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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 24 June 2002

Lundi 24 juin 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 24 June 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 24 juin 2002

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEEPING THE PROMISE
FOR GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT
(2002 BUDGET), 2002
LOI DE 2002 SUR LE RESPECT
DE L'ENGAGEMENT D'ASSURER
LA CROISSANCE ET LA PROSPÉRITÉ
(BUDGET DE 2002)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 20, 2002, on the motion for second reading of Bill 109, An Act to implement the measures contained in the 2002 Ontario Budget and to implement other initiatives of the Government of Ontario / Projet de loi 109, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le budget de l'Ontario de 2002 ainsi que d'autres initiatives du gouvernement de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): It is my understanding that the member for Trinity-Spadina has the floor.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's good to have time, and plenty of it, to be able to say what you have to say in this place.

It's hard for the Tories. Even when they have an opportunity, they don't speak. So imagine how hard it is for the Tories to be able to get their views out to the public. It's hard, Bart. We, on the other hand, have plenty of time to dissect your budgets as best we can so that the public watching this political program, Monday night, 6:45, watching it live, have an opportunity to watch us have that debate.

Interjection: They're clicking on.

Mr Marchese: Yes, they're clicking on, because it is one of those opportunities they have to watch us, to hear us. How else do they see you? How else do they hear you, except in this place? That's why they want the Tories to be able to get up and speak on the issues, and the budget in particular, because that's what we're talking about tonight.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): If you sit down, we'll be pleased to stand up.

Mr Marchese: Good to see you, Steve, because I've got some things to say to you on the budget that you may or may not like. I don't know.

This is a budget—

Mr Gilchrist: Let's talk about cars made in Brampton.

Mr Marchese: No, I want to talk about the budget. It's such an exquisite budget to talk about; it really is. This is the first budget we have by the former Minister of Education that reveals just how much trouble you folks really are in. This is a budget that says, "We are putting off the income tax cuts for one year." They say in the budget on page 6, because this is where the exquisite part of the politics comes into play, "Our government has pursued an aggressive tax cut plan for one very simple reason. Tax cuts work."

Applause.

Mr Marchese: And the Tories clap for themselves. It works, right?

I'm reminded, of course, by the politics of the Conservative government and the Common Sense Revolution that they say very much the same thing. On page 4 of the Common Sense Revolution it says, "In fact, taxes must be cut if we want to create jobs."

Applause.

Mr Marchese: They clap because they believe it. They believed it then and they believe it now.

So here's my concern that I raised last week, which I will raise again, because I'm not quite sure that some of you were here last week to listen to my remarks.

1850

If tax cuts work, why are you saying on page 6, "In the meantime, because of our short-term fiscal situation, I propose to introduce legislation to delay, for one year only, the current planned reductions in personal income tax"? I don't get it. It's paradoxical in my mind. It may not be in yours, but it is in mine. If you believers, the true-blue ones, believe that tax cuts work, I don't remember one single Conservative soul in the past and/or present saying, "Tax cuts work only some of the time."

Mr Gilchrist: They work all the time.

Mr Marchese: Steve Gilchrist says they work all the time. That's what I remember. I remember every single Tory, past and present, saying, "Tax cuts work all the time." If they work all the time, then putting off tax cuts for one year means they do not work.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Only some of the time? How can you have it both ways when you have consistently, for years, said they work all of the time? The Liberals can have it both ways, but how can you Tories claim the same ground they do? You just can't do it. You either believe in it or you don't. You believed in the past that tax cuts

work, that they would bring prosperity and that tax cuts were the only way—the only way—to increase jobs.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): Carried.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Mr Guzzo. I'm just re-affirming what you believe now and believed then.

But if tax cuts were the only way and are the only way to create prosperity and jobs, why are you putting them off? Clearly because they don't work. But you quite conveniently say, "They do work, but sometimes they don't." Then the former Minister of Education, now finance minister, says, "We will continue with tax cuts because we want to take even more steps to promote prosperity in the province." She believes that tax cuts create prosperity. In the same breath, within the space of 15 seconds in this budget, she says—

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): Rosario, remember this?

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): It's the budget of 1994.

Mr Marchese: I can't wait to hear it.

Mr Sampson: You wrote it.

Mr Marchese: Maybe you can repeat it for us.

I remember the current Speaker of this House, I remember Mr Stockwell, the Minister of Energy, I remember your former Premier, long gone now, Monsieur Harris. When we had a recession, the Tories used to say about the NDP—David, your former folks used to say to us—"You don't have a revenue problem; you have a spending problem." Chris Stockwell used to say that, and we used to say it was a recession that of course we didn't cause. But the Tories—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: They're laughing now and they laughed then. They used to laugh then: "No, no, there's no recession. You people just have a spending problem, not a revenue problem." So the recession, of course, was invented by the NDP, caused by the NDP, but in the minds of the Tories it didn't really happen. There was no recession; it was something we just thought up.

So you have the Minister of Finance, the former Minister of Education, saying, "We've got to put off the tax cuts. We have a few problems." You know what the problem is, Mr Banker? September 11. The Minister of Finance says, "We could never really anticipate some of the problems we've had, but September 11 really, really did it."

Mr Sampson: You're catching on.

Mr Marchese: Catching on to what?

Mr Sampson: To the real truth.

Mr Marchese: So September 11 did happen and, of course, it caused the economic misfortune that you're experiencing.

Mr Sampson: And your problem was a recession that didn't happen. Is that the idea?

Mr Marchese: So what do you think, Mr Banker? So we didn't have a recession in 1990, but we did have a September 11 because it happened to you. What hap-

pened to us wasn't real, but what's happening to you is real. Do you follow the drift?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): You'd better go over that again for Hansard.

Mr Marchese: You follow it, right, Garfield? Yes, it's amusing, really—

Mr Sampson: Rosie, your spaceship is outside.

Mr Marchese: No, no. My spaceship went a long time ago. Yours is coming. Yours is coming.

Mr Sampson: Hey, Rosie, ET, please come back.

Mr Marchese: September 11 has caused your economic—

The Deputy Speaker: Take your seat, please.

Mr Sampson: I think we're going to get yelled at.

The Deputy Speaker: No, not yet, but I am going to ask nicely, to start, if everybody would please come to order and give the member an opportunity to make his remarks. Please continue.

Mr Marchese: So September 11 is the cause of all of their worries and sins and misfortunes. When they can't beat up the federal government, they go back to September 11; when September 11 doesn't work, they beat up on the federal government. I've never heard so many Tories whining simultaneously. Every minister who gets up, every MPP, whines about the federal Liberals not giving them any money.

Mr Dunlop: Do the math.

Mr Marchese: Garfield, it's true, right? And when we were in government, your members used to say to Bob Rae, "Stop whining." They used to say, "You're not really having a recession. The federal government really hasn't taken billions of dollars away from you. Stop whining, Bob Rae." And here you are, loaded with money coming in, and all of you ministers, all of you, standing up day in and day out, attacking Monsieur Chrétien—deservedly so. No, I'm not saying it's undeserving criticism, except I remember because, you see, I was here. I remember. When you find people, those of you looking around, none of you were here in my time. None of you. That's why you don't savour the excitement of these words, because you weren't here.

But if only you had witnessed your former member Stockwell just about here—right about here—when he used to fulminate and he used to spit fire with his eyes and he would say, "Now you guys, you don't have a revenue problem"; he would say, "Stop Bob Rae from whining"—he, the former Speaker, Mike Harris and each and every one of the Tories. I thought Tories were not capable of whining. Surely when you hear them in opposition saying to Bob Rae that he shouldn't whine, if Tories should ever be in power, God forbid that they should whine. They don't have the ability to whine, I thought. Lo and behold, my God, what a pack of whiners you are, all of you.

So I remind you, when your colleagues who were here in 1990-95 used to say that New Democrats didn't have a revenue problem; we had a spending problem—I ask you today, with all of the good economy you created because you guys are so good, and all these millions and billions

of dollars coming right in, how come you can't balance your budget this year without the harm that it's causing you politically? Because it's causing you a heck of a lot of damage. But you say, "We've got to balance the budget," right? I'm trying to understand it. You presumably don't have a revenue problem, correct? Because the economy has been good to you, right? But then I say, maybe they have a spending problem, but is it possible that Tories have a spending problem, because these people don't like to spend the taxpayers' money, right?

Mr Sampson: Rosie, we're losing people to the shopping channel.

Mr Marchese: Now hold on, hold on. Let me go through this. Enjoy the moment. Savour it. Put it into your mouth. Grab it and just savour it.

You don't have a revenue problem. That is undisputable because you people love to tell the public how much money you've got. But you don't have a spending problem, correct? You don't have a spending problem, right? So when you say, "We're putting so much money—look—into health: \$1.6 billion"—

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): One point seven.

Mr Marchese: One point seven? Right. Is that a spending problem, or is that not a spending problem?

1900

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): What do you think it is?

Mr Marchese: If I were to listen to Tories, I would say you have a spending problem on your hands. "You don't have a revenue problem," Stockwell would tell you, "you've got a spending problem." Right? Otherwise you'd be able to balance your budget without having to raise close to \$500 million on cigarettes. You're putting a \$5-a-pack tax on cigarettes. That's four hundred and fifty million bucks you guys have to raise to balance the budget. So what is your problem? Do you have a revenue problem, a spending problem or a September 11 problem? What do you have? Is it terminal? I hope not. I hope it's not terminal, because I really would worry if that were so. But you've got to help me: tell me what your problem is.

Ah, Minister of Labour, is it an incompetence problem you're facing?

Hon Mr Clark: Now you're getting personal.

Mr Marchese: OK. Not revenue, not spending; it's got to be incompetence, Minister of Labour. Say it like you mean it.

But when you get up—monsieur Beaubien, tu vas parler après. C'est toi? Justifie ça pour moi. Parle clairement pour moi et pour les autres qui regardent ce programme. Je veux savoir, le public veut savoir, les raisons pour lesquelles vous vous trouvez dans un grand problème politique-économique.

Interjection.

M. Marchese: N'importe. Parlez-en. Je veux savoir les vraies raisons pour ce problème.

I was just trying to figure out the nature of the problem: not revenue, not spending, and yet they are so immersed in the morass they find themselves in. I believe, good citizens, they are truly incompetent. They are. They have been so for five, six, seven years, for God's sake. But I raise these issues so that you are able to help me understand.

They say, "Tax cuts are always good." Then they say in the same breath, "We've gotta put 'em off." They say, "Tax cuts create jobs." Then, in the same breath, they say, "Not this year." But Ecker says, "Come back next year; we'll bring them back." We've got a revenue problem this year, but we won't have a revenue problem next year?

Hon Mr Clark: Now you've got it.

Mr Marchese: I see, Minister of Labour. Have you got two eyes or one when you speak on this issue?

Hon Mr Clark: Actually, I've got four.

Mr Marchese: You've got four. That's a big help. That really is a big help.

I don't understand you Tories, I really don't. Again, please, you've got to extricate the complexities, the paradoxes, the contradictions. Monsieur Beaubien, tu vas m'aider? You told me you would. I want to know, because I know the public wants to understand.

I'm saying that if you argue in one consistent manner you cannot be inconsistent in the same breath. You can't be.

Hon Mr Clark: That might come back to haunt you.

Mr Marchese: To haunt me? No, it's going to haunt you. I didn't say, "Tax cuts work," and then, "Stop them." I didn't say that, as Stockwell used to say. You said it. I'm not saying it; you're saying it.

Hon Mr Clark: Are you sure? I want you to remember what you just said.

Mr Marchese: Am I sure? It's not what I said; I did vote against your income tax. I'm telling you that we New Democrats say consistently that when you cut income taxes, you take billions away from provincial coffers in a way that you could only devastate your social infrastructure, in the ways people have seen.

What is that social infrastructure? You've cut in health by the billions. You've cut in education by the billions. You've cut in natural resources—you fired thousands of workers from the Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Natural Resources. We told you the consequences of cutting taxes would mean you would devastate our social services. You can't have it both ways. You thought you could, Monsieur Beaubien, but it's coming back to you. It's grabbing you in ways you just don't like.

And do you know what? Staving off, putting off tax cuts is hurting you on Bay Street. It really is, I understand from a poll here: "In the report card, chief executives of large, medium-sized and small businesses gave the Eves-led Tory government failing marks—47% and 45% respectively—for its decision to delay tax cuts for businesses and households." It must grab you here when you hear that.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Minister of Labour, I know you're getting whacked by the big boys on Bay. You see, they were arguing, "We're making all these decisions based on these tax cuts." They thought, "It's coming," and then you said, "No, it's not coming." I imagine you must be feeling strangled.

Look at your Tory—no, Alliance—supporters. I met one of your former staffers, whom I shall not name, who said to me, interestingly, "Do you remember when our government used to say, 'We're going to give people a hand up'? The government is now giving people a handout," which is another paradox. They used to say, "We're going to give you a hand up," and now they're going to give you a handout. So he said, "I'm leaving for the Alliance." I said, "God bless. Godspeed."

So I say to myself, "The Tories are really hurting on this one. If this guy's leaving"—he was there with someone I didn't recognize—"there must be a couple of hundred at least or a couple dozen at least here in Ontario who are saying, 'Holy moly, they've changed direction. What gives? Do we have to find another party in Ontario?'" Of course you can't find another party. You're stuck. The poor Alliance types are stuck.

I know you're hurting. I know some of you are saying, "I just hope we can hold on to that nice Alliance, strong right Tory vote. I hope we can hold on to it," as you try to squeeze the Liberals a little bit by saying, "We're going to hold off on the tax cuts," because that's what the Liberals called for. We always called for it permanently, but they change their minds from time to time.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Well, in the last election in 1999 they said they were against tax cuts but they wouldn't touch it if they got elected. This time they said they would cut the \$2 billion worth of income tax and corporate tax cuts. So you guys are trying to squeeze the Liberals a little bit, thinking, "If we do what they say and squeeze them a couple of per cent," just a teeny little bit, as the Minister of Labour is indicating to me, "then we could squeeze back into electoral victory." The Liberals are unnerved by what you're doing. They are. I find it terribly amusing.

The problem you've got is that you're getting squeezed by your ultra-conservative types, and the Liberals are getting squeezed by your moving into that territory. They're in a quandary, but so are you. That's the beauty of it all. That's what's so beautiful and amusing to watch, this kind of panorama of politics as it goes around. I love to see it, because you see the squirming that's going on in here. You do. Don't you see the squirming? I see it and it's beautiful.

These corporate types are really unhappy with you guys because they believed you would cut taxes, and they planned—and then. But here's my problem: your reliance on the private sector to fix all the ills of the world is not working. I can see that your grandification of the chief boys who manage these corporations is just wrong. It's not working.

It didn't work, did you notice, in the past six months to a year? Jean Monty, the chairman and CEO of Bell Canada Enterprises, did his shareholders the immense good service of quitting because, man, did those shares plummet severely. Those shareholders were severely hurt by what went on in that company. These are the people you put on a pedestal. You say, "They're like gods who can do no wrong. They will bring you money unlike you've ever seen before. Trust them." The same CEOs who give you guys the bread are failing. They're falling down, all of them—like Enron, falling down. Then you've got the other CEO from Nortel, John Roth, who was named CEO of the year. He presided over the single largest loss in Canadian corporate history. This godlike reliance on these big chiefs is not working. They're falling apart, and all of the greed and incompetence should show the public that you can't rely on the private sector to fix your problems, that you have to rely on the state to protect you when these CEOs break down and bring the shareholders with them.

1910

I say to the public, when this government is interested in selling off Hydro One—now, not completely. Prior to a ruling very recently that said, "You can't sell off Hydro One"—God bless that judge—the government came back, read the pulse and said, "If we sell off Hydro One, we're in big political trouble. What do we do?" So you guys huddled in those caucus meetings and decided you can't sell it off completely.

What are they going to do, though? Michael, they're going to sell off 49%. "We're not going to sell off 51%, we're going to sell off 49% to bring private sector discipline," the same discipline of Jean Monty, CEO of Bell Canada Enterprises, that brought the company down; the same discipline that CEO of Nortel John Roth brought to his company that brought the company and shareholders down; Enron, the same company that manipulated energy in a way to make money—all about greed. He came down and brought thousands of people with him.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Arthur Andersen.

Mr Marchese: Arthur Andersen, the accounting firm, worldwide famous, was part of that plot to undermine us as a people. They can't do things honestly and so they get caught and they collapse and they come down. What this government wants to do is bring the private sector discipline into Hydro One, where they would sell half of Hydro One—not half, 49%—and bring this type of private market discipline that has collapsed so many corporations and so many chiefs of these companies. That's the kind of discipline you want to bring into Ontario?

They proudly mock the opposition when they say, "We're not selling Hydro One. We're only selling 49%. We've got 2% ownership over the private sector but we're not going to let the private sector control us. Oh, no, the government will control it, because we'll have 51% and the private sector will only have 49%. Don't you worry, taxpayers. Don't worry about rates going up.

The private sector isn't there to make money for its shareholders; they wouldn't do that. They're there to bring private sector discipline to help you out—not to suck you dry of your money but to help you out.” That's why the Tories want to bring it in.

The private sector is there to suck up the money like there is no tomorrow. That's why they're there: sucking up as if there's no tomorrow; private sector discipline as they suckle away, forever and ever; tucking the profits into their pockets as they bring private sector discipline.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Mr Banker, they don't like you any more.

Listen, it could be that it's all part of a game, where the bankers pretend, “We're upset. We're really upset. We're going to do a poll and we're going to help the government out by saying we're really upset. Oh, boy, all the money we're going to lose and all the jobs that will disappear. We've got to help them out by telling the public we're in trouble, we're hurting. We hate them.” That could be part of a good plot, but I don't know. Who knows? My sense is that they will survive without you. They made lots of money before and they'll continue making lots of money with or without you.

Mr Beaubien: What's your point?

Mr Marchese: What's my point? Monsieur Beaubien, s'il te plaît.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: My point is, you've got a fiscal fiasco on your hands. You've \$8 billion going out because of your tax cuts and you're in trouble, you're tight. Now Ernie Eves says, “We've got to sound a bit like the Liberals,” because he's smart. He knows. He's in here for the long haul, I think, and he says, “I want to win an election. What do I do? I'm squeezed. I don't have enough money. I want to put a couple of bucks back into health without letting the people know that I'm a big spender. I've got to put some more money back into education—we're in trouble—without letting people know we're big spenders. We've got to put some money back into environment, because people died at Walkerton, without appearing like we're big spenders. We really care about people” kind of thing. Then they say, “But we don't have any money. What do we do?” Two things: the tax on cigarettes to raise a couple of dollars. “We'll sell Hydro One—49%, mind you, not more, because otherwise we can't tell the public we still run it.”

My point, Monsieur Beaubien, is that you're in trouble. That's all I was saying to you. It's not as if I'm saying to you that I'm not happy with the fact that you put off the income tax cuts. I am happy you're putting them off. I really am. I'm not happy just for me; I'm happy for all Ontario, because if you hadn't done holding off those tax cuts, you guys would have had to cut health again, education again, natural resources again, environment again, Ministry of Labour again, culture again, senior citizens and social services again and again. You said to yourself, “Look, we hurt these people so much, we can't hurt them again. They're not going to take it.” It

wouldn't show well on Ernie Eves, the Premier, if he didn't do this, because he's got a heart.

Remember that he said he's got a heart?

Mr Prue: He said that.

Mr Marchese: He did say that. He says he's not an ideologue. He's neither right nor left. All these six years, I don't know where he was, but he must have had his heart hidden tightly in that jacket.

But Ernie needs to show the public he cares about people, he cares about health. It was a mistake committed by Mike Harris, but not he, the Treasurer, no. When he was Treasurer, not he. He must have been directed like a puppet, like a marionette, and presumably he had no choice. Le pauvre Monsieur Eves had no choice on that one. He was directed by Harris to make all the cuts to education, health, senior citizens, water, culture. Poor guy, because deep down he really had a heart and it's showing now. The big spender, Ernie Eves, is showing.

I'm just telling you that I'm happy you guys put off those taxes. I am. Other people may not want to say so, but I do. I want to tell you that I think you people have restored some sanity—because I think you're all lunatics—but some sanity has been restored, and I think it speaks well of you guys. You guys are recovering some of the sanity that may have existed prior to you getting to office. I don't know. But I want to say to the taxpayers of Ontario watching, at least these people may be on their way to becoming sane, and that's a good thing, not a bad thing. But then I look at the budget and I say, if these people are moving to sanity, why would they do an insane thing of the sort I'm about to articulate?

On page 18, the minister says, “I am pleased to announce the creation of the student achievement fund. This \$20-million fund will begin by providing \$5,000 to every elementary school principal whose school meets or exceeds its student literacy goals in grade 3.” Twenty-five million bucks and it's going to go to schools that meet or exceed the standardized test. All of you Tories know, because you've been around; you don't have to be teachers to know this really—this is class-based, “class” meaning if you are here, professional and you've got money, that class will help you and help your children do better in school. If by class you are at the bottom end, where you don't have the same level of academic achievement and you are unfortunately not so rich, that means your kids are likely not to do well in school.

1920

So this Minister of Education, a former teacher, a trustee, allowed herself to be hoodwinked by a previous Minister of Education to allow \$25 million to go out—where? To schools where the kids are rich, where the kids come from professional homes. The kids who really need help, who may not pass the standardized tests, don't get any money.

I say to you, taxpayers, they might be restoring some sanity—even though I've always believed they're lunatics—but on this issue I say I don't really know. How could they pretend to help all the schools by giving an incentive to the rich little boys and girls who come from

rich homes, who get money—for what purpose, no one knows—but the children who are in desperate need of a Tory hand up get nothing?

I am not convinced that they are on that road to sanity. So, taxpayers, I worry for me, I worry for you, I worry for us all because I don't know what they're doing. I think they are seriously incompetent, have been for seven years and are likely to continue. The only way to restore sanity in this province is by booting them out. It's the only way. This budget won't do it. You've got to boot them out, and the way to do it is you've got to get involved electorally, you've got to vote and you've got to canvass to get these people out.

The Deputy Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I am pleased to respond to the member for Trinity-Spadina tonight. I listened with great interest to his speech. He provoked me to go to the legislative library tonight because I wanted to find out, to go back to what the NDP budgets of the past were.

So I went to the legislative library and asked for the 1994 budget. You may recall this budget, Mr Speaker. I got to page 3 of the budget. The budget was brought forward on May 5, 1994, by Floyd Laughren, who was then Minister of Finance. Much to my surprise, there's a head in here which says, "Cutting Taxes to Create Jobs."

It says, "The economy has been growing, but employment has been lagging. Small- and medium-sized businesses—which are the biggest generators of jobs in the economy—have told us that payroll taxes can stand in the way of new hiring."

They say one thing in here. For the last seven years we have been listening to the NDP saying that tax cuts are the worst thing that has ever happened in this province. I say, tell that to the 880,000 people who are now working in this province as a result of the sound economic policies that have been brought forward.

You look at the third sentence of the budget. It says, "This budget cuts taxes to encourage companies to hire new workers." It goes on. I was absolutely in disbelief when I read this budget. The member now is saying he's against tax cuts. Now he's saying that he actually could have voted for this budget because it would have cut taxes.

The budget from 1994 also said they were "on target to balance our operating budget by 1998." Thank God they never got the chance to be in office at that time. The other point is, "This budget contains no new taxes and no tax increases." That was Floyd Laughren's budget in 1994.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I am pleased to respond to the member for Trinity-Spadina. I listened carefully to his presentation over the course of the last couple of days of debate. I want to follow up on one thing he said. He said this evening that he thought the government was in trouble. Those were his exact words.

I happen to believe him. I think this government is in trouble. It's in trouble for a variety of reasons, the most

important of which is that the people of Ontario are paying far greater attention to how this government manages than they've ever done before over the course of the last seven years. The people of Ontario are now tuned in to this government, so they'll want to read page 65 of the government's budget this year to find out that this government is paying more money to pay down the public debt interest than they are to provide programs for social services. They're paying 14 cents—

Mr Guzzo: Whose fault is that?

Mr Bartolucci: The member for Ottawa asks whose fault it is. I want to tell the people of Ontario that it's the government's fault. It's the Harris-Eves government's fault, because they've increased the public debt by \$21 billion and they might want to find that on page 106 of the budget. So, because they've increased the public debt by \$21 billion, they're now forced to spend 14 cents of every dollar in paying down the debt they helped to create. That certainly is not acceptable.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm going to ask the government benches to please show a little more respect for the speakers. There's far too much heckling. It's way beyond just the norm. Please calm down a bit.

Mr Prue: I am amazed to see the number of people who are sitting opposite here tonight. There are about four or five of us here on the opposition bench but it is full over there.

I've only got a couple of minutes. I'd like to speak to what I think are two of the major things.

It's always entertaining to listen to my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. First of all he talked about September 11. I think we need to talk a little bit about September 11 and the role it has played, or not played, in this economy. Quite frankly, almost every reputable economist has said that although there were very worrying and troubling times in the weeks and maybe the month or two that followed September 11, in the whole grand scheme of things it has not had the economic impact that people purport. I would say to the Minister of Finance, if she were here, that is not really a good excuse for what is happening around this budget. The effects of September 11, although enormous on our psyche, have been really quite insignificant on the economy of this country.

The second point he talked about, which has just been raised again by the member Bartolucci, was about the trouble this party finds itself in, and I have to agree. I watched it most carefully the other day, sitting there in general government committee. We had people come who were angry at the government over the bill dealing with Hydro. They were extremely angry with the government. Speaker after speaker spoke against it. What was most important: I expected all the usual range of people to be unhappy, but what really got me were three eloquent speakers who came, who previously were on the government's side, who are now very angry with this government for backing off Hydro. Now I'm glad you did, but I had to watch three of your keenest, biggest supporters ever come there and castigate you. You are now between a rock and a hard place.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Scarborough East.

Mr Gilchrist: When the member for Trinity-Spadina stands up, of course it draws a big crowd. It's a shame there aren't any opposition members here to listen to you. But I appreciate the reference from Mr Prue to the work ethic demonstrated by members of the government.

You always raise so many issues when you stand up and speak, mostly because you have a difficult time staying on topic, but I must challenge your suggestion that this budget perpetuates cuts in health care. How preposterous. You know that. You know we're adding \$1.7 billion, and it doesn't matter how you split \$1.7 billion; that's a lot of new equipment, a lot of nurses, a lot of nurse practitioners, a lot of expanded hospitals.

You suggested this budget was one more in a series of cuts to public education. You know, member opposite, that over half a billion dollars was added to public education in this budget.

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But perhaps most troubling in the representations made by the member for Trinity-Spadina, a member of a party that has 9% of the seats in the Legislature. How fitting to see a poll published by Leger and Leger this week that found that 54% of respondents here in Ontario believe that North American-made cars are best, 25% believe that Japanese cars are best and only 8% believe that European cars are best.

To the member opposite, I know it's a very difficult, perhaps arcane economic theory that the more we buy Ontario-made products, the more jobs we create, the more money circulates in the economy, the four- to-five-time multiplier effect. I want to congratulate the member for his stimulus to the German economy these last few days, but I want to point out to you that had you bought a car or a van built in Windsor or in Brampton or Oshawa, you would have done far more for the workers in this province. I'm disappointed, member for Trinity-Spadina.

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

Mr Marchese: Thank you, friends and foes. This is the first time I've ever heard a member of the Conservative Party speak against the North American free trade agreement and worldwide trade agreements. I can't believe it. It would be fair to say that New Democrats oppose the North American free trade agreement and the worldwide opening up of borders. It's true to say that. But for you, Gilchrist from Scarborough East, to say that you want to close down the borders—I don't get it. What gives? Are you saying you want to close the borders and you just want a made-in-Canada car?

Mr Gilchrist: Ontario-made cars create more jobs.

Mr Marchese: Even Ontario-made, not even in Canada. You want to close the borders here in Ontario. He goes beyond saying, "Open up borders." He's saying we just want to close the borders here in Ontario. Steve. I suspect even some of your own friends drive Jettas.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Will? Where's Will? Does he drive a Jetta too?

Listen, I don't want to get off topic, Speaker. I've just got a couple of things to say.

The New Democrats said there would be no new taxes. Why? Because, when the economy was picking up, just at the time when we could have done a whole lot of good, these people come in and they just suck out billions of dollars by giving it away to corporations and wealthy Ontarians who don't really need it. They're proud of the fact that they say that tax cuts work. If they worked, you would not have put off the tax cuts in this budget. Clearly they don't work. Just say that. Admit it and make me feel better. It's comical to hear you people say, "September 11 has made us tremble." It's comical. Please, recover some of the sanity that you desperately need.

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mr Beaubien: I'll be sharing my time with the member for Peterborough and the member for Kitchener Centre.

I must admit that it is quite an act to follow the member for Trinity-Spadina. Mon ami, il est très difficile de te suivre ce soir.

Anyway, the member for Trinity-Spadina was saying they're fundamentally opposed to tax cuts. Well, we are fundamentally in favour of tax cuts. That's why I want to take a moment to talk about the program spending initiative proposed in the 2002 budget, namely Bill 109. Let me tell you that since 1995, 893,000 people are working because of tax cuts. Our tax cuts for people will allow taxpayers to keep more of their hard-earned income. A family of four with a \$60,000 net income, earned by two working people, will save \$2,005 this year. I don't think this is anything to sneeze at. Also, the real take-home pay has increased by 18.5% since 1995.

I know there are an awful lot of different opinions with regard to tax cuts. The member for Trinity-Spadina was saying that this government is incompetent because we deferred the tax cuts. Well, for the past seven years, I've heard the members of the opposition say that we were incompetent because we were implementing tax cuts. Now they're saying that because we're deferring tax cuts for one year, we are still incompetent. So I'm somewhat confused with regard to some of his comments.

Also, he mentioned the tax on cigarettes. Well, in 1996 the provincial sales tax on cigarettes was tied to the federal sales tax. So if there was a tax increase at the federal level, there was an automatic tax increase at the provincial level. Recently, as we all know, the federal government did increase the taxes on cigarettes by \$3.50 a package. So this government did take the initiative, in conjunction with the governments of Quebec and New Brunswick, to increase the taxes to \$5. To say that we totally increased the taxes by \$5—we increased them by \$1.50 over and above what the feds had increased.

He also mentioned the private sector fixing all the ills of the world. I don't think anybody can fix all the ills of the world. I think we all have a role to play with regard to fixing the ills of the world. The private sector certainly plays a role.

Let me talk about some of the programs that we're sponsoring and financing with the 2002 budget.

Let's talk about health care. Health care has been a very interesting subject for many people in the past seven years. There's no doubt that there is more money spent in health care today than there has ever been; there is going to be almost \$25.5 billion. However, I would caution people that just because we are increasing the level of spending in health care does not mean that the services are always increasing at the same level.

I happen to have worked in the health care field a number of years ago. I had the opportunity to work at the Sarnia General Hospital and at the Strathroy-Middlesex hospital as a medical laboratory technologist, and 35 years ago people were saying that there was not enough money in the health care system. It has been talked about for the past 35 years and probably longer than that. Will there ever be enough money in the health care system? If we're going to gauge how good our system is by the amount of money we spend in the system, I think we're taking the wrong measurements. Instead, we should start measuring the quality of the health care system by its output and outcome, not the input.

Just to give you an example as to what we have been doing with regard to the health care initiative, we've increased the number of MRI machines from 12 to 43 in the past seven years. There are also 20,000 new long-term-care beds coming on stream. We've increased the funding for cardiac care, which enabled an additional 61,000 heart procedures since 1995.

Dialysis services are now available to 3,240 people. I would like to point out also that you should talk to Pat Davis of Wallaceburg, who is a constituent assistant of mine who happens to be on a dialysis machine. Prior to this government being placed in power, this man used to have to travel to London to be dialysed. Now he can do it on his own at his home every night. I'm sure the quality of life for this particular individual is much better than it was five years ago.

We're moving forward with initiatives to meet the health care needs of northern and rural Ontario, which have experienced a severe shortage of physicians and nurses. In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, let me assure you that we have a fairly high proportion of nurse practitioners working in the health care centres in Forest, Grand Bend and in the small hospital in Newbury. There's no doubt that nurse practitioners can provide a high percentage of the primary health care needs of people in Ontario. I know there are some conflicts with the Ontario Medical Association when it comes to nurse practitioners, but I think as a government we have to increase our initiatives to provide more nurse practitioners in rural Ontario and certainly in northern Ontario.

While we're recognizing the need for more capital investment, we also recognize that there is a need to improve how it is invested, where it is invested and the timelines of investments. For instance, let's talk about new treatments, new drugs, new technologies, and of course, if I look in this House, an aging population. I

think we're a perfect carbon copy of this in this House. Certainly there is an increase in expectations and pressures for consumer choice and increasing cost beyond the ability of the province to undertake on its own.

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That's my segue with regard to the role of the federal government. I think in 1976 the Canada Health and Social Transfer Act was developed. If I recall, at that time the costs were to be split 50-50. There is no doubt that life, society, the health care needs and the social needs of people have changed since 1976. However, the level of funding from the federal government has not increased; it has decreased.

Just to go back prior to 1995, where they were spending about 18% or 18 cents per dollar on health care, today I think we're spending in the neighbourhood of slightly over 14%. It would be nice to go back to the original agreement. To say that we have a problem with health care and it's synonymous with or unique to Ontario I don't think is very fair. I think we should look at what is happening in the other provinces. I remember being at a conference last year and Neil LeBlanc, who is the Minister of Finance for Nova Scotia, said that if they keep spending at the present rate on their health care costs, within five years they will be spending 100 cents of every dollar on health care. I don't think this is what we want in Ontario. I'm sure that's not what the people in Nova Scotia want. I'm sure and hopeful that the Romanow report is going to give us a hand in this, but hopefully the federal government will also realize that they have a role to play.

Let's talk briefly about education. In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, we've probably had more small school and rural and urban school closings than any riding in Ontario. We keep hearing that there is not enough money; there is not enough money for books, there is not enough money for special education. However, with the Lambton-Kent school board in the past year, \$1 million was spent on tracks. There is no doubt that I believe in athletics. However, I think there are priorities. If there is no money for books and we have money for tracks, I wonder where the priorities are.

To give you some of the initiatives with regard to education, we're going to be spending \$200 million to double the local priorities grant from \$100 to \$200 per student. We're also going to be spending \$86 million for enrolment growth. I'm sure the board in Lambton-Kent would love to qualify for this particular grant, because they have been having some problems and difficulties. With the decreasing enrolment in the past six or seven years, they've probably lost close to 8,000 students. That is a travesty. There is no doubt about that. It's an issue we have to deal with. This is why this government has appointed Dr Mordechai Rozanski to look at the funding formula, to make sure that small rural schools in Ontario and northern Ontario are treated equitably.

We're also spending \$23 million to assist declining school boards. We're also spending another \$23 million for school transportation and another \$15 million for the

learning opportunities grant to help students who are at greater risk of not achieving their educational goals. This government is living up to its responsibility with regard to the education needs of people.

It's too bad that my colleague from Trinity-Spadina is not here, because I have one disappointment that I have to raise with regard to the budget, and that refers to the tax credit for independent and Christian schools. This is an issue that I strongly believe in. I know that we have deferred this tax for one year, but hopefully we will see fit to reinstate it at the same level it would have been next year when it is introduced in the budget.

With regard to post-secondary school, we're certainly taking many initiatives by providing fairness and equity. The province is providing \$16 million annually, with \$10 million targeted to colleges in the north and those serving rural communities. I would imagine the \$10 million, hopefully, will apply to small colleges like Lambton College and St Clair College. There's no doubt they are challenged because of their location, because of their enrolment and sometimes the lack of enrolment. However, those small colleges do play a very important role in the community. They have to be funded properly, and I am certainly happy to see that we are providing \$10 million in order to prop them up.

There will also be new funding of \$11 million in 2002-03 to meet the skills shortages. We've heard before—and I agree with my colleague from Chatham-Kent. Not too long ago he was quoted in the newspaper with regard to the provincial government not doing enough for training. He's absolutely, 100% right. However, I think he has to take it a little further, that skills training is not only a responsibility of the provincial government, it is a responsibility of the federal government and the provincial government, and municipal governments have a role to play in it; and certainly the private sector and the corporate sector have a major role to play. So again, when we talk about pointing the finger at one group, I think we have to be balanced. Many organizations and many levels of government play a role in providing proper education and training.

We also will be expanding the apprenticeship system. The government is providing \$5 million in 2002-03, which will be growing to \$25 million by the year 2005-06. These new investments to expand apprenticeship will be especially valuable to those youths who do not go on to college or university or who find themselves unemployed.

Let's talk about guidance teachers for a minute. You talk to people and they will tell you that there is a lack of properly skilled and trained people; that the average age of the construction worker is 47 to 49 years old. I think we all have a role to play in this; as a guidance teacher, who should point out at an early age that there are other alternatives to colleges and universities and to being a doctor, to being a teacher and to being a politician. There is nothing wrong with being a skilled machinist; there is nothing wrong with being a skilled labourer; there is nothing wrong with being a skilled carpenter. These are

good trades, they are well-paid trades, and we should encourage young people to enter into those trades because Ontarians do need new skills to use new technologies found everywhere in the workplace.

Talking about new skills, I look at the money the provincial government, along with St Clair College and the corporate sector, invested in Wallaceburg in the Burgess School of Technology, where they train people as machinists for the auto industry. The Burgess school has been training people probably for the past 30 to 35 years. However, the equipment was outdated. Their headquarters were not adequate. Consequently, an addition was put on to the local high school. People are benefiting. As far as I'm concerned, this is money very well spent.

Let's talk about the environment. I know we are all concerned with the tragedy that occurred in Walkerton. But when we look at the regulations that are in place today—let's look at regulation 459, a very stringent regulation for water quality. However, if there is a fallout in the system, if somebody is not doing their job, doing the proper tests at the proper time, the same situation can occur. Yes, the Minister of the Environment does play a major role. Yes, they must be very aggressive in enforcing the regulations we have in place. But again, the average worker—the person who takes the test, the person who reads the test, the person who reports the test—must do their job diligently also.

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Another initiative with regard to the farm community that I'm very happy to hear about is that this government will be exempting the 14.3-cent tax per litre on bio-diesel. That has to be good news to the farming community, because bio-diesel, I think, is the fuel of the future, it's a fuel that many corn producers support, and I'm sure that it's going to help them with marketing their corn products.

Another initiative that I'm glad to see this government has undertaken is to give the municipalities the flexibility to reduce the tax rates from 25% to a lower rate to help the farming community. I think the farming community does need some help, especially the ones that are in the commodity fields. I think it's up to the municipality, because it's more responsive; it knows the difficulties that the farmers are having. Giving them the option to reduce the tax rates from 25% to a lower rate will give farmers a small break with regard to maybe overcoming some of the difficulties they've encountered in the past couple of years.

As a result, I feel that this government has implemented a comprehensive and far-reaching tax reform system over the years, and I know that we have been criticized for deferring some of the taxes. But we also have to realize that these taxes are deferred for one year, and 88% of the small businesses will still benefit from the tax cut implemented by this government.

Also briefly, I would like to talk about a document here that I have in front of me. It talks about cutting taxes to create jobs and it talks about a new Ontario Hydro and

a revitalized WCB, a competitive tax system that avoided up to 40,000 layoffs. It talks about common-sense measures to save dollars. It talks about a balanced operating budget. As my colleague the Associate Minister of Health pointed out, all these references were made in the Ontario budget of 1994, submitted by Floyd Laughren.

Even though the opposition may have some concerns—and I know the Liberals sometimes wonder as to where they should stand, but at least with the NDP, they did believe back in 1994, and we have to give them credit, that tax cuts had benefits, that making it more cost-effective for business to hire people in this province made sense. I'm glad to see that the NDP realized that back in 1994, long before the Common Sense Revolution was implemented.

The Deputy Speaker: Members have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I do agree with the previous speaker that this government did some things right. Thank goodness, with human nature, none of us can do everything wrong all the time. For the people of Ontario, some good things happened and slipped through.

I need to clarify some of the points that have been brought out. The budget allows for municipalities to lower the farm tax rate, lower than the current 25%. Don't take any credit for that—that's downloading on the municipalities. If the municipalities do that tax cut, which the farmers need, you give no compensation to them. We have municipalities already overburdened with the downloading. This either causes municipalities to have reduced services or to increase taxes on the others. It's no credit to you.

A shortage of apprenticeships: you betcha there's a shortage of apprenticeships. How did this government react? Several months ago it started implementing a charge of \$400 per course against our apprentices. Even those who were partway through the program and entered it on the belief that these were the conditions—it means for an apprentice, who often has to be away from home to take the apprenticeship course, has extra expenses, is living on unemployment insurance at that time, away from their family, and indeed may have expended a lot of money to buy tools for their particular trade, now they're hit with a \$400-per-course charge that wasn't there before. That isn't very helpful to it.

Your corporate tax cuts that you're concerned about delaying, when they come into place, if they come into place, cause our rate to be 25% lower than our competing jurisdictions such as Michigan and New York. There's no need to undersell Ontario by 25%. Corporate tax cuts, by the way, help companies that make a lot of money. The companies that are struggling, the companies that are trying to maintain their employee base, that are trying to stay in business, that aren't paying taxes but are trying to survive, get no help whatsoever out of this.

Mr Prue: I listened with some pleasure, actually, when the member opposite spoke. He talked about some of the sadness of the budget to him, but I have to tell you

that it was not equally shared on this side. You were speaking about the deferral of tax cuts and the deferral of monies to private schools. With the greatest of respect, I have to tell the Conservatives and the members opposite that that was one of the highlights of the budget for me because this was at least some common sense coming into the realities of this province: the reality of this province where schools are having to lay off janitors; the reality of this province where there aren't enough secretaries; the reality of this province where in Toronto all the swimming pools are closed and kids who live in poor neighbourhoods won't have a chance to learn to swim any more; the reality of this province where all the social things we have held all of our lives to be good have been taken away; and I thank, even if it's late, the reality you have finally come to that the tax cuts have gone far enough when balanced with the needs of the people.

So I for one applaud you for not doing it. I applaud you. Don't listen too much to some of those who try to have it both ways and castigate you for doing it and then castigate you for not doing it. Please don't listen to the National Post, because I think they've got it wrong.

On the issue of cigarette taxes, if you have to tax something, I believe that's not necessarily the worst thing you could possibly do.

But I do in my remaining time have to tell you that I did take a little umbrage to the thing about—and you were right; the federal government has done really bad things financially to this province. There's no doubt that they have downloaded upon this province. At the same time, it's very hard for me to stand here and listen, because I know that this government, equally true, has downloaded on schools, has downloaded on municipalities, has downloaded on non-government agencies right across the entire province, and you cannot say they're doing that to you without saying you're doing it to someone else.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'd like to compliment the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for his elucidation of how the budget, the taxation policies of this government, has assisted his particular area. I think there are two things that need to—it would be interesting to hear from the members opposite, but I'm sure they don't want to bring these items up.

One: back in 1995, the federal government, upon almost losing the country in the referendum with Quebec, promised they would decentralize and devolve person-power training. So to this point in time, we have the situation—I believe Canada, that Ontario is still a valued member of Confederation. They seem to take all our tax dollars—corporate, personal and whatever else you have. But where is the agreement from Ottawa regarding person-power training? Will we be hearing from members opposite on that issue? It's now probably \$800 million that is owing to this province for that particular issue. But I'm sure we'll continue to hear silence over there.

The second issue I want to raise is the whole issue of home care support, long-term care. The federal Grits

have been promising since 1993 to get involved in this issue. Here we are in 2002 and what have we? Still a 13.5-cent dollar on long-term care. When are Romanow and the Grits in Ottawa going to get it together and assist in a national home support program, which they have always promised? If that's an area they want to get involved in in upping their dollars, either through direct delivery or expenditures, this is the place we need it as our demographics change in this province. I'm expecting some remarks from the members opposite on it.

Mr Bartolucci: I'm pleased to be able to offer a few comments on the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. He spoke about training. We think it's very important that dollars be given to train. For so many years, this government has actually punished people who have wanted to train.

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The member from Etobicoke North talks about this program but he should know, or he should tell the people of Ontario, that we're the only province that hasn't signed an agreement with the feds. I would suggest to you that as the other provinces signed a good agreement, this government should sign on with the feds.

I do want to talk about how our budget dollar is spent, because the member talked about the hard-working people of Ontario. The reality is that this is a dollar, and of this dollar, 14 cents is spent paying down the public debt. That's a public debt this government helped create, to the tune of \$21 billion. I wouldn't suggest that's good management of money, when you consider that they spend more money paying down the debt they created than they do on economic development, the environment, resources and justice, along with social services.

I would suggest the people of Ontario aren't very complimentary about the way this government handles this dollar and every other dollar that hard-working Ontarians are trying to get in order to support their families. They're telling you to start managing more effectively.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Beaubien: I'd like to thank the members from Prince Edward-Hastings, Beaches-East York, Etobicoke North and Sudbury for their comments.

I feel that this is a sensible and prudent budget. It's going to help keep Ontario strong and prosperous. I'm glad to see other people also feel that some of the initiatives we have implemented in the past seven years have been good for the economy, for job creation and for taking people off welfare.

Let me quote from page 3 of this document:

"The economy has been growing, but employment has been lagging. Small and medium-sized businesses, which are the biggest generator of jobs in the economy, have told us that payroll taxes can stand in the way of new hiring.

"To address this concern, this budget cuts payroll taxes to provide a permanent incentive to companies to take on new workers"—document: Ontario budget, 1994.

So you can speak against tax cuts, you can laugh at job creation and you may sneer at taking people off welfare,

but the reality is that the programs the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves governments have put in place in the past seven years are working. Is it the be-all, end-all for everybody in society? Of course it isn't, because I don't think there is such a program. However, a large majority of people in Ontario is better off today when it comes to health care, education and certainly their financial situation.

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is now open for further debate.

Mr Parsons: I will be sharing my time with the members for Sarnia-Lambton and St Catharines.

I think a pretty good way to judge whether the budget is a good one or not is to ask our constituents. I think about the issues they bring to me, and that I know they bring to every member in this House, and I say, "Does the budget address them?"

Certainly, the issue of no family doctors is extremely high on the list, if not at the top. What does this budget do to help find more doctors or train more doctors? Nothing. Yet, in rural Ontario and I suspect in urban Ontario, but certainly in rural Ontario—I have families in my riding travelling 50, 60 and 100 kilometres now to find a family doctor. Imagine doing that with a sick child; just imagine that. Or they're forced to take that sick child and sit in a waiting room in an emergency ward for hours and hours. Clearly, the number one priority among families that need a doctor has not been addressed.

Education: education sounded great, because all of us get calls from constituents on that; \$400 million more for education. Then we look at the numbers and realize that \$350 million of it has already been announced before. It's a traditional amount, evidently, that is announced every once in a while. In fact, there's \$45 million in new money for all of Ontario. The government is reduced to playing a shell game with the students: "Here's the money, now it's gone. Try to guess where it is. Try to guess how many times it will be re-announced."

What's the effect of not funding public education? I pointed out this afternoon that there's only one state in the US that spends less money on its students than Ontario does. The effect of it in our schools has been that principals are no longer deemed necessary in every school. I couldn't have imagined that before 1995. Secretaries are not in every school. Custodians are not there. The safety factor alone should be causing concern; it's not. Music programs are gone.

Special ed: parents, I know, contact each of us almost in tears or in tears over the lack of special-ed funding. We have programs in place for children who are autistic. Wonderful. Once they turn six, evidently they're not autistic any more. I'm being really sarcastic because I think that's cruel to set the students and young people up with a program, have them start to make progress and then dump them when they turn six.

School closures: in rural Ontario, the school is the centre of the community; it is the focus. At one time, school boards had discretion, because they had the ability to think and to make the decisions about moving some

money around to preserve that community school. That can't happen now. Schools are being closed simply because of a funding formula that's inadequate. If the government does come up with a better number—and I know they have to if they look at the facts—it will be too late for far too many rural schools.

Home care: the government has announced 20,000 more long-term home care beds. Wonderful. I liked that announcement in 1999, I liked it in 2000, I liked it in 2001 and here it comes in 2002. Please start to construct some of them rather than making an annual announcement. Your funding of long-term-care beds—and I wrote this down because it's unbelievable to me—the increase you've announced in this budget provides an additional \$2 per day per resident; two bucks a day. You allow for a bath once a week in your wonderful formula. For each meal, each resident is allowed three minutes of help, and they're allowed four minutes in the morning for assistance in getting out of bed, getting dressed, washing and going to the meal; four minutes. How can we treat our seniors like that? It is unimaginable to me.

Money for transit in this budget: zero. For ambulances, it was zero. For Ontarians with disabilities, it was once again zero, year after year. You have the nerve to make a person on ODSP live on between \$8,500 and \$11,160 per year. Don't tell me that's the highest or second highest in Canada. That is below the poverty level, and we're expecting people to live on it.

The cabinet offices: now, that has not been a problem. We've seen a 118% increase—

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): It's 119%.

Mr Parsons: —119%. It's going up every day; a 119% increase in cabinet offices. What an absolute disgrace.

Colleges: there's \$5 million more for colleges to deal with the double cohort. Now, members, students who go to colleges are not second-rate citizens; they are as entitled to an education and will contribute as effectively. Universities and colleges aren't one better than the other, they are different streams with different programs. To give universities \$70 million—which they say is not enough—and then throw out \$5 million for community colleges is an insult.

What this budget really says is that the priorities among the general public don't merit responding to. I think it's disgraceful that they want to be proud of this budget.

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Ms Di Cocco: I am pleased to rise to speak to the budget. I think the budget certainly sets a tone as to where the priorities of government are. I also need to address the fact that the budget, again, deals with where money is being spent but sometimes not necessarily where the money is not going to be spent. There's some confusion here.

Anyway, one of the things that I think is important to note is that we all have a budget in our own homes that we have to take care of every year. We know we should

not spend beyond our means, and I think that's a very practical way to look at how we handle our finances.

One of the problems I look at all the time when it comes to the way government spends its money—I constantly hear the rhetoric from the members opposite: “We're putting this much more money into here and that much more money into there.” One of the things we seem to lack is evaluating how that money is going to be spent. Where is the money going? What are the outcomes? We don't hear that.

We hear things like, “You have to balance your budget at all costs.” But at the same time, they don't seem to have any real sense of where the money is actually being spent. One of the things that has happened is that there's more and more money being outsourced to private companies. When you do that, it's away from the purview of the Provincial Auditor. Once that happens, we can't find out if we're getting value for money. Hydro is a perfect example. You blanket it with this cloak of secrecy, and what happens? No one knows what is really happening in that sector.

To me, the whole issue of management of where the money is going is tremendously important. It isn't about putting money back into a system or taking it out; it's about how that money is being spent. Is it delivering that service? For instance, in health care one thing that is very important to me is having this whole essence of accountability. I brought in a bill a year ago and it went through committee. It was called the Ethics and Transparency in Public Matters Act, and it asked that bodies such as hospital boards, school boards, municipalities and also the electricity sector conduct their affairs in public. If they chose to go in camera to make decisions, there would be a penalty imposed on the people who actually went in camera who shouldn't have gone in camera to make decisions.

To me, that is tremendously important, because it's about the right of the public to know. That transparency provides for good decision-making. It provides a real accounting of where money is being spent and how it's being spent and what the decisions are.

When I look at this budget, I'm certainly pleased to hear that the government has decided at the very least to defer the tax cuts, because they have admitted something. They've admitted the tax cuts are not the panacea of all our ills in this province. As a matter of fact, the way we are going down this road of tax cuts—and that's all we've heard for the last seven years—really does erode the ability to provide services to the public.

Maybe it does bring taxes 25% below the United States, but what good is that if we can't access health care because we've got backups at the emergency, where we have all types of ambulances being diverted because there's no room at the inn? I have had health professionals come to see me from my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, and they've been talking to me about the issue of our own emergency in Sarnia-Lambton. They were telling me that in April and May they saw 12,500 people. The nurses and the professionals are saying, “We cannot

handle this load with the staff we have. We just can't do it." Not only that; they don't even have enough stretchers to put the patients on.

Then what happens is that we have nowhere to divert the ambulances. A number of times the emergency doctors have had to say, "We only want the code 4"—which apparently is the highest risk—"patient. Don't bring us anyone else here." This is what they've been telling me. I don't think they are lying. That is the reality they are facing on the front lines. Why? Why are they facing that reality? We supposedly have one of the greatest economic booms we've had in the seven years that this government has been in power, yet the system, if you look at it at the front lines, has been eroding. The question is, why? Why is there that sense that we don't have enough nurses? Why is it that we don't have enough doctors?

We say it's a global matter, but it's more than a global matter; it has been compounded in Ontario. In Ontario we have the lowest per capita nurses in the country. That doesn't just happen; it happens because there has been policy in place that has discouraged the health professionals in this area.

We talk about management, and one of the issues about—

Interjection: Or lack of it.

Ms Di Cocco: Well, I'm going to use the word "incompetence," because I believe the government has been incompetent in how it has restructured hospitals, and I'll tell you why. In my view, when they restructured the hospitals, they forgot to put something into the equation, and I heard this from Dr Sinclair. They decided, "You know what? We're going to cut some beds. We're going to save some money," but do you know what they forgot to put into the equation? They forgot that we were having an increased number of people in this province and we had an aging population. So do you know what they forgot to put into the mix? They forgot to put those numbers into the mix. So what do we have today? We have a shortage of beds in the hospital. We have occupancy rates at 99% in hospitals. Do you know what that means? That means there is absolutely no flexibility for any new patients to come in.

When we talk about what I call mismanagement, the government members forget—it's amazing. They don't talk about the \$20 billion that they added to the debt. They talk about their budget. They've balanced their budget here—we understand that—but they forgot that they added this huge amount to their Visa; they added this huge amount to the debt, \$20 billion added to the debt since 1995. What I find amazing when I see that, when I hear that, is that on a number of occasions I've actually heard the members on the government side deny that. Either they don't understand that there is a debt that they have added on to and that there is a budget that they have balanced—they don't seem to understand that there is a difference. Our credit rating in this province is still at AA. It used to be AAA+. It's now AA, is my understanding.

Mr Dunlop: It's AAA now, Caroline.

Ms Di Cocco: AA is all I've seen.

I looked at the budget and I tried to understand where the money was going. Again, one of my biggest surprises is that just like every other government, they know how to take care of themselves. A couple of years ago, when I first came to the Legislature, I was watching all the different cuts in the different ministries and I was curious, so I decided to find out how much they had cut their cabinet costs, the Cabinet Office. I actually believed they had cut them. So I went and took a look and I compared it to 1995, and I actually saw this incredible increase. Remember, we've got a smaller Legislature. Our Legislature is now 103 members; it used to be 130. Do you remember, when they cut down the number of members, what the idea was? The idea was that it was going to save money. Is that not right? Isn't that one of the reasons they touted that they were going to make the Legislature smaller? Instead, what has happened? Cabinet Office costs have gone up by 119.5%, to be exact, since 1995. That is unacceptable in any type of corporation or management, but as far as this government is concerned, I think they had hoped that nobody would take a look at that and notice. But we did notice, and it isn't, in my view, an acceptable way to manage.

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Education is another issue. What really drives our competitive edge globally? What really drives it is our brain trust. What really drives our ability to generate new jobs is innovation. Where does that come from? It comes from our brain trust. That's what we compete with. We compete with our ability, our highly skilled workforce. Where have we failed in the last seven years, in my opinion? In our education system, at all levels. What do we have? We now have overcrowded schools, large classrooms, a lack of textbooks. But do you know what is incredible? They've changed the curriculum, brought in a new curriculum, and therefore needed new textbooks, and what did they forget to do? They forgot to give—well, they didn't forget; they obviously chose not to give adequate dollars to pay for the new textbooks for the new curriculum they had asked the school boards to implement. What kind of management is that? I believe the word "incompetence" can be used in that case.

So many of our students are falling through the cracks now. We have over 30,000 students who need to be assessed yet for learning disabilities. Instead of attempting to get each and every person in this province to be the best they can be, because that's the measure of a good society, we say, "No, there's no money. Just shut down the schools." We're shutting down good schools with 300 students. They are 90% full; we're shutting them down. They're in good physical shape; we're shutting them down. Why? Because in places like Sarnia-Lambton, a school that has 300 students and is 90%-plus full is not viable according to this funding formula. We have no room any more for smaller schools, even though students do better in smaller schools.

I believe the direction of this government is based on a very narrow ideology which included cutting taxes,

lowering government spending—except, supposedly, cabinet offices—shrinking the size of government, except cabinet offices, and reducing regulations.

Remember those things that used to protect the environment? “Well, we have to remove those barriers.” Thus the Red Tape Commission, to address how to speed up and to take obstacles away that impede what they call economic growth. Therefore, the public interest and public safety can be jeopardized, because we have to speed those things up.

I will finish my discussion. Thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Mr Prue: I listened to the last two speakers and I must say that some of what they said struck home.

They talked about the lack of staff in hospitals. Really, that is becoming a recurring problem not just in places like Sarnia and Prince Edward county, but even in huge places like Toronto. The Toronto Star—and I know it is a paper much admired by the members opposite—did a whole series of work around Toronto East General Hospital, a hospital that has had its own controversy in recent months, of what it was like to be in that hospital to see people being born, to see people dying, to see the workers working, to see the lack of workers that were there. I have to tell you, that report should have opened a lot of eyes. What it said, in a nutshell, was that there simply weren’t enough staff there to deal with the hundreds and thousands of people who go into that hospital looking for care each and every day, usually in emergency situations.

Also, just this past week while I was in the constituency office for a few hours, a gentleman came in to see me. He asked that his name not be used, but he talked about his experience at Toronto East General Hospital. He asked me, if I had a chance some day to say something about it, to do so. His problem was he went in one night at 10 o’clock very ill, sick to his stomach. He said the staff was wonderful. The nurse was there and came to see him every hour or two until 6 o’clock in the morning, when the resident doctor finally got to him. When he asked why, the doctor told him there simply weren’t enough staff in that hospital any more to do the work that needed to be done for him, or for anyone else, and that he should go to see his MPP. Well, he came to see me and I promised him that I would tell the members opposite of the difficulties, even in the city of Toronto, due to shortages. We are glad to see you’re putting more money into hospitals. It’s long overdue. That would be my comment.

Mr Dunlop: It’s a pleasure to rise tonight to speak on Bill 109, the budget bill.

I’d like to make some comments based on the comments of the member for Sarnia-Lambton. She talked about health care costs and spent a lot of time on health care. It’s interesting that you reflected back on some debt that our government actually accumulated since the Common Sense Revolution. The fact of the matter is, that

was very well laid out, a clear message with a clear platform in the Common Sense Revolution. No government could possibly eliminate a \$12-billion debt, that that party had accumulated over there, and eliminate it in one year. We laid out a platform and the people of Ontario accepted that.

If you go back to the second platform, the Blueprint commitments, we outlined that we would spend \$23.1 billion in health care by the year 2004 and right now we’re \$2.2 billion ahead of that, as we’re spending \$25.5 billion this year. I might say, and I think everyone in this room agrees—I’m sure even my colleagues opposite would agree—that’s without the help of the federal government. We all know they dropped their percentage to 14% on last year’s amount of money, and if they don’t put any more money in this year it’ll probably be back down at about 11.5% or 12% on the dollars. They don’t really want to hear that. You understand why, because it goes back to the rhetoric.

I’d like to make another comment on Mr Manley, our new Minister of Finance, who tried to capitalize. After years of being embarrassed into making tax cuts, last week he said, “Yes, we’re going to carry on and have those tax cuts”—the first time ever, because he was humiliated by this government into finally making tax cuts. I appreciate the comments.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I should have shared this two minutes with my colleague from Ancaster, but I know he understands.

I was wondering if the member—I know she didn’t have as much time as she would like. Under the new rules you don’t. The people who have disabilities in this province—I heard my friend Ernie Parsons talk about this in the early part of his speech as well. I was really moved by his concern for people on disability who have not had an increase in about 10 years. I talked to some of those people, and what has happened is that their utility costs have gone up. The cost of natural gas, the cost of electric power and water in communities, some basic costs, have gone up pretty substantially over the years, yet the allocation to those individuals who are on a disability pension has stayed the same. Unless their circumstances have changed in some way individually, there has been no overall increase in the allocation for people on disability. I find that most unfortunate. I’m glad Mr Parsons mentioned that in his speech, because he has been campaigning for that and for other benefits for people who are on disability.

The second category of person I feel sorry for, and I hope my friend from Lambton made some mention of this, is people who need home care for individuals they’re looking after. I think particularly of elderly parents who are looking after developmentally disabled individuals within their family or others who may have multiple disabilities, some of them developmental and some of them related to physical disabilities. These people are absolutely beside themselves and are really, really concerned that, as they get older, there will be no one left to look after those individuals in their family.

2030

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I couldn't help but respond to the member from Sarnia-Lambton. I think she's been listening far too long to the member from Scarborough-Agincourt. I have the greatest—the member is their finance critic, but he does always try to confuse you, the public. I'm looking at this year's budget—and to the people of Ontario, if you want one, you can call my constituency office in Durham and we can certainly get one to you. We've done the right thing.

If I look at the growth of debt—and I think everyone knows the debt doubled under the Liberals and NDP; that's common knowledge. The point is that when we took office—these are public records—\$101 billion, almost \$102 billion, and now it's \$110 billion. To put this in perspective, Mr Speaker, and you would understand, when we were elected in 1995, each year there was \$11 billion worth of debt accumulating as the deficit. We took three years to sort of balance the budget. So each year is \$10 billion, and that's \$20 billion. Not only that; we have paid down against the debt compared to where it was.

The member from Sarnia-Lambton should get a copy of Hansard. Where she's getting confused—she's leaving. It's the accumulated stranded debt from Ontario Hydro. If you put those two numbers—we call it the electricity restructuring debt. But that's part of the \$38 billion called stranded debt. They keep lumping that in. They don't want to admit it, but I think the record shows clearly that this government has committed to paying \$5 billion down toward the accumulated debt, and I believe that Ernie Eves and our Finance Minister, Janet Ecker, have done a spectacular job in terms of balancing demands in health care, demands in education, demands in the environment and clean water etc. They've done the right thing. The member from Lambton is listening too much to the member from Scarborough-Agincourt and she's got it all wrong. So just rewind your cassette—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Either of the original two speakers has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Parsons: I'd like to thank the members for Sarnia-Lambton, Beaches-East York, Simcoe North, St Catharines and Durham for contributing to this debate. I would like to refer to the things said by the member for Simcoe North, who mentioned how much more money they're spending on health care. The object is not to increase the money going into health care; the object is to spend the money wisely. If we have additional funds, then we can do more things. We're seeing initiatives on the part of this government that have some of the health care money go to profit lines for private clinics. That doesn't help a patient; that simply profits someone, probably a friend of the party. But it is not health care money well spent.

This government some months ago approved funding for macular degeneration. I truly thank you for doing that. That was a great initiative—

Mr Bradley: Thanks to you raising it.

Mr Parsons: Well, I appreciate that, but it has made a difference to many people.

I have become increasingly aware, though, of the effect of juvenile diabetes on our citizens. Juvenile diabetes is the leading cause of amputation, of heart problems, of kidney failure. The government spends \$100,000 if there are complications for a citizen with juvenile diabetes. That is not money well spent. All too often, they come out of the hospital having to have a limb or something removed. There is a very simple device now available called an insulin pump, which maintains the regular feeding of insulin into the body. It's not covered. It's \$5,700, but the treatment for not having it is \$100,000. I would ask that the government seriously consider doing not only what is morally right for the people in this province, but what is fiscally responsible. Certainly this is a leading candidate to be covered under the assistive devices program. It makes life better, allows people to be contributing citizens and it reduces substantial health care costs to this government. Please do it.

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): It is indeed my pleasure tonight to say a few words in favour of Bill 109, Keeping the Promise for Growth and Prosperity Act. I do like the name of the act. "Keeping the Promise" is one more indication that our government has that type of conduct as a cornerstone and we will continue to do it, something that other governments have not done for many, many years, or indeed never; and again, the "prosperity" part of that act—things are good in Ontario, there is absolutely no doubt. The economy is booming; the jobs are booming.

You know, it's interesting. I listened to my colleagues from across the room, the members for St Catharines, Trinity-Spadina and Prince Edward-Hastings, and these are all the groups that say that nobody other than a few on Bay Street like the tax cuts. Yet I remember back in 1995 or 1996, we opened a special account and said to anybody in Ontario who did not want those tax cuts to please return them to us and put them in that account.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Surely all the Liberals did that.

Mr Stewart: I would hope all the Liberals did. Could we maybe have a show of hands? How many Liberals did that? There are not many of them here. It's called procrastination. You can stand up and criticize about things like that, yet when you have the opportunity to do something about it you absolutely don't do anything at all.

I believe this bill, if implemented, when it is implemented, will enhance the growth and prosperity in this province. This is a good budget. If passed, this bill will ensure that Ontario remains the best place to live, work and raise a family. In other words, it will ensure a prosperous future for our province, and we know that prosperity is a very major part of the existence of this great province.

Prosperity means a growing economy that provides more and better jobs—this we have done; more disposable income—this has happened; and more revenue to

invest in the future, and that is a fact. All you have to do is look at the small businesses that are expanding in this great province and it is because of what has happened. The economic growth has created that prosperity.

Prudence and frugality on their own are a very important part of making sure that governments continue to be prosperous. I remember back a few years ago I wanted to buy a new car. I looked at the dollars and I thought, "No, I don't think I can afford that new car this year. I'm going to defer it till next year." I can remember in business wanting to do a number of things and having to defer them for one year, to be prudent and to be smart and to conduct it in a businesslike fashion. That is no different from what we are doing this year, to balance and to make sure we balance a budget this year—and again, four budgets in a row.

That's why we are going to continue on that course: tight fiscal discipline, balanced budgets and debt reduction. They are all priority areas. We have to do that if we're going to continue to focus on our priorities. Our priorities have not changed one iota since we became government in 1995. Health care was a priority, education was and is a priority; the environment as well is one of those priorities. The focus has been on efficiency, effective delivery of government programs and government services. If we are not prudent, if we are not frugal, if we do not operate in a businesslike fashion, then let me assure you those services will not be enhanced in the future because we will not have the dollars to do it.

2040

I believe that the Ontario government should be accountable to the people of this province. The taxpayers of this province is whom I am talking about. Let me define the Ontario government's definition of accountability. I know "accountability" is a strange word to some people, but I believe that it has to be one of the cornerstones of any government and it is a cornerstone of ours. Accountability is the way organizations and their workers must answer and take responsibility for their performance to those who pay for and use their services. Those people, ladies and gentlemen, are the people, the taxpayers, of Ontario.

Without accountability, without faith and respect in all government institutions and indeed for the people of the province, the respect will not be there. I believe it is mandatory that it be there in conducting the business we conduct on a day-to-day basis. In fact, we solidly believe that tax dollars belong to the hard-working people of Ontario, not the government. All we are to do is to make sure the services that people want and need are in place.

Taxpayers, citizens and users of government services expect, in fact demand, that the government deliver quality services in the most effective and efficient manner possible—not a very dynamic statement but a very important statement.

The government has improved and will continue to improve its own ability to deliver value-for-money services directly to the people. We will continue those efforts because we can't afford to put our hard-won fiscal

discipline at risk. That is why in the 2002 budget we announced a number of initiatives that would maintain and improve government accountability and the delivery of services to the people of Ontario.

I believe that no other jurisdiction in North America is so actively pursuing value for taxpayers' money. Effective this year, our business planning process incorporates zero-based budget principles—again something that is done in business every day, and most of it is done in the household. But it seems that governments in the past have not thought that way until our government came into power back in 1995.

Every ministry is now required to review all of its program spending over a four-year cycle to determine program effectiveness, efficiency and value for money. Our government is taking the process even further. Premier Eves announced in this budget that he was establishing a parliamentary assistants' committee on program evaluation, chaired by my colleague Julia Munro, the member for York North. Through its government-wide review, this committee will identify resources for reintroduction into priority areas.

It's interesting: what business does, if they looking for efficiencies, if they are looking at effective operations, is that they usually form a group of team leaders to take a look at all aspects of the business to try and find where efficiencies can be achieved. Then, of course, when they do find them, they present them to the entire team, to the entire group in that particular business.

One of the keys of it is that the day you make that presentation and tell them where the efficiencies will be achieved, you had better keep the same team going to start relooking the next morning, because that is the only way the business survives and it is the only way, I believe, that government can survive as well in an effective and efficient manner.

As I mentioned, the parliamentary assistants' committee on program evaluation will ensure that taxpayers' dollars are being used most effectively in the programs that Ontarians value the most. As I said, our priorities have been and will be health education and the environment. If I were to do a survey of the people in my riding, I would think they would agree wholeheartedly that that's where the dollars should be going.

Providing stability and encouraging continuous improvement in those services on which Ontarians depend is a priority of this government. You can't just put a service into place and let it sit there forever. I've always made it very public in this House, and I will continue to make it public, that I'm a great believer in sunset clauses. What works today may not work next year or the year after or the year after that. It has to be revisited and looked at to make sure it is working as effectively and efficiently as possible.

To this end, I believe that the government will develop more effective ways of preparing and presenting the provincial budget, in constantly looking at new ways to improve, to make sure we continue to operate in an effective and efficient way. We've also got to assist our

public sector partners with more stability and certainty. We will work to develop multi-year budgeting and a multi-year-based funding model, including the introduction of three-year-based funding for hospitals and school boards.

It's interesting: there are some of us in this House who were at the municipal level of politics. I was one of them for about 13 years, and one of the things we were constantly after, the governments of the day, was to make sure we had our funding in advance of preparing our budgets at the municipal level. Certainly hospitals and school boards have been talking about that. Many of us who were involved in municipal politics I think are extremely supportive of this type of initiative. It is very difficult for people to budget if they don't know the amount of money they're going to get. I highly support this, I think it is long overdue, and I'm pleased that it is our government that is going to do it and to look at it, because nobody has done it in the past.

We will look for way to incorporate information on results so that the users, the decision-makers and taxpayers, can hold government accountable for delivering on its goals and objectives. The government has to be accountable; we have to be accountable to our public sector partners, whether it's through community services, through hospitals or through school boards. We want to make sure they know what our objectives and goals are, and hopefully they will be theirs as well. We will aim to table the next provincial budget before the start of the fiscal year so that all public sector organizations can plan and manage more effectively and efficiently. I think it is only fair. We have said we will do it and, again, as we have so many times in the past, we will keep our promises.

We will work toward publishing a multi-year fiscal framework in the Ontario budget, outlining revenue, expenditures and economic projections. As with multi-year-based funding agreements, this framework will be developed in accordance with sound fiscal management and principles, including responsibility and transparency. If there is one thing that I believe our government has endeavoured to do, it is to make sure that what we do on a daily basis is very transparent for the people of Ontario. I think it's a good example of the number of times we've taken proposed bills out on the road for public input, more than any government has in the last many years.

Our government will also move to a more businesslike way of managing and accounting for tangible capital assets. Many of our critics say that we can't run government like a business. I say that is not right. Why can't we? In all of the times that people have come up to me and said, "Government isn't like a business; it shouldn't be run like a business," I usually say, "Why not?" And I have not yet heard why we can't. All of the principles that business has, whether it be efficiency, accountability, effectiveness—we do it in business; why wouldn't we do it in government? I can't understand that. I believe the critics who say that we can't have not looked very hard at it. I hope some day somebody tells me why it cannot be done.

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Beginning this year, of course, the government will depreciate assets in the same way that a business does. This will enable the government to determine the true cost of delivering government services and improve resource allocation. True cost—surprise, surprise. Let me tell you, if you want to stay in business, you better know what your true costs are, because if you don't, you won't survive. A million businesses have fallen because they don't know what their costs are and cannot move forward accordingly.

A good example of this is Ontario Hydro. They didn't know what their costs were—totally out of control, spending way more money than they ever had. That's what I'm saying. The government has to know what their true costs are, and if you don't, you've got a problem.

Mr Speaker, I think you will agree that these initiatives are the hallmark of a government with a profound respect for transparency and taxpayer dollars. I've said this before and I will say it again: tax dollars belong to the hard-working people of Ontario, not the government. It's up to us to ensure that those tax dollars are being spent accountably and responsibly. We owe this to the people of Peterborough—absolutely, we do; one of the finer ridings in this great province—as well as the people of Ontario.

Our government policies are creating a very positive business climate that contributes to the diversity and resilience of the province's economy. Since 1995 we have focused on eliminating barriers to growth, lower taxes, strategic investments in education, innovation in infrastructure, streamlining financial regulations and less red tape. The economy is good in Ontario. Things indeed are good.

Within this supportive economic environment, businesses of all sizes across a wide range of industries have contributed to strong job growth in Ontario since 1995. Small and medium-sized enterprises have responded strongly to the improved tax, regulatory and general business climate, and since 1996 well over 800,000 jobs have been created in this great province. Things are good in Ontario.

I would also suggest, in addition, that retail and wholesale trade, leisure services and construction are contributing significantly to job growth, aided by strong domestic spending. Things are good in Ontario.

Last Friday, in my riding of Peterborough, we just announced a new call centre—500 new jobs in our community, in my riding. Things are good in Ontario.

General Motors is expanding: a third shift of production at its Ottawa car assembly plant. Bowater has announced plans to construct a new softwood sawmill in Thunder Bay. De Beers has continued to invest in the Victor diamond project in James Bay. And many other companies, including from off-shore, are looking at increasing investment in this great province.

As I said before, things are good in Ontario. And they are good because of our government under Premier Mike Harris and Premier Ernie Eves, a government that

believes in accountability, that believes in efficiency, that believes in effective, good government. We will continue to do this and we should be supporting Bill 109.

The Deputy Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Listening to the member for Peterborough talking about the role and function of government being to deliver services that people want and need, and then going on talking about his confidence in his government's private sector ability to run the government, begs some obvious questions that we've been asking on this side of the House related to hydro and the need not to privatize, particularly Hydro One, and also the whole issue of health care delivery, which I want to focus on specifically.

I don't think it's enough just to spend your life leaning on your horn. I know we had the member from Prince Edward-Hastings speak. When he speaks, I know the importance of being earnest, listening to him chat. He talked a bit about the doctor shortage. I want to just describe what happens in Australia, where they don't have a doctor shortage. They recruit in the junior grades, I think grades 6 and 7. They do aptitude tests to spot who has an interest. They mentor young people through high school. It involves a whole lot of volunteer work. Then they fund these young people through medical school and then, having been recruited from underserved areas, the arrangement is that they're placed back in those communities. They don't have a doctor shortage there.

The other issue that I would just draw quickly around the medical side is that we know from statistical analysis that the OMA has done some 40% of graduating doctors go south after graduation because the debt load is so high, and 50% of that 40% don't return. So if this government wants to do something creative about the doctor shortage they can look to Australia and they can look to student debt load as two possible ways to help resolve that problem.

Mr Prue: The member for Peterborough asked for someone to explain to him why government can't run like a business. I will tell him in very brief words, if he will listen. As the mayor of East York, we adopted zero-based budgeting, just like this government did. We did it from 1993 until we were amalgamated in 1997. In that period, when I was the mayor, we had five balanced budgets and we also paid down our entire debt. Our reward, of course, was to be amalgamated, against the wishes of the people who live there. But in that time, we adopted the view that yes, we could run government like a business but you had to balance the business's need to make profit with the government's need to provide service.

What this government has failed to see, and what I believe you have failed to see, is that the service aspect has to be every bit as strong as the profit aspect. It does not have to be that way in private business, and indeed it never is. But in government it is a key component that at least must balance, and where there is any doubt must outweigh, the need to make profit to pay down debts.

Having said that, I hope you now understand and someone has at last explained it to you, because I am still somewhat perplexed by the statement on the priorities of this government being health, education and environment. For health, I think at last you've seen the light and there is some money. But for education, there are thousands of people on the streets and in meetings of cities everywhere in this province. Literally every week they can see their schools deteriorating. They are not happy with what is happening.

In terms of the environment, one need only speak of Walkerton; one need only speak of all of the people who have been laid off, which resulted in Walkerton; one must only see the mess the entire department got into in all those years. I fail to see how that could possibly have been a priority in the past.

Mr O'Toole: I just don't want to respond to the NDP message here. It's the IWA, the Interim Waste Authority, Ruth Grier—she sort of spoiled Ontario.

But the member for Peterborough, a very good friend of mine, talked early in his speech—and it's fundamental to understanding the theme that he was pursuing. I think I'm quoting. I hope I'm not doing a disservice to that, because he's so profound that often I miss the point. He talked about the decision of buying a car or, for instance, buying a condo and wondering if it's the right thing to do. Always spending within your means was the point that he was trying to make. His wife, Judy, is watching, perhaps, and I know the anguish he's going through on various personal decisions, but it's all about accountability. In fact, unusually, it's kind of poetic harmony in a way, because I just looked back in the budget in 1996, and here's what I read: "The people of Ontario expect their government to live within its means"—much like the member from Peterborough was suggesting. "We are finding savings in every area of government activity"—as Mr Stewart would see in his own personal budget. "The government is making the same difficult decisions and adjustments that we have all had to make at home and at work in our everyday lives." That was by the then-Finance Minister Ernie Eves.

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So if I reflect on what Mr Stewart was trying to say to us, government during this budget, in the 2002-03 budget, is saying to the people of Ontario, "Our heart is with the priorities of the people of Ontario." That priority is clearly in the budget for health care, a record level of over \$25 billion; education, almost half a billion dollars; environment and clean water.

On the other hand, there are those supporters of ours who said, "Where are the tax cuts?" The Premier is still on message. He realized the economy is soft. He's on the same page as Mr Stewart from Peterborough. He recognized that it's time for difficult decisions, whether it's a condo, a house or the people of Ontario. We choose the people of Ontario, and I'm happy to support this budget.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm happy to have a couple of minutes to respond to the member from Peterborough

and the sermon he gave us about fiscal responsibility and that this would suggest that this budget in fact represents that. I think it's important to remind the people of Ontario of the record of this government. If you think it's good business, I'd like to know what business over the course of this period of good economic growth has actually increased the debt of the province by well over 20%, pushing 25%. The debt that the province has is greater now than when they came to office in 1995. That's something that our children are going to have to pay off. So they crow on the other side of the House about being fiscally responsible and good business managers, and yet they have borrowed the money to do that. They're very silent on that fact. They're very silent on the amount of money that this budget is going to put toward that debt that our children will finish paying for. So when I hear about good business practices, I've hardly seen that in this government.

Also, when I think of businesses in my riding, in my community, of a car business, for example, they say that the salesperson sells you the car but it's the service you get that keeps you coming back. I would suggest to this government that the service that they provided to the people of Ontario may not have them return to them in the future, because people who need to access health care services, education services, when they consider what has happened to our environment since these folks came to office, will indicate they're not very satisfied with the service the government has given.

So just to the member from Peterborough, who would suggest that they are the example of good business practice, I would suggest that is not the case.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Peterborough now has up to two minutes to respond to those comments.

Mr Stewart: It was interesting to listen to some of the comments, and I often think a lot of us who talk about responsibility and accountability and whether we can live within budgets or not should sometimes look in the mirror before we start criticizing others.

Anyway, I had talked a bit of a theme about things good in Ontario. And things are good in Ontario if you look at 800,000-plus jobs, 600,000-plus off social services. It's interesting to hear about how you can't run a government like business. The gentleman from Beaches—

Interjection: East York.

Mr Stewart: East York; sorry. About this word "profits," profits help you to expand your business, to put in services etc. What in the name of goodness do you think revenues are? What do they do? They allow you to give services like health care, like education, like the environment. You've got to have some dollars if you're going to provide services. It's the same thing with profit. Heavenly days, go back to school and listen about some of this. It's not a dirty word. If you don't have revenues on the plus side, you can't supply the services. But you have to know your costs first. I know you guys over there don't think that way, but you've got to. It's called common sense; this is how you supply services. I can't

buy a car unless I have money. I can't buy food for the table unless I have money. That's no different from what government is. But you had better know what your costs are to supply those services. That's why we're going to zero-based budgeting. I support the government for that and I support them on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mr Bradley: So much to say and so little time to say it in, is the lament I have as I share my time this evening with Mr McMeekin, the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

First of all, I want to reflect upon what are some of the major calls coming into the constituency office. Next to the situations involving the Family Responsibility Office, which of course occupies half the time of the constituency staff, there are other areas that are extremely important. One is the doctor shortage that exists in St Catharines, particularly now general practitioners. It seems that almost monthly people are retiring, or perhaps they become ill or perhaps they're moving out of town or moving out of the country, and it's leaving us with very few physicians in the Niagara region.

We need programs. We need, first of all, more people being graduated out of our medical schools in Ontario. We need more incentives for places such as St Catharines and the Niagara region to attract family physicians and specialists to the area. I certainly make that plea. I put that on the table as an important issue. I know we're not the only area in the province that is finding that to be a problem, but it is one that we as legislators, and in this case the government of the day, should be addressing very aggressively.

A second issue that has come to my attention is people who have children with autism. A question was asked in the House today about that, and much has been said about children with autism and a very special treatment, an aggressive treatment that is available and now given to children, I believe, between the ages of two and five. But after that they are ineligible for the funding which could provide that treatment, so if they are to receive that treatment they have to pay out of their own pockets. That's very expensive. That gets into two-tier medical care. I make a plea to the government to provide the necessary funding so we can have more spaces and not people competing for the existing spaces and trying anything and everything they can to have their child put ahead of another child, when we would like to see, of course, all children access those services.

With the Minister of Natural Resources here, I want to say that there's another issue, what's referred to as Marcy's Wood in the riding of Erie-Lincoln. It is an area where there's a Carolinian forest, a wonderful natural area that is under threat of development. I think there's a developer who wants to make a bid for it. I would like to see some kind of moratorium put on any sale of that, if that's possible, and ensure that stays in public hands. I know some commitment has been made already on the part of the government and I would like to ensure that

rather pristine land is kept as it should be. I refer the minister to a letter to you in this regard from Mr Bert Mills, who has provided me with a copy. So I ask the minister if there's some emergency action that can be taken by him to ensure that it doesn't fall into private hands and a property that should not be developed then gets developed. I know that with his special responsibility as Minister of Natural Resources he'll want to look into that.

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I'm going to talk about something else out there that strays a bit from the budget. Nevertheless, you'd be interested in this. I am amazed, amused and appalled by this uproar now, at this stage, over Izzy Asper and the Ottawa Citizen. There's Conrad Black, who bought all those newspapers, turned them from moderate, middle-of-the-road newspapers—he said it was left pap, or something like that—and now when Izzy takes them over and says, "No, they're not all going to be right-wing, Alliance, Mike Harris"—it's not Mike Harris any more; well, I can't even say Ernie Eves, but Conservatives the way they used to be when Mike Harris was around. All these papers—the Windsor Star, the Ottawa Citizen and several others, some of them out west—are vitriolically anti-Liberal and anti-NDP. Today there's a hue and cry out there about Mr Asper interfering. While people may not agree with the specifics of how somebody intervenes, I simply ask the question of the CBC, which has ongoing coverage of this: where were they when Conrad Black made them all into right-wing papers?

Mr Speaker, you're neutral in the chair but you're a member of the New Democratic Party. When was the last time you got a break out of the Ottawa Citizen?

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: You wouldn't be able to think of that, because you've never had a break as a political party.

So finally Mr Asper says, "You know, I'd like to see some balance in the newspapers I own" that are vitriolically right-wing. I know I divert from the issue at hand, but I just thought I'd mention that to people. I looked at the crowd demonstrating outside of the Ottawa Citizen. They're a bunch of Alliance types. I've seen them in other parts of the province, with the red faces and shaking their fists, anti-immigrant, anti-French and so on, shaking their fists at people. Now they don't like it because, of course, the owner of the Ottawa Citizen says, "I'd like something different from the usual anti-Liberal, anti-NDP editorials etc that we get in the Ottawa Citizen."

I know you wanted me to bring some balance to that particular debate, but it takes away from some of my other time here, and I do want to say that our CCAC, community care access centre, needs more funding to be able to carry out its responsibilities. People today simply are not able to get the kinds of services they would like to get, and that's because this government will not provide sufficient funding for that purpose. Of course, they've bounced all the people off the board and they've put in—some people would say puppets; I don't want to say that

because it's kind of a pejorative word—people whose thinking is very similar to the government's, let's put it that way. I see some people in the Niagara region who are even fundraisers for other members who happen to be on the CCAC board now. I'm sure that's just co-incidental.

I want to say as well that I'm concerned about Visudyne. After repeated questions in the House, particularly that dramatic day when Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the official opposition, addressed this issue to the Minister of Health with someone in the gallery who is suffering from macular degeneration, finally the government capitulated to the pressure and is now going to fund people for that particular treatment. It costs about \$2,500 a treatment. But we're finding some problems as to how it is going to be funded, number one. Number two, I think the government should fund it back to when Health Canada approved it. I understand their not wanting to go before that, because it would be considered perhaps an experimental treatment, but certainly back to that time, and I hope the government will capitulate on that particular issue as it has capitulated earlier.

I want to say as well that I'm concerned about school closings in my riding. I understand—I'm not an unreasonable person—that somewhere, sometime, there are schools that close. What is happening, however, is that the provincial funding formula militates in favour of closing schools, sometimes where they shouldn't be closed, because the local board of education gets the money when they sell the school, and that's the only way they're going to get money to repair other schools. So I see that as a problem.

I believe, for instance, there should be a problem-solving—someone must want to get a note to me saying I have only a few moments left. I see them approaching, just when I'm wound up.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Anyway, I will continue to say—and some of the members from auto centres will agree with this—I think it would be great to have a select committee on the automotive industry. The select committee on alternative fuels worked very well. There are some members who are here in the House tonight. You would think they would have divergent views and a divergent philosophy. I can tell you, I was very impressed with all members of that committee, how they checked their partisan hats at the door and got down to a task-oriented situation where they had a committee which was well done. I think a select committee on the automotive industry would be very helpful because we have many challenges to meet. I think most of us here know just how important the automotive industry is to each of our communities.

Lastly, because I'm running out of time, I'm going to talk about the ambulance dispatch service that is totally unsatisfactory for the Niagara region for a number of reasons, which I've enunciated in the petitions that keep coming into my office for me to present on matters of this kind, where the government kept hidden for several months a report which said what should be done about

dispatch. Now I want to turn the rest of the time over to my colleague Mr McMeekin.

Mr McMeekin: I'm pleased to follow the member for St Catharines, who brings so much wisdom to the debate. It has been said that for those who can learn from the past, the past indeed becomes a prologue to our future.

In that context, I'm pleased to say that in some small way the budget put a couple of days back was yesterday's budget. I say "pleased," because had it been two budgets back some of us might have stood and applauded that effort. It was in fact yesterday's budget. It was reacting to events that have overtaken this government. In terms of painting any vision for tomorrow, it was quite deplete in both its analysis and its presentation.

As a relative newcomer to this place, it strikes me that there's frequently a disconnect between Queen's Park and those people we have the privilege of representing. Somebody in the rural area of my riding asked me last week if I knew the difference between Jurassic Park and Queen's Park. When I asked him what it was, he said they made a movie out of Jurassic Park. Anyhow, that aside, I think the disconnect is serious.

In my riding of Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, we've attempted to get a handle on this by inviting our citizens to be involved in a series of listening-advisory groups, one on education, one on the environment, one on health care and one of course on agriculture. We have a youth forum where we meet with 20 young people every six weeks. We talk about issues of importance to them. This culminated recently in the late spring in something I don't know has been done anywhere else. We called it a constituent assembly. We took a full day. People volunteered to participate, they set the agenda and we talked about issues of importance to them.

I made it a priority when I was elected to create this constituent assembly because, whether it sounds corny or not, I believe that only a commitment to hearing from the grassroots and then listening to and acting on what they tell you can produce good government. Even more fundamentally, I think it's a vital part of my role as a member of the Legislature to help members of my constituency talk to each other and with me about issues of concern to them. I'm deeply grateful to those 80-some-odd people who took part and shared their views, which, by the way, you can find on my Web site, www.tedmcmeekin.com, for anybody who wants to check those. They're a bit rough and raw in places, like the MPP who represents that area, but it would be a good opportunity for anyone who wants to read that to see exactly what real people said. They've asked me to communicate their concerns in the context of this budget.

So here's a summary of some of the discussion that I think the government members opposite might find helpful.

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In the area of health care, universal access to health care is a universal concern. Medical care is seen to be dying a "death of a thousand cuts." The growth of two-tier health care should be resisted. Some fear that

NAFTA will ultimately force us into opening the door to American-style health care, which they believe will lower quality and raise costs. Profit, they note, is money taken away from providing quality health care, an interesting point, given some of the discussions we've had about the private-public sector debate.

Along with calls for greater transparency and accountability—a common theme—there was significant support for increased funding in areas such as hospice and community-based care, health education and prevention programs. "We are willing to pay for a strong health care system," virtually everybody seemed to be saying.

In particular, home and community-based care are seen as being able to provide not only the kind of service that people want, but that care and service at some considerable savings to the taxpayers of Ontario. One participant summarized a great deal of the discussion quite neatly with the comment that the "whole thrust of Queen's Park is to divert the sick from home care to long-term care. This must cost much more," she suggested. I can tell you, it does. It's about \$812 a day in the hospital, about \$117 a day in a good long-term-care facility, and in the PC study of detailed home care costs, about \$44 a day. You've got 23% of the people in the four acute care hospitals, which you're continuing to fund with even more dollars, with virtually no money at all going into home care. These 23% of the people shouldn't be there; they should be in home care facilities.

On the education front, the level of frustration with government policies just came boiling off the page; in fact, 10 full pages of notes from this forum, with a whole bunch of suggestions that we could commend to the government. Underfunding, of course, topped the list of specific concerns. It was noted that the funding model is centrally controlled, in itself a major flaw, and that local control needs somehow to be reasserted back into communities, or at least a portion of that control. Specific areas of underfunding included English as a second language, for which we didn't see a lot of money in this budget, and certainly special-needs programs, which is tragic. We heard about children with autism today and we know about the long lineups for assessment—a tragic waste of human potential. Of course, we had the talk about textbooks and the lack of textbooks and all the anger with respect to the funding for the independent schools situation.

On the environment, we had a broad-based discussion. There was a lot of concern about water quality, particularly the need to provide funding for small local municipalities that don't have the assessment base that others might have in order to pick up costs, and the need for partnership there, some real power sharing and some real revenue sharing. There's a lot of talk about new deals for cities, but I see that once again this government has sloughed that off, and rather than pointing direction has decided to point fingers at the feds, even though constitutionally they know, as does anybody who follows that scene, that it's more decidedly a provincial issue.

On the amalgamation issue—talk about accountability—there was strong support for organizing a de-

amalgamation referendum in 2003. Amalgamation, for the participants in these groups, represented “sadness for our loss of identity,” a victory of urban interests over rural life, a betrayal by this government of democracy and, in practical terms, a straightforward policy failure. They note some of the changes.

In the transportation area, and the former minister might be interested in this, much discussion can be summed up this way: fewer trucks, more rail; fewer one-person cars, more public transit. There was very little support for the concept of a mid-peninsula expressway. “If you want to solve gridlock,” said one participant, “do not build more highways.” There was consistent support for better planning regionally from Niagara to Toronto. Such planning, participants thought, should promote a reliance on walking and cycling—what you might call an environmental kind of thrust to some of the budget considerations.

In the minute or so that I have left, I would just add some comments that have been really festering in my riding to do with the agricultural sector. Somebody once said farmers have more things to fix and less to fix them

with than anybody. I think that’s an old Perth county saw.

Mike’s fishing buddy, Mr Bush—you remember Mike over here—has now introduced the highest level of agricultural protectionism in the world: \$190 billion over the next 10 years. The fear of many in my riding is that a whole generation of those hard-working, honest, food-growing folk who have contributed so much to Canada now stands the potential of being lost. There’s next to no mention in this budget about the importance of the agricultural sector or about the federal funding and the challenge to the provincial government to come up with 40%. That’s even before we get into the \$192 million that Agricorp has been sitting on and the dumping of foreign folk who have the advantage of this subsidy.

So from the people to the government, some very practical suggestions about what you ought to be doing in your budget.

The Deputy Speaker: It being almost 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2127.

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Prince Edward-Hastings Renfrew-Nipissing- Pembroke Sarnia-Lambton Sault Ste Marie Scarborough Centre / -Centre Scarborough East / -Est	Parsons, Ernie (L) Conway, Sean G. (L) Di Cocco, Caroline (L) Martin, Tony (ND) Mushinski, Marilyn (PC) Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	Windsor West / -Ouest Windsor-St Clair York Centre / -Centre York North / -Nord York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston York West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L) Duncan, Dwight (L) Kwinter, Monte (L) Munro, Julia (PC) Cordiano, Joseph (L) Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

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.

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