to help us get control of welfare abuse. Your party was simply not prepared to do anything. To sit by and do nothing, to us, was simply not an option.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): It's not a surprise that my question is also for the Minister of Community and Social Services.

I want to quote from the Provincial Auditor's follow-up report on the continuing corporate rip-off of Andersen Consulting. This is what he says December 3, 1999, "In light of the significant payments already made to Andersen Consulting at rates which the ministry cannot control, the delays in the completion of the deliverables and our concerns about the workings of the cost and benefit pools, we continue to question the achievement of value for money for the taxpayers." That's what he says. He points out that the rip-off is getting worse.

Let me give you one example: computer inputting. Your own employees can do computer inputting for \$28 an hour. You pay Andersen \$85 an hour. Is that what you call value for money? You give Andersen Consulting \$85 an hour for computer inputting when your own employees can do it for \$28?

Hon Mr Baird: I'm not going to defend the early mismanagement of this project, which I believe was unacceptable. The member opposite is obviously prepared to defend the unacceptable welfare regime that he and his party left in place. The recent audit of the Provincial Auditor is just an exchange of letters and phone calls. There has not been a follow-up audit to his 1998 report.

Our motive is to build a better welfare system, to try to work to ensure that the project is successfully completed

and that it continues to save the taxpayers money. We want to ensure the project is completed on time. We want to ensure the project is completed on budget. We do, of course, want to also seek to renegotiate rates. That's an objective of this government as we finish the first third of this part of the project.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

1500

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Minister, it's the continuing gross mismanagement under your leadership that we're worried about.

For goodness' sake, your government has now given a gift—a gift—of \$58.5 million to Andersen Consulting. The auditor made it clear in his report again this morning that Andersen has been paid for work that has nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with your business projects. He made it clear again this morning that the costs Andersen is claiming are grossly inflated because of the high hourly billing rate. The auditor made it clear again this morning that you are under no obligation, no contractual obligation whatsoever, to pay Andersen one cent until the benefits of the project exceed the costs; and they never have.

You have been made aware by your deputy of the auditor's concerns several times. Your deputy made it clear this morning that you have been briefed about these concerns on a number of occasions, and you've done nothing. Are you now prepared to stop any further payments to Andersen Consulting? Are you prepared to do something?

Hon Mr Baird: In the province of Ontario, we don't pay Andersen Consulting one single cent unless a benefit is accrued to the taxpayer. If the member opposite wasn't so selective in her use of the facts, she might have a point, but she is selective with the facts.

An independent assessment was done by Ray Hession and Hickling Lewis Brod. They conducted an independent review, and this independent review said that more than \$66 million of benefit to the taxpayers has already been accrued.

They came in and helped us fix the process. I want to tell you what some of them did. We found one person with a gold credit card who was making monthly payments that exceeded their welfare cheque. We found a person collecting welfare for eight years who was receiving unemployment benefits because they had lost their job while on welfare—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member take his seat. Order.

Hon Mr Baird: Working with our private sector partners, who are helping us develop a process and technology, we found a person collecting welfare who had a line of credit at a local hardware store. This welfare recipient was charging building supplies. Why? Because he needed them for his job.

We weren't going to sit back and wait two or three years to implement their anti-fraud measures. No fraud is acceptable for this government, and when we find fraud,

with the help of Andersen Consulting, we're going to stamp it out.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): You and your government are tough on what you call welfare fraud, but when it comes to corporate fraud it's A-OK, anything goes, you write them a blank cheque.

You should have been at the committee this morning, because your deputy minister confirmed exactly what Mr Peters, the Provincial Auditor, had to say, and that is that you have paid out \$58.8 million to Andersen Consulting when your contractual obligations required you to pay not one penny. Your largesse to Andersen Consulting has been remarkable. Andersen Consulting has robbed the treasury of Ontario and you're driving the getaway car. When are you going to put a stop to the corporate fraud, the corporate theft that Andersen Consulting is engaging in and return these monies back to the public coffers?

Hon Mr Baird: I don't share the comments of the member opposite.

What our independent assessment done by Hickling Lewis Brod and Ray Hession has clearly said is that more than \$66 million of benefit has already accrued to the taxpayers of Ontario. By the time we're through with this project, we'll be able to save the taxpayers more than \$200 million a year. I think that's good news.

We brought these people in to try to help us clean up the mess that you left us, a system that was so out of control that we had more than 3,000 people in jail collecting welfare; a system that was so out of control, welfare fraud was everywhere, welfare abuse was everywhere. The worst thing about it was that your government, your caucus, your cabinet weren't prepared to do one single thing about it. Well, this government is taking some actions to clean up the mess we inherited from you.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Acting Premier, but I just want to say that Andersen Consulting certainly has a friend in your government.

It is one year to the day since the Kyle Martyn coroner's inquest made their recommendations regarding hospital emergency wards in this province. I just want to recount what has happened in one year. This week we see 23 of 25 hospitals in Toronto turning ambulances away. The number of hours emergency wards closed their doors to ambulances was 14 times higher in October of this year than in October 1995, a jump from 73 hours to 994 hours over that time period.

One year since those recommendations came down, how do you justify a situation that is getting worse by the day? How do you justify the fact that in hospital after hospital emergency wards are shut down or on redirect?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I think everyone in this House and everyone in the province is concerned about any issue

related to the delivery of health care in Ontario. Emergency room pressures are not a new issue to this province. Numerous examples exist of this happening under previous governments and I could go through the headlines that were published in both opposition parties' term of government.

Last year our government established an emergency services working group in partnership with the Ontario Hospital Association. Our government has invested more than \$300 million to address the specific question of emergency room pressures. The government is implementing all 25 recommendations of the working group in partnership with the Ontario Hospital Association, recommendations such as \$75 million more for hospital emergency room funding. I could go on at some length, but I know the member has some more questions.

Mr Hampton: Yes, I do have a supplementary question and it involves this: When you talk to nurses out there, they will tell you that the money you say you've allocated is not nearly enough to deal with the situation your government created through your cuts.

Think about it: One in four ambulances in Hamilton is being turned away from hospital emergency wards. The Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital turned away ambulances every other day so far this month, and they had never closed their doors before this summer. You say you're doing something, but in hospital after hospital, community after community across this province, the situation is actually getting worse despite what you say you're doing.

The only response I can see is your Bill 23, which would give the Minister of Health almost unilateral powers to close hospitals or to order hospital services. Can you give us a guarantee that you're going to use Bill 23, an incredible power for the Minister of Health, to reopen the beds you've closed, to go out there—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member's time is up.

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned, I think everyone is concerned about delivery of health care right across Canada, and in particular your example of the problems in the emergency rooms. This government has invested substantial resources, working with our partners, the Ontario Hospital Association, and working with the nurses' union. They've set up a task force. They've made recommendations. We've accepted all of their recommendations and are in the process of implementing them. We're looking for solutions that will help the people of Ontario access health care when they need it and where they need it and there have been some early signs of positive results.

Yes, there is more work to be done and I know the Minister of Health will continue to work with our partners who deliver these services to make sure that Ontarians get the health care we need and deserve.

1510

HIGHWAY 407

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Two weeks before the spring election call your government announced the sale of Highway 407 to a private consortium. We have asked your government to make the details of that sale public, but you continually refuse to do so. Well, eight months later it's now clear why. The users of the 407 are simply being gouged; 99 years of toll charges, skyrocketing fees, administrative fees higher than bank charges, unsuspecting motorists losing their licences, no accountability and no due process. Worse still, the government is acting as a Cadillac collection agency for the private consortium by collecting late toll charges for them and then adding on a \$30 administrative fee on top of that.

Minister, as your friend Al Leach, now a board member of the 407 consortium—nudge, nudge, wink, wink—might say, “This is a boondoggle.” When will you end the shroud of secrecy surrounding this? Will you today release the details of the Highway 407 contract? The people deserve to know.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): In fact, there has been an FOI request on this and the ministry was ready to release it; however, under the due process set up under the system, there was an objection to this. It is being examined at this moment, and if it is cleared we will then continue to release the information.

Mr Gravelle: Minister, just five years ago in this House you stood here as transportation critic for your party and you condemned—and I will quote you: “... the absolutely scandalous conditions of the awarding of the Highway 407 contract and the fact that the public has absolutely no access to the information surrounding the awarding of a contract.”

Interjections.

Mr Gravelle: That's what he said.

Ontarians today have a right to know what deal their government has made on their behalf, objection or no. They have a right to know why the government is giving the ETR consortium special treatment, and indeed you are. They have a right to know why Highway 407 tolls are the highest in North America and why this faceless consortium is victimizing motorists.

In 1994 you called these same conditions scandalous. Do you not agree that a deal that is so shrouded in secrecy, which allows motorists to be gouged for the next 99 years, is equally scandalous? Minister, do you not agree?

Hon Mr Turnbull: No, and I'll tell you the reason why. Quite simply, as I stated in my original response, we are in fact ready to release those details. There is an impediment. Somebody from the private sector has objected to the release, and these are the arrangements that were set up, I believe, by your government at the time, if I'm not mistaken. We're ready to move ahead.

The terms of the contract were the most carefully thought out decision of our government, which ensures—
The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Transportation take your seat. I can't hear the question when members are talking to each other across the floor and not listening to the answer.

Hon Mr Turnbull: Our process ensures that the road will be built out to the western extension and the east partial for the cost of half a billion dollars at no cost to the taxpayer. As far as the privatization is concerned, I want to tell you, sir, we got awfully good value for the taxpayers, something your government didn't know about.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): My question is for the minister responsible for children. Across Ontario there are children in constant need of medical attention and, as such, cannot participate in a normal childhood existence. Families who have children with multiple special needs find it difficult if not impossible to have their children participate in school or play. Some are dependent on medical technology, which puts further constraints on their lives.

Minister, I understand that earlier today you announced new government initiatives for children with multiple special needs. Could you please tell us exactly what this means for families across the province who require respite care?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I'd like to thank the honourable member for Carleton-Gloucester for this important question and to commend him for his representation of the interests of these children, not only in his riding but across the province.

I'm delighted to tell him that the announcement I made this morning was \$11 million in new funding for special-needs children. This includes \$7 million of additional respite care for families and caregivers with medically fragile and technologically dependent children who are being cared for at home.

Our government recognizes the enormous sacrifice and dedication that these families make, because these children require constant, 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week care. There are about 1,700 of these families—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Answer.

Hon Mrs Marland:—and they require observation every single moment.

I will just say finally that it's \$3,500 per child and that's an additional—

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Coburn: We also recognize that families are tremendously dedicated in caring for their multiple-special-needs children, and this involves a great deal of time and energy from those families that are affected.

The announcement today of new funding for children's treatment centres in the new fiscal year as part of our government's overall special-needs initiative is

surely a welcome one. Could you please tell us how children using these centres across Ontario are going to benefit from this news.

Hon Mrs Marland: Children and youth across Ontario who use the children's treatment centres will benefit from this great news. It was \$4 million, in fact, that I announced this morning. That's a 7% increase to their Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funding. The money will improve access to health care services for these special-needs children and their families.

The good thing that happened this morning was that Valerie Elliott Hyman, the chief executive officer of the Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services—

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mrs Marland:—was present and she said she was pleased and grateful to have this funding from our government.

It was kind of interesting when earlier today the Liberals said this was a sidebar announcement—

The Speaker: I'm sorry, the minister's time is up.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. We heard about the boondoggle in a prior ministry she was involved in. I want to talk to you about the current boondoggle you're helping with, and that's this Millennium Memento business.

You allowed these mementoes to go to all your schools and you also allowed, I guess, or encouraged people in the education community. But you'd be interested to know what the people who were consulted now say about this book: "Students can't see this as a positive gift," says Lindy Amato, "because they have to live with school cutbacks. It's a waste of taxpayers' money." Bill Reith says: "The priorities of this government are mixed up. I am not happy with my name being a part of this book." Today we had parents come in from around the province who say that you don't know what's happening in the real world, and one of them is a parent from Guelph who has raised \$3,000 to buy textbooks since the beginning of this year.

I want to ask you, as Minister of Education, do you not agree that the \$2.4 million that was wasted on this memento and the \$306,000 that's supposed to be spent to put it in school libraries would be better spent on textbooks in the schools that you're responsible for? Don't you agree?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I know the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation would like to answer this question.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): As the member opposite knows, these books came out of the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Let me read a letter that says:

"A secondary school teacher has approached one of the constituency offices. This teacher is going on a

teaching exchange to Australia and has requested that we supply him with materials unique to Ontario so that he can bring them to school with him when he teaches. He has requested supplies of 30 copies of My Ontario Millennium Memento book to bring back with him for distribution to the libraries in the area schools. He feels it would be an excellent opportunity for students from other sides of the globe to have a glimpse of life of students in Ontario."

This teacher is departing early in January. Guess who said that. Steve Peters. The EA for Steve Peters—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up. Final supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order. Sorry, member, the clock is stopped. We'll wait till it's quiet. Member.

1520

Mr Kennedy: My supplementary is to the Minister of Education because, Minister, the question was to you. Do you not agree that the money spent on this, almost \$3 million, would be better spent on textbooks? For example, at a school like Alexander Graham Bell school in your riding—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Labour, come to order, please.

Mr Kennedy: Thank you, Mr Speaker. At Alexander Graham Bell school in Ajax, where the Minister of Education recently visited, she was made fully aware that teachers like Tim Ralph and Jackie Moro don't have the resources; they do not have the textbooks. The principal of Alexander Graham Bell school—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think it's unfair that at the back they're beating up Steve Peters and I think you should—

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. Member.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Niagara Falls, come to order. Thank you. The member's time was almost up, if he could wrap it up quickly, please.

Mr Kennedy: The point the minister fails to recognize is that teachers in her own riding, including the principal—Mr Ayott says he has \$9,000 to spend on books, 10% less than last year. Half the students in his school don't have textbooks. None can take them home. They have to share textbooks. There's a shortage of money for textbooks, Minister.

The Speaker: The member's time is up. Minister.

Hon Mrs Johns: I would just like to read another letter out and let me say that this one is not from the executive assistant of one of your members. This is from the outgoing chair of the Rainbow District School Board. He says:

"Just a note to advise you that after I spent 10 minutes on TV regarding My Ontario Millennium Memento, I

received all kinds of calls from citizens at large wanting a copy, contrary to the Liberal hoopla. So ignore the political MPP from Sudbury and his negative attitude. I reckon that the secondary teachers should also be ignored for using students in an effort to discredit the democratically elected government. So don't lose faith. There are many parents and kids who will enjoy the books in a few weeks ..."

Let me just remind the members opposite that this was a modest amount of money invested, less than \$1 a student, to make sure that the children of this province were able to recognize their hopes, their dreams, the future in 2020.

This government has put half a billion dollars into books—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up. Thank you very much. Stop the clock.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to seek unanimous consent to have Steve Peters ask a supplementary.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? I heard a "no." Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would you put five seconds back on. New question.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is to the Minister of Correctional Services. The Ministry of Correctional Services is in the process of restructuring its correctional system by replacing older and less efficient facilities with a system of new, larger, strategically located facilities based on modern and efficient building design and advanced technology. In fact, construction is underway in Penetanguishene to build one of these new facilities.

Recently our government announced to partner with the private sector to operate the superjail in my riding of Simcoe North. Minister, my constituents in Simcoe North would like to know why our government would consider partnering with the private sector to operate a correctional facility.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I know the member for Simcoe North has been quite interested in this particular subject, because of course we have one of the brand new facilities being constructed just outside of Penetang. I've been there myself to see how the construction is going, and I've heard from local tradespeople and local citizens around Penetang that that particular construction itself has been a tremendous boost to that economy in the area. I gather it's even difficult to find somebody to lay bricks or wire a facility because most of those trades are being employed in the construction of that facility to get it up to speed and in shape to be used.

The member speaks to how we will partner with the private sector. Yes, we have indeed proposed to try to see

if we can find a private sector partner to help us operate these facilities efficiently and effectively, because part of our commitment to Ontarians is to have a safe, efficient and secure facility. We'll challenge public and private operators both to do that.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to thank the Minister of Correctional Services for that response. Minister, it's my understanding that our government has always kept the option open for public-private participation in correctional facilities. The former minister also said that privatization is possible in the future if a company can make a case that it could run jails more efficiently and with the same safety guards. Minister, when will the process begin for a public-private partnership with the Penetanguishene superjail?

Hon Mr Sampson: To the honourable member from Simcoe North, he should be aware, and I believe people who are watching today are quite aware, of the fact that public safety is our top priority in corrections. So we will maintain a focus, a very high and very dedicated focus, on public security and safety as we go through the process to help us determine whether there are indeed some private operators who may partner in one form or another with us to help us deliver on our commitment to Ontarians to have a safe and secure facility. That's safe and secure for those who are working inside the institution as well as those who live in and around the particular institutions across this province.

We'll also be challenging them, whether they be private operators or public operators or some combination thereof, to deliver on all the objectives we have in our ministry, which are safe, secure, effective and efficient institutions. I believe Ontarians are expecting that from us.

ONTARIO LOTTERY CORP

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Given that in the Sault Star of Saturday your director of communications for the OLC, the Ontario Lottery Corp, said that the headquarters of the new amalgamated Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp will be in Toronto, and given that you understand the importance of that corporation to our community, and the fact that since it was moved there in the late 1980s, early 1990s, it has made increasingly more profit year after year, will you tell me when this decision was made, who made it and why it was made? Don't give me a lecture on how much you've done for Sault Ste Marie, and don't suggest for a second that this could be a self-fulfilling prophecy that I'm putting out here. Just answer very clearly. Who made the decision, when was it made, on what information was it based and what impact studies were done to support this decision?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I can surely understand the member from Sault Ste Marie not wanting me to enlighten the people of Sault Ste Marie of all the good and positive things this government has done for the people of Sault

Ste Marie over the last five years. I can see that wouldn't be in his own self-interest.

I would like to remind the member that if he doesn't want to take my word for it maybe he should read his own local papers: The Sault Star on November 30 said, "OLC Wise to Stay in Sault ... Thank goodness for the Ontario Lottery Corporation's swift and unequivocal response to Sault Ste Marie MPP Tony Martin's concerns about several signs he sees pointing to imminent moving of the headquarters to Toronto."

What has happened here is that we're merging the Ontario Lottery Corp and the Ontario Casino Corp into one gaming corporation so we can save and manage efficiencies. What that means for Sault Ste Marie is that you've had 40 more jobs associated with the racetrack and you've had 357 news jobs with the casino. I don't know how you can turn that into bad news for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: The bad news is that the headquarters is going, and not long after that, we're afraid, everything else will go as well. We're concerned that in fact decisions about gaming in this province are no longer being made by you and the government; they're being made by one person, a Mr Barbaro, who is making frankly very reckless decisions without considering all the factors.

Not only is Sault Ste Marie concerned. I had a meeting with a group called OCAGE in my office about a week ago, and they believe that the province has forgotten its promise to allow local communities like Woodstock, for example, to have a referendum, to have their own say about slots coming to their communities. They say municipalities are being faced with an ultimatum. If slots come in, no matter what the local experience, the communities can't get rid of them.

You've got a man in charge of gaming in this province now who seems to be accountable to nobody. He's the chair, he's the president, he's the CAO, he's Mr Everything. Who is making the decisions about gaming? Why are they being made and on what basis?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I only got part of that question but I think I got enough of it to understand the gist. Despite the member for Sault Ste Marie's negative attitude about the Ontario Lottery Corp and the Ontario Casino Corp becoming one corporation, which has benefited the Sault Ste Marie economy, the Ontario Gaming Corp in the future, as it had in the past, has a board of directors, and under their inspired leadership, despite your protests, will still continue to deliver positive programs and be of benefit to Sault Ste Marie.

1530

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. You're aware that the county of Essex undertook and recently completed a significant restructuring. The number of county municipalities was reduced from 22 to 7 and the number of

county councillors was reduced from 44 to 14. This was done under your restructuring guidelines and approved by the minister of the day, and it was a made-at-home solution by elected representatives.

Now the city of Windsor wants a chunk of the county, and in reply the county has made a substantive offer to the city. The city of Windsor in a recent resolution has defined its concern by calling for improvements to local government in Windsor-Essex similar to the action taken in the regional municipalities of Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Sudbury. The county views this issue as a boundary adjustment and has recently sent you a report to that effect. Minister, my question to you is this: Do you consider it a restructuring issue or a boundary issue?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I consider it an issue for the taxpayers, actually. It's an issue about giving the taxpayers a break, ensuring that we have the efficient delivery of better services for less money, that we have clear accountability and responsibility. Those are the issues that are the issues on this side of the House, to be perfectly frank with you.

I will say to the honourable member that in recent weeks I have had an opportunity to meet with the mayor of Windsor in person to get his perspective on things, but I also, on the same evening, met with the county warden and got his perspective on things. He indicated at that time that I should expect a formal reply to the mayor of Windsor's suggestions in terms of restructuring. I have received that reply, I believe two days ago. The honourable member should know that the reply is quite voluminous. I believe it is in excess of 200 pages, so it'll take us some time to get through it, but we will take it very seriously.

Mr Crozier: In my view it's clearly a boundary issue. Your communications assistant, Karen Vaux, as a matter of fact, and I will quote, said, "It's an annexation or border dispute."

The county warden condemned the city's proposal as economically devastating to the county. The county's offer, as you will recall, is for 2,700 hectares that will allow the city to expand by 60%. This would allow for 48,000 more houses, 120,000 more in population, and it would have additional space for 10 industrial parks. The county is following the process laid out by the ministry. You said you would take action if there was a logjam and it wasn't broken by the end of December. The end of December is close at hand. Will you accept the county's boundary adjustment proposal and advise the city of Windsor that it's a fair proposal and that it should be implemented?

Hon Mr Clement: As I say, the reply from Essex county was quite voluminous, so we will take it under advisement and we will judge it on the basis of what is best for the taxpayers, what is best for accountability, what is best for responsibility, what is best for the provision of services to those hard-working Ontarians in that area.

I'm willing to take the honourable member's suggestions on this issue. I'd certainly like to hear from the member for Windsor-St Clair; I'd certainly love to hear from the member for Windsor West. Perhaps there might be three different opinions, or maybe there will be one opinion. I'd be willing to cast a wager that there might be at least three opinions on this issue. But we would take it under advisement as long as their suggestions help the taxpayer. That is how we run the government, because hard-working Ontarians want us to work on their behalf. Those are the people we respect and are accountable to.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have a question for the Minister of Labour. Between 1985 and 1995, small businesses in my community and certainly throughout all of Ontario were complaining about excessive taxes—specifically payroll taxes—federally and provincially. One payroll tax they were upset about was WCB premiums.

In 1995, we made a commitment to remove barriers to job creation, investment and economic growth. We pledged to cut workers' compensation premiums by 5%. Since that time, admittedly, many changes have been initiated in workplace health and safety. Members opposite have harped and carped for four years about how our changes would be to the detriment of Ontario workers and how the changes would ignore their safety.

Minister, can you tell us what impact, if any, these changes have had on workplace safety and insurance premiums for businesses in my riding of Kitchener Centre and throughout Ontario?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you very much for the question. The facts are quite clear now: The changes were good. Workplace safety is better than it was when the NDP was in power. As a matter of fact, this year it's gone down for the fourth year in a row. The rate we're charging today is the lowest since 1985. There was a 5.4% decrease from 1999 and a 24% decrease from 1995. Our year 2000 rate is \$2.29 per \$100 of payroll.

It surprises me that anyone would not say that the changes made at the WSIB have had a profoundly positive impact on people who work in Ontario and who do business in Ontario. The fact is, without any doubt, the jury is in: WSIB has done a very good job.

Finally, I've often met with the people who work at the WSIB and who run the WSIB, and I'll tell you that all the news is good. I think we should be very proud of that fact.

Mr Wettlaufer: Thank you, Minister. That was certainly a positive response for employers in my riding.

However, I think you'll remember that in 1995, in addition to ever-increasing premium rates, the former WCB had built up a mind-boggling \$11-billion unfunded liability. Some of the premiums that employers are paying are going to pay off that unfunded liability. The Employers' Council of Ontario demanded that we

implement a plan to eliminate the unfunded liability by the year 2014. We gave a commitment to retire that unfunded liability. What progress are we making in terms of the commitment to retire the unfunded liability?

Hon Mr Stockwell: In the warped and distorted world of the NDP, when they were in power, with respect to the WSIB and the unfunded liability—it brings back memories, I say to my friends on this side of the House, when I hear my good friend from Hamilton saying: "Who owed the debt? The employers. We didn't owe anything." That was government under the NDP. Do you know what's really comforting? It's to know some things never change.

The debt was \$11 billion. You were running the WSIB into the ground. It was horrendous, a black hole, the abyss. That's where the money went, and you know it.

The changes that have been brought in not only lowered the rate, and not only are places safer to work in, but we went from an \$11-billion unfunded liability to \$6.6 billion today. We're ahead of schedule.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I say to my barracking NDP friends that rather than barracking you should be thanking us. We turned around the WSIB. Employees are safer today, premiums are lower and it's a better place to do business in—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): A question to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I'm hoping you can confirm a few things for me today. In 1997, the province fully funded the cost of shelters for the homeless. Then you started your municipal downloading exercise and informed municipalities that you would pay only 80% of the cost. Your next move was to cap the funding for this year. In Toronto, that means you are effectively paying 73%. Now I read, in a self-congratulatory press release on November 19, that municipalities can fund preventive programs designed to help people find and keep housing. A good idea, but you are covering up the full story. What you don't highlight in your release is that you're giving no new money to municipalities. What you've told them is that if they want to provide the program, they have to do it out of the declining dollars you give them and the dollars you have capped, all at a time when shelters are full to capacity because of your government's assault on the poor.

Minister, will you confirm today that this announcement means nothing, especially since you're going to be putting no new dollars into the shelter crisis and you're asking cash-strapped municipalities to dig into the funds needed elsewhere to run these programs?

1540

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I certainly share the concerns of the member

opposite with respect to how we can help people who find themselves homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. We provide substantial resources, and the vast majority of what we spend province-wide is spent right here in the city of Toronto, where he is a member. We provide 80% support for the operating costs of shelters.

The member opposite has indicated that we're not providing any new money. We're providing \$100 million in our provincial homelessness strategy, more than \$10 million in the homelessness initiative fund, a large percentage of which has gone to the city of Toronto. We have also tried to seek out more ways that we can help to deal with this challenge. Those include providing the former Princess Margaret Hospital, working with my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs, to be used to help more homeless people get shelter from the cold.

Mr Caplan: The Minister's answer was interesting. You issue great press releases, and you put out a lot of spin. But when it comes to a real commitment from your government, you don't put your money where your mouth is. You talked about \$100 million, but what you didn't say to this House and to the people of Ontario is that it's mostly recycled federal money, and that's even according to the deal you signed. Your real financial commitments are appalling. Let me review the facts with you.

You used to fund shelters 100%. Now you don't; the funding is now capped. Your share to municipalities was announced at 80%, but you won't give a splashy press release to tell the people in Toronto that it is only 73% and declining. Over two years ago your colleagues in housing slashed funding and caused closure of half of our housing help centres, and announced that the programs you now say are valuable should be funded by municipalities.

Minister, my question for you today is this: Will you confirm today that you have provided no new money into this program? Will you confirm that municipalities are expected to find the cash to make up for the shortage, for what you have cut in these program areas?

Hon Mr Baird: I'll certainly confirm today that this government is providing more support to help the homeless in the city of Toronto than ever before. There is no easy way to eradicate homelessness. There's no single solution to such a complex issue. Our government is committed to working with municipalities, with the volunteer sector and with the private sector.

We're also committed to working with the federal government. We haven't seen any substantial monies coming from the federal government to assist with homelessness. We're putting \$120 million on the table to add to the more than \$2 billion a year we spend through shelter subsidies to help those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. On this issue everyone seems to be on side and wanting to row together except for the federal government. As usual it's letting down the people of Toronto and the people of Ontario. Maybe the member opposite could help us out in that regard and put in a good word for the people of Ontario.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of the Environment.

Recently I had the privilege of flying over the region of Durham with Arnold Kerry, Brenda Metcalf and Don Drake from the region's federation of agriculture. It was really a spectacular and breathtaking scene to fly over the beautiful countryside of Durham and the agricultural area I am so proud to represent. Agricultural concerns are important to me as I am sure they are to you. But at the same time, there is bit of pressure as well in that the local economy needs the infrastructure of the 407. As you would know, the region of Durham is on record as supporting expansion of the 407 into the region of Durham.

Minister, my question is with respect to the expansion of the 407 into eastern Ontario. Can you please assure me and my constituents, and specifically the federation of agriculture people, that there is a proper environmental assessment expansion into the eastern part of Durham region?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Yes, the honourable member is correct. The government of Ontario still has a continuing environmental interest in Highway 407 and the lands underneath the potential extension. There has been a lease of the assets for 99 years. But we still have responsibility, as a government, for the environmental impact of any road extensions for that highway.

If I can give an assurance to the honourable members of this House, we are still in the environmental assessment business. The new owners have to comply with all the environmental safeguards, all the environmental assessment rules that we have in this province. Full consideration will be given on the proposed alignment through the east extensions for sensitive lands within Durham region.

You can tell your constituents they have a government that cares about that, that will ensure the environment is protected and will ensure there's a proper balance between the roadway itself and the lands in question.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The time for oral questions is over.

POINTS OF ORDER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before the member rises on a point of order, yesterday I requested that the three government House leaders do their points of order today. There is a circumstance that makes it that one of the members won't be able to attend.

I have listened to the reasoning. I will say, as you know, yesterday we talked about members talking about when members are here and not here. This is one of the reasons we don't do it, because there are some legitimate reasons to be out there.

In light of that, I will entertain the points of order on Monday. There was some confusion on this. I will admit the confusion was my fault. The member did speak to me. Being busy today with the Governor General, I was late in getting back to the member. It was entirely my fault. It was not the member's fault.

In light of that, and in light of the fact that the member affected is the member whose point of order it is, I will be prepared to try and be flexible. In doing so, I will be prepared to hear the points of order on Monday. I thank all the members for their indulgence. I know this is a very important point of order and it will give all the members the opportunity to debate it fully.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Now the member for Kingston and the Islands on a point of order, is it?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): A point of privilege, Speaker. I gave you notice of this earlier and, as a courtesy, I also gave the notice to the Deputy Speaker since it involves him. It relates to matters that happened in the House yesterday afternoon. I'm sure that I and others regard it a privilege to represent people in this House, to be elected by them to be able to speak on their behalf and to vote and debate on matters.

My forefathers, particularly my own parents, fought tyranny for five years during the Second World War so that the democracy that we enjoy in Canada and the western world can be preserved and enhanced. Therefore, I take great exception to what happened here yesterday. Just so there's no misunderstanding, I'm not appealing the ruling that the Deputy Speaker made yesterday, but rather am appealing to you to bring some consistency to the application of the rules here.

What happened here yesterday afternoon is that during the speech of the member from Sault Ste Marie there were a number of interjections. I don't believe there were any more than about 10 or 15 members in the House. Certainly, by the standards I've witnessed here over the last four years, none of these interjections were obnoxious or were irritants or anything like that.

Let me just quote you what happened then. I'll quote what the Deputy Speaker said as well because I want to be perfectly fair about the whole situation. At one point in time, after some interjections, the Deputy Speaker said:

"The Deputy Speaker: Let me be very clear: I'm patient, and yet if I can hear someone except the speaker"—I'm reading from the instant Hansard that came out yesterday; I assume it's the same in Hansard—"then I don't think it's fair. The member for Sault Ste Marie has the floor. Therefore, I'm going to be very fair. The members for Kingston and the Islands and Whitby-Ajax, I'll not warn you again.

"The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie."

The member for Sault Ste Marie then took part in the debate again and he said:

"Thank you very much, Speaker. I really appreciate the fact that you're helping me out here because I've obviously touched a nerve and the folks across the way are getting very anxious about this because they know that I tell the truth here.

"But you put this in the context of an economy—

Interjection.

"The Deputy Speaker: I'm naming the member, Mr Gerretsen."

1550

What did I say at that point of time? None of the members in my own caucus even heard it. I believe there were two or three members here. I simply asked the Attorney, "Jim, are you the member from Ajax-Whitby?" With the new riding names etc I didn't know which member on the other side at that point in time was being identified by the Speaker. That's all that was said. It was said in a stage whisper. Last night I had the opportunity to speak to members from all sides of the House who were here, and quite frankly, they thought it was overdone by the Speaker at that point in time. But to be instantly named for that and to be ejected from the House—I take that to be a great insult.

The reason I am saying that is that from my reading of Beauchesne and Erskine May it is quite clear that the conduct of the member has to be of gross disorder. I invite you, Speaker—

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: By what happened here just now, maybe all these members ought to be evicted from this House.

I invite you to review the videotape. I invite you to review the Hansard, and I would ask you to be at least consistent in your rulings. We have a lot of discussion here, a lot of name-calling and a lot of interjections during question period.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: It's going on right now. The kind of behaviour that I was involved in yesterday, Speaker, was nothing like that. It was simply to ask in a stage whisper whether or not the Attorney General's riding was indeed Ajax-Whitby. All I am asking for is some consistency in this matter, Speaker.

I would like you to take that under advisement, and perhaps you could give us your ruling in due course.

The Speaker: I thank the member.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I was in the House at the time the honourable member was ejected. I can tell you that we took great comfort in the fact that finally the Speaker in the chair followed through on the fact that he had warned the member numerous times.

I recall having discussions with you, as well as with the other members who presented themselves as Speaker candidates in this place, and we talked about decorum. One of the questions I'm sure all members in this place were interested in is how in fact the Speaker would conduct the business in this House. You yourself committed to doing what you possibly can do to ensure

that there would be decorum in this place so that questions could be asked uninterrupted and, yes, so that responses could be given uninterrupted.

I, for one, congratulate the Speaker who was in the chair yesterday for naming the member, as he should do, quite frankly, any other member who refuses to allow the business in this House to be conducted with the appropriate decorum.

Mr Gerretsen: Mr Speaker—

The Speaker: On a very brief point of order and we can wrap this up very quickly.

Mr Gerretsen: It's not a point of order; it's a point of privilege that I raise, and my original point was a point of privilege as well, not of order.

I think if the member will check Hansard he will find out that both the member from Ajax-Whitby and I were warned once by the Speaker, not many times, as he just stated.

The Speaker: I thank you very much and I thank the member for giving me notice. It is not a point of privilege.

Just so the rules are clear—one of the things I would say is that disregarding any authority of the Chair is always out of order, and that is up to the Speaker to decide that. I would be happy to meet with the member privately to deal with that.

As you may or may not know, there are some new members, including myself as the new Speaker. We are finding our way. There are days when this House gets heated. We would appreciate all of the co-operation.

What I will try to do and what I undertake to say very clearly to all the members, before I name them I'm going to give them a warning. I've tried to do that. There will be times when I may not do that and that will be my mistake if I do that, but I try to give them at least one warning and I will say, when I have done that on occasion, to three or four members, they have been very good; when they've got the last warning and we've said that's the last warning, they have been very good. So I will try to do that. We don't want to move too quickly in throwing people out of here.

By the same token, I'm sure there have been occasions when I may have been too lenient and there may have been some members that should have been thrown out when I erred the other way. We will attempt to find our way. From my perspective, what I will do is at least warn the member when it is his last warning, and that will give the member the opportunity.

I will say this: Naming a member is a very serious offence. I think most members believe it is. This House works well when there is co-operation, and if there's anything I can do to facilitate that, I will do that.

The thing that I said to all the caucuses was that I would attempt to be consistent; however, having said that, I know there are times when I will not be. The way I believe we can handle it is by co-operation. By working together, we can work to find a level that I think will make all of the people of this province proud of the work we're doing here and, hopefully, that will be helpful.

I say this in all sincerity, because the member is a friend. I will get an opportunity—I'm in the chair most of today, but early next week we can sit down and discuss this.

I do appreciate the member bringing it to my attention and I also thank the chief government whip for his participation as well.

Petitions? The member for Brant.

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It's Elgin-Middlesex-London, Mr Speaker. It's a hard one. We should go back to the old names. It was a lot easier for everybody in this House.

This is a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

“Whereas the price of gasoline has soared over 30% in price in the last six months; and

“Whereas the Mike Harris government has done nothing to protect consumers and is afraid to take on the big oil companies; and

“Whereas the wholesale market for gasoline is controlled by an oil oligopoly which controls 85% of the wholesale market; and

“Whereas the big oil companies have used predatory pricing to eliminate small competitors; and

“Whereas, in 1975, former Ontario Premier Bill Davis froze the price of gasoline—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): A point of order.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I first want to ensure that this has been approved by the table and, secondly, I want to put on the record that there is a task force which I co-chair with Joe Tascona that is examining the price of gasoline.

Mr Peters: For the member's information, yes, it is stamped and certified by the table.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario call for a 90-day freeze on the price of gasoline while an inquiry is held into the pricing practices of large oil companies and that the province pass into law the Gas Price Watchdog Act which would protect consumers and independent oil companies from price gouging and predatory pricing.”

I happily affix my signature along with many others, including Ann Wales.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Again, it is an honour and privilege to join with 3,000 of my constituents in the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

“Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

“Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario will:

“Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

“Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

“Fight the federal government’s plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

“Ensure that the Ontario government’s sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible.”

I’m pleased to sign my name to this petition.

1600

MEDICAL LABORATORIES

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario government has recently imposed a retroactive cap on revenue earned by medical laboratories for services provided under the health insurance plan; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has also required these businesses to refund revenue for services rendered in previous years where the amount of that revenue exceeds the retroactively imposed cap for those years; and

“Whereas this legislation amounts to expropriation of economic rights without adequate compensation or due process of law; and

“Whereas the greatest incentive to the provision of efficient and quality services and products by the private sector is competition and the ability to make a profit; and

“Whereas the removal of these incentives by government negatively affects all of society and particularly patients in need; and

“Whereas this type of legislation also unfairly discriminates against one sector of the society;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That adequate protection of property rights is needed to ensure that government cannot erode the property

rights of certain sectors of society without fair compensation and due process of law.”

I have affixed my signature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): It being 4 of the clock, pursuant to standing order 30(b), I must interrupt proceedings and move to orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 7, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant certaines lois dont l’application relève du ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne le soutien et la gestion du système de soins de santé.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 8, I am now required to put the question. Mr Newman has moved second reading of Bill 23. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please 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 1602 to 1607.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	O’Toole, John	Young, David
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
Hastings, John	Palladini, Al	

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Di Cocco, Caroline	Marchese, Rosario
Bryant, Michael	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 52; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe that, notwithstanding standing order 51, I have unanimous consent to second and third reading of Bill 26, the Audit Amendment Act.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

AUDIT AMENDMENT ACT, 1999
LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA VÉRIFICATION
DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Mr Sterling moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Audit Act / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la vérification des comptes publics.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): This is a very brief act—it contains, I believe, two or three clauses—which in effect undoes what we did about a month and a half ago with regard to the auditor. What we have done in this bill is ensure that the auditor is independent in his office by assuring him a pay scale that is tied to a government deputy minister's salary. It also ensures that the auditor's compensation will be reviewed by the Board of Internal Economy on a regular basis.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move third reading of Bill 26, An Act to amend the Audit Act.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sterling seeks unanimous consent to move to third reading. Agreed? Agreed.

AUDIT AMENDMENT ACT, 1999
LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA VÉRIFICATION
DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Mr Sterling moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Audit Act / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la vérification des comptes publics.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to just correct the record on some statements that were made in the House this afternoon. In a letter that—

The Acting Speaker: A member can only correct his own record. He cannot correct somebody else's record.

Mr Peters: Speaker, I'd like to correct the record. The references were made that the letter that was written that was attributed to—

The Acting Speaker: Sorry, that's not a point of order.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I ask you to consider this: There were material misstatements made with respect to comments that were attributed to my colleague—

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. I already ruled on that point of order. It's not a point of order. We'll move on.

Mr Peters: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I would just like to correct the record this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of privilege. I'm sorry.

Mr Duncan: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I'm referencing standing order 21(c):

“Notice to Speaker

“(c) Any member proposing to raise a point of privilege, other than one arising out of proceedings in the chamber during the course of a sessional day, shall give to the Speaker a written statement of the point....” That's by exception.

It is my view that my colleague's privileges were violated earlier today, in that a letter he is alleged to have signed was misquoted materially. Indeed, statements—

The Acting Speaker: I already ruled that this is not a point of order, nor is it a point of privilege. Orders of the day.

Mr Duncan: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House to allow the member for London-Middlesex-Elgin to put his case to set the record straight about a letter of his that was deliberately misquoted by the minister earlier in the session today.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? No.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member, I'm not sure of the riding, disparaged this minister with the comment he just made. I would ask him to withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: I didn't hear the comment. I will leave it up to the member to determine for himself if he said some disparaging—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Orders of the day.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
AND LONG-TERM CARE
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ
ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mr Newman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant certaines lois dont l'application relève du ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne le soutien et la gestion du système de soins de santé.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: It's my understanding that according to the standing orders, if the privilege of one member is being breached, then the privileges of all of us are being breached. So I would just like to read into the record the letter he spoke of. I think it speaks not only—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): No, I've already ruled on this matter.

Mr Newman has moved third reading of Bill 23.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I want to begin by seeking unanimous consent to divide the remaining time among the three parties.

Interjection: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: OK.

Mr Newman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak in support of third reading of Bill 23. I believe that the member for Northumberland spoke quite eloquently on this bill yesterday as he pointed out just how important a proper debate on a bill of this nature is. By rising today to debate Bill 23, we continue the tradition of the Mike Harris government by allowing more time for third reading debate than either the Liberals or the NDP did when they were in government.

I'd also like to thank other members of the House who have spoken in support of this very important bill. Obviously it's not lost on them just how simple yet important this legislation is.

Over the past four years the experts on the Health Services Restructuring Commission have worked with hospitals, district health councils, other health care providers and patients to make recommendations on the tough but necessary decisions needed to improve and sustain our hospital system in the province of Ontario. We are already turning the corner on restructuring, and we're seeing the results of more than \$1 billion invested in more modern, more efficient hospitals throughout our province. We are beginning to see the solutions to problems that other governments had refused to deal with over a 10-year period, and the 10 years I am speaking of are the years from 1985 to 1995, referred to as the lost decade.

The Health Services Restructuring Commission sought the advice of health care experts throughout the province, and the advice they came back with was how to deal with these tough decisions. I'm proud to say that we've made those tough decisions and it's now time to put them behind us and to look forward. The Health Services Restructuring Commission has finished the bulk of its work. Our government's work now is to renew and sustain one of the world's great health care systems by working hand in hand with efficient, up-to-date hospitals ready to tackle the 21st century.

This means giving the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care some added responsibilities. These responsibilities entail the minister extending time lines to assist hospitals to finish restructuring projects such as building new hospitals, opening new hospital wings and cardiac and cancer centres, and delivering improved services to the communities in Ontario. It goes without saying that we remain unshakeable in our continued commitment to the principles of the Canada Health Act, which is based on universal access to a publicly funded health system. This very positive amendment I speak of should be viewed as integral to the focus our government is assuming in our second term in office: The sustaining of the health system with special emphasis on improving the health of Ontarians. The legislation is practical and straightforward. The legislation is clear. It will provide flexibility and support to hospitals as they move forward to better meet the needs of their growing and changing communities.

1620

There's another issue I want to bring up. I'm going to bring it up for the third time, and it's an issue that has yet to be addressed by anyone on the opposite side of the House.

On page 7 of the Liberal policy platform, 20/20 Plan, Dalton McGuinty writes, "We will not be bound by the recommendations of the Health Services Restructuring Commission...." I ask the members of the Liberal Party: Under what legislation would you have done this? They too would have needed legislation exactly like the bill being debated here today if they were truly going to bring that forward and keep their word. Then again I shouldn't be surprised that the opposition members are opposed to this bill. It's yet another example of the Liberal flip-flopping policy on virtually every bill that comes forward.

We all realize that the prerequisite to a strong health system is a strong and growing economy in which jobs are created on a daily basis. So over the past four years we've worked hard to cut taxes, reduce red tape and do what we can to support the private sector in creating new growth and job opportunities throughout the province. It is important to note that since the throne speech of September 1995, over 640,000 net new jobs have been created in Ontario. In the period from 1990 to 1995, under the NDP government, we saw 32 tax hikes in our province and over 10,000 jobs lost. So we've seen that tax cuts are indeed creating new jobs in our province. It's our government that has had the courage to make a

difference in Ontario. As I mentioned, we had to make some tough but necessary decisions and, as a result, Ontario is now a better place to live, work and raise a family.

I hear the members on the opposite side barking away. What they would have done would have been the easy thing, and that's to do nothing. That would have done nothing for the health care system in Ontario. They simply want to preserve the status quo, and that is not what the taxpayers of Ontario want and not what the patients of Ontario want. The Liberal Party wants to stand still, do nothing and maintain the status quo. That would have been the easy thing to do, but it wouldn't have been the right thing to do. The right thing to do is restructure the health care system in Ontario.

I want to put on record that I have seen first-hand the benefits to Ontario's health system of what the Mike Harris government has done. I have been across Ontario to open many of the new facilities. For example, I had the privilege to speak at the grand opening of the new emergency room at Windsor Regional Hospital. It's an emergency room like many others being opened across our province, which would never have opened while previous governments were in power.

We're not done with projects like the new emergency room in Windsor. During the June provincial election, Premier Harris committed a further increase in health care spending by a guaranteed 20% over the next four years. This will mean almost an extra \$4 billion a year for health care in this province by the year 2003-04.

I want to note again that when we were elected by the people of Ontario, health care spending in our province was at \$17.4 billion. The Liberals on the other side had promised to spend \$17 billion. Each and every year we've been in office since 1995 we've increased the amount of money spent on health care in this province. The only one cutting health care spending in Ontario was Jean Chrétien and the federal Liberals. Each and every year they cut the transfers to Ontario.

We have added more money to the health care system each and every year. Today we are spending \$20.6 billion on health care and, as I mentioned, there will be further increases over the next four years. We were able to make up what the federal government had cut, plus more, because we have a strong and growing economy in Ontario.

The increased dollars are rapidly accelerating the pace of health care and allowing us to proceed with such priorities as hiring more nurses for our hospitals. We have allotted funding of \$480 million to support the increased role of nurses in Ontario, and we're adding some 10,000 nurses to our health care system over the next two years.

Furthermore, the number of day surgeries has increased, new drugs have been developed, new technologies developed, and we're continuing to see the expansion of dialysis units throughout Ontario. There are approximately 25 new communities that now have these vital services available to them, and we presently have 56

new, up-to-date emergency rooms being built or planned, including the one that I previously mentioned at Windsor Regional.

Recently Minister Witmer announced added flexibility for Ontario hospitals as they restructure and build improved health care facilities. This was in direct response to recommendations from the Ontario Hospital Association and its members to help ensure their ability to effectively implement the HSRC directions.

Under the legislation before us today, the minister will maintain responsibility under section 6 of the Public Hospitals Act. Without the proposed change, the minister's responsibility would end on March 1, 2000. Unfortunately, that would be before most hospitals will have completed their restructuring projects.

During second reading, and also during the time allocation motion on this bill, I quoted several chief executive officers from hospitals across Ontario who are in favour of Bill 23. There has also been the CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association who has said that. So I think I've been very clear with those quotes.

So far our government has invested more than \$1.2 billion in hospital restructuring, and most recently the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care committed to providing an additional \$2 billion, for a total investment of over \$3.2 billion. This money will assist hospitals in such restructuring costs as labour adjustment and retraining, capital redevelopment, communications, legal fees, consulting and so on.

In addition, our overall investments and improvements to the health system mean that hospitals will be better able to provide newer equipment for faster diagnoses and better treatments. We're also investing in front-line patient care, from the distribution of physicians throughout the province to the creation of new long-term care facilities.

Each and every dollar saved from health care reform has been reinvested in the priority patient care areas.

Just a quick tour around Ontario confirms that a strong economy means a stronger health care system. Whether it's a new cardiac care centre in Mississauga or Kitchener, or the new cancer centre in Sault Ste Marie, or a dialysis unit at the Scarborough General site of the Scarborough Hospital, or a satellite centre, this government is good for health care.

To date, the level of this reinvestment has topped \$1.5 billion. This includes the 36 MRI machines that will be up and running by the end of the year—up, I want to note, from the 12 when we took office in 1995. Twelve MRIs in Ontario in 1995; 36 MRIs by the end of 1999. That's more than the rest of Canada combined.

We've also seen a 45% increase in cardiac surgeries, and of course the quality of cancer care has increased.

Hospitals, in turn, have asked us to ensure that they have the flexibility to safely and effectively complete their restructuring. The proposed extended timeline leaves that responsibility with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care while allowing hospitals the latitude to complete their restructuring plans.

As well, we have another \$2 billion in capital funding yet to be allocated.

The legislation being debated today, that being Bill 23, is a vital and necessary tool, giving us the ability to effectively distribute this extra money. We have yet to determine where and when the additional funding will best benefit hospitals, medical staff and the population of Ontario. But Ontarians need reassurance that hospitals are able to set reasonable timelines for the start and finish of their restructuring projects. At the same time, we must be sure that our health system, including hospitals, is better able to continue providing the best possible care to patients during restructuring. The proposed change gives us the flexibility to fulfill these necessities.

Our responsibility for restructuring needs extending because of the sheer magnitude and complexity of the task at hand. We're talking about four years of hard thinking and planning by experts spanning the entire breadth and depth of the health system. It's more than 100 hospitals in 22 communities, more than 1,200 separate directions, many of them complex and time consuming, and \$3.2 billion in unprecedented commitment.

1630

It is my hope as I address you on third reading of Bill 23 that we work together towards this vision of health services in Ontario, that together we address the challenges of the 21st century, because Ontario has a growing and aging population with constantly changing needs. That's why the health care system needs to be restructured.

By giving the minister an extension on health care restructuring, we allow the government to effectively meet those needs. Hospitals across Ontario have proven exemplary in assisting with restructuring and helping to modernize the health care system. I want everyone here to know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and I, as her parliamentary assistant, personally admire and respect the way they've adapted to the dramatic changes of the past decade. They continue to amaze us with the remarkable progress that they've made in both absorbing and leading the changes, changes in medical technology, in clinical services, in treatment.

We've travelled to the communities and we've visited the hospitals. I appreciate the efforts of those who have worked so hard and given so much of themselves during this difficult period of restructuring. We value them and the great distance that they've come.

With this extended timeline under Bill 23, our ministry can continue to work into the early years of the 21st century with hospitals across the province. Most importantly, the extension affords the chance for our government to provide communities across Ontario access to the best and most technologically advanced health care system in the world.

In conclusion, I urge all members to vote in favour of Bill 23, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: I agree with the member on one point. He said that when you've got a growing economy you should have a strong health care system. I totally agree with that. The problem is that the opposite is true. I don't know where this member has been. I'm just reading today's clippings, for example, and you see all the problems with the emergency wards in the city of Toronto.

I read the auditor's report, and one of the most stunning statistics in the Provincial Auditor's report is the fact that only 32% of patients who have been diagnosed with cancer are treated within the four-week period of time that is prescribed by the medical community. That means that 68%, or more than two out of three individuals who have been stricken with cancer do not get the radiation treatment in time.

Just think about the families who are stricken with this on a day-to-day basis, when the man, woman or child finds out that one of their loved ones has been diagnosed with cancer and needs treatment, as if that isn't a dastardly development in itself already, as if that isn't the kind of situation that brings people almost to edge in anxiety and in fear. And here we have a government that apparently thinks it's quite all right that if we could only treat one of those people or start treating one of those people within the four-week guideline, that's good enough.

You may recall that one day the minister said here, as a matter of fact, that things were a lot better, because since the auditor's report it had gone from 32% of the people being treated in time to 35%. Well, I say shame on them. There's no question about it. This is the time. We're living in a booming economy, particularly here in the GTA. It certainly isn't hitting my area of eastern Ontario and it certainly isn't hitting northern Ontario as well. But this is the time we should be preparing our health care system for the future to make sure it's up to date and up to scratch so that when tougher times come, the people will have that social safety net, the health care net to fall back on.

There are many other issues as well that deal with restructuring. One of the two areas that this bill deals with is the ability for the government to sue the tobacco industry, which, by the way, is totally separate and apart from giving the minister more power to deal with the restructuring plans. A good argument can be made that these issues should not have been dealt with in the same bill.

You may recall that the first time this bill was tabled here in the House was on December 3. What is it today? Today it's December 9. The bill was tabled a week ago, and here we are, giving it third reading under a time allocation motion, a bill of tremendous magnitude that affects just about every hospital in this province. It affects our ability to sue the tobacco companies, and I'm totally in favour of that aspect of that. It has to be dealt with in a week, without any kind of public hearing process, or if there was a public hearing process it was so short a period of time here at Queen's Park that it shouldn't even count.

Let's look at the other issue. Let's look at the issue of what the auditor says about what the restructuring is going to cost in Ontario. The health restructuring commission has stated in its report that the total amount of dollars that are required from the provincial purse for restructuring is \$2.1 billion. What does the Provincial Auditor say about that? He's saying it's not going to cost \$2.1 billion but it's going to cost \$3.9 billion minimum. We are \$1.8 billion short.

Where's that money going to come from? We know where 30% of it is going to come from, because the government has already made a decision on that: 30% has to be raised locally in each and every community. In my community of Kingston, in effect, the original estimates word it that \$30 million would have to be raised in our community. The estimates now are, and this is right in line with what the Provincial Auditor is saying the situation is across the province, that they will have to raise probably about \$45 million or \$50 million.

The community simply is not going to be able to do that. As you well know, in many of these fundraising efforts you rely not only on local donations, but you also rely on provincial foundations, national foundations and international foundations to come up with a large chunk of the money.

When just about every community in the province is going to be involved in one of these fundraising efforts, you can be assured that the money from the national foundations just isn't going to be there. So where a lot of this money is going to come from in each and every municipality, including my own—I know; I've been there before in the mid-1980s, when we had a major, very successful fundraising drive for our hospitals—is the local property taxpayer.

Sooner or later these local organizations that are going to have to come up with that 30%, which in our case will probably be about \$45 million, will be going to the local councils and they'll be asking for money, a commitment over let's say the next five, 10, 15 years. The local taxpayers had better be prepared that that's probably going to raise their taxes by \$100, \$200, \$300 per property per year.

The reason I raise this issue, and I've raised it a number of times in my own community because nobody wants to talk about it right now: I think the people should know where this money is expected to come from. So I say, is it proper for the property taxpayer now to be burdened by health care costs as well? It is one of those indirect downloads. We've heard an awful lot about downloading on local municipalities over the last number of years, and we've seen it happen mainly in non-health-related areas. But it has also been in the health-related areas such as, for example, ambulance costs and some of the other quasi-social health care costs. But this is another one. This is going to be how the hospitals, the so-called new facilities in our communities, are going to be directly financed.

What I have been saying is, and I've had a number of discussions about this with Duncan Sinclair, the former

chair of the restructuring commission, why did the government put the cart before the horse? Why didn't they say, when they went through the restructuring process, "Look, let's put the community care facilities and programs out there first so that the people can see what the alternatives are to long hospital stays"?

The problem is, they decided to close the hospitals in many areas around the province first—and I think the count is that up to 40 or 45 hospitals are being closed—and people aren't being reassured that this money that is going to be saved from the closure of these hospitals is in any way, shape or form going to be placed in community care facilities, programs, whether it's home care, nursing care or what have you.

1640

As a matter of fact, last winter in Kingston we had a crisis in the whole home care area when the community care access centre was \$1 million short and individuals were cut off from nursing care and from home care. That left some dreadful situations.

I can remember one day talking to a woman in her mid-70s who was complaining over the fact that her home care and nursing care had been reduced. I thought she was talking about herself until she said, after a while: "Mr Gerretsen, I'm not talking about myself. Come on in. Meet my 99-year-old mother." Here I met an elderly lady lying on her couch in a fetal position, 99 years old, who used to get two to three hours of nursing and home care a day. She had been cut back to two hours a week. These people didn't know what to do.

You and I know what's going to happen in that situation. I haven't checked back with them, I must admit. I tried to get her some extra care and wasn't able to get it. One of two things will happen. Either the elderly individual—we're talking about a 99-year-old woman here—is going to be institutionalized at probably about 10 or 20 times the cost of the home care and nursing care that was being provided at home, or she just isn't going to make it. That is the reality of the situation.

That's where the government made its biggest mistake in the whole area of changing our health care system by, in effect, trying to close hospitals first without making sure that the community care programs and facilities were in place. If there's one issue that should not be a partisan issue, if there's one issue that we all in Ontario should agree upon, it is surely that the health care of our people in Ontario, young or old, rich or poor, ought to be taken care of, that everyone who needs health care should have it available to them. They shouldn't have to wait more than the prescribed time as, for example, cancer patients are doing right now.

When the member states that everything is fine in Ontario, he couldn't be more wrong. This is the one issue, more than any other issue, that the people of Ontario have the greatest concern about with this government and what it's doing to our health care system. I can see down the road a private system being set up along the same lines as our public system. Then it's really going to depend on how much money you've

got in your pocket as to whether or not the care you need at that point in time will be available for you.

I know that people will say, "You're scaremongering; you're doing this, that and the other thing." That is the reality of the situation. I would hope that the debate we had in this country some 34 years ago, whereby we agreed that everyone should be entitled to good health care regardless of how much money they had in their pocket, was a debate that was truly ended and that we all agreed on that. That's how we were different from our American neighbours.

This bill does absolutely nothing to give the people of Ontario any assurances that the public health care system will continue and will be enhanced in the future.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On a point of order?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If I could request unanimous consent, based on the fact that our next speaker is one of your deputies who just served. He's gone to change. If the Tory wouldn't mind going next and then revert back to us, we'd appreciate it.

The Speaker : Agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It's a pleasure, again, to talk about this bill, Bill 23, which gives the government some more time to finish the job that they have started and that they have done so eloquently. Some of the members opposite had some concern that the House didn't come back in time, even though we've explained that this House was being very beautifully refurbished. They've done a great job. I think we should all be proud of it. All Ontarians should be proud of it.

At the same time, we as a government were consulting with the people of Ontario, consulting with the hospitals and consulting with the administrators. They told us that even though the restructuring was perceived as a mammoth and very difficult task when it was started—if I can name a few names, Dr Dixon from Peel Health Centre, which is now called Sir William Osler Health Corp, agreed that it would be most difficult to go back and that no government should undo the progress this government has the guts to implement.

As my good friend the member from Northumberland said the other day, other governments closed 10,000 beds, the equivalent of 35 medium-sized community hospitals, but they were afraid to actually close any hospitals because this would create havoc. Like the member from Northumberland said, they were gutless and did not have, to use his words, "the intestinal fortitude." It does take a lot of guts to make difficult and tough decisions.

I'm very close to this industry. I come from a pharmaceutical background. I've spent many years manufacturing drugs, pharmaceuticals that actually reduce the number of days one stays in the hospital. If you look at the total health care pie, new pharmaceuticals reduce the number of days one stays in the hospital.

Our government has taken a great step by restructuring. I'm going to quote more stakeholders who have

told us the we are on the right track. This is by Ron Bodrug, president and CEO of Scarborough Hospital: "I'm requesting that the Ministry of Health take the necessary steps to ensure the appropriate study, monitoring, review and necessary changes to the commission's directives and recommendations." Tony Dagnone, president and CEO of London Health Sciences Centre: "We believe that as the Minister of Health you must have the authority to shape and transform health care in the face of the future needs of Ontario citizens." These are some of the quotes that are coming from administrators.

In Mississauga, as in many communities, there are many wonderful hospitals and wonderful health care workers. What we as a government are trying to do in our restructuring proposal is reduce the size of administration while at the same time increasing front-line health care services. We have had discussions with the OMA and with the doctors, and they all seem to saying that even though much work has to be done, we are on the right track.

We believe that a government's job is pretty simple: to do the things that only government can do or should do, and to do them very well. That list of essential priority services includes providing dependable health care and quality education, keeping our communities safe and preserving our province's natural heritage. By doing our job well in these areas, we make Ontario a better place to live for you and your family, for all of us.

Making sure every person in Ontario has access to top-quality health care is a most urgent concern. Our health care system distinguishes us as Canadians, and we are proud of it. Our government is fully committed to the principles of the Canada Health Act, including universal access to the publicly funded health care system. All of us and our families need to know that medical care will be available when and where we need it. That's why we made the tough decisions needed to modernize our health care system. The changes we made weren't easy. But as experts in the system told us, they were long overdue.

1650

When we took office, the health care system had been under incredible strain for many years. With Ontario mired in a deep recession, pressure on the system continued to rise. Only because of our economic turnaround have we been able to start giving health care the resources it needs.

Back in 1995, the federal government had just begun cutting the money it transfers to Ontario for health care. Although hard-working Ontarians paid for Ottawa's support with their tax dollars, the federal government cut \$2.8 billion from our health care funding. In spite of these cuts, we succeeded in increasing Ontario's health care funding to \$18.9 billion, by far the highest in our provincial history: \$1.2 billion more for long-term care, resulting in 35% more beds and expanded community-based services. We increased the number of women protected by breast cancer screening to 325,000, which is up from 65,000 in 1995. We provided a pneumonia vaccine for the elderly and very ill. We first created and

then doubled funding for the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program to screen all newborns and identify children at risk. We also invested \$225 million over two years as part of our plan to reduce emergency room waits; an extra \$67 million in funding for hospitals in high-growth areas; established a university program and more jobs for nurses.

Previous provincial governments avoided tough decisions. They closed thousands of hospital beds, like I said, and allowed money to be wasted maintaining underused buildings instead of spending on front-line patient care. Past governments—the Liberals and NDP are both culprits—have also known for years that more money was needed to be directed into community-based programs and care, but no one would make the tough decisions to change the way money was being spent.

Doing the right thing isn't always easy or politically popular in the short term, but with strong leadership and expert advice it can be done. The result will be a better health care system for our families.

The job of creating a modern health care system isn't finished. We will increase funding by another 20% over the next five years to meet future needs and guarantee our access to the health care services we all need and deserve. Above all, we need to maintain a strong and growing economy to provide the resources to meet tomorrow's needs. That's what our plan is all about.

In the past four years we've had to replace every one of the 2.8 billion dollars that Ottawa has cut from Ontario's transfer payments just to keep our health care funding stable. On top of that, we've added \$1.5 billion in new funding to expand and improve health care services. However, our population is aging and the cost of medical treatment is growing. Demand for health care services will continue to rise. The health care system will need even more money in the future. In order to meet future health care needs, we will increase funding for health care a guaranteed 20% in the next term. Based on the latest 1998-99 figures, this will mean nearly \$4 billion a year more for our health care by the year 2003-04.

Our Premier, Mike Harris, fought hard to get the federal government to restore the money they cut from our health care system. Just recently he convinced them to give some of that \$2.8 billion back to our province.

We are putting every penny of the \$900 million we recovered from Ottawa straight into the direct line health care services. It's a start, but Ottawa should be doing much more. Our plan contributes more new Ontario funding towards health care than the federal government is putting back in. Mike Harris and our government will continue to fight for our health care dollars and, if we recover more of our federal funding, it will always go directly, straight into health care. But we've learned not to count on Ottawa. Our plan guarantees a 20% health care funding increase even without more federal help.

We've also agreed to emergency room assessments within 15 minutes of a patient's arrival. Members opposite, please note. It goes back to the credibility.

Interjections.

Mr Gill: Members don't seem to believe that. Let me assure you. Ask the public.

We went back to the public six months ago. They decided that we are on the right track. We all went with our own programs, as I said yesterday. We went with our Blueprint, you had your 20/20, you had some other plan—beautiful plans, but whom did they believe in? People of Ontario can't be fooled. They know what's good for them.

A minimum 60-hour hospital stay; the Liberals are proposing 48 hours. We went beyond that. A minimum 60-hour hospital stay after birth offered to every new mother in Ontario, at least one follow-up phone call and the offer of a home visit.

There are many programs that we've implemented. Much more restructuring still has to be done.

Many communities have said: "We want you to continue. Please don't give up halfway. We want you to continue with the mandate you've been given." We will listen to them. We will agree with them and, therefore, I'm requesting of everybody in the House a speedy passing of this bill so that we can continue with the good work we have started.

The Speaker: As per the unanimous agreement, we'll now revert to the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to thank my colleague from Hamilton West for being so kind as to jump into the lurch when I was literally in between suits in this House.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): You look better in black.

Mr Martin: I look better in black? OK.

I want to thank the members of the House for their unanimous consent that I would get my time when I did come to speak on this very important bill.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): It was our unanimous consent too, Tony.

Mr Martin: Yes, I said, "the members of the House." Thank you. Thanks to Margaret Marland, specifically, from Mississauga, whose brother used to live in Sault Ste Marie and we now miss him. He was—

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Keep it up? OK.

Hon Mrs Marland: Was he a good Conservative?

Mr Martin: He was a good Conservative and an old-time Conservative, I must say.

Mr Christopherson: The kind with a heart.

Mr Martin: With a heart and a conscience and a moral ethic about him. A man who understood community.

Hon Mrs Marland: John King.

Mr Martin: Don King. If we had more people like Don King in the province, doing the kinds of things that he did in the community of Sault Ste Marie on behalf of people, we'd all of us be better off.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): He spent all of his life in court.

Mr Martin: Well, he may have. Was he a lawyer? The member for Etobicoke Centre says he spent most of his life in court. I don't understand that.

Hon Mrs Marland: No, his name is John King.

Mr Martin: Oh, John King. Not the promoter of boxing.

I wanted to put some thoughts on the record here this afternoon and I have to, in advance, apologize to the member from Etobicoke North because I may get ever so slightly negative and critical by the time I'm finished. That will be a surprise, I'm sure, to many of the folks across the way.

Health restructuring is what we're talking about here. Who doesn't know about health restructuring across this province? Who hasn't heard of the efforts of this government to restructure the health care system? It was a program that was put in place like a freight train coming down the track, hitting every community.

Interjection.

1700

Mr Martin: No, I said that I might get a little negative, just a little critical. But I really am going to try to temper the tone tonight because we're close to Christmas and all that kind of thing.

It was like a freight train coming down, hitting every community; the safety barriers were down, they went flying. Plans were developed, people were consulted and put in place. Everybody thought that right after the train was going to come the money and we were going to be able to get on with the restructuring that was laid out in the plans that we all looked at; some we didn't agree with because we thought there should be more money as we looked at some of the thoughts that were put on paper. As the auditor's report of a couple of weeks ago pointed out, we weren't far wrong in our anxiety and our worry. In fact, at the end of the day he suggests that the restructuring commission was off by some billions of dollars in its projections as to how much the capital costs would be to do the restructuring that it laid out.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): What's a few billion among friends?

Mr Martin: Yes, what's a few billion among friends?

Everybody across Ontario thought, even though they may have been critical and were working very hard to challenge the powers that be of the day—the boards of directors of the hospitals worked, sometimes behind closed doors, with the restructuring commission to put in place plans that weren't necessarily going to respond to what they saw as the real needs of the community. As you know, health care has been in some degree of flux for some long time now.

I agree with the government when they say this is not a problem that has just shown up overnight. It has been around for quite some time. Mr Newman, I think, painted that picture very clearly and very correctly here on a number of occasions in this place, that in fact health care needed some significant and serious restructuring.

As a matter of fact, when we were government from 1990-95, we spent a lot of time, I have to tell you, and energy, effort and money to try to come to terms with—

Interjection.

Mr Martin: This was after Mrs Caplan.

We spent a lot of time trying to deal with a system of health care delivery in this province that had grown to be quite sophisticated and complicated, because it's not an easy thing to deliver health care, no matter where you are. It's difficult, particularly if you're trying to make sure that the quality of health care and access to health care is the same across the province, whether you're in Toronto or Moosonee, whether you're in Rainy River or Wawa, that you have access to a quality of health care that speaks to getting well in a timely fashion, being able to get in and get done what you need to get done, having a doctor you could call your family doctor, who you can confer with from time to time as to your own health and perhaps the health of your children and your family. We all worked very hard at trying to come to grips with the escalating cost involved in that exercise as well.

You'll remember that when we took power, Mr Speaker, because you were here, that the cost of delivering health care in the province was escalating at a rate of an average of a 12% increase a year all the way through the 1980s. When we got to be government, at a very difficult time in the fiscal and economic history of this province, we found ourselves, alas, in the midst of a recession equal, some say, to the Great Depression in terms of the impact. For the first time in the history of the province, actually, revenues went down, revenues for government declined, not that we had cut taxes. I dare say that there wouldn't be too many in here who would suggest or expect that we would do that, because we believe that we need taxes to pay for these services, and these services, if they're going to be of a quality nature and accessible to everybody, have to be funded properly and appropriately. The way that we care for each other in a democracy, in a civilized society, is to pool our resources. We call it taxes. We do that through taxation so that we can afford to have things like health care, education, social services and other government-delivered programs available to us.

We're talking about health care here and the fact that we struggled very hard from 1990 to 1995 to come to terms with this. We were moving in a direction that we thought was positive and constructive. We were struggling with issues that still confront us today, being successful to some degree, and not finding answers in some other areas.

The Health Services Restructuring Commission was supposed to answer all these problems. They were supposed to come and talk with us, sit down and come up with plans which were going to resolve a whole lot of these issues. Alas, it seems to me, my perspective on it is that for the most part it was very much a political exercise, an exercise in public relations. Putting a commission out there that literally cost millions of dollars of taxpayers' money, going around the province, meeting

with people, putting together a plan—as a matter of fact, let me share with you what happened in my own community.

They ran out of time. They wanted to call the election, but they needed the restructuring commission to be finished so they could deliver the package, so they could put the wrapping and the bow on it and deliver it as a promise in their blue book and talk to the people of Ontario about all the good things that they've done and are going to do in health care. They literally came into my community, did a quick-and-dirty review and listened to a few of us.

The health care coalition and I forced a public forum at city hall at that time—and we filled the place—so that people in the community might have a say, as our hospitals come more and more together under one structure and governance, about what we needed to have as a community to respond to the health care needs and what would take us into the next century. Alas, we found out by way of an article in the newspaper that the health restructuring was going to be wrapping up and they had a week to report back. We sent in our stuff. I know a whole pile of other people in Sault Ste Marie sent in responses and certainly the hospital worked very hard at putting together their plans, and actually came to the public forum that we had, sat with us, listened. We felt that in some very significant ways, their final report to the ministry reflected some of what they heard.

The restructuring commission had about a week to deal with all that information—that's all—and in a week, magically came back and said, "OK, here's the plan." The problem here is, even though all that work was done and we did put in place a plan, and the restructuring commission came back with what they deemed to be what we needed—it included some very exciting and interesting possibilities; for example, the possibility of a cancer bunker in Sault Ste Marie—since then, we've heard nothing.

There may be some work going on behind the scenes that I've not heard of. The Ministry of Health may be in consultation with the hospital board in our community about where we're going and what will happen. But we who worked so hard to have our voice heard, to very constructively and positively put on the table what we thought would be a good plan for Sault Ste Marie for now and for the next 40 or 50 years, have heard nothing as to where those plans went. They seemed to have gone into a big black hole someplace, until this legislation came forward.

That may be good news in some ways. I don't want to be negative and critical here tonight, because I promised the member for Etobicoke North that I wouldn't be. This may in fact be good news, because the plan that was sent forward and approved by the restructuring commission and some of the comments that we made weren't quite in sync. We thought that was it, that was our last kick at the cat, that there would be no more opportunity for us to have any real dialogue and chance to have our thoughts heard and perhaps included in some of the new plans. But

now we're told that after all that work that was done by the restructuring commission, after all the money that was spent and the plans were put together, now the minister is going to take over and she's going to decide what's going to happen next and whether in fact those plans were the right plans and how they're going to deal with the \$2-billion shortfall and whatever else that needs to be done, given some of the difficulties and problems and challenges that have arisen since the restructuring commission shut down and since the election and up until this moment.

1710

It's actually with that in mind, with the fact in mind that the minister is now going to take some personal responsibility for making sure that these restructuring plans actually happen and that the timelines required are realistic and that there is actually an integrated plan coming forward for the whole province, that maybe we do have a chance to get her ear and to speak to her and have her understand some of the problems we're experiencing.

As a matter of fact, I phoned the minister's office not long after I got elected and I asked to have a meeting with her.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Who?

Mr Martin: Elizabeth Witmer, your minister. You should meet her sometime. She's a great lady. She sits right in front of you.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I know her.

Mr Martin: Do you? Good. OK. Anyway, I phoned her office and I said, "We need a meeting because we have some real big problems up here." We have a lot of people travelling for some reason or other to other parts of the province for health care and they're finding it very difficult in many real ways—the cost, the inconvenience—just a million and one different challenges that you folks in the south might not know a whole lot about because if you can't get into a facility next door, you just jump on a bus or take a taxi or the subway and go down the road to the next facility. In Sault Ste Marie, if you can't get the service that you need at the local hospital, you've got to go 180 miles down the road—that's almost a day's drive—to go to Sudbury. Or if you can't get health care in Sudbury, you may have to go to Thunder Bay. Do you know how far Thunder Bay is from the Soo? Does anybody over there know how far Thunder Bay is from the Soo? How far is it?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Six hours, maybe six and a half.

Mr Martin: No, it's eight hours. It's as far to Thunder Bay—

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): If you're flying by Polar Bear Express.

Mr Martin: No, it's Bearskin Air.

Interjection.

Mr Martin: No, Wawa is 140 miles. Thunder Bay is as far from Sault Ste Marie as Toronto is. So to suggest for a second that things are the same in the north as they

are down here, and if you just close things and rationalize things—

Ms Mushinski: Why would you go to Thunder Bay when you can go to Sudbury?

Mr Martin: It is. Yes, I said that. Sudbury is 180 miles. Thunder Bay is as far from Sault Ste Marie as Toronto is. I'm trying to say that the distances are quite significant.

We have to travel because there's a plan beginning to evolve in northern Ontario that is regionalizing health care services. So if you can't get health service in Sault Ste Marie or Wawa or Chapleau or North Bay or Timmins or Gogama or Foleyet or any of those communities in—

Mr Hastings: Geraldton?

Mr Martin: No, Geraldton's in northwestern Ontario. But Geraldton too, yes. If we can't get health care in a timely fashion in those communities, because more and more we're having further difficulty getting specialists to come to any of those communities, and even to get family doctors in there, we have to go someplace else. You know where we have to go? We have to go to either Sudbury or Thunder Bay, and I'm telling you how far those places are.

If you get somebody who's got cancer or who has had a heart attack or whose child has fallen down and broken their leg, and they have to travel to these places, you can only imagine the cost in actual dollars and cents if it's airfare. I don't know how many of you have flown from the Soo to Toronto or Toronto to the Soo lately, but I'll tell you, the airfares are quite stunning. You could fly to Europe cheaper these days than to Sault Ste Marie or Thunder Bay or Sudbury or Timmins and back. Very expensive. As a matter of fact, in more and more instances, as we have to travel for more and more of the health services that we used to have in our community, it's becoming very expensive. There are lots of things that happen to people of a health care nature that you could not possibly decide to take a car to the facility you need because it's just too far, the complication is too much and it's hard to do.

We have a particular problem in the north in that we're not able to get the specialists we need into all the places we need them. As a matter of fact, we are now discovering that we're having a hard time even getting family doctors to come to many of our communities. It used to be that in the north we had a special problem, but because of the cutbacks in the dollars that are flowing to education, rural Ontario and many of the areas in Ontario that are a distance from Toronto are experiencing the same thing. Where the north used to be the only area that really had a serious and significant doctor shortage problem, we're now finding that's happening all over the place. The focus is no longer so much on the north where that problem is concerned. So we're losing out again.

What I'm doing here tonight is trying, through this place and this House and perhaps some of the government members who speak to the minister on a regular basis, to send a message. I called her, and she agreed to

meet with me on this issue. So I came down to Toronto with a woman from Toronto who speaks on behalf of Easter Seals, and I'll speak about that in a couple of minutes here because they have a particular issue with the northern health travel grant.

We went to see the minister's staff. We had a meeting with the minister's staff because the minister got called away at the last minute to go to a funeral, and we laid on the table with that gentleman, Tariq Asmi, all of our concerns, all of the issues around travel and health care in northern Ontario. We explained to him the distances and the different challenges, the different roadblocks we face in trying to get our health care.

But most particularly, in the context of travel and health care and trying to get to some of the facilities we need to get to, is the northern health travel grant. The northern health travel grant, you may remember, was a program introduced to this place and to the province back when the Liberals and New Democrats formed an accord government.

Mr Smitherman: Those were the good old days.

Mr Martin: Those were the good old days. That was when we could go to the Liberals, who were the government of the day, and say, "Either you do this or we pull the plug." Because there were a whole lot of us from the north in the NDP caucus at that time, we said, "We want a travel grant for health care." Even back then the regionalization of health care was beginning to happen, and because of the lack of specialists and physicians, we needed to travel then. It's becoming more so now and more complicated now, but back then we had that problem.

That program was put in place. Mind you, it was never meant to cover all the costs of travel for northern residents, although I don't understand that. We're making the point here today that this government has to look at the possibility of providing for all the costs of northerners who have to travel for health care outside of their community, because it's becoming more and more expensive and more and more people are not being able to afford it. In fact, some of them are even making decisions not to get the health care they need, because they can't afford it.

We're asking the government. There are resolutions that have been circulating across northern Ontario, some of them circulated by my colleagues from Thunder Bay-Superior North and Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Mr Gravelle and Mrs McLeod. They've been up in northwestern Ontario for quite some time now getting resolutions passed by municipalities, circulating and getting petitions and bringing them before the House here. I have a resolution going before my own municipal council this coming Monday night asking this government, in light of some of the challenges we're facing, for some assistance.

Here is how the resolution goes:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment

outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

“Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be the full responsibility of those residents and therefore financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

1720

“Whereas travel costs, in particular airfares, accommodation and other related costs, have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds to southern Ontario patients needing care”—listen to this now; this is really interesting—“at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre to have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north, which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

“Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their diagnosis or geographic locations;

“Now therefore be it resolved that the city council of Sault Ste Marie hereby petitions the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to review the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing specialist health services outside of their communities, until such time as the care is available in our communities.”

In my view, that simply is a stop-gap measure. If we're going to be moving to regionalizing health care, which it seems we are as we look at the plans that are coming down the road, I hope the minister will take the time to go up to northern Ontario and speak to some of the people involved in health care, not just the boards of directors of hospitals, but some of the folks who actually deliver the care: the nurses' associations; the doctors' associations; some of the folks who provide the maintenance and backup work for the nurses and the doctors in the very important work that they do; the SEIU, Service Employees International Union, which represents a whole host of very important health care workers in the system.

Speak to those people. Speak to the members of the community, our constituents, the citizens of the communities up there, and find out from them what they think they need, what they would like this government to spend their tax money on re the provision of health care for them in their communities. You'll find that most of them will be very realistic and honest with the minister and they will tell her exactly what it is they think they need.

We know an awful lot about our health care. We know what we confront every day. We know what happens when we bring a child into emergency and what happens following that. For example, there was a young boy this summer who broke a bone, a badly broken wrist, and would require surgery to fix it—that was the doctor's

analysis in Sault Ste Marie. He was told there was a problem, however, because we had no orthopaedic surgeon in Sault Ste Marie. They had either retired or left. We were without an orthopaedic surgeon, if you can imagine, in a place like Sault Ste Marie. So plans had to be made to fly this young man to Timmins. He was told to fast overnight. His mother, though, asked the question: “If we fly to Timmins, are we guaranteed that he will get back, and who makes those plans? Can I go with him, and if I go with him, will I get back with him?”

I think they were pretty honest and serious and important questions to ask. She got a call the next morning. They flew him and her to Timmins. He met with a doctor, not the specialist, who suggested, after looking at the X-rays, that actually he didn't need surgery. There was another procedure they could do that would fix the wrist for him that meant he didn't need to be admitted to the hospital and he didn't need to have surgery. That may seem like no big deal to members across—

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, it's a big deal. We know it.

Mr Martin: Yes, right, it is a big deal, because it wasn't long after the discovery that he didn't need surgery that the specialist said to the little boy and his mother that they were on the hook to get themselves home. Here they had been flown to Timmins on the expectation that he would have surgery, because that's what the doctor said in Sault Ste Marie. They got to Timmins and a new procedure was prescribed, and because of that now they were on their own as to how they would get home. These are the kinds of things that we run into. This mother looked around and said, “How do I get out of here?” She went to the bus station because that was probably the cheapest way. There was no direct flight to Sault Ste Marie from Timmins, so you can imagine the cost to have to have flown from Timmins to Toronto to Sault Ste Marie. It costs us over \$800 just to fly back and forth from Sault Ste Marie to Toronto, so you can imagine the cost they would have incurred there. But the bus trip from Timmins to Sault Ste Marie would literally have taken 16 hours—16 hours to get home, at her cost.

To make a long story short, she phoned her husband, who had to take a day off work and pack up the rest of the family, drive all the way to Timmins, pick up his wife and son and drive home. That's what we have to do in northern Ontario right now to get the health care that we need for our families and for our children. How would you like to have to deal with that on a fairly regular basis, Mr Speaker, if that was the reality for you? That's the reality we face up in northern Ontario. So we have a problem. We have a problem with travel and we're suggesting that this ministry needs to look at this question and do something about it.

Let me give you another small example here. Easter Seals in Sault Ste Marie does some excellent work. It's just an excellent organization. It has some really good people involved who work with it, people like Heather Breckenridge here in Toronto, people like Jennifer MacDonald in the office in Sault Ste Marie, who really

work hard on making sure children who aren't well get the services they need wherever it's required.

They had a special deal for quite some time with one of the local airlines such that the amount of money at the end of the day that would be left over to be paid by the parent of a child and an attendant to get to Toronto or Sudbury or wherever they needed to go was enough such that they had an arrangement made with the Rotary Club—another excellent organization in our community—that they would cover the difference. They would get money from the northern health travel grant to cover the cost of the patient travel and the attendant and what was left over the Rotary Club would cover.

Alas, though, there's been a bit of a change in that this air company, who, God bless them, did some really good community work by offering these special rates to the Easter Seals and some other organizations in the community, found that they had to put in place a program that was equally accessible to everybody in northern Ontario that required health travel. So they increased the fare for the folks serviced by Easter Seals—mind you, at the same time reduced the cost of travel for health reasons to everybody else. But by virtue of increasing the cost to Easter Seals and, subsequent to that, the cost to the Rotary Club, we now have a program that's in tremendous difficulty, because the Rotary Club is saying that if they have to come up with the increased cost, which has risen substantially from that time, they will not have any money left after a month or two of the beginning of the year. So we have some problems.

To give you a little background that was put together by Heather Breckenridge of the Easter Seals, I'll read this into the record as quickly as I can:

"The northern health travel grant provides \$210 for an individual to travel. Children and adults who require an attendant to travel with them, and based on a physician's approval, are eligible for an additional \$210.

"This rate is based on a one-way car trip to Toronto. It was established in 1994 and the program has had no increase since. Other costs like meals or accommodations are not covered.

"Flights from Sault Ste Marie range from \$261 for a seat sale to \$890 regular fare. The medical fare rate offered by Air Ontario presently is \$325 but is scheduled to increase to \$445 January 1st."

This is where the problem begins to arise:

"Sault Ste Marie is worse off than other northern communities because of the distance to travel to Toronto or London, the fact that most must travel by plane rather than car due to their condition, and the fact that trips often require additional costs for taxis, meals, and accommodation.

"Due to the financial hardship many residents are experiencing charitable organizations, service clubs, and church groups are being asked to use their limited financial resources to help residents requiring travel for health reasons.

"Many residents assume health travel out of Sault Ste Marie is funded fully by the government but it's not."

We're making the case that if this is the road we're going down, if we're going to continue to regionalize, if something isn't done to improve our chances of getting more specialists in and more doctors in, we will be travelling more. So this government has to look at the cost of travel and the northern health travel grant.

1730

I'm asking the minister if she's serious about taking hold of this restructuring program now and if she wants to do something significant for the north besides trying to get more specialists up, besides trying to get more family doctors to come up to Sault Ste Marie—and we have lots of advice on that for her if she will come and talk to us—she needs to look most immediately at the cost of travel and she needs to review the northern health travel grant so that more money is put into it so that the residents of northern Ontario are not overly burdened simply to get the health care that they need.

Mr Smitherman: It's an honour for me to have a chance to follow the member from Sault Ste Marie in this important debate. It was interesting, as someone who represents a densely populated urban riding in the centre of our province's capital, Toronto, to hear a little bit about Sault Ste Marie and to be reminded of the challenges that face health care around this province.

I have a fond association with Sault Ste Marie, having lived there for one winter. My father owned a company that was the house carrier for Algoma Steel, and Sault Ste Marie is a place that I remember fondly, so it was interesting and an honour to follow the member from Sault Ste Marie.

I would, in this debate on Bill 23, like to take some time to tell the story of health care in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale. Despite some of the stories about growth that's going on in the GTA which seem to focus on growth taking place in places like York, Durham, Halton and Peel regions, where it is of course very, very strong, there is a story as well in downtown Toronto of very strong population growth.

In fact, there is a building boom in residential development in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale and in ridings like Trinity-Spadina, right next door. In my riding alone, the King-Parliament neighbourhood is seeing much new residential construction. As a result of initiatives taken by then mayor Barbara Hall on the Kings project, King-Parliament is seeing much new development.

Yorkville alone, a neighbourhood very near to here, has 11 new condominium development proposals before the city of Toronto for consideration.

The railway lands just to the west of the SkyDome will be home in a short time to 5,000 new units of housing, probably with something like 15,000 new individuals.

In my riding, the Gooderham & Worts site, where once fine products were created, will now be home to many thousands of new people. Of course, the prospect of new housing related to an Olympics bid speaks as well

to residential growth in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

We experience as well in downtown Toronto very significant population swells by day when hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people from all parts of the greater Toronto area come to work in downtown Toronto. On evenings and weekends, entertainment uses swell the population as well. People do not only require assistance from hospitals and from our health care system when they are at home but also when they are at work.

We also have a very significant linkage with University Avenue hospitals and with the University of Toronto, their teaching hospitals. What is learned there and the critical mass that is created by these institutions being able to work together and to work with the University of Toronto is very, very significant.

In downtown Toronto, as well, we have a very diverse population. I think everybody knows that. My riding may be home to more homeless people than any other riding in Ontario, with significant populations of people suffering from issues related to mental health and to addictions.

We have serious challenges related to the delivery of health care to very diverse ethnocultural communities, to many, many people suffering from HIV and AIDS, to people who work in the sex trade and who are IV drug users and who suffer from other addictions.

As well, we have an abundance—too many people, I would say—who are poor. As a result of that, there is a very strong link obviously between poverty and health, and we have many, many people who require health services that have historically been provided and that as a result of the actions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission are put at risk.

Only yesterday I took a break from question period and went on behalf of Central Neighbourhood House to work with their home support network to deliver Christmas gift baskets. I met with several people: a gentleman suffering from severe arthritis that keeps him housebound; a gentleman who is blind and who, although quite mobile, does suffer from limitations; and a woman who is suffering with the challenges associated with sickle-cell anemia.

In my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale, which has the highest proportion of tenants in the province, the highest number of public housing units in the province, the highest number of social housing units in the province, we have many people who are very dependent upon an efficient health system. As I said, this is put at risk by much of the activity of the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

When I moved downtown from Etobicoke Centre in 1986, some hospitals did not necessarily have a particularly sterling reputation as places where you ought to go for service. I'd like to point out the evolution that occurred at the Wellesley Central Hospital. When I came downtown it was a place that was viewed as one that you should only go to as a last resort. The emergency ward there had a very poor reputation. Under the effective leadership of Scott Rowan, who now serves in Hamilton,

I believe, meaningful community-based reforms took place and that hospital transformed itself into one of the finest institutions you could imagine.

Then the government of Ontario appointed the Health Services Restructuring Commission, and what they have left in their wake is nothing short of a tragedy: emergency wards on redirect, ambulances bounced from place to place with sick people in them.

We have in Toronto Centre-Rosedale a lot of fingerprints of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. The Salvation Army Grace Hospital—closed. The Orthopaedic and Arthritic Hospital—closed. Women's College Hospital—stripped of its autonomy, a world-renowned institution for women's health, not just health services delivered to women but health services delivered by women, with senior management positions held by women. The government, in its move at restructuring, has reduced the autonomy of this very fine institution.

Wellesley Central Hospital, as I mentioned earlier, is one that I have a very strong relationship with, having worked on the Staying Alive campaign, which came about as a result of the actions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. This hospital received special treatment from the Health Services Restructuring Commission—a forced merger. No consensual-style amalgamation, no opportunity to negotiate the terms under which it would merge with St Mike's, but rather a forced merger that did nothing to protect much of the community concern that was out there.

I am so proud of the communities that stood and fought against that forced merger because these are communities that I am proud to represent. They are communities that are poor and they are often disenfranchised, but they got together and coalesced around this issue and said, "No, we'll not stand by readily as you take from us what we need and what we have committed to working with and what we have worked to build." I'm proud that they found their voice.

I must say I am less proud of the role that the Health Services Restructuring Commission played because they ignored many other options. With respect to Wellesley and Women's College, those two fine institutions which had many things in common came together and developed their own merger proposal which they presented to the Health Services Restructuring Commission, a merger proposal which had associated with it significant savings and the protection of those historic service delivery models that the communities they served so depended on. The Health Services Restructuring Commission set up by this government didn't even bother to consider their proposals.

Many on the government side will say, "We took tough action. We needed to do it because this wasn't going to happen anyway," but that is untrue. In Toronto Centre-Rosedale the Wellesley Hospital and the Central Hospital merged, a voluntary merger long before the Health Services Restructuring Commission had been created. These two hospitals came together, they closed a site. There is ample evidence that these people, working

together, could find savings, could find efficiencies, but could continue to deliver service in a way that suited the needs of those communities. The decision to close Wellesley Central Hospital deliberately understated the physical capacity of St Mike's hospital to bring those programs in-house.

1740

If we fast forward to today, it's a very tragic situation developing in the neighbourhoods that surround this Legislative Building. St Mike's has a \$22-million operating budget deficit forecast. Their capital redevelopments are incomplete, but rumours are out there that the pressure to close early is intensifying. I ask the question to the members of the government, who will dutifully vote in favour of this bill that places so much power in the hands of the minister: Who will protect the people who are currently in those beds, who are ill, where there is no physical capacity yet created at St Mike's to take them on? Where will the people who currently are in the psychiatric ward at Wellesley Hospital go when this hospital is closed and the capital investments have not been made at St Mike's? Where will the people who use the emergency ward, a very, very busy emergency ward, at Wellesley Hospital go?

Already in downtown Toronto our hospitals are suffering from the highest level of redirect ever. Sick people are being shuttled from hospital to hospital in an attempt to find a place where they can get the care they require, and this government stands idly by as one more emergency ward, a very busy emergency ward, is set to close, further intensifying the problem. I would like to see a commitment from the government to keep that open.

What price will we pay? More than half a billion dollars in capital investments will be spent at just two of the hospitals that are in Toronto Centre-Rosedale, and within sight, within short walking distance—probably as far as some members opposite could drive a golf ball—facilities will close, only to have new ones built. Tell me that that's efficient, and demonstrate that the savings are there.

What other price have we paid? We've paid in extraordinary loss of connection to communities. Where once we had communities coming together and working with hospitals like the Wellesley Central Hospital to deliver programs in a way that worked, we now have larger organizations, less able to deal with those communities.

In closing, I make a plea to the minister as she assumes these powers: Ensure that the emergency ward and the psychiatric beds at the Wellesley will not close until capacity is replaced, as planned but not yet delivered at St Mike's; and ensure that women's health services, like reproductive health services, are provided for, that the needs of the community are met.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's a pleasure to join in the debate on Bill 23. Let me just start with a couple of quotes of some prominent hospital CEOs in the province.

The first one: "The legislation extends the minister's authority to amend the Health Services Restructuring Commission's directives to fine-tune the restructuring that's being implemented according to local needs. We support that." That's Manu Malkani, president and CEO of Sault Area Hospitals.

The second one is Tony Dagnone of London Health Sciences Centre, which I'm proud to say is in my riding, who supports the legislation. He's quoted as saying, "We believe that as Minister of Health you must have the authority to shape and transform health care in the face of future needs of Ontario citizens."

That's what this is all about. It's about restructuring hospitals so that we can have a vision for our health care and we can actually put patients first. It's about re-investing and restructuring that will create modern hospitals with new technologies that deliver more services to more people.

I'm proud in London-Fanshawe because at the London Health Sciences Centre in October the Premier was down and he toured the facility, which had a first non-invasive heart surgery. This was done by a computerized robot called Zeus. What that does for a community or a patient when you can perform a surgery that's non-invasive: Speaking for Tony Dagnone, he says that the expense involved in performing that type of surgery, and taking that to the next level where you can continually do that, will mean that they will be able to perform more surgeries on more people with less hospital stay.

Essentially, you can serve more people by cutting down the amount of time in the hospital. Wouldn't that be great for Ontario? Wouldn't it be great if the opposition would put people first and support those types of initiatives? But we got here after 10 years of Liberal and NDP mismanagement. They ignored the realities of modern health care, as I've just described. To renew that hospital system, we had to restructure it.

Let me give you a few examples of some of the new technologies and new centres that came out of restructuring: creating regional dialysis centres with machines out in local hospitals such as Woodstock and Stratford, close to London, two small communities with services they didn't have before; creating two new cardiac care centres; opening five new cancer care centres in Mississauga, Oshawa, Kitchener, St Catharines and Sault Ste Marie—it's all about local needs; that's what this is all about—56 new up-to-date emergency rooms; tripling the number of MRIs in the province.

These are all supported by the Ontario Hospital Association. They asked for this legislation. To give you the example of the Health Services Restructuring Commission, 22 communities will be affected by this legislation: Brant county, Essex county, Hamilton-Wentworth, Kent county, Lambton county, Niagara, Waterloo, Toronto, the greater Toronto area, Haliburton, Ottawa-Carleton, Pembroke, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Leeds-Grenville, Kingston, Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Prince Edward-Hastings, Cornwall, Nipis-

sing, Sault Ste Marie, West Parry Sound and then, of course, London Health Sciences Centre in my riding.

In order to prioritize these needs, you need financial resources. What we've had to do in the last five years is make those financial resources a reality. We had to cut taxes to do that. The province was bankrupt. As well intentioned as anybody is, you cannot help our health care system and our education system if there's no money. We cut taxes, created an economy with almost 600,000 net new jobs and more people paying taxes. It gave us the ability to invest in health care.

Back to priorities: Back when the Canada Health Act was negotiated, the province of Ontario and the federal government split that commitment on a 50-50 basis. That's a true partnership. In most relationships we believe in the concept of 50-50. That's the type of arrangement that was negotiated. Today the federal Liberal government pays 11% of spending in Ontario for health care; 11 cents on every dollar. For anyone to say that health care is a priority and only fund it with 11 cents on every dollar is not fooling anyone. I know the people in my riding are disgusted at the federal Liberals' lack of priority for health care.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to continue the debate on this bill dealing with health care. I think there continue to be significant problems in the health care system and all of us should acknowledge that. Hopefully they're going to get better. Time will tell. My own view is that until we begin to look at health care differently than we have, I don't think we'll ever really solve the issue.

1750

I always ask people, "How much do we spend on health in the province of Ontario?" The answer I normally get back, particularly around here, is that it's about \$20 billion. Of course, that's not the answer. The answer is, we spend in the province of Ontario probably about \$30 billion to \$32 billion on health care. It happens that we fund about \$20 billion with a lot of provincial revenues and the other \$10 billion to \$12 billion is funded out of other sources; drug plans and supplementary health plans and all those sorts of things. I assume it's about \$32 billion. There's a rule of thumb that says it's about 10% of the gross domestic product. If that were the case, it would be about \$37 billion, but I assume it's around \$32 billion. In my opinion, until we begin to say: "That's how much money is spent on health care in the province of Ontario. Is it well managed?" I don't think we'll really get some long-term solutions.

Also, and I've felt this way for a long time, I think there's a conflict of interest in the Ministry of Health because it has two responsibilities. We rely on it to develop our health policy for us but it is also the largest health insurance company. It funds \$20 billion of our health costs. In my opinion, they are often in a conflict of interest: What may be in the best interests of health may not be in the best interests of that insurance company, namely, the Ontario government. My own view is that we have to look at that because the insurance side of the

Ministry of Health may say, "Listen, if we approve that drug, even though it may be beneficial, it's going to add substantial costs to our drug plan." I've had this view for a long while.

I once asked the NDP Minister of Finance, Mr Laughren, "How much money do we spend on health care in the province of Ontario?" He said, "I'm going to wait for the supplementary because obviously this is a trick question." What I was trying to get at was, don't look at how much the province funds of health care; look at the total spending. As I say, until we begin to appreciate that, I think we'll perpetuate, to use the jargon in the health area, the silo mentality, where there's a hospital silo and there's the drug plan silo and there's the OHIP silo and there's the long-term-care silo.

It's very difficult for any government, I might add, to move funds among those things. It's relative to this bill because the bill gives the Minister of Health the authority to continue to assert the recommendations of the hospital restructuring commission. In my view we are tinkering at the edges until we lay out for ourselves how much money we spend on health in Ontario, how it is paid for and whether that is the most efficient mix of spending. It's important for economic reasons, by the way.

I actually read material that the government sends. Minister Palladini sent all of us, a week ago, a pamphlet on site location, it was called. It was a magazine produced by, I gather, an independent organization that analyzes site locations in North America. It was extolling the virtues of Ontario. It said there are two key reasons why plants might want to locate in Ontario, and several other reasons but two key ones. One, they said, was our skilled labour force. The second was the way we manage our health care and that it is heavily publicly funded. Clearly, as we all know, the auto sector looked at this very carefully. One of the key reasons why they located in Ontario was that their health costs per employees are, I think, about one third in Ontario what they would be in Michigan.

I raise these issues as we debate this bill because I'm convinced that we're going to continue to face problems in health care. The debate around here often is, "It was just as bad when you Liberals were in, so what are you talking about?" But the public is going to want solutions. I worry that there is some evidence that it's not getting better. I hope I'm wrong. Until we see the evidence that it is getting better, I think we have to say to ourselves that maybe we don't have the right long-term solutions.

I go back again to where I began my comments, and that is, in my opinion, until we say, "How much money are we spending on health care in Ontario? How is it being funded? Is it being spent in the right areas or not?" and—again, I have my view—until the policy area of health is separated from the insurance side of health, I think there will be a continual conflict of interest within the Ministry of Health.

All of us have had issues of health in our own constituencies. The members will be familiar with the reason I'm so concerned about what appears to be a

continuing problem in the emergency wards. Two years ago, my local hospital asked me to come in and meet with a family that had just lost a young woman in their family, a pregnant lady who suffered a brain haemorrhage. There were about 20 calls made to try to find a hospital here in Toronto that could handle her brain haemorrhage; they couldn't. She went to Hamilton and tragically passed away.

I never made that issue public. I sent the minister a letter saying, "Can you explain this?" Really, it stayed hidden for six months and no answer. Finally, in my opinion because I pushed heavily on it, there was an inquest held. I went to hear the inquest. They reported June 29, 1999, on the reasons why that person lost her life. The recommendations from the jury called for solutions to our emergency room situation. I was assured at the time, on June 29, the government was going to move forward to solve them. I say again, based on what we're seeing today, I don't think that issue has been resolved.

Where does that leave all of us? If we don't find real, long-term solutions and we put band-aids on these things, we'll be faced with similar headlines next year and the year after. I believe the solution rests with looking at the

total health needs, not just how much the province funds, and separating the Ministry of Health's responsibilities. Have the insurance side of it, but have the health policy without conflict.

The Speaker: Mr Newman has moved third reading of Bill 23. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): It carried.

The Speaker: I heard a no. It didn't carry.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would like to request that the vote on Bill 26 be deferred until Monday, December 13."

Therefore the vote will be deferred.

The House now stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
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Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Thunder Bay- Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
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		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

continued from overleaf

THIRD READINGS

Audit Amendment Act, 1999, Bill 26, <i>Mr Sterling</i>	
Mr Sterling	1295
Agreed to	1295
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999, Bill 23, Mrs Witmer	
Mr Newman.....	1296
Mr Gerretsen.....	1298
Mr Gill.....	1300
Mr Martin	1301
Mr Smitherman.....	1306
Mr Mazzilli.....	1308
Mr Phillips.....	1309
Vote deferred.....	1310

OTHER BUSINESS

Food drive	
Mr Hampton	1277
The Speaker.....	1278
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	
Mrs Johns	1278
Mr Curling	1278
Mr Kormos	1279
Points of order	
The Speaker.....	1291
Speaker's ruling	
Mr Gerretsen.....	1292
Mr Klees.....	1293
The Speaker.....	1293

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeu­di 9 décembre 1999

AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Loi de 1999 concernant la vérité sur Ipperwash, projet de loi 3, <i>M. Phillips</i>	
Rejetée	1271
Loi de 1999 sur la responsabilité des banques d'alimentation, projet de loi 20, <i>M. Spina</i>	
Rejetée	1272

DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Mé­mento du millénaire	
M ^{me} Boyer	1273

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi Christopher de 1999 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels, projet de loi 31, <i>M. Tsubouchi</i>	
Adoptée.....	1275
Loi de 1999 modifiant le Code de la route (protection de la jeunesse), projet de loi 32, <i>M. Bartolucci</i>	
Adoptée.....	1275

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 1999 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, projet de loi 23, <i>M^{me} Witmer</i>	
Adoptée.....	1295
Loi de 1999 modifiant la Loi sur la vérification des comptes publics, projet de loi 26, <i>M. Sterling</i>	
Adoptée.....	1295

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 1999 modifiant la Loi sur la vérification des comptes publics, projet de loi 26, <i>M. Sterling</i>	
Adoptée.....	1295
Loi de 1999 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, projet de loi 23, <i>M^{me} Witmer</i>	
Vote différé.....	1310

CONTENTS

Thursday 9 December 1999

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Truth About Ipperwash Act, 1999, Bill 3, <i>Mr Phillips</i>	
Mr Phillips	1257, 1262
Mr Kormos	1258
Mr Smitherman	1259
Mr Bisson	1259
Ms Di Cocco	1260
Mr Hampton	1260
Mr Parsons	1261
Mr McGuinty	1261
Mr Kennedy	1262
Mr Klees	1262
Negatived	1271
Food Bank Accountability Act, 1999, Bill 20, <i>Mr Spina</i>	
Mr Spina	1263, 1270
Mr Kennedy	1264
Mr Kormos	1265
Mr Tascona	1265
Mr Agostino	1266
Ms Churley	1267
Mr Stewart	1268
Mr Bartolucci	1269
Mr Martin	1269
Mr O'Toole	1270
Mr Christopherson	1270
Negatived	1272
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	
Municipal restructuring	
Mr Bartolucci	1272
Izetta Hobbs	
Mr Martin	1272
Hanukkah	
Mr Young	1272
Hospital funding	
Mr Agostino	1273
QuitCare program	
Mrs Elliott	1273
Millennium Memento	
Mrs Boyer	1273
Mr Stewart	1273
Rural Ontario	
Mr Peters	1274
Fiscal responsibility	
Mr Newman	1274

FIRST READINGS

Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 1999, Bill 31, <i>Mr Tsubouchi</i>	
Agreed to	1275
Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Youth Protection), 1999, Bill 32, <i>Mr Bartolucci</i>	
Agreed to	1275
Mr Bartolucci	1275

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Children with special needs	
Mrs Marland	1275
Mr Kennedy	1276
Ms Churley	1277
Sex offender registry	
Mr Tsubouchi	1275
Mr Levac	1276
Mr Kormos	1277

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ipperwash Provincial Park	
Mr Phillips	1281
Mr Flaherty	1281
The Speaker	1282
Government consultants	
Mrs Papatello	1283
Mr Baird	1283, 1284
Mr Hampton	1284
Ms Martel	1284
Mr Kormos	1285
Emergency services	
Mr Hampton	1285
Mr Hodgson	1285
Highway 407	
Mr Gravelle	1286
Mr Turnbull	1286
Mr O'Toole	1291
Mr Clement	1291
Children with special needs	
Mr Coburn	1286
Mrs Marland	1286
Millennium Memento	
Mr Kennedy	1287
Mrs Johns	1287

Correctional facilities

Mr Dunlop	1288
Mr Sampson	1288

Ontario Lottery Corp.

Mr Martin	1288
Mr Hodgson	1288

Municipal restructuring

Mr Crozier	1289
Mr Clement	1289

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Mr Wettlaufer	1290
Mr Stockwell	1290

Homelessness

Mr Caplan	1290
Mr Baird	1290

PETITIONS

Gasoline prices

Mr Peters	1293
-----------------	------

Karla Homolka

Ms Mushinski	1293
--------------------	------

Medical laboratories

Mr Kwinter	1294
------------------	------

SECOND READINGS

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999, Bill 23, *Mrs Witmer*

Agreed to	1295
-----------------	------

Audit Amendment Act, 1999, Bill 26, *Mr Sterling*

Mr Sterling	1295
Agreed to	1295

continued overleaf