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(Hansard)**

Thursday 2 June 2005

Jeudi 2 juin 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 2 June 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 2 juin 2005

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing July 1, 2005, and ending December 31, 2005, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation of the 2005-06 fiscal year following the voting of supply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion 406.

The Chair recognizes the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton–Lawrence): I'm glad to be here tonight with you, Mr. Speaker, and colleagues from all across Ontario. As you know, we represent a diversity of ridings, over 12.5 million people. In the US Congress or the House of Representatives they call this "appropriations," but we call it "interim supply." In essence, we are making a decision of whether or not, and if, we're going to pay for all of our public servants and all the institutions that come under the auspices of the province of Ontario.

It's something that may seem bureaucratic to people watching out there, but it's a good time for us to perhaps remind the Ontario public and ourselves of all the incredibly good work that is done in the province of Ontario. It's not just about the good work government does, but it's about the excellent work that is done by Ontarians working for the government in all its agencies, boards and commissions for the people of Ontario.

There was a reporter whom I once asked, "Wouldn't you like to go to Ottawa and maybe cover the federal House?" He said, "Why would I go there? They don't really deal with people on an everyday basis." The reporter said to me—in fact, it was John McGrath, who's been here for quite a long time—he likes being here because we in the province deal with people in a very tangible, direct way, and the decisions we make and the expenditures we make affect people's day-to-day lives.

So today, in the interim supply motion, what we're doing is ensuring there is a flow of tax dollars that we collect that goes to all of these various ministries of

government, all the boards and all the different partners we have in government.

As you know, the biggest expenditure in the provincial budget, over 40%, is in providing health care. When we look at that health care budget, it seems like an easy word to say, but there's a lot of traction when you say that word. The traction is there because when we talk about allocating money for health care, front and centre we're talking about our health care providers. They are our doctors, our nurses, our hospital custodians, our cleaning staff and our lab technicians. All those front-line people have to be paid, and they're essentially paid by the province of Ontario. They're indirectly on our payroll. So those front-line health care providers are, you might say, an extension of our government. They're partners in delivering a provincial service, so it's a very significant part of our budget.

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We can go even further afield. It's not only the doctors and doctors' visits; we pay for the province of Ontario's drug plan. It's a drug plan that's certainly envied by the Americans. As you know, the Americans have these bus tours that come up here. They have trainloads of seniors trying to get our affordable drugs. You can find the same medication at 1/20 the price here in Ontario, compared to the same product manufactured by the same company south of the border. The province of Ontario, through the taxes it collects, provides for the availability of drugs for the general population.

You also get your hospital stay covered. I was just talking to someone who said they had a relative who was unfortunate enough to have a hospital stay in the United States. The bill came back—it was a premature baby, and the mother and baby had to stay for a month—and it was a bill for \$37,000, which that family couldn't afford to pay. As you know, in Ontario, that is covered by the tax revenues that we collect and that we allocate to the hospitals, so you don't get a bill if you've had a heart bypass. You don't get that charge.

I am always reminded of this story from, I think it was, my colleague from Chatham–Kent. A lady came into his office and said that she was golfing in the States and had a situation where she was taken to hospital. They found out she had cancer—operation, intensive care. She came back to Mr. Pat Hoy's office in Chatham–Kent and said that the bill was \$210,000. She said, "I couldn't pay the bill for \$210,000." She had had an emergency cancer operation. She had to stay in that Florida hospital, I think it was: a \$210,000 bill. I think the husband and wife were

both in there, and they said, “We don’t know what to do.”

That is why I think that at this time it’s good for us to remind ourselves and remind the people of Ontario: This is what we are doing by passing interim supply. We’re making sure that there is enough money to pay for the hospitals, the doctors, the nurses, and also pay for the staff and the health care providers in our nursing homes. In all of our communities and ridings, we have, I think, some of the best nursing homes in Canada. I look across at the member from Markham, Mr. Tony Wong, who knows about the Yee Hong Centre. In my own riding, I’ve got Villa Colombo. They’re all over this province. We do hear about some of those shortcomings once in a while, but I have what I call the Mayo Clinic of geriatric care in Canada, the Baycrest. My friend from York Centre, Monte Kwinter, will tell you.

These are places that we should celebrate. But we not only celebrate them, we also have to fund them, and that is done through our provincial tax dollars. Remember, this is not just funding that occurs for six months or for a year. This is day after day, 24/7. St. Michael’s Hospital, Mount Sinai Hospital and all of our hospitals have to work around the clock, day in and day out, pay for the staffing, pay for the mechanicals and pay for heat and lights. All of those costs have to be borne by the taxpayer. That’s done through the taxes that we collect, and we pay for that.

That’s something that we sometimes fail to reflect upon enough. People always ask us, “Where does this money go?” When you look at our nursing homes and our home care—we’ve extended another \$280 million for home care this year so that people don’t have to always be in the hospital; they can get that care at home. Those are dollars that come through the CCACs, from provincial tax dollars that have to be collected through the Ministry of Finance.

If we look at our whole health care budget and health care expenditures, we are no different than any other jurisdiction in North America or in Europe. Everybody is facing the challenge of rising costs for health care, more expensive technology and the demographic bubble as the baby boomers get older. Whether you’re in France, New Jersey or Alberta, every jurisdiction is facing that pressure from the mounting cost of health care.

What we’ve tried to do as a government, and I think other governments have tried this to a certain extent, is to find ways of getting a better bang for our buck. I think what Minister Smitherman has tried to do is, he talks about the emphasis on transforming health care; in other words, taking the pressure away from hospitals. This is why in interim supply here we’re talking about putting money into family health teams. The member from Chatham–Kent got a family health team that they were very happy to get. I think there are 52 new family health teams—one in the riding of my good friend from Northumberland. Quinte, right? You’ve got Quinte West. There’s going to be the Ride for Sight there, motorcyclists from all across Canada coming to Northumber-

land on June 24, I think it is. They’re going to ride the beautiful Northumberland hills in a very attractive part of this province.

So in every community there are investments, whether it be for family health teams or whether it be for immunization for children so that children won’t end up with those life-threatening illnesses that will force them into hospital. That’s why the Minister of Health is putting money into prevention, immunizing children. We have probably one of the widest and most comprehensive immunization programs in North America now in Ontario. So that’s where health dollars go through interim supply.

We should mention that the spending of money sometimes also has to be a long-term investment. If you look at the approach that our government has taken, we’ve said we not only have to take care of today’s bills, but we’ve got to invest in our economy and in our intellectual power so that we can continue to have a competitive economy. We’ve got to continue to grow the economy—because I’m sure all of us have all kinds of things that we would like to have money spent on in our ridings, but ultimately, unless people are working and small and big business is attracted to Ontario, we won’t have the money for nursing homes, we won’t have money for the nurses, to pay the doctors, to pay the bills in our hospitals.

Part of these expenditures, especially with this year’s budget, will go toward an unprecedented, historical investment in post-secondary education: our universities, colleges and skills training. It’s self-evident that if you look at the world’s economies, they’re no longer just your factory-type economies. They are not just on an agricultural base. They’re much more sophisticated.

If you look at the economies that are thriving—look at Ireland. Ireland is now one of the most competitive economies in the whole world. They’ve turned that country around from an unemployment rate of about 29% to an unemployment rate of about 4% now. Ireland invested in their universities and the skills of all of their workforce. So Ireland, which was considered almost an economic basket case, is now the envy of the world for its success because they invested in intellectual power; they invested in people’s ability to be competitive through education.

If you look at the various states in the United States, our neighbours to the south—as you know, we are fortunate in Ontario because we’ve surpassed Michigan now in automobile production. Most Ontarians probably don’t even realize that. We’ve surpassed Michigan. What we’re seeing through our expenditures is that we want to be perhaps less like Michigan—not to put Michigan down; it’s a very good neighbour—and more like Massachusetts perhaps. If you look at the GDP per capita in terms of wealth produced, of all the US states the one with the highest GDP per capita is Massachusetts. And you say, “What does Massachusetts export? What are the big factories in Massachusetts?” Basically, in Massachusetts, whether it’s MIT, Boston College, Boston University, Harvard, it’s an investment in intelligence, an investment in young people—people of all ages—who

want to learn. Therefore, Massachusetts has surpassed states like Texas, the states in the rust belt, because they see the competitive advantage of tax dollars being invested in education.

1900

That's why this government is not afraid, and has shown in its budget—and we'll see in the supply measures—that we are going to invest \$6.2 billion over the next five years in education past high school. That is not only an investment in universities per se—and we all have universities and colleges in our constituencies. We've got Georgian College in your constituency, Mr. Speaker, where they do great work in hospitality, tourism, marketing, business and computer literacy. If you look all across Ontario, these are not only places where students go but they're great centres that employ people.

People say, "Look at Hamilton. Hamilton is an old economy." That's not true. Hamilton is part of the new economy. The number one employer in Hamilton is now McMaster Health Sciences Centre. That's the new economy. I think there's a bright future for a place like Hamilton, but you have to invest in the intelligence that exists in Hamilton, give people in Hamilton an opportunity, because that's the value-added jobs, the jobs of the future.

Look at London, Ontario—another great middle Ontario city. For years it was the insurance industry that carried the London economy. Now it is not. The University of Western Ontario Health Sciences Centre is the number one employer and revenue generator for the economy in London.

If you look at Toronto, they say, "In this budget you're investing in universities and colleges. Great. It's great for students." We're doing a heck of a lot for students. Some 135,000 middle-income students will get increased assistance through their student assistance loans, and 16,000 of the poorest will get a direct grant of \$6,000. It's not investing only in those students; we're investing in significant employment centres.

I would just mention, by the way, that a student from Ryerson—I know the Minister of Tourism from St. Catharines is very interested in this—was named Miss Universe. The most beautiful woman in the whole world came from Ryerson University. I think we should hear a clap for her. I can't remember her name now. I think the Speaker remembers her name. But the most beautiful person in the universe came from Ryerson University. It's a great tourism boost for Canada.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): Michael, make it the universe, not the world.

Mr. Colle: OK, the universe. Sorry. I have to correct myself. The member from York West corrects me. She was named Miss Universe, not Miss World. Sorry. I stand corrected.

That's a different part of the return we get from investing. But if you put together Ryerson, U of T and York University, and Seneca, Centennial and wonderful Sheridan—Sheridan is a cutting-edge world institution that—

Interjection.

Mr. Sergio: Seneca College.

Mr. Colle: Seneca.

Interjection: George Brown.

Mr. Colle: George Brown—culinary arts. No one can match George Brown's culinary arts school. People say, "Culinary arts? What's the government doing investing in culinary arts?" One of our biggest industries in Toronto and Ontario—it's number three, if I'm correct—is tourism. That's what brings money in.

Applause.

Mr. Colle: The Minister of Tourism is clapping because many thousands of Ontarians work in tourism, so whatever money we invest in tourism in increasing the hospitality and training skills of young Ontarians, we're going to get back tenfold with those jobs in tourism.

By the way, the name of the Ryerson student who won, Miss Universe, is Natalie Glebova, so we should remember that name.

Just to let you know, in this interim supply we look at where the money is going. We see Algonquin College, \$2.6 million; Cambrian—Mr. Speaker, for you—\$1.2 million; we look at all these great colleges: Conestoga, Confederation, Durham, Fanshawe, George Brown, Lambton, Loyalist College, Mohawk, Niagara.

The money we are allocating for interim supply is not just an expenditure; in other words, it doesn't just go out the door. I think we've got to look upon it as an investment in Ontario's people, an expenditure that will bring us back more economic activity so we can help our farmers, help our elderly, help our struggling small rural areas, invest in our hospitals, in training for nurses and help the unfortunate who are in difficult times. Hopefully, by investing these dollars we collect through tax allocations we can make this province prosper and grow. Let's hear it for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Haliburton—Victoria—Brock.

Applause.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock): Such a round of applause. Yay. A little bored in the Legislature tonight, everybody? Is the applause because women like to spend money?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Can't we all get along?

Ms. Scott: We can all get along.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak to how the government does spend its money and the interim supply bill that we're discussing tonight. I'm so happy to see that the government side is anxious to hear our comments. Hopefully, they will have some peace on the labour front over there with the impending OPSEU strike. It certainly affects our jail in Lindsay, in the city of Kawartha Lakes, correctional east.

There are certainly some concerns on the issuing of birth certificates. That will be affected, and that's been enough of a backlog from this government that we've had to deal with, a big backlog causing people a lot of anxiety and frustration.

Abattoirs: Maybe the government should have reconsidered their meat inspection plans, because the abattoirs are going to be affected adversely with this OPSEU strike that is coming.

Mr. Colle: Don't be so negative.

Ms. Scott: I hope it doesn't come; we hope that it doesn't come.

I was very encouraged to hear about our health sector from the member opposite, and certainly we have a health care system that is a great system; it needs some improvement. I was anxious to hear what he'd say about nurses, so we can hire more nurses, when they have just given the hospitals money to sever nurses, losing close to 1,000 jobs in nursing when this government is supposed to be improving our health care system. My co-workers could be in jeopardy, close to 1,000. Many hospitals across Ontario are already warning that there will be staff shortages. The fact that they say they're improving health care and hiring more nurses, yet they're laying off almost 1,000 nurses, is very concerning. Maybe we should look at that.

Doctor shortages: In the city of Kawartha Lakes alone we are short 15 family doctors. I don't think the shortages that are faced are unusual for all of rural Ontario. I'm happy to see the investment in post-secondary education and the expansion of some spaces in medical school, and to mention that we had initiated the northern medical school and are happy to see that it is going to be in operation. Hopefully, with these investments we can attract more doctors to our rural areas.

I would like to see more nurse practitioners, especially in rural Ontario, where I think that the need for primary access to health care could be met. Maybe the government and the Minister of Health can re-look at how we get more nurse practitioners into the field, and maybe change some formulas so there is more encouragement for that scope of practice to expand, especially in rural Ontario.

1910

Speaking of rural Ontario, we did not see an improvement in investment in agriculture for rural Ontario: \$169 million less is what's going to be seen for our agriculture sector. We had the Ontario Cattlemen's Association here today, and they're in crisis. BSE has gone on for over two years now. They need the governments, federal and provincial, both to listen to the concerns they have and to invest. We have to decide, do we want farmers or do we not? Because we're starving them right now. They brought those concerns. Farmers are very proud people and they often don't want to cite their problems, but it is a huge issue in rural Ontario. Agriculture is the backbone of many of our ridings here in the Legislature, more so in the Conservative ridings, I think, than the Liberal ridings, because they don't seem to be addressing the situation in rural Ontario.

When I go to the stores in rural Ontario, they're losing jobs one by one. Not as many people are coming in to buy clothes, to buy farm implements. Dairy farmers are selling off chunks of their quota. So, one by one, our jobs

are being lost in rural Ontario, there are less monies being spent, and it's impacting all of us. Things have not been so bad for rural Ontario in decades. So we want the government to listen to that and change their spending priorities. Things are bad in rural Ontario.

In the city of Kawartha Lakes alone, there are 1,300 registered farms; in Peterborough county, 1,200. I share some of Peterborough county with member Jeff Leal from Peterborough. This is a large impact of your spending priorities over there. Are you spending the monies in the right places? Certainly with your budget that came in—is it the fourth time now that we've had to try to balance the budget? Are you going to balance it or are you not going to balance it? How are we going to know?

The people of Ontario earned a \$2.6-billion increase in revenues for this government. Is it being spent properly? It's hard to know. Should they have got a tax credit? I think they should have, because what happens when you give people more money? They generate more economic activity. They spend the money, especially farmers. You put money in farmers' pockets, and they spend it all locally.

Are we using enough incentives? We talk about bringing more jobs to Ontario. Are we being competitive now? Are we doing the right things to increase jobs in Ontario, to increase the state of our economic situation, which means a lot to the whole of Canada? We are the economic engine, and may I say that agriculture is the second-largest economic driver in Ontario. I want to continue to bring this up because it is a theme that I think is not addressed sufficiently by the Liberal government—rural Ontario and the agriculture needs.

When you're mentioning education, I want to mention that one of my school boards, Kawartha Pine Ridge, didn't settle. They're not happy. Do we have a rural school plan yet? We need a plan for the rural schools. Will they be closing rural schools? We don't know yet. It's all a mystery to us, what's going to happen.

Look at what happened with the Frost Centre. The Liberal government closed the Frost Centre down. It was shut down in one week. Is that what this Liberal government is about? They wanted better education, better environmental laws, better stewardship. Closing the Frost Centre did nothing about that. They closed it down cruelly. I'm hoping, thanks to a committee that's been working hard over the last year on what to do with the Frost Centre, that the government will see the light, that that needs to be reopened and a partnership at least needs to be formed, because that exists in Haliburton county. The second-lowest household income in the province of Ontario is in Haliburton county. This was like closing down a car manufacturing plant to them. You have to think of these things, and I don't think you're thinking enough about rural Ontario.

The investments made in post-secondary education are very welcome. I know that will improve, in the long run certainly, our economic outlook for the future. I've been working with the Liberal government, and Minister Chambers has been very positive in light of a possible

new apprenticeship program that I have introduced in a private member's bill. The apprenticeship would be in the fuel industry. It was brought to my attention by a small business owner in the riding and it was an excellent idea, a good incentive to create an apprenticeship in a much-needed industry. It would be increasing the safety standards for all of us if that goes through: getting businesses to have more qualified staff, an incentive for people to go back and get the proper accreditation at school.

There's much to be said about how the government spends its money on the interim supply bill, and I was happy to have the opportunity for this short period of time to speak to the interim supply bill today.

I will be sharing my time with the member from Waterloo—Wellington.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Applause.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): Hold your applause. You might not like what I say. I thank you for the applause. I hope I get as much applause when I finish. I'll be tough.

First of all, this is an interim supply motion and I hope everybody in this room will understand what that is, but for the benefit of the two or three who may be watching us out there on the television, this is a bill that allows us to pay our civil servants, to pay the monies that the institutions and boards need while we are still struggling with the budget, because it is the budget itself that determines the amounts and who gets what and, in fact, who doesn't get what.

So I'm going to talk in terms of what the budget is doing. Although we need to get some money for interim supply, because of course our hard-working civil servants need the money, of course the schools and institutes of higher learning need the money, of course the boards and commissions across this province need the money to function, the real question comes down to who gets what and why have certain groups been left out.

In this House a few weeks ago there was a vote on the budget. I think every single Conservative member stood up to vote against it and every single New Democrat stood up to vote against it. But I have to tell you, I think the reasons why we voted against it are very much different from why the members of the Conservative Party voted against it.

When I heard some of the statements made by the honourable members on the government side, that we were not voting for it because we didn't want to help students and we didn't want to help institutes of higher learning and we didn't want to help hospitals, I think nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the reason why New Democrats don't support this budget is really one of poverty, because we do not believe that this government has adequately addressed the poor, the needy, the destitute and those who most need help in Ontario. That's why I voted no to the budget, that's why I continue not to support what is in that budget, in spite of the fact that this government has gone at least part way, and probably as far as you could or would be able to go

in the short term, in order to help our institutes of higher education. I think what's happening there, in line with the Rae report, is the right way to go. In spite of the fact that hospitals have got an increase, although not enough of an increase, that is simply one of the places that the money needs to be spent, and it needs to be spent in our schools, and you're increasing some of the funding for schools and reducing class sizes. I read the paper too. You're doing those things, but what you don't do and what causes me grief on this side of the House is that there are all these groups that you've left out and you should not have left out and that you're leaving out through this interim supply motion. When we give the money through the supply motion, it's going—or more correctly, it's not going to go to some people in our society who, in my view, need it the most, and that is the poor, the destitute and the children.

1920

I'd just like to deal with some of those groups: first of all, the autistic children. I think there is probably no greater champion of autistic children in this entire House than the member from Nickel Belt. She stands at least once a week or twice a week and asks questions of the government on how the government is going to help children who are autistic, children who have been dealt a very cruel blow early in their life through no fault of their own, who require specialized treatment, who are on waiting lists and find that those waiting lists are never-ending. The children turn six years old without ever having had the opportunity to get IBI treatment.

We've been in this House and we've talked about these situations. We've talked about the families that are forced to go to court and have so far been successful in getting treatment for their autistic children once they have turned six years of age, only to find that this very government that pretends they want to help the poor and to help autistic children takes those same families to court, only to find that you are doing everything in your power to impede them from getting the services they desperately need, only to find that those children who are less than six years of age and who are on waiting lists have now been told that because you are struggling with your court proceedings with the families of the children who are over six, their waiting list is going to continue to grow.

You know, there was a wonderful child sitting in the members' gallery with her mother. Her name is Tennyson Quance. Tennyson Quance lives in Beaches—East York. Tennyson Quance is closing in on five years of age and is one of the most charming children I think I have ever met. She is absolutely beautiful. But she has autism. Her family is doing everything in their power to try to help their daughter, in a way that I only wish this government would do. They are doing things that I only wish the members on the government side would find in their hearts to include in a budget.

I went to a fundraiser for Tennyson Quance the other night, because, you see, the family can no longer afford the \$6,000 a month it costs for autistic services, IBI

treatment. The family is a very good family. Both the father of this child and the mother work full-time. Sometimes they work extra hours; sometimes they take on extra jobs. The mother is an accomplished photographer, owns a studio and takes literally every job she can find in order to find the money for her daughter. But at \$6,000 a month, you have to understand that this is beyond the realm of possibility even for this very good and strong middle-class family in Ontario. Six thousand dollars a month has eaten into all of their life savings. Six thousand dollars a month has eaten into their mortgage, and they've had to remortgage their house. Six thousand dollars a month is beyond their ability to pay for their own lifestyle for their other two children and all the necessities of their life, the food and shelter that they also have to provide for themselves and their other two children. And so the community has been forced to come together on numerous occasions. This past week, I went to a fundraiser at \$40 a ticket. They sold out 500 seats—\$20,000—and people had to come forward. Two brilliant comics came forward for a night of entertainment, and they did that to raise the funds.

But I have to tell you that what was most poignant to the night for me wasn't the comics, although they were extremely funny; it was Mr. Brett Quance, who stood up to talk about why we were all in that room, why the people of Beaches–East York and the broader community were all in that room. We were all in that room, as he put it so carefully and so clearly, because the government of Ontario had failed him and failed his family, and especially had failed his daughter, Tennyson Quance. They had been promised and they were led to believe that Tennyson Quance would have an opportunity, that this government would see to it. In fact, the Premier had promised to do exactly that prior to the election.

Mr. Brett Quance told me on that occasion and on others that he had believed the Premier, and in fact he had voted for the Liberal Party for precisely that reason in the last election. He is devastated by what you have done, or more correctly by what you have not done, in your budget, and by what you have done, or more correctly have not done, in this interim supply bill. You see, there is not one penny coming to him. We raised \$20,000. That's enough for another three months of IBI treatment. Tennyson is going to be five years old before that three months is up, and she is still waiting for the IBI treatment that she needs in order that she can do the little things that you would ordinarily expect from a five-year-old. She's getting the best help the family can do by fundraisers. She's getting the best help the family can do through their friends and neighbours and the people who are trying to raise the money. But they are exasperated with this government, and they are not alone. There are hundreds of such children and hundreds of such families in Ontario, and this government has an obligation to look after them. If you want to know why I do not support your budget, it's because of that. It's not because of education; it's not because of health. It's because you have failed this family and families like them.

I want to talk a bit about other families, families whose children are not autistic, families whose children are just poor. This government, prior to the election, said you were going to end the clawback of the monies that you claw back from the families of poor children. For those watching who may not know what this is—I'm sure that all of the government members know what it is—the federal government decided years ago that they were going to end poverty in Canada. Part of the way they were going to end poverty was to give a supplement for all of the children of poor families. When I was a boy, we called it the "baby bonus." I'm sure that when many of you were young, you and your families called it the baby bonus too. I remember growing up in Regent Park when that cheque came every month. My mother took that cheque, which was \$8 for myself and \$8 for each of my two brothers, and she spent that money absolutely and totally wisely on things that we needed in our family. Whether it was a new pair of shoes, whether it was food, whether it was something that we needed to go to school—pencils or books or crayons or whatever we needed to go to school—the money was spent wisely. Because, you know, parents know how to do that. Parents know how to do it when they're poor and when they have children who need the money.

The federal government gives that money today for poor families. If you're a poor person who makes minimum wage and you get this money, you get to keep it. But if you are unfortunate, if you are on Ontario disability or on Ontario Works or if you are a single parent with one or two children and you get this money, what this government has chosen to do, to my mind, is disgraceful. The money is clawed back. It is taken away from children who cannot afford to have the money taken away from them. The Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto said that if this government were to do one thing to alleviate child poverty in Ontario, the single best thing that you could do in one fell swoop was to end the clawback. If you ended the clawback, just that one action, you would do more to alleviate child poverty than any other single action that you could possibly take.

Did this government do this in this budget or in the last budget? I'm afraid you didn't, and this is extremely disappointing to me. They were going to get a 3% increase, so you'll let them keep the 3% increase that they were going to get last year and the 3% increase that they're going to get this year. But in reality, what that means is that 100% of the money that you promised to give back to them two years ago is still in your hands. All you have allowed them to keep is the 3% increase that the federal government has granted to children across this entire land.

I have to tell you that as a New Democrat I find this appalling, because the poorest of the poor children, those whose families are forced to live on incomes of \$1,000 or less a month—in cities like Toronto or Hamilton or Ottawa, that doesn't even pay the rent. Those children are forced into food banks. Those children are forced into poverty. They're forced to go to school, as some of the

speeches have said, and not to enjoy even the little things like milk or a pizza lunch or a trip to the museum if in fact they have to pay for it. I have to tell you that I find this quite appalling, and I find it appalling that we force children and their families to go to food banks when this government could do something about it.

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The amount of money that you claw back from the poorest of the poor is, I've heard, about \$250 million. I put this all into perspective: If there's \$400 million for a casino, if there's half a billion dollars for Ford, then there should be something for poor children. I can't support the budget and I can't support an interim supply motion that leaves these poor children out of the picture.

I also look at what's happening to people on ODSP and OW. This government promised that it would keep up their payments in line with inflation. That was one of the election promises. In the first budget, you did that. Even though they were so reduced from the Mike Harris years—had 21% chopped right off the top, and not an increase for nine years—I have to commend you because, in your first budget, you gave them a 3% increase. It wasn't much—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: How did you vote on that budget?

Mr. Prue: The right way.

It wasn't much but it was something. This budget is an abomination because you have said, "No more increase for them." So the reality is, with inflation over the two years, they are now worse off under your Liberal government than they were under Mike Harris. Can you imagine, to be on ODSP and come to the realization that today, under Dalton McGuinty and his government, you are worse off than you were under Mike Harris and his government, in the worst of worst times for poor people? That causes me a great deal of grief too. If you want to know why I can't support your budget, it's because I can't support what you're doing to people who, through no fault of their own, are forced on to ODSP. I can't fathom why you would say to people who are in wheelchairs, people who are blind and people who have medical problems that they can't have an increase. We gave ourselves an increase, as parliamentarians—we all took it—but they can't have an increase. They get \$900 a month if they're single, if they're lucky. They get \$1,200 if they have a child. That's what they get. This budget gave them no increase. If you want to know why I can't support the budget, look there.

I'm glad that the minister responsible for all these new housing initiatives is here today. I was there in Beaches—East York with him and all the counterparts from Ottawa and the mayor for the great big announcement of all the housing that's going to be built in Ontario: \$300 million from the federal government, \$300 million from the province and \$300 million from the cities. It was a pretty good day. I felt kind of good when I was there that day, and then I saw this budget. I opened up to the page on housing in eager anticipation to see the \$300 million that was going to be spent, and what did I see? It was \$31 million. When questions were asked, "Where's the \$300

million? This is only 10% or maybe 10.5%. Where's the money?," the answer came back, "Oh, this is over 10 or 20 years that we're going to give this money." So it wasn't that the government was committing itself to the \$300 million; the government is committing future governments of this province, and they only commit themselves, in this year, to \$31 million of it.

I don't know where that great announcement's going because in the next two years that follow, if they carry through with that, they'll have made about one third of their pledge. I guess they're going to try to stick any new government that is elected after that with the balance. I really don't know.

I wonder, with all the great announcements that were made about the really poor people who need housing, the 150,000 families in Ontario who are on waiting lists, if they're going to be satisfied that only 10% of what you promised that day came forward in this budget. I wonder about all of those people who need supportive housing, all of those people who have psychiatric problems or emotional problems or need special services with supportive housing. I wonder if they're going to be satisfied knowing that the housing they need is probably not going to be available with the paltry sum of \$31 million that has been put forward. I wonder if all of those people who desperately are hoping for a place to live are going to be happy knowing that the money simply is not there.

I looked in the budget to see—and I couldn't find it but maybe it was there, hidden, because it's a big document—whether or not the 5,000 supplements are going to be given, but I couldn't find anything in the budget that says that money's going to be spent either.

The last thing is the civil service, because I guess this whole supply bill is to make sure that they get paid. This past week, the largest union within the civil service of Ontario, OPSEU, voted 65% in favour of strike action. Two out of every three civil servants in Ontario want to go on strike. They're not very happy with Dalton McGuinty. I think they're not very happy with the way they are being treated. This is a union, you have to remember, that went through two very long, bitter, bitter strikes under the previous government, and here they are voting 2 to 1 to go out again.

I had a couple of union people in my office last week on a completely different issue, and I asked them what the issues were and whether it had anything to do with wages. These are union people and they told me no. They told me that it wasn't so much a question of how much you were offering; it was in fact because they were very, very worried about their jobs, they were very worried about the closure of jobs in places like the regional centres, they were very worried about how cavalierly you closed down the Frost Centre, and they were very worried about how, when he stands up to speak, the finance minister talks about restructuring the civil service in ways that are going to reduce their input or their jobs or everything altogether. They're very, very worried and nervous about what's going to happen to the provincial people who work in the audit department, who actually

find us tax money that the federal government doesn't, if that whole thing is turned over. No one has discussed it at all with them.

I think my 20 minutes are about up, and that's what I've agreed to.

I want to tell you that this is an interim supply bill. Everybody is going to have to be paid. I have no doubt whatsoever that the bill is going to pass. But I ask the government members, when you ask for the money, please do something in advance to spend it wisely, because it needs to be spent more wisely than it is.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): Speaker, I'd like to ask your advice. While the House is in such a good mood, I was going to seek unanimous consent to have second and third reading of my Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act.

Interjection.

Mr. Arnott: The minister is in the House, but he appears not to agree at this time. I'd better not push it; I might lose the support of some of our colleagues. He may once again express his view; I don't know.

This is the debate on interim supply, as you well know. This motion, if passed, will authorize the government to spend money on the civil service: pay, as was said by the member for Beaches–East York, as well as the other expenditures that the government must undertake.

I want to talk a little bit about the budget, because there was a constrained debate on the provincial budget motion, and I didn't get an opportunity to speak to it.

I want to start on a positive note. I was quite interested to be here in the Legislature for the budget speech. Of course, we received the budget speech document and also the budget papers document. I was flipping through it the day the budget was read into the House, and an item that was in the budget papers but did not make it into the speech caught my attention. It's on page 157, in "Details of Revenue Measures," and talks about a retail sales tax exemption for booster seats. It says here, "The Ontario government's Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads, was passed into law in December 2004."

I'm pleased to see the Minister of Transportation here in this House and to acknowledge his role in that particular bill.

The paper goes on to say:

"Regulations under the new law would make booster seats mandatory for children who are too big for child car seats, yet too small to be properly protected by seat belts.

"An amendment to the Retail Sales Tax Act will be proposed to expand the current retail sales tax exemption for child car seats to include booster seats. This amendment would be effective upon proclamation, to coincide with the implementation of the booster seat requirement."

When I read that, I thought that somehow it sounded familiar. In fact, it did sound familiar, because I introduced a private member's bill to accomplish this very thing on May 6, 2004: Bill 77, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act. I was concerned about the fact that

there was a disparity in the Retail Sales Tax Act, whereby car seats for smaller children were exempt from retail sales tax but booster seats were not.

While I was pleased to know that the Minister of Transportation was expressing his concern about safety for children and he was expanding the coverage to ensure that older children were safe in these booster seats, they neglected to think about the fact that those seats were very expensive and subject to tax. So I'm still looking forward to hearing the acknowledgement from the Minister of Finance for my role in this particular initiative, and I'm sure when he comes to Kitchener–Waterloo tomorrow at the Communitech breakfast, he'll likely acknowledge the fact that I gave him an idea that he put into the budget.

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I'm also pleased to see that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal is here. I recall a few months ago, he and I had an opportunity on a night just like tonight when the House was in a good, jovial mood, and I wandered over to talk to him about a few issues. He has been quite attentive to the concerns that I have in terms of infrastructure projects in Waterloo–Wellington. I have the Waterloo–Wellington transportation action plan, and he knows all about that because we've talked about it over the last little while. But we were talking about how we would fund the infrastructure needs of the province. Not that long ago, I think when David Lindsay was still involved in infrastructure issues, there was a study that indicated that we needed to spend about \$100 billion, if I'm not mistaken, on our infrastructure in the next few years. I forget; was it over the next 10 years? Maybe he could help me. But it was an extraordinary figure and we seemed to be behind the eight ball on how we finance this.

Of course, the Minister of Finance, in the budget speech, announced a plan to spend \$30 billion on infrastructure over five years. There weren't a lot of details as to how we would come up with this \$30 billion, but over five years, of course, it's on average \$6 billion a year. Right now the provincial government spends just over \$2 billion, if I'm not mistaken—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: It was \$2.6 billion last year.

Mr. Arnott: OK, two and a half billion on infrastructure. Somehow we're going to have to come up with three and a half billion as well per year on average for the next five years, trying to involve the federal government, I suppose, maybe local governments, and the private sector. I'm pleased to see that the government has overcome its ideological misgivings that were misguided when they were in opposition and realized that if you can involve the private sector in terms of the financing and the developing of an infrastructure project, allowing you to expedite the construction of needed infrastructure, why wouldn't you? They have come to that conclusion, and there are still a few members over there who are reluctant to agree to that, apparently, but I think it is only common sense that they would undertake that.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member for Waterloo–Wellington convinced me.

The Acting Speaker: Point taken.

The Chair recognizes the member for Waterloo–Wellington.

Mr. Arnott: Thanks for the acknowledgement. But we talked about how we would finance these projects. I suggested to him that it would be a good idea to initiate infrastructure bonds that the average person, the average investor, might be able to purchase, not unlike a Canada savings bond, not unlike the war bonds that we financed the war effort with. In those days, of course, it was a patriotic appeal that was extended to people. If you wanted to help your country, you would buy a war bond. We talked about how it might be possible to encourage people to invest in infrastructure bonds that would allow them to invest in their communities, and that if the sales pitch took that approach, there would be a good response.

I was very pleased to see that the minister obviously did his homework with the Minister of Finance and followed through on this. We see in the budget infrastructure renewal bonds: “These bonds will go on sale later this year and will provide a solid investment for Ontarians....” I would like to go on the record tonight and say to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal that I would like to buy the first bond. So if we could make arrangements, I would be prepared to do that.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member for St. Catharines is buying the first bond, but you can buy the second, I say to the member for Waterloo–Wellington.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Waterloo–Wellington.

Mr. Arnott: I want to express my appreciation to the minister for following through on that conversation. I think it will be a positive development for the people of the province.

Now I have to get into the negative aspects of the budget. We all recall the election campaign in 2003, and we recall the ad that the Liberals used repeatedly on television. I didn’t get to see it as often as perhaps some, but I remember it vividly. The then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Ottawa South, now the Premier of Ontario, went on TV, and the ad was run hundreds of times, so in effect he made the commitment hundreds of times. He said, “I won’t raise your taxes, but I won’t cut them either.” I remember that, and I think the people of Ontario remember that.

That’s why last year in the provincial budget, when the new health tax—or, as I call it, the brand new provincial income tax—that the government claims is going to be put toward health care, which they called, of course, the health premium and is now commonly called the health tax, was introduced in the Legislature, there was a great deal of outrage across the province.

It coincided as well with the federal election, as we all recall. I remember knocking on doors with my now federal counterpart; at that time, he was a candidate for a seat in the House of Commons in the riding of

Wellington–Halton Hills, Mike Chong. We were knocking on doors a couple of days after the provincial budget, and the anger of the people at the door was unbelievable. I wouldn’t want to repeat in here what people were telling us about this particular bunch of Liberals at the door in those communities because it wasn’t parliamentary; let’s put it that way.

I think, to some degree, that that provincial budget, arguably, was responsible for the fact that 24 Conservatives were elected to sit in the House of Commons in the election last year. Again, you could say that perhaps to some degree, that was what was responsible for the fact that the Liberals were returned to Ottawa with a minority government, not a majority. It’s quite a legacy for the first budget of the provincial Liberal government in this place, and their federal counterparts have not forgotten. It appeared that, with this particular budget, knowing that a federal government might very well be in the offing, this particular provincial government wanted to make sure that it didn’t have the same impact the second time, if there was a second federal election this year.

So there weren’t any new increases in income tax announced in this budget. However, what most people apparently don’t realize is that the health tax—or the new income tax, as I call it—that the government claims to be putting toward health care doubles this year, in effect because it only took effect on July 1, 2004. So if you paid \$300 in health tax last year, this year you’ll pay \$600. I think people are going to be quite angry when they realize that at the end of the year. I think it’s quite unlikely that the Liberal government here at Queen’s Park will be particularly well-received when that realization sinks in.

The other thing I’m very concerned about with respect to this budget is the fact that the government appears to be completely backing away from its commitment to balance the provincial budget—again, an election promise. In the election in 2003, my Liberal opponent in Waterloo–Wellington repeatedly stated that the Liberals were promising to balance the budget. I don’t think she meant that they would balance it in their second term, if they got a second term, in 2008. Certainly, in the first budget of this particular government, there was a commitment to balance the budget at the end of its term, and now it appears the government is not even committed to doing that.

My concern is this: If we’re not thinking in terms of the next generation and the generations that follow in this place, I don’t know why we’re here. If we continue to run deficits in good years, if we continue to add to the debt—and the total provincial debt, which is again in the budget papers as well—of course, the government puts that section at the very back of the budget papers. When I first arrived here in 1990, the total provincial debt was about \$42 billion. Now it’s \$157 billion. It has tripled in 15 years. For five years, the New Democrats were in power; for eight years, the Conservatives were in power; and now for two years, the Liberals have been in power since I’ve been here. It has tripled, and as I said, if we, as

members of the Legislative Assembly, don't concern ourselves with that issue, don't discipline ourselves to attempt to balance the budget in good years, then we're leaving a legacy of debt to our children and our grandchildren that I personally find unacceptable. I would suggest to the Minister of Finance that if he doesn't balance the budget by 2007 or sooner, he will sorely regret it over the long term.

I'm told that our time is up. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Waterloo–Wellington has spoken respectfully, addressed the topic of the bill, not violated any standing orders, nor maligned any members. Is that practice still in order?

The Acting Speaker: Is that your point of order? Thank you.

Any further debate?

The government has moved, through Mr. Sorbara, motion number 406, and it reads that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments, pending the voting of supply for the period commencing July 1, 2005, and ending December 31, 2005, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation of the 2005-06 fiscal year, following the voting of supply. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Any further business?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Adjournment of the House has been moved. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned till 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1950.

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Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
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Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakubuski, John (PC)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Cordiano, Hon. / L'hon. Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement		
Scarborough–Rouge River	Curling, Hon. / L'hon. Alvin (L) Speaker / Président		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (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.

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John O'Toole
Wayne Arthurs, Caroline Di Cocco, Andrea Horwath,
Cameron Jackson, Kuldip Kular, Phil McNeely
John Milloy, John O'Toole, Jim Wilson
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Phil McNeely
Toby Barrett, Mike Colle, Pat Hoy, Judy Marsales,
Phil McNeely, Carol Mitchell, John O'Toole,
Michael Prue, John Wilkinson
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General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Linda Jeffrey
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vic Dhillon
Marilyn Churley, Vic Dhillon, Brad Duguid,
Linda Jeffrey, Jean-Marc Lalonde,
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Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Andrea Horwath
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Michael Gravelle,
Andrea Horwath, Tim Hudak,
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Laurie Scott, Monique M. Smith,
Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Justice Policy / Justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bob Delaney
Michael A. Brown, Jim Brownell, Bob Delaney,
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Frank Klees, Peter Kormos,
Shafiq Qaadri, Mario G. Racco, Elizabeth Witmer
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mario G. Racco
Donna H. Cansfield, Bob Delaney,
Ernie Hardeman, Rosario Marchese, Ted McMeekin,
Norm Miller, Tim Peterson, Mario G. Racco, Mario Sergio
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Public accounts / Comptes publics

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Julia Munro
Laurel C. Broten, Jim Flaherty, Shelley Martel,
Bill Mauro, Julia Munro, Richard Patten,
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**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Churley
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Gilles Bisson, Marilyn Churley, Kim Craitor,
Kuldip Kular, Gerry Martiniuk, Bill Murdoch,
Khalil Ramal, Maria Van Bommel, Tony C. Wong
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Social Policy / Politique sociale

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Ted Arnott, Ted Chudleigh, Kim Craitor,
Peter Fonseca, Jeff Leal, Rosario Marchese,
Mario G. Racco, Khalil Ramal, Kathleen O.Wynne
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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