



**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Monday 29 May 2000

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Lundi 29 mai 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 mai 2000

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment):

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am seeking unanimous consent that the House business for this afternoon proceed as follows:

That pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall sit this evening from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm and that the motion of the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke be deferred until orders of the day this evening;

That the House now proceed immediately to routine motions, followed by oral questions;

That after oral questions the House immediately move to orders of the day for an emergency debate on the tragedy of the events at Walkerton, and specifically to consider the following motion:

This House expresses sincere regret and concern over the tragic events faced by the residents, families and friends of the citizens of Walkerton;

That this House sends its condolences to those who have lost loved ones and its prayers for those who continue to struggle with the ravages of this tragedy;

That, out of respect for the victims of this tragedy and as a sign that the entire province joins with the people of Walkerton in mourning, staff of the Legislative Assembly be directed to fly flags at half-mast for the remainder of the week;

That this House pledge, as Premier Harris has, to do whatever it takes to get to the bottom of this tragedy, and, to that end,

That the standing committee on general government be directed to review the circumstances leading to the tragedy in Walkerton, and to report its findings and recommendations back to this House;

That for purposes of its review of this matter, the committee is authorized to travel from place to place in Ontario and to meet and receive evidence from witnesses when the House is not in session;

That the committee commence its review by considering, as they become available, the results and any recommendations that emerge from the Ontario Provincial Police investigation, the pending coroner's inquest, and the investigation by the Ministry of the Environment;

That if legal proceedings arise from these investigations, the committee suspend its review of any specific

issues that are the subject of those proceedings, but may continue to review and recommend government action to ensure the reliability and safety of Ontario's water supply;

That at 5:50 this afternoon the Speaker will put all necessary questions to decide on the emergency debate motion, and that any division bells on that motion shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Newman has moved unanimous consent that we move to motions. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MOTIONS

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Newman moves that the House now proceed immediately to routine motions, followed by oral questions, and that after oral questions the House immediately move to orders of the day for an emergency debate on the tragedy of events at Walkerton, and specifically to consider the following motion:

This House expresses sincere—dispense? We didn't hear "dispense." I will read it if the members would like to—

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have not been provided with a written copy of this motion. I've asked the minister and I've asked the government House leader for a copy of the motion.

Based on what I have heard, it sounds to me like there are clauses that will effectively restrict the ability of the committee to sit until such time as any legal matters would be dealt with. It would be the view of the official opposition—and I note that government members are shaking their heads.

The fact remains that we have not been given a copy to read or review. We have been calling the government House leader's office all morning to get a copy of this to find out what it is they want. Until such time as we can at least have a chance to read this resolution, it's very difficult for us to comment on it.

The Speaker: The member knows I would be reading it. The minister would have an opportunity to read it again before we would then proceed, just so he's clear on that, if he wasn't. I don't know whether, to help with this

in any way, it would be possible to get any available copies. If not, I can read it.

I see the Minister of the Environment trying to get copies as soon as possible.

I would read it once. We'd then go to the Minister of the Environment and he would then read it again, if you would like. That would be twice, in total three times, if you'd like.

Mr Duncan: So that I understand—and perhaps maybe now we could get a copy of it—we will have the opportunity to debate and vote on this motion at 5:50. Is that what is in this? Right now we are only granting unanimous consent to move the motion, to debate it and then we will have a chance this afternoon to debate and vote on it. Is my understanding correct, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes, that's what the government is saying. I hate to say it because I just got it as well, but that is what both the Minister of the Environment and the House leader are saying is the case, and I see the Minister of Labour is saying it as well.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to express our concern again that we don't have the written motion. It's our desire—and I've had chats with the House leader for the Liberal Party—obviously, to accommodate such an emergency debate. In fact, we all want it desperately. But in order to ensure that we aren't rushing ahead into something and find out afterwards that there are little hooks in here—it is a relatively complex motion; it's not that straightforward—we ask, in the interest of trying to find unanimity here, that we recess the House for maybe 10 or 15 minutes to just give us a chance to look at the motion, discuss it and come back in here, and then hopefully in very short order we could be into the emergency debate that we want.

The Speaker: Just so you know, the House has already given consent. If you're not giving consent after we read this, it will then turn over to the Minister of the Environment, where we will proceed. All we have given consent to is to now go to motions, at which time the Minister of the Environment will read the motion. That's just where we're at. I'm in the government's hands. If they want to facilitate—the government House leader.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I had understood that the House had now given unanimous consent for us to next move to motions, then move to oral questions and then move to a motion which contains the Minister of the Environment's statement asking for unanimous consent. At that point in time, at 5:50, we agreed as well that there would be a five-minute bell and all members of the Legislature would have the opportunity to vote on it.

At approximately 3 o'clock today all members of the Legislature will have the opportunity to debate that motion for approximately three hours in order to then come to a resolution to deal with the wording as contained by the statement of the Minister of the Environment.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Premier indicated that these are the rules around emergency debate. (1) The Premier ought to be advised that there are no references to emergency debate in our standing orders. (2) We support the call for a recess so that we can look at this. Quite frankly, it sounds to us, just based on what we've heard, because the government has not provided us with a copy of their motion, that it's a restrictive motion, that nothing could happen until after such time as all criminal and civil proceedings are done.

We would like to have an opportunity for a 10- or 15-minute recess to review the motion. It may be possible that we can bring forward amendments, in co-operation with the third party and with the government, that will make the debate this afternoon a little bit more unanimous. So I would seek again a 15-minute recess to allow the opposition parties to review the motion that's before us.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Hon Mr Sterling: No, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The government House leader and—
Interjections.

The Speaker: Just so we know what would transpire now, it would go back to the Minister of the Environment to read the motion. We have now said we are going to go to the motions. We have not agreed to the motion. I will turn to the minister if we proceed. He will then read the motion and then there will be the opportunity for both sides to say yea or nay and to vote on this motion. That's where we would be at. There isn't unanimous consent for us to adjourn, so that is the situation of where we would be at.

Just very quickly, if the member could take his seat, what we have agreed to is to go to the routine motions. Motions could now be read by the Minister of the Environment, but his reading it out doesn't mean that we've agreed to anything. At that particular point in time, after he finishes, I say, "Is there agreement?" and then we have the regular process and both sides at that point can decide what to do.

Mr Duncan: Mr Speaker, I seek your ruling. Let us assume that we agree to have the motion read. Will the opposition have an opportunity to amend the motion in that debate later today?

The Speaker: Just so we know where we are, we'll be moving to motions. That was, as you know, to allow Mr Newman to move that motion. At that time, if he moves the motion, during the regular course of the debate there will be opportunities, as there always are, to introduce any type of amendments. So yes, during the debate there will be opportunities by all sides to introduce some as well. All we've agreed to do by unanimous consent is to allow the Minister of the Environment to move a motion. He will do that now and all sides will have another opportunity to hear it. I will then read it after it has been moved.

The Minister of the Environment.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I move that this House expresses sincere regret and concern over the tragic events faced by the residents—

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: While the minister was conferring with officers of the table, I have to point out that we still don't have a copy of the motion. While they may have it over there, it's not over here yet. Quite frankly, I just want to express disappointment—I'm going to take just a very brief second—that there isn't the opportunity for the three House leaders to quickly meet during a fast recess to make this go smoothly.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order. We asked for unanimous consent. We did not get it.

Mr Christopherson: I seek again unanimous consent that you allow the House leaders an opportunity to talk about how this afternoon will unfold, and hope that we could do it by unanimous consent.

The Speaker: That is a little bit different. Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Just so I'm clear about the amount of time we would be looking at, we will adjourn for five minutes.

Interjection: Fifteen.

The Speaker: Sorry. Just to make sure, rather than coming back, we'll make it 15. This House stands adjourned for 15 minutes.

The House recessed from 1345 to 1401.

The Speaker: I thank the members for the indulgence of the House.

The Minister of the Environment.

Hon Mr Newman: I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall sit this evening from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm and that the motion of the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke be deferred until orders of the day this evening;

That the House now proceed immediately to routine motions, followed by oral questions;

That after oral questions the House immediately move to orders of the day for an emergency debate on the tragedy of the events at Walkerton, and specifically to consider the following motion:

This House expresses sincere regret and concern over the tragic events faced by the residents, families and friends of the citizens of Walkerton;

That this House sends its condolences to those who have lost loved ones and its prayers for those who continue to struggle with the ravages of this tragedy;

That, out of respect for the victims of this tragedy and as a sign that the entire province joins with the people of Walkerton in mourning, staff of the Legislative Assembly be directed to fly flags at half-mast for the remainder of the week;

That this House pledge, as Premier Harris has, to do whatever it takes to get to the bottom of this tragedy, and, to that end,

That the standing committee on general government be directed to review the circumstances leading to the tragedy in Walkerton, and to report its findings and recommendations back to this House;

That for purposes of its review of this matter, the committee is authorized to travel from place to place in Ontario and to meet and receive evidence from witnesses when the House is not in session;

That the committee commence its review by considering, as they become available, the results and any recommendations that emerge from the Ontario Provincial Police investigation, the pending coroner's inquest, and the investigation by the Ministry of the Environment;

That if legal proceedings arise from these investigations, the committee suspend its review of any specific issues that are the subject of those proceedings, but may continue to review and recommend government action to ensure the reliability and safety of Ontario's water supply.

That at 5:50 pm this afternoon the Speaker will put all questions necessary to decide on the emergency debate motion; and

That any division bells on that motion shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker: Mr Newman has moved that the House now proceed immediately to routine motions, followed by oral questions;

That after oral questions the House immediately move to orders of the day for an emergency debate on the tragedy of the events at Walkerton, and specifically to consider the following motion:

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ensure the reliability and safety of Ontario's water supply.

That at 5:50 pm this afternoon the Speaker will put all questions necessary to decide on the emergency debate motion; and

That any division bells on that motion shall be limited to five minutes.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the—the member for Windsor-St Clair on a point of order?

Mr Duncan: Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to divide out the motion, if I might. The first seven paragraphs relate, effectively, to the Legislature extending their condolences and apologies to the people of Walkerton. The balance of the resolution deals with the government's attempt to cover up what has happened in Walkerton and to effectively delay any kind of inquiry by the Legislature—

The Speaker: So you're asking for unanimous consent to break it up?

Mr Duncan: I seek unanimous consent to deal with paragraphs one through seven in the motion and to break it up.

The Speaker: Member for Broadview-Greenwood on the same point of order?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): If I may, I ask for unanimous consent to divide up the motion. We can support—

The Speaker: We're going to move to it very quickly. We can't continue on this. Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

Just so that everybody knows, I read out the motion. I am now going to call the question for the motion.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, May 29, Tuesday, May 30, and Wednesday, May 31, 2000, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would the government House leader like to explain how we can discuss government business at 6:45 this evening with the motion we've just approved, when at 6:45 we are to return back to the Conway motion, which was not government business.

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

Hon Mr Sterling: On a point of order, Speaker: We moved two motions today. Part of the first motion was that we'll sit this evening from 6:45 to 9:30 pm, dealing

with the motion of the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and that is the intention of the government. The other motion also allows for night sittings on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week, as permitted by the first motion, that the House now proceed immediately to routine motions. I put forward that routine motion.

The Speaker: That is my understanding. At 6:45 tonight we will be dealing with Mr Conway's motion. As a matter of fact, I'll be in the chair then.

1410

ORAL QUESTIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. The people of Walkerton have our sympathy and they deserve our respect, for they have shouldered this tragedy with dignity, grace and courage. But I also believe that they deserve answers from the people in charge, and I believe that the final responsibility for ensuring that the stuff that comes out of our taps in this province is safe to drink rests with you and your government and with no other person. It's your government's solemn duty to protect our health and to make sure our drinking water is safe and clean.

This morning, your government admitted it found E coli in Walkerton two years ago. When that happened, your only action was to send the town a letter. You didn't send in inspectors. You didn't send in experts to provide help to the people on the ground at Walkerton. Premier, why did you fail the people of Walkerton?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think all members of the Legislature would agree that what has occurred in Walkerton is a tragedy. If there are any details of what happened when, the Minister of the Environment would be the best one to respond to those. But the member has asked me specifically about obligations, and we take these obligations very, very seriously.

While our thoughts rest with the families of this community and with everyone who is struggling to cope with these tragic events, last Friday—and I repeat it today—I pledged to the people of Walkerton that all necessary resources of the Ontario government would be made available to provide immediate help. I think that's the first order of business, and that is being done. I also pledged, and pledge to the Legislature, that we'll do whatever it takes to get to the bottom of the tragedy, and that too is being done.

Mr McGuinty: What the people of Walkerton are looking for and what the people of Ontario are looking for is your pledge that you will begin to accept responsibility for what has happened at Walkerton. That's what they're looking for. It appears that some mistakes were made at several levels, but the final responsibility for making sure our water is safe rests with you and with your government. You decide which people, which

policies, which procedures, which programs are in place. Your job is to make sure that nothing goes wrong at the local level, and if something should by chance go wrong, your job is to make sure that your people are in there immediately to make sure it is cleaned up. That didn't happen in this case. You failed the people of Walkerton, and now the people of Walkerton want to know, why did you do so little when you knew two years ago that there were serious problems with the water in Walkerton? Why did you fail the people of Walkerton?

Hon Mr Harris: I think it is clear that this government accepts its responsibility and takes its responsibility very seriously. I apologize to the people of Walkerton, quite frankly, on behalf of all of us. I'm not aware of any test results of two years ago or a year ago. I've only just recently become aware of test results.

But what the people of Walkerton said very directly to me, the mayor said very directly to me, a number I talked to when I was there and when I visited the community centre and chatted with a number of people, is that they want answers. They want to get reassurances that the problems are being corrected immediately, and then they want answers as to who knew what, who was responsible, how much did ministry officials know, how much did health officials know, how much did municipal officials know, how much did politicians know. I pledged to them that we would get to the bottom of that, just as we make a further pledge to the people of Walkerton and of Ontario that we'll do everything we can to ensure this kind of tragedy never happens again.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, we can't begin to move forward on this matter, we can't begin to draw whatever positive lessons might be there for all of us, until you and your government begin by accepting some element of responsibility. That's where it all begins.

This morning, your environment minister held a briefing which was nothing more than an admission of failure. When you gutted water protection in Ontario, you failed to do three very important things: You failed to ensure that testing labs are accredited; you failed to legally require that labs report to the ministry and to local health officials; finally, you failed to put in place regular and frequent inspections so that local officials were backed up by ministry experts. You failed on all three counts, Premier. Why did you fail the people of Walkerton?

Hon Mr Harris: I think I have accepted responsibility, and I accept accountability, as we all do as members of the Legislature and I do particularly as the head of this government. The facts are starting to come out about what happened and when it happened, that actions were taken. I think you've heard from the Minister of the Environment. We have made no changes in any of the reporting procedures since we took office. Clearly, in hindsight, we wish that we had, I would say, made changes. To suggest that now is not the time, that we don't have enough information to take corrective measures—I would point out the number of corrective measures that were announced today by the Minister of

the Environment. I don't think we can wait a day or a week or a month, however long some of these investigations make take. As soon as information is available, we, the minister and this government, will respond, as you would expect us to. As the legislative committee finds any other actions we should take, we should act on that right away, not await the finality of this investigation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: My second question is for the Premier. Premier, the problem is that you've waited four and, in some cases, five years before acting. You had ample warning about this on a number of fronts. Everybody from the Provincial Auditor to the Environmental Commissioner to environmentalists to members sitting on this side of the House warned you about the drawbacks of proceeding at such a reckless pace to close down government labs and to assign responsibility for water treatment and water safety to our municipal partners, who don't have the financial wherewithal, don't have the expertise and need ongoing assistance, at a minimum, from the provincial government when it comes to ensuring that we have safe and clean drinking water inside each and every Ontario community. That's what you should have done, and you failed to do that.

Now he stands up this morning and says he's going to change some regulations. Where was he and where were you four and five years ago, Premier, when you were made full aware of the dangers of proceeding to devolve responsibility for water safety, water cleanliness, to our municipal partners? They, in many cases, don't have the expertise, they don't have the time, they don't have the money, and they need this government, they need you there to assist. Why didn't you act four and five years ago, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: Certainly the three investigations that we have set up to date, including a legislative committee that we are requesting by way of motion today, will want to take a look at what could have been done to prevent this very serious tragedy. To suggest, though, that Walkerton, which has run its water supply for many, many years—when you were in government, when the NDP were in government, when we were in government—doesn't have the capability, or to suggest that that is the problem, I think is very premature. To suggest that municipalities can't afford to do the tests, which they were asked to take over and do in 1994, as I indicated very clearly in Walkerton, I haven't heard any complaints previous to this to suggest that that was a problem for municipalities to afford.

As to providing expertise, of course the Ministry of the Environment is there to provide its expertise whenever these types of occasions arise. Of course we're doing that right now.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, the only real surprise here in Ontario is that something like this hasn't happened before. You shut down government labs in Ontario. Municipalities were then left in the position—and they

had to take on this new responsibility because you just shoved it down on them; they didn't ask for it—where they had to find out which private labs were out there. You didn't provide for any accreditation or certification program. You didn't provide for more frequent inspections of the local operators. You didn't make sure that we did everything that we possibly could to make sure that the people of Walkerton, and everybody right across the province of Ontario, could continue to make the assumption that when they went to the kitchen tap, when they went to the bathtub, and they turned on the water, the stuff that was coming out of there wasn't going to kill them, Premier. You didn't take the necessary steps to ensure that here in Ontario—and we're not talking about a Third World country; we're talking about Ontario, Canada, in North America. Five people have died, including a two-and-a-half-year-old child. There are 12 on the critical list. This is unprecedented, and you have failed to take the necessary steps to ensure that all Ontario municipalities can rely on safe and clean drinking water. Premier, why have you failed us?

1420

Hon Mr Harris: I might add that in addition to the legislative committee and the Ministry of the Environment investigation into what went wrong, and the OPP investigation, I think it's very premature to be assessing blame to any ministry, to any official, to any government, to any municipality. As you know, when I went to Walkerton, I made it very clear that now is not the time to assess blame. Now is the time to have sympathy and pay our respects to the people of Walkerton.

Of course, people want facts. It's time to get actual facts out. I haven't heard a lot of factual information but I hear empathy and sympathy from the member, and I think that's appropriate, but I think facts are important to get out. Then we will leave the OPP, we will leave the coroner, we will leave the investigations to see where the fault lay, what broke down and why. At the same time, we want to put procedures in place to assure the people of Ontario that this type of situation doesn't happen again.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, the facts are painful and they are these: You shut down government labs; you cut back on ministry funding by 40%; you let go one third of the staff; you ignored the Environmental Commissioner's recommendations; you ignored the Provincial Auditor's recommendations; your own ministry ignored important information regarding contamination in the water that it had received.

Those are the facts, Premier, as painful as they may be. There is a police investigation underway; it will be confidential and it may or may not result in charges. The Minister of the Environment now is presuming to investigate itself. I have no confidence in that whatsoever. There's going to be a coroner's inquest held and that will look into the circumstances relating specifically to what happened at Walkerton.

What we need here, Premier, in Ontario is a full, independent, public inquiry so that we can provide

reassurance not only to the people of Walkerton but to the people in Wawa and Sarnia and Kingston and Ottawa and London and Toronto and all points in between, that we are doing everything we can to draw whatever lessons we might from this terrible tragedy to ensure that it never, ever happens again. Premier, will you agree to a full, independent public inquiry?

Hon Mr Harris: First of all, let me say that I think it is very presumptuous to assume that private labs are not as effective as government labs. Certainly since 1994, when the government of the day allowed private labs to take over the testing, there has been no evidence yet that I have seen that indicates they're not equally competent and equally capable.

As well, to get to the bottom of this, if the members opposite would like to hear the answer, the coroner's inquest of course will be full and public and have power to call witnesses; the police have substantive investigative powers; and I can think of nothing more public and more substantive than an all-party committee of the Legislature with full power to subpoena.

The Speaker: New Question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. I was in Walkerton earlier today and I had the opportunity to talk to a number of residents of that community who are all clearly of the view that this tragedy could have been avoided. But this tragedy happened because your government over the last five years has placed cut after cut after cut to the Ministry of the Environment.

It was your government that closed the four labs that were dedicated to doing this kind of water testing. It was your government that then cut the budget of the Ministry of the Environment by over \$100 million. Your government laid off 900 of the staff: the scientists, the inspectors, the enforcement officers.

After doing all that, do you accept responsibility here for what has happened? There's a clear link between the Ministry of the Environment's inability to do its job and the tragedy that has happened here. Do you accept that responsibility?

Hon Mr Harris: As I said, as the head of the government of the province of Ontario, I accept all responsibility. I apologized on behalf of the government of the people of Ontario. While I am not involved in every decision that is made in the day-to-day, the responsibility stops here. That is why, while there have been many allegations, I think I heard very clearly from the people of this province, including those from Walkerton, that it's a little premature, before those investigations, to be assessing blame or saying who is responsible.

What I found was needed when I was in Walkerton, from the residents I chatted to, particularly at the community centre, was that a process be put in place to (a) clean up the water as soon as possible and (b) make sure it never happens again, and (c) that there be a full and open investigation to get to the bottom of this. I have committed to do that. I think it is very premature to suggest that your move to allow private labs had anything

to do with it; I said very clearly I don't think that had anything to do with it. To say that municipalities should be responsible for the tests that you did in 1994, I said I don't think that had anything to do with it. I hadn't heard that. I think it's very premature for you to judge as well. But I think what we want to do is make sure there's a process to get to the bottom of this.

Mr Hampton: Premier, what we need to acknowledge is that what happened in Walkerton isn't some isolated event. It didn't just happen, unrelated to other events. Your government has systematically gone after the Ministry of the Environment. You have systematically laid off the scientists, systematically laid off the inspectors and the enforcement officers, systematically taken the budget that is necessary to do this kind of inspection and enforcement work.

Just another example I want you to acknowledge: We have learned that you cut the staff assigned to drinking water quality and water quality generally by 42%—113 staff assigned in 1995 to water quality, now down to 48. You cut the staff assigned to groundwater and hydrology by 53%, from 28 in 1995 when you took office to 15 now. Premier, how do you expect to protect the water supply of the citizens of Ontario when your government is busy wiping out the very inspectors who are there to do that?

Hon Mr Harris: It is true we have downsized government in a number of ways to get it to operate more effectively and more efficiently. We campaigned that we would do that. We made it very clear to the public that we had too many people and were not delivering a high-enough quality of product. We had an \$11-billion deficit. Had we carried on that way, we would not have had any resources left for anything.

But I tell you this: The recommendations that we accepted for the Ministry of the Environment were to provide better service, and at no time was any single individual downsized in the Ministry of the Environment, at no time was any person downsized in a way that should have affected the delivery of any services of the Ministry of the Environment. That includes one of the most important services, and one of the ones that we consider the most important, and that's the delivery of quality, clean, safe water.

Mr Hampton: I think what we got was an acknowledgement from the Premier that he has in fact gutted the Ministry of the Environment in terms of its capacity to do the very work that was at stake here. Not only that, but the Environmental Commissioner came forward in the 1995 annual report and said that your government had to bring forward a groundwater protection strategy or there would be this disaster.

When your government was warned, your Ministry of the Environment was warned about the serious problems in lab tests in January, February and March of this year, you did nothing until April. Then you simply made a phone call. When your Ministry of the Environment staff finally went up to Walkerton on May 20, you failed to

even talk to the medical officer of health who has blown the whistle on this whole thing.

Premier, you can't stand here and say that your government isn't responsible for this, and you can't tell us that the meagre things that were announced today by the Minister of the Environment are enough to ensure that this won't happen again. Are you prepared to put the staff back into the Ministry of the Environment, to give them the budget they need to do the inspections and the enforcement, and are you prepared to start listening to the Environmental Commissioner, who in 1995 warned you that this disaster could happen unless you brought forward a comprehensive groundwater strategy?

1430

Hon Mr Harris: I think it's very important to understand I didn't say we were responsible; I didn't say we weren't responsible. I can tell you that there have been no changes to the ministry budget that we approved that was to do anything other than deliver higher-quality service at a better price, as you did. You asked municipalities to take over some responsibilities; so did we. We asked the ministry to—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the Premier take his seat, please. Today we are obviously going to have some controversial issues, but we can't proceed when I can't hear through yelling and screaming. I will remind members that this afternoon we'll be debating this, and if I have to name people, they won't be around for that. I can't have a situation where I cannot hear the answer coming forward from the Premier. Sorry for the interruption.

Hon Mr Harris: For example, I am told there has been no reduction in the number of enforcement officers, those who go out and actually lay the charges and do those inspections. As in other areas, we've asked for duplication to be avoided; we've asked for technological improvements. But to suggest that this has been responsible for fewer inspections—it's not true. We've had as many tests as we've always had; we've had the same procedures in place.

The challenge here is to find out what went wrong, are there procedures that need to be tightened up, where there was human error, where there were warnings that were ignored. We want to get to the bottom of this and we have acknowledged and put into place three investigations and, if this motion carries today, a legislative committee, with all the powers to subpoena and to get to the bottom of this.

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

Mr Hampton: If the Premier wants to show true compassion for the people of Walkerton, there are a number of things he and his government can do right now. The first is to release the most recent water quality test results for all municipal drinking water systems, something you haven't done. The second is to tell the public which water treatment plants have outstanding orders against them from the Ministry of the Environment, something you haven't done. The third is to release the most recent audit reports on the status of all Ontario water treatment plants,

and if those audits have not been done, they must be done immediately. If you want to show true compassion, Premier, and start to indicate that this won't happen again, you and your Minister of the Environment will do these things now. Are you prepared to do that?

Hon Mr Harris: I appreciate the advice and I will ask the ministry if we can legally do this.

Mr Hampton: Finally, Premier—this has to do with the motion that you put forward today, because there are real problems with it. One part of the motion is that if there's any kind of legal proceeding, it means that the committee work has to stop. That's clearly in the motion. So if there's a civil proceeding out there, all of the work has to stop. Premier, that's unacceptable. In fact, that looks an awful lot like Ipperwash. Your government refuses to have an inquiry around Ipperwash, you refuse to talk to the family and you refuse to address the outstanding issues because you say, "There's a civil proceeding."

Premier, the only thing that will do here is a public inquiry—a public inquiry which will not be beholden to your backbenchers and a public inquiry which will not be beholden to some legal proceeding that might happen somewhere. If you really want to show compassion and you really want to get to the bottom of this and ensure that it doesn't happen again, we will have a full and independent public inquiry. Are you prepared to do that, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: Certainly the coroner's inquest will be very public and will have the power to subpoena witnesses and will be there. Certainly the OPP investigation will have the powers it needs and will be exhaustive. The Ministry of the Environment—as you know, it's an ongoing review. They've already released recommendations. We're suggesting the committee begin right away. We think there are a number of things the committee can do. The suggestion here is so we don't get into a situation like the Patti Starr affair or some of the others, where there are courts that say, "You will have to stop," or, "You're prejudicing or jeopardizing any actual legal proceedings."

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Premier, take a seat, please.

The member for Hamilton East has been yelling out, and he's not sitting in his seat. You can sit there, but you can't continue to yell out. Sorry for the interruption, Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: Contrary to what you allege, I think the committee ought to be able to get started right away and be able to deal with information right away. Even if there are criminal charges or other court actions, there's no reason for the committee not to be able to travel the province and take a look, as you suggest, at other water facilities. The motion says that, and the motion covers that. If you would like to propose amendments to the motion to make it even better, then that's what this debate is to be for this afternoon.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, this is the largest outbreak of E coli infection, as we know it, in the history of North America. Some 1,000 people were crippled over it, with terrible cramps, experienced bloody diarrhea. Hundreds went to the hospital. Five people died, and 12 people are in critical condition as we speak.

Do you not think, Premier, that in these circumstances a full, independent public inquiry is warranted? Given the huge public interest in this matter, given the overwhelming public concern in every corner of this province, is not the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances, in the interests of all Ontarians, to have a full, independent public inquiry that begins its hearings immediately, that takes a look at this matter in the most open and transparent way possible, so that we can draw whatever lessons we might and put into place whatever changes we have to put in? Why would you not agree to a full, independent public inquiry?

Hon Mr Harris: We have three inquiries underway right now, and I think there's nothing more public and thorough than a coroner's inquest, which the coroner has indicated will take place. I suggest to you there ought to be nothing more thorough than a legislative inquiry by all members of the Legislature. If, after all of this, you think a fifth, a sixth or a seventh inquiry is warranted, you can bring that forward. My experience with public inquiries is that they are very expensive, they take months to set up and get going, and we just think we need a legislative committee to get started right now.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Kingston and the Islands, this is his last warning. If he continues, I'll have to name him, and he will not be here, I'll remind him, this afternoon for this entire debate. I have no order. You can't be shouting and banging at the desk when the Premier is trying to answer the question. This is your last warning.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, what is it that you have to fear from a full, independent public inquiry? You know that the legislative committee proposal that you put forward has a couple of serious shortcomings. First of all, it is run by the government. You're in charge. You get to decide what you want to hear, when you want to hear it, and you get to decide ultimately what kind of recommendations are going to be put forward.

Second, it is severely limited by a clause you've got in here that says this committee can't begin its work in earnest until such time as all other investigations and findings have been made. This is an urgent matter. Five people have died. We've got to find out exactly what we can do in every part of the province to make sure this doesn't happen again.

Why is it that you would have us embark on this committee process, dominated by government members, that will not begin its work in earnest for perhaps eight to 12 months to two years, for all we know? Surely you would agree that in the circumstances, the most important thing we could do would be to launch, effective immediately, a full, independent public inquiry so that we can do

the very best for the people of Ontario because, to date, you have failed to live up to your responsibility to protect them?

Hon Mr Harris: We certainly expect the coroner to proceed immediately with a full, independent coroner's public inquiry. We expect the legislative committee to be able to get set up as soon as possible if you will approve today of a full-blown public inquiry done by the legislative committee, with all the powers of the legislative committee. I'm surprised actually that you are opposed to that, but perhaps in debate today I'll find out why. You asked me to accept responsibility. I have accepted responsibility. This party accepts responsibility. Now it's time for this Legislature to accept responsibility for what went wrong and how we make sure it never happens again.

1440

ONTARIO RESEARCH AND INNOVATION OPTICAL NETWORK

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): My question is for the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. As always, it's a pleasure to have you visit the nation's capital. Last week you were in Ottawa and made an announcement that puts us on the leading edge of technology. You announced the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network, more commonly known as ORION. Could you tell the members of the House what this initiative means for the region of Ottawa-Carleton?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): The Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network, or ORION, is a five-year, \$57-million investment by the province of Ontario that, with our partners, should yield over a \$150-million investment. What it is is the next generation optical Internet. It will connect our universities, and eventually our colleges, and our major research institutions so that they can use the best computing resources available around the province. We can't, practically, have a supercomputer on every researcher's desk, but we can have an advanced Internet dedicated to research that links the power of those supercomputers so that places like Ottawa-Carleton, the region of Ottawa and other research areas in our province can have the best tools possible to do the most advanced research, which will eventually lead to increased high-tech jobs in the Ottawa area and throughout the province. Ontario indeed will have the most leading-edge research Internet available to any researchers in the world.

Mr Coburn: Because of innovative research and the growing research industry in the Ottawa area, explain to us how ORION will help expand research and development with many of these expanding technologies in Ottawa-Carleton.

Hon Mr Wilson: To my colleague I'd say again that the optical Internet that we're installing will be very much like the original Internet, except a lot faster, carrying a lot more data and giving the power of a supercomputer to the average researcher's PC on his or her

desk or in his or her lab. It's a very exciting project. It's one in which a number of partners from the private sector have come together, along with the universities and colleges and research institutions, and it puts Ontario as a lead in the world for the next generation Internet.

We can be proud as members of this assembly that this government is sponsoring the next generation Internet. It will be born in Ontario and it will lead to more high-tech jobs that will come from our universities and colleges, particularly jobs in terms of distance learning, telemedicine and access to large biotechnology databases, which are becoming more and more important in our province.

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is for the Premier. While you were on the campaign trail in 1995, you explained to reporters that your common sense manifesto was such that you would be able to find \$6 billion in cuts to government spending without cutting the environment. Indeed, Premier, you proceeded to say, "I don't think you'll find a cent there cut out of the environment."

Now that you can see the devastating impact that gutting the Ministry of the Environment has—that is, 40% of the budget gone and a third of the staff gone—now that you can see the effect that it has on the health of your fellow Ontarians, will you stand in your place today and acknowledge that in your all-consuming quest to chop spending and download responsibilities to free up money for your tax cuts for the wealthiest people in this province, you have indeed placed the health and lives of Ontario residents in jeopardy?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I don't believe (a) that the member expects me to acknowledge that, or (b) that the member believes that. Certainly any of the efficiencies that we have sought from government have been to avoid duplication or do things more efficiently or more effectively. We've done that throughout a number of ministries.

Clearly there will be an investigation to take a look and see whether any of those actions have had any bearing or any effect on the Walkerton situation. To date, I have not seen any indication that that in fact has been the problem. But we want to leave no stone unturned, and the member, I would hope, would want to participate in a legislative committee because he has expertise in the environment from his former days. He would know that the procedures we're following are the same as when they were passed on to us by the former administration. If there's anything in the procedures that is a problem, we need to know that. The minister has already identified some; we want to take a look at it all.

Mr Bradley: I won't be interested in participating in a committee that has an Ipperwash clause in it. But I'm going to ask the Premier about a second promise that he made during that election campaign, a promise which was renewed just a few days ago. That was to set up a

Red Tape Commission. As you know, the Red Tape Commission has cut out many, many regulations, hundreds of regulations, it says. It has influenced a change in legislation to get the Ministry of the Environment out of people's faces, as I think some people on the commission might say. Even one of those commission members, a senior Progressive Conservative MPP who headed the Ontario Red Tape Commission, urged the Ministry of the Environment to drop its prosecution of a company that violated a provincial landfill regulation because he believed the regulation was going to be changed, was going to be weakened, was going to be removed.

Premier, would you tell the people of this province how many regulations in this province have been removed or tampered with by you that impact adversely on the environment, and will you now end the Red Tape Commission's role of gutting the environment ministry and gutting environmental regulations in this province?

Hon Mr Harris: Certainly, absolutely none of the regulations that we may have changed or amended, in my view, have affected negatively the environment. They're all designed to affect the environment positively. When you go to the Rouge Valley commitment, when you go to the Lands for Life and the Living Legacy, the record number of parks that we've created, when you go to the new, tougher standards that we have set for air emissions, for example, when you go to the commitment in the Blueprint for even tougher fines for infractions, we take violations of our environmental regulations and laws very, very seriously, as we take violations of any of our laws very seriously. At the same time, we want to be able to, as expeditiously as possible, investigate these situations and lay charges where we should.

MUNICIPAL REFERENDA

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This fall, Ontarians across the province will be going to the polls to elect their municipal governments. In the past, municipalities have used municipal elections as a time to put questions on the ballot. These plebiscites have often had wide-ranging topics, from local issues to provincial and even federal ones. Minister, could you tell us what jurisdiction municipalities have to ask questions on the municipal ballot?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question. Indeed, our government has been and continues to be committed to supporting efforts to promote local and improved participatory democracy in this province.

During this session I was pleased to introduce Bill 62, the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000, which, if passed by this Legislature, allows the municipalities to ask questions on the municipal ballot about local issues. If it's something they can pass in a bylaw, if it's something they can approve by a policy, if it's something they can direct staff to, that is obviously an issue of local jurisdiction, and we provide

the citizens an opportunity to indicate directly their views on municipal government and on those local issues. Through that legislation, should it be passed, we will be providing the framework for municipal questions so that what is being asked in a municipal election is pertinent to local government and is what they can be empowered to legislate, so they can have an effective say on issues that concern them.

1450

Mr Galt: Thank you, Minister, for that response. However, in the past there have been, shall we say, dubious manners in which plebiscites have been held. You may recall that last Friday, May 26, in Bobcaygeon, the wardens of eastern Ontario met. They questioned how this ballot question might be clarified prior to going on the ballot. Minister, could you please tell me and the House how we will ensure that questions asked during municipal elections provide voters with clear options so that they can make informed decisions?

Hon Mr Clement: Indeed, historically, while some municipalities have done well to ask local questions and get local input, there have been cases of questions of dubious repute that have, I think, tinged democracy, tinged local involvement. So the legislation does provide that the municipality shall only ask questions about issues that are within their jurisdiction, that can be passed by bylaw or initiated by policy or that staff can be directed to do. Questions must be clear and precise and in the form of a yes-or-no answer. It's also required, for the result to be binding, that voter turnout be at least 50% on one side of the question. If it's less than that, the municipality can have regard to the result but it's not required. Once these conditions are met, the results of the municipal question will be binding on that municipality. It shows once again our seriousness in this regard.

Of course, this House, on the direction and on institution by the Mike Harris government, passed the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, and the whole idea again is to provide the government's continuing commitment to participatory democracy.

WATER AND SEWAGE INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. On May 26, the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Association wrote to David Lindsay of the SuperBuild Corp: "We have seen too many examples of municipalities cutting back on water and sewer capital programs in order to balance their budgets. As I write this letter, I am listening to the tragic events in Walkerton where it appears that a chlorination system had been in disrepair for some time. This is the type of situation the provincial water and sewer protection fund was designed to address."

Minister, you decided to cancel this essential program at the end of this fiscal year. I'm asking you now, will you restore this program, and not only restore it but increase the funding?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I just want to begin by expressing my condolences to the people of Walkerton on this situation.

In the question the member puts forward, she talks about a fund. We had a \$200-million provincial water protection fund which was to be over three years. We accelerated that fund so that municipalities could have access to that money on a more timely basis; that's what we did in the last fiscal year. We wanted to ensure that municipalities had access to that money so they could have clean water and clean sewage treatment facilities. The fact of the matter is that we accelerated that money.

The sad reality is that the town of Walkerton never applied for any of that money that was made available. The last time the town of Walkerton applied for money was in 1991, and that money was made available to them. But the town of Walkerton did not take advantage of the money from the \$200-million provincial water protection fund.

Ms Churley: I don't think the minister should be blaming the town of Walkerton for this one. Has the minister seen the strict criteria attached to this one-time funding? He should take a look and see for himself how difficult it was made for municipalities to get that money. This is a one-time-only transitional fund, as they call it, because they're completely phasing out money to municipalities for sewer and water projects. They've downloaded the whole thing. They are phasing it out. In 1995-96, \$232 million went to mostly sewer and water programs out of the MAP program; in 2000-01 it was \$65 million. You're completely phasing out all the money to help municipalities with their sewer and water systems.

I'm asking you again, in view of what happened in Walkerton and in view of what we now know about the state of disrepair in some of the old infrastructure across this province, will you commit today to increase the funding for this fund? Furthermore, I would ask the minister that he go back to the Premier and demand that the \$100 million this government took out of the budget for environmental protection and the protection of the health of the people of Ontario be put back in the budget immediately.

Hon Mr Newman: First off, no one is blaming anyone. I was simply trying to illustrate the point that the province has made money available. Some municipalities chose to access that money and others didn't. Municipalities have always run their water and sewer facilities. In 1997, title was transferred to those municipalities that didn't actually have title of those facilities. That's why one of the recommendations I brought forward today is that all certificates of approval are going to be reviewed in this province for every water facility. On top of that, we're going to ensure that certificates of approval are approved every three years. That's what we're going to do.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. Last week you visited the people of Walkerton. I gather that you would have been thoroughly briefed about this issue going into that community. You would have known that in 1998 E coli had been detected in the water in Walkerton. You would have known that that had not been made public. You would have known that coliform had been detected on several occasions between January and April of this year. You would have known that the water was unsafe as a result. Why is it that when you were in Walkerton just last week, you did not tell the people about these facts?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the minister can refer to the facts better than I can.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): There was a regular inspection done of the water facility in Walkerton in 1998. In fact, it was done in February of that year. I want to go through some of the events with respect to that inspection and what happened as a result of it. There was a detection of E coli in the system.

On May 6, 1998, in the final report, these were the recommendations of the ministry inspector: He recommended the use of chlorine to maintain a satisfactory level of disinfection; he recommended the need for the ongoing training of the operations staff; and he recommended the requirement to adhere to the minimum sampling program as laid out in the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives. This requirement, it's important to note, was conveyed to the public utilities commission in a letter from the ministry in June 1995. This report was sent to the public utilities commission and copied to the town of Walkerton and to the Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Health Unit.

On July 14, 1998, the commission wrote to the ministry's Owen Sound office and stated that it would implement all of the recommendations of the inspection report—all of the recommendations. On July 30, 1998, the Owen Sound office acknowledged the commission's letter and provided, at the commission's request, an update on the ministry's emergency contact procedures. That's what we did.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, when you were in Walkerton last week and people were desperately searching for answers and they were wondering who was responsible for this tragedy that unfolded before their eyes, why did you not tell them that your own officials had refused to comply with the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives and had failed to pass along information to local health officials? Why did you not stand before them and tell them about that important detail? Why did you overlook that fact? Why did you not come clean with the people of Walkerton and say: "Listen, we screwed up here. We made a terrible mistake. I had a responsibility to bring this information to the fore and give it to your local health officials. That did not happen on my watch"? Minister, why did you not do that?

Hon Mr Newman: I want to tell you that when I was in Walkerton last week, no one was pointing fingers at anyone. People wanted answers. We all wanted answers. I want answers; the Premier wants answers; the people of Walkerton want answers; indeed the people of Ontario want answers. That is why today the recommendations that I brought forward which will be in the form of regulation are so important that they are given the force of law in this province.

While the members opposite scoff at this idea, they all had an opportunity when they were the government to put these measures into regulation. The Liberals had the opportunity to, the NDP had an opportunity to and, yes, Progressive Conservative governments of the past could have put it into regulation. We're putting in regulations—*Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take a seat, please. Sorry for the interruption, Minister.

1500

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is to the Solicitor General. Minister, constituents in my riding have consistently told me that they take the issue of community safety very seriously. At local events, on radio open-line shows and door to door, people I've talked to in my riding of Simcoe North all believe that we should be able to live in our communities free from the fear of crime.

Minister, our government had made commitments to the people of Ontario. Could you tell this House and the people of Simcoe North some of the commitments our government has made to make our communities safer?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): This gives me an opportunity today—thank you to the member for Simcoe North—to indicate to people across Ontario that in 1997 we established the proceeds of crime unit. These particular proceeds allow us to use the assets of criminals in order to fight crime. Clearly, to date almost \$1 million has been expended on a number of very good projects, including the helicopter pilots which we have had in six jurisdictions.

I might say to the people of the Toronto that if and when the city decides that they want to support a helicopter project, the province will still be there to support that. I believe it's important for them in terms of safety in the streets.

Second, I'd like to say that I believe the community at large appreciates the efforts being made to support the police. In fact, I believe the community at large supports the police. As well yesterday I was at the People's Church, and Pastor Hull had a special service for the law enforcement community to thank them for their contributions to their communities.

Mr Dunlop: I'd also like to thank you for the grant of \$18,000 for extra overtime policing in the RIDE program. Clearly this government believes that when we make a commitment to community safety, we keep it.

Some of our commitments to make the community safe deal with providing the police with the tools they need to help them do their jobs.

Minister, the battle against crime takes place from the front-line police officers on the streets to the involvement of community organizations. Could you tell the constituents of my riding, and the people of Ontario, about the initiatives our government has taken to help community organizations fight crime?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: There's a very good organization that we have been supporting for some time called Crime Stoppers. Just this weekend they had their conference to discuss future directions and initiatives with which Crime Stoppers wishes to assist the government and policing community to crack down on crime. This took place in North Bay.

Just two weeks ago I was able to present Crime Stoppers with a cheque in the amount of \$190,000, and that's to support their after-hours telephone service, which does have results. I'm proud to tell you that Crime Stoppers, in conjunction with police, has resulted in the arrest of over 50,000 persons, clearing over 79,000 cases and recovering over \$429 million worth of stolen property. Clearly, this is the result of our supporting what I believe is a very good organization of volunteers who deserve a lot of credit in terms of assisting us and assisting the policing community in fighting crime.

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment about when he knew things were happening. It was reported that there was coliform found in the water of Walkerton in January and April of this year; in other words, in the period of time before May of this year. That is usually a sign that there is a problem, when you find bacteria of that kind in the water. In addition to that, in February 1998, E coli was found in the water. I don't know who the minister was then. It's a revolving door over there. You had about four ministers, some part-time, some half-time.

I want to ask you this question: When did you know that information, Mr Minister, and when did the previous minister know that information about the E coli? And when you found out about that information, what specific action did you take and what action did the other minister take?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): What I can say is that on April 3, 2000, four of the eight samples—that included two from water supply wells and two from the water distribution system itself—showed potential contamination. The GAP laboratory faxed these preliminary findings to the ministry's Owen Sound district office on April 7. On April 10, staff from the ministry's Owen Sound office contacted the Walkerton PUC to address the irregular results. The PUC did not indicate that it was experiencing any significant problems with its system. At this point, the district office did not notify the medical officer of health. It's very important to

note that at this point we have a current operational assessment to this matter and it shows that there's no direct link to the situation that arose in Walkerton a month later. We expect that issue will be fully scrutinized as part of an ongoing investigation.

Mr Bradley: What I was interested in was what the minister knew at the time, what he did and what the previous minister, whoever it was, did in February 1998, because those were very serious problems that would of course have come to the attention of the Minister of the Environment at a management committee meeting of the ministry or by report to the minister.

Speaking of reports, I want to ask why we don't get an annual drinking water surveillance program report; at least if you do, you don't advertise it very much. The Sierra Legal Defence Fund asked the question in the report it released two weeks ago called *Who's Watching our Waters?* I think I know the answer to that. It's not the Ministry of the Environment or the Harris government. It's somebody else watching, but it's not you people. Every time somebody wants to get a report now of any significance in a timely fashion, they have to file a freedom of information request and either pay for the report or have it long delayed.

Minister, could you tell us why we don't seem to be getting an annual drinking water surveillance program report put out and advertised and made easily available to the public and why it takes so long to get your discharge report?

Hon Mr Newman: On the issue of the discharge report that the member mentioned, it doesn't differentiate, as I indicated two weeks ago, between a 0.001% exceedence of an allowable discharge level or a 300% exceedence.

The member also raised the issue of freedom of information requests. It's important to note that there is a lot of time and effort on the part of ministry staff that is spent as a result of freedom of information requests. I think the Ministry of the Environment probably gets the most freedom of information requests. I can tell you that it puts a lot of stress on the staff to get that information. It costs a lot of money and a lot of time because of the number of freedom of information requests placed before the ministry.

1510

NORTHERN HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Last week, as part of our Tourism Week celebration, I travelled from Sault Ste Marie to Mattawa and from Thunder Bay to Kenora. Minister, as you know, the people who live, work and particularly vacation in the north have to overcome great distances when going from one community to another. I noticed a lot of construction going on. The harsh climate of northern Ontario requires a solid infrastructure. What steps have you been taking to

ensure that northerners have a great highway system that makes it possible to overcome those distances?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I thank the member for Brampton Centre for the question. I want to, as well, commend the member for his interest in northern issues, both as parliamentary assistant at this ministry and at Tourism. I know the member was travelling around extensively and continued to do so even last week, from Mattawa to Kenora.

As the member and those in northern Ontario know, this Mike Harris government has invested record levels of spending on northern Ontario highways—in our first mandate, up to \$730 million—and announced in this budget a four-year program of \$850 million into northern Ontario highways alone. I had a chance to drive between Dryden and Fort Frances myself last week, down 502. There is investment in Highway 11 and 502 north to Dryden. There's no doubt—and I hear this from corner to corner of the north—under the Mike Harris government, there are two seasons: There's winter and there's construction season, because we know the importance of highways to the northern Ontario economy, to tourism, to trade and to commercial development.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The time for oral questions is over. Just before we begin, in the members' west gallery is Mr Bob Huget, who was the member for Sarnia in the 35th Parliament. Would all members join me in welcoming the former member back.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I recognize the Minister of the Environment to move a motion respecting the tragic events at Walkerton.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Very briefly, I would like to, under the circumstances, given the nature of this emergency debate today, ask unanimous consent that we divide the time equally between all three parties.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I move that:

This House expresses sincere regret and concern over the tragic events faced by the residents, families and friends of the citizens of Walkerton;

That this House sends its condolences to those who have lost loved ones and its prayers for those who continue to struggle with the ravages of this tragedy;

That, out of respect for the victims of this tragedy and as a sign that the entire province joins with the people of Walkerton in mourning, staff of the Legislative Assembly be directed to fly flags at half-mast for the remainder of the week;

That this House pledge, as Premier Harris has, to do whatever it takes to get to the bottom of this tragedy, and, to that end,

That the standing committee on general government be directed to review the circumstances leading to the tragedy in Walkerton, and to report its findings and recommendations back to this House;

That for purposes of its review of this matter, the committee is authorized to travel from place to place in Ontario and to meet and receive evidence from witnesses when the House is not in session;

That the committee commence its review by considering, as they become available, the results and any recommendations that emerge from the Ontario Provincial Police investigation, the pending coroner's inquest, and the investigation by the Ministry of the Environment; and

That if legal proceedings arise from these investigations, the committee suspend its review of any specific issues that are the subject of those proceedings, but may continue to review and recommend government action to ensure the reliability and safety of Ontario's water supply.

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ensure the reliability and safety of Ontario's water supply.

Hon Mr Newman: Can I have unanimous consent for Mr Harris and Mr Galt to share the leadoff time?

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Thank you very much. It is with a great deal of sadness that I rise to discuss the tragic situation in Walkerton. I don't believe there's a single person in this province, indeed a single Canadian, who has not been touched by the events of the past week. As I said on Friday when I visited this grief-stricken community, all Canadians are united with the families of Walkerton. We're united in grief; we're united in prayer; we're united in heart and in mind; we're united in the determination to stand by one another until this situation passes.

Speaking personally, not only as Premier but as a father and as a son, as a fellow citizen, I, like members of this Legislature, have been moved by this tragedy. Like most Canadians, from the moment I first heard about this situation right up until now, two things have continued to weigh heavily on my mind. The first is the realization that this tragedy is rooted not in an activity known to be hazardous, but in something we rightly expect to be clean and we rightly expect to be risk-free. We're not talking about airplane travel or motor racing; we're not talking about a tornado or flood or other natural disaster. We're talking about drinking water, the most important requirement for human life on this planet and something that we in this country are privileged to be blessed with in abundance. We take for granted, and I think we have a right to take for granted, that when we turn on the tap, what comes out is safe and is clean and is not contaminated. Parents have a right to take for granted that what they give to their children is life-sustaining, not life-threatening. The fact that the families of Walkerton fell victim to something that each and every one of us takes for granted, something on which each and every one of us relies, the fact that their only mistake was to place their trust in a resource that each of us trusts too, only compounds the horror of this situation.

The second, and related, issue that weighs heavily on each of us is the thought that this tragedy clearly should have been avoided, that loss of life should have been prevented. But if any good is to come out of this horrible tragedy, if we are to learn from what went wrong, then these difficult questions must be asked. The people of Walkerton demand answers, the people of Ontario demand answers and I demand answers.

For example, if there was a delay in alerting residents to the presence of deadly bacteria in their water supply, I want to know why. This I say not simply as an individual, but as Premier on behalf of the province. I will leave no stone unturned and I will not rest until that question is answered. That is precisely why I want a committee of this Legislature to conduct a full, open and public review of the circumstances surrounding this tragedy. The government will co-operate fully with the committee's review. More specifically, all employees of the

government will be instructed to furnish the committee with any information or documents that the committee requests.

It is my hope too that a public review will also dispel some of the misinformation and the inaccuracies that have entered into the discussion. Some have focused on the use of private labs to test the water. I caution that we do not yet have all the facts, but based on the information reported in the media, we do know that the testing worked. The testing was accurate. The testing correctly identified the presence of a deadly contaminate in the water. It would seem that the testing itself is not the issue, but rather what happened to the test results and when. I, like everyone else, demand answers.

1520

A tragedy has taken place. Our responsibility is to find out why, to ensure that such a horrible situation can be avoided in the future. That is a weighty responsibility. We demean that responsibility when we use the tragedy as an opportunity to score political points or to seek political advantage. So I urge everyone to address this tragedy with the respect for factual accuracy that the situation deserves. I remind everyone, we don't yet have all the answers. We do not yet know all the facts.

Mr Speaker, protocol dictates that I address my remarks through you, but if I might, I would like to close with a message to the families of Walkerton.

In the midst of grief and of sadness, you are not alone. The rest of the province, the rest of the country, stands with you. Canada is a vast nation, but at times like this it becomes a single community and what touches any one part of our community then touches us all. You're in our thoughts, you're in our prayers, you're in our hearts, and I assure you we will do everything in our power to get to the bottom of this. We'll do everything possible to find out what went wrong, when it went wrong, why it went wrong and how it went wrong. We will do all that we can to avoid such a tragedy in the future, and we will not rest until we do.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise today, and it's certainly a very sad time in the province of Ontario, when several people have died and many more are seriously ill in the community of Walkerton and also in the amalgamated community known as Brockton. Certainly my empathy and sympathy go out to those people, particularly those who have lost loved ones. I can appreciate that it must be extremely difficult at this time, and particularly also for the many who are sick and still wondering what the outcome will be.

Today in question period the Premier answered very capably many of the questions that were put forward. As he has indicated, not only he but the government of Ontario and the Legislature certainly should take responsibility for finding answers to what is going on here, a very serious situation indeed. As he has already mentioned, there will be a coroner's inquest. There's no question that when deaths occur in humans under various circumstances, a coroner's inquest is called, and that's what's going on here. Coroners' inquests, as members of

this Legislature and the people of Ontario know, are very extensive. They can call witnesses and they come forth with recommendations that the province and the courts pay attention to.

An OPP investigation is also going to be carried out on this whole problem, as to who did what and how it happened and what went wrong and why. We have great respect for our people in uniform who carry out these investigations—again, an investigation that's going to be very extensive, an investigation that can call forth witnesses. We'll be examining this in great detail.

Over and above these investigations that will be carried out, we'll be having an investigation by a standing committee of the Legislature, the general government committee, made up of all parties. Again, they are unlimited in what they'll be able to do in calling forth witnesses, asking questions and delving very deeply into this whole affair.

I have followed this over the last few days with great concern, having worked in a diagnostic lab and having a little understanding of some of the organisms they're dealing with. I thought it was very unfortunate the way the members of the official opposition and the members of the third party dealt with this. Here we had a situation of people dying and people very ill—we're talking about 500 to 1,000 people severely ill—and these people on the other side of the House trying to win political brownie points. I was embarrassed as a politician to experience and to see this kind of thing going on with members of the opposition. I held them in high regard, but certainly after what I was observing over the weekend that has dropped significantly, and I'm a bit ashamed—not a bit; I'm very ashamed on their behalf. They do not seem to be ashamed, and I think that's very unfortunate.

This is a very difficult situation, very unfortunate, and I acknowledge that. At the same time as we acknowledge that, I think we can recognize that in the province of Ontario and in Canada we have some of the safest drinking water in the world. Rarely do we run into situations where the water is contaminated and we have this kind of situation. It's not a time, maybe, to be celebrating, but at least it's a time to be thinking about how much of our water is looked after and is properly handled. Yes, what has happened at Walkerton is extremely unfortunate, but at least we can recognize the kind of water that we have available in this country and in this province called Ontario.

I think what's going on in Walkerton is difficult, but what the people of Walkerton, I'm sure, are looking for is clean water in the future. We can walk through all of the things that occurred and have happened over the last few days, over the last few months, and we can point all kinds of fingers—and obviously the opposition indeed has been pointing fingers right, left and centre—but I think it's very unfair that they're doing this at this point. What the people of Walkerton want is to have the problem solved and have clean water in the future.

The Premier repeated many times that what's more important than pointing fingers is to get some facts, get

some figures, get some understanding of what went wrong in Walkerton and then once those are sorted out by the three studies or investigations that will occur—the coroner’s inquest, the OPP investigation and the standing committee on general government—once we have those reports and as information becomes available during those studies, we can then implement changes and possibly change regulations, possibly change reporting procedures and ensure that this never happens again in any other community, in any other municipality in Ontario. I’m sure that this incident in Walkerton will have epidemiologists around the world studying it for many years to come, and what we do and how we respond will be part of that report and part of what those epidemiologists will be acknowledging.

I think it was rather interesting to hear the member for St Catharines talking about the importance of public labs and trying to draw a comparison of how public labs do better than private labs, which I really have to question. I also found it kind of ironic in the fact that he has stood here and criticized me, because once upon a time I was a director of a public lab. But I found it rather satisfying today to hear him talk about how wonderful they are. I really don’t know just which direction he’s coming from on the public labs, whether he supports the people who work in them or whether he’s opposed to them. He comes from both sides. I can understand why, being a Liberal, he might do that kind of thing, but it’s unfortunate that he couldn’t be consistent.

In spite of that good news that I was hearing from him, how wonderful public labs and the directors of those labs are, what I really want to say is, scientists are scientists. Whether there’s a profit at the bottom line or whether it’s a public lab that they’re responsible for, scientists are scientists and they do not bend, they do not change just because of the person they may or may not be reporting to. Most scientists have that kind of credibility and put it way above that kind of thing the member for St Catharines and many of the other members from the opposition were pointing their fingers at today.

1530

Having worked in a lab and recognizing this organism, I know that they report it often as a coliform, and there are tremendous numbers and varieties of coliforms, well over 600, some serotypes, and only a very few that cause the devastating effects that this organism that they isolated, the 0157 variety, can cause, so much kidney damage. I remember some seven or eight, maybe nine years ago, just prior to Applefest in Brighton, a similar organism was isolated in apple juice that had caused kidney shutdown in a young child. That year it was terrible to try to sell any apple juice at Applefest. But the following year, of course, that was forgotten. In that case, as I understand, it was picked up from some apples off the ground.

This just points to the fact that you can have some coliform organisms that have no effect, and the large percentage of them have little effect, whereas in this case, this particular one is very devastating. Often it’s looked

at as a sentinel organism, whereby you’re checking to see if there’s a fecal source and whether there may or may not be things like salmonella or campylobacter or some of the other well-known intestinal organisms that might be there and that you’re not picking up. But in this case it was a devastating E coli, which was most unfortunate for the people in Walkerton, from what I understand and what I have seen in many of the reports.

There have been a lot of things written in the paper. There’s one from Andrew Coyne that just recently was published in the Post that talks about the opportunity for the people who hate our government to try to take advantage of it. “If it is necessary to exploit the suffering of others, to use the dead as pawns, so be it.” And on it goes. I think it’s most unfortunate that the opposition would take this kind of opportunity.

I’ve had about 10 minutes, and that was what was recommended that I have, but I’m just wondering if maybe some of the following leadoff time could be split with the Minister of the Environment, if we could have unanimous consent that the Minister of the Environment could continue for another 10 or 15 minutes.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Newman: The tragic situation that is unfolding in Walkerton is indeed uncharted territory for all of us. I’m pleased to see how everyone has come together in support and sympathy for the people of Walkerton. It really is a case of tragedy bringing out the best in people. I’m especially amazed at the way the people hardest hit have held up under the intense glare of national and international attention. Though we’ve been hearing all manner of claims and counterclaims and allegations, Walkerton residents have shown a resilience and generosity of spirit that are very inspiring.

Last week I had the chance during two visits, including one with Premier Harris, to meet and speak with some of the people who have been sick. I was particularly touched when I met a father and son outside the town hall on Friday afternoon. The son was suffering after consuming some contaminated water. We talked about many things. We talked about his illness. We talked about hockey. You don’t have to be a parent to be touched by these heart-rending events. But like so many of my colleagues, I am a parent, so the effect on children is what really drives home the seriousness of the situation for me.

The most unfortunate aspect of severe pollution problems, for example, smog, is that the people who suffer most are the most vulnerable members of society: the young, the elderly and people already coping with some form of illness. For their sake and indeed the sake of all Ontarians, I believe we must make positive changes to ensure that this kind of situation never arises again. I believe that something positive can come from the situation, but only if we act with determination.

I would like to outline for my colleagues in the Legislature some of the proposed actions I outlined this morning with respect to the strengthening of the safeguards for Ontario’s drinking water supplies. I will follow the

discussion of new measures with some thoughts on this government's commitment to protecting Ontario's environment and water quality. We believe that a healthy, well-protected environment is a cornerstone of a prosperous Ontario and an Ontario that is a great place in which to live, work and do business.

Everyone will be aware that I announced these measures this morning in a press conference, where I was joined by my deputy minister, Stien Lal, who provided an overview of the Ministry of the Environment's role. As I stated this morning, there are three investigations underway or soon to be underway: First, there is one by the Ontario Provincial Police; second, another by the coroner, who has called for an inquest into the deaths of five people that are believed to be linked to the E coli outbreak; and the third one is by my ministry, which will focus on the events that led to the contamination of the municipal water system.

These three investigations are necessary to start getting answers and information out to the people of Walkerton and out to the people of Ontario. You don't have to live in or near the affected areas to feel the need to know exactly what happened, and why. These investigations will be looking into very complex issues, and the Ministry of the Environment will provide whatever assistance we can to help out. As I said this morning, we are acting in a spirit of unprejudiced openness to shed light on the role that was played by the Ministry of the Environment.

In a few moments my parliamentary assistant, Toby Barrett, will clear up some of the issues surrounding the suggestion that the Ministry of the Environment knew about Walkerton's contamination problems for six months and has not taken action. This is not true, as you will hear from my parliamentary assistant.

I have instructed my ministry staff to begin work on a regulation that includes four key mandatory changes.

First, all laboratories or water treatment plant testing facilities which perform tests on drinking water must be accredited by an agency. This accreditation will include certification for all tests to be performed to fulfill the requirements of the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives. As it's now worded, municipalities are strongly encouraged to use accredited labs. I want to say, as the Minister of the Environment for this province, that this is simply not good enough for the people of Ontario.

Second, municipalities must inform the Ministry of the Environment of any change in private laboratory facilities testing their water. This will allow my ministry to follow up and ensure that the new lab is fully aware of, and able to fulfill, its role and obligations.

Third, the Ministry of the Environment will review every certificate of approval currently in place for all water facilities in Ontario. In the new regulation, all water treatment facilities must have their certificates reviewed at least once every three years.

Fourth, regarding the issue of notification, I want to underline that the current procedures in place do—I stress “do”—require any testing labs to notify the Minis-

try of the Environment and the local medical officer of health, as well as the municipality, of test results. However, we recognize that built-in redundancies or fail-safes on the notification procedures may have resulted in some confusion about reporting obligations. We do not want there to be any question about notification requirements. These requirements must be absolutely clear. If any laboratory gets a test result indicating unsafe drinking water quality, the Ministry of the Environment and the medical officer of health must be informed, as must be the municipal water facility operator.

I have directed my staff to consolidate and strengthen the requirements I have outlined by codifying them in the new regulation. This will make it absolutely crystal clear that all three agencies must be informed, and in a timely way.

With three investigations, more facts will come to light, and this will mean, in turn, that further steps will be taken depending on the nature of the findings.

1540

The staff at the Ministry of the Environment have a major task ahead of them in shaping the regulations I have requested. From my experience as minister, and especially in the past few days, I can tell you that my staff are all ready to roll up their collective sleeves to get to work. They share my belief, and the belief that I know is shared by all members in this Legislature, that Walkerton must not be repeated, not in Walkerton and not anywhere else in our great province.

There are a number of issues that require serious consideration by the ministry. For example, we still need to determine the exact format, including the penalties that will be associated with non-compliance. Even with many details remaining to be worked out, we can spell things out immediately. This is only fair to everyone concerned and it's in the best interests of public safety.

Of course, we do not want to do anything that will jeopardize the integrity of the three investigations that are under way or are soon to be under way. But we are doing our best to make abundantly clear the responsibilities that laboratories and the owner-operators of facilities have to inform authorities of potentially unsafe water supplies.

I'm very proud to be part of a government that is very serious about protecting water quality and ensuring the highest quality of life possible for its residents. We have assisted Ontarians in many municipalities through our \$200-million provincial water protection fund, which is helping in situations where problems are being experienced as a result of problems with water and sewage infrastructure.

With respect to water quality in the Great Lakes and the connecting channels, we have invested \$300 million to clean up areas of concern in our portions of the system. Through the Great Lakes Renewal Foundation, the province is stimulating new partnerships that are investing millions of dollars to continue the vital work of cleaning up, conserving and protecting the Great Lakes and our other water resources.

The foundation was established with an initial provincial contribution of \$5 million in seed money. This investment has generated eight times that amount in the form of in-kind and financial support from other sources. Certainly we know that improvements to our water quality can be made. Consider the findings of the third report of progress under the Canada-Ontario agreement respecting the Great Lakes ecosystem, released in September 1999. This report states that the Great Lakes are cleaner than they have been in 50 years. Among the highlights: Ontario's municipal-industrial strategy for abatement regulations limiting discharges from nine industrial sectors, which have resulted in a reduction of at least 70% of toxic pollutants being discharged into Ontario's waterways.

The pulp and paper regulation has resulted in an 82% reduction in discharges of chlorinated toxic substances into the Great Lakes, as well as the elimination of discharges of dioxin and furan to water from this sector. Significant reductions have also been made in discharges of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, cyanide, zinc, lead and chromium. Ontario has cleaned up 12 contaminated sites within its jurisdiction in the Great Lakes basin. Cleanups at an additional 50 sites are being funded by private groups or responsible parties. Of these cleanups, 31 are completed. The collection and treatment of contaminated groundwater continues at eight sites and work on a further 13 sites is scheduled to be finished in 2000.

The amount of chemicals entering the lakes continues to decline. Significant reductions have been achieved for dioxins, furans, mercury and several other toxic contaminants. One of the best indicators of improved water quality is the fact that beaches are remaining open for longer periods in Toronto, Hamilton and other lakefront communities. This is the result of government programs to separate formerly combined storm sanitary sewers and/or to put holding tanks in place to deal with excess runoff.

Returning to our topic, drinking water, a report released in February 2000, called *Drinking Water in Ontario*, shows that Ontario's drinking water is better than, or as good as, that found anywhere in the world according to ministry testing between 1993 and 1997. The jurisdictions with which Ontario was compared include Australia, Great Britain, Japan, South Africa and the United States. The ministry's drinking water surveillance program results indicate that 99.98% of water samples analyzed meet health-related Ontario drinking water objectives. These are the standards established to protect public health, produce aesthetically pleasing water and ensure proper operation of water treatment facilities.

The measures I have announced today will improve Ontario's ability to protect water quality. We've come a long way in this province in providing safe and abundant water supplies, but the events of recent days in Walkerton have shown us in dramatic fashion that there is still a lot of room for improvement.

Walkerton is a situation that pains each and every one of us in this House. I know that everyone from all parties shares in my feelings about what has happened. There is nothing we can do to undo what has happened, but we can move forward and try to effect some positive changes. By acting together, and by acting quickly with resolve, we can at least improve the safety of our water supplies and contribute to the health and well-being of Ontario residents.

The rest of the time—I would ask for unanimous consent—will be shared with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, and the member for Durham.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): As noted by Minister Newman, my time will also be shared with MPP O'Toole.

I, as all MPPs in the House, am very saddened by this tragic event and I share the concerns of local residents and their families. Our thoughts are with them, with lost friends and family. For those who are still sick I pray for a speedy recovery. On behalf of the Legislature, I wish to offer my sincerest thanks to medical practitioners who are taking care of the sick, to the municipalities and industries who have offered assistance to Walkerton, for example, by providing potable water.

Premier Harris, MPP Newman and the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer have met personally with residents of this community to deal directly with the events over the past week.

On the May 24, Ministry of the Environment staff met with the local PUC, their consultant and town council, to review operating procedures, to develop an action plan to confirm the source of the problem and to return the town's water supply to its previous safe state. As part of the action plan, we have turned over the operation of the municipal system to the Ontario Clean Water Agency, also known as OCWA.

Again, I understand the anger of people in Ontario. Five people have died and hundreds of people are sick, and we're committed to finding out as quickly as possible exactly what led to this tragedy. I'm sure that all members of the Legislature continue to be concerned about the health of the residents of Walkerton and are relieved that the number of new cases is now starting to decline. However, it's vital that the Ministry of the Environment continue to monitor and act on the situation, along with town and the Ministry of Health.

On May 25, the ministry issued an order requiring immediate implementation of the action plan to review the municipality's operating procedures, to develop a plan to confirm the source of the problem and to return the town's water supply to its previous safe state.

As you know, the ministry is also currently conducting an investigation on the cause of the E coli contamination. One question which has come up several times is whether the ministry had any warning of these health-related problems with the town of Walkerton, now known as the township of Brockton. As you know, the incidents leading up to the tragic events in Walkerton are the

subject of an investigation. My ability to comment on them is severely limited because I have no intention of compromising that investigation. I can, however, clarify what the ministry knew and what actions it has taken.

1550

Earlier this year, analysis of samples from this water system were conducted by GAP EnviroMicrobial laboratory. The ministry's Owen Sound office did receive faxed test results from GAP once in January and again in April of the year 2000. These test results indicated the probable presence of coliform bacteria in the Walkerton water system. However, no E coli was reported.

Total coliforms are bacteria which are common inhabitants of the intestines of warm-blooded animals. They're prevalent in soil and surface water. Not all coliform bacteria produce disease in humans, but their presence in treated water is taken as a warning of potential problems. The Owen Sound office followed up by telephone with the Walkerton Public Utilities Commission on April 10, 2000. The PUC said that following the irregular results, corrective measures were being taken, as prescribed in the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives, 1994. These measures included increasing chlorination of the water supply system and further sampling. On May 3, 2000, the Walkerton PUC submitted to the Owen Sound office a copy of a GAP lab report which indicated that the follow-up testing showed an absence of any coliform bacteria or E coli. The ministry received no further lab results.

It has been noted that the ministry was aware of problems with the Walkerton water treatment system in 1998. The question is, would these tragic events have been avoided if the Ministry of the Environment had taken action in 1998? The ministry compliance inspection report on the Walkerton water treatment system, completed in 1998, confirmed a history of adverse sample results in two of the four wells in service at that time, as well as failure to maintain adequate chlorine residuals in the system, and that the bacteriological monitoring program did not meet the ministry's monitoring sampling requirements. The ministry did take action on this 1998 problem. The ministry followed up with the municipality, which confirmed that appropriate action had been taken to address the problems noted in the ministry's compliance inspection report.

We must understand that the municipality is and always has been fully responsible for ensuring that drinking water is safe. The Ontario Drinking Water Objectives prescribe standards of quality for all drinking water supplies. In addition, the ministry has established a comprehensive sampling program for all waterworks in the province in order to ensure that the people of Ontario have a reliable supply of safe drinking water. To be fair, we must recognize that municipalities take the responsibility for providing safe drinking water seriously. Our drinking water surveillance program has shown that overall Ontario's municipalities ensure their drinking water quality is among the highest in the world.

It has also been asked whether this situation would have been avoided if the laboratories of the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Health were still conducting the analysis of water samples. I can't see how it would make a difference. Whether the lab is a ministry facility or a private facility, it's obligated to notify the owner-operator of the water system, the Ministry of the Environment and the medical officer of health in the event of any exceedance of health-related Ontario drinking water objectives. At that point, the owner-operator is obligated to begin immediately collection of special samples to confirm if there is a problem and/or take corrective action. Corrective action includes immediately increasing the disinfection dose and flushing the mains. This action should continue until sampling confirms the Ontario drinking water objectives are no longer being exceeded.

Notification of proper authorities is a key question in the Walkerton tragedy. Both the owner-operator of the drinking water system and the laboratory are obligated to notify the ministry and the medical officer of health in the event of any exceeding of health-related Ontario Drinking Water Objectives. The Ontario Drinking Water Objectives require that the laboratory immediately notify the ministry if the sample results indicate unsafe water quality. The ministry, in turn, then must immediately notify the medical officer of health and the operating authority to initiate collection of special samples and/or, as required, take corrective action.

This was spelled out on May 14, 1995, when the ministry sent a letter to waterworks owners advising that the owner is responsible for notifying the ministry as soon as possible of the occurrence of any analysis which indicates unsafe drinking water quality. Later, in January 1997, the ministry released a guidance document for sample collection and the use of commercial presence-absence tests for the bacteriological analysis of drinking water. The document recommends that laboratories should, with the permission of the owner, report results indicating the persistence of coliforms or the presence of E coli to both the ministry and the local medical officer of health regardless of the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives.

Another ministry guidance document for selecting an environmental analytical lab strongly recommends that the contract between the owner and the laboratory include a clause requiring the laboratory to immediately inform the local medical officer of health, the ministry and the owner of when health-related parameters are being exceeded. In the case of Walkerton, we know the PUC changed labs on May 1, 2000, and at this time we do not know if such a notification clause was included in the contract between the Walkerton PUC and its new laboratory. The Ministry of the Environment does intend to change procedures to avoid similar tragedies in the future and strengthen requirements to protect our drinking water quality to ensure a similar tragedy does not occur in the future.

Today, even in advance of the results of the investigations, the ministry is proposing four important and mandatory changes, and these were alluded to by Minister of the Environment Newman:

(1) The notice requirements must be absolutely and unequivocally clear. If any laboratory finds a test indicates unsafe drinking water quality, it must immediately inform the ministry, as well as informing the PUC or the facility owner and the medical officer of health. All three offices must be informed in a timely way.

(2) All laboratories which perform tests on drinking water must be accredited by an agency, such as the Canadian Association for Environmental Analytical Laboratories. This accreditation will include certification of all tests which they perform if they're following the requirements of the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives. To date, such labs have been strongly encouraged to be accredited. Now there will be no option.

(3) Municipalities must inform the ministry if they change the private laboratory facility that is testing their water.

(4) The ministry is going to review every certificate of approval currently in place for water facilities in Ontario. In the future, the certificates will be reviewed at least once every three years.

There's no question that local officials and private labs are really quite well equipped to safeguard community drinking water. Local officials are trained and licensed to operate drinking water systems. The ministry tests and licenses operators of water treatment facilities in Ontario, and the ministry also requires facilities that need a certificate of approval to have licensed operators. Accredited private labs are certainly equipped to perform the tests required to safeguard provincial drinking water quality. Private labs are accredited by the Canadian Association for Environmental Analytical Laboratories and the Standards Council of Canada and are certified for appropriate analytical tests such as the microbiological test to detect E coli.

1600

There has been some confusion over the number of water samples required for municipalities like Walkerton. The Ontario Drinking Water Objectives distribution system sampling requirements: A population of up to 100,000 people is required to take eight samples, plus one sample per 1,000 people. In the case of Walkerton, this is 13 samples per month, with at least one sample per week. In addition, if there are any indicators of unsafe water quality, the ministry can order additional special samples taken to determine the exact extent of the contamination in the distribution system.

The government has been asked why it closed all Ministry of the Environment water testing labs in 1996. Well, the ministry did not close all its water testing labs in 1996. It maintains a complete capability for water testing at its laboratory services branch facility in Toronto. What it did close were three regional laboratories that were providing routine water testing for municipalities. That was done because both the capability

and the capacity to accurately perform the tests existed in the private sector. Municipalities were provided support to either contract with an accredited lab or develop their own.

The provincial government has been accused of downloading responsibility for testing drinking water to municipalities in 1996. The provincial government did no such thing. The responsibility for testing drinking water systems resides with the facility owner, and owners have always collected the water samples and submitted them to the lab. The owners were paying the Ministry of the Environment laboratories for water quality testing as early as 1993. The testing services provided by the ministry were mainly for routine water quality analysis that could be provided by accredited private laboratories. The ministry decided to stop doing the analysis of water samples for the municipalities because there was adequate private sector lab capability and the capacity to do this testing. The Ontario government did not want to compete with the private sector on a fee-for-service basis.

Similarly, the government did not download responsibility for building and maintaining water and sewer plants on to municipalities in 1997. Municipalities are, and always have been, responsible for delivering water and sewage services to their communities, and we've heard this more than once today in the legislature. The transfer of title of some water and sewer services to municipalities under the Municipal Water and Sewage Transfer Act does not alter this responsibility. As a matter of fact, Walkerton already owned and operated its water treatment and distribution system in 1997, when the act was passed. The majority of water and sewer systems in Ontario were already owned by municipalities at that time.

There is a straightforward system of accountability for drinking water quality in Ontario. The municipality is ultimately responsible for ensuring that drinking water is safe. The Ontario Drinking Water Objectives describe standards of quality for all drinking water supplies. In addition, the ministry has established a comprehensive sampling program for all waterworks in the province in order to ensure the people of Ontario have a reliable supply of safe drinking water.

In carrying out its responsibilities under section 52 of the Ontario Water Resources Act, the ministry applies the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives in approving any waterworks that supply water for domestic purposes and serve more than five private residences. The ministry tests and licenses operators of water treatment facilities in Ontario and requires facilities that need a certificate of approval to also have licensed operators. The Ministry of the Environment conducts proactive inspections of waterworks to ensure operators have proper procedures and practices in place to ensure safe drinking water quality in accordance with the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives.

In conclusion, let's recap the actions the ministry took when it learned there was a potential problem in the Walkerton facility.

The Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Health Unit first learned of a possible E coli contamination event in Walkerton on May 19. This occurred when it was alerted by the South Bruce Grey Health Centre staff that two cases of bloody diarrhea had been reported. On May 21, the medical officer of health did contact the ministry's Owen Sound district supervisor, but did not identify a water problem or request assistance. On May 22, the medical officer of health requested assistance from the ministry. An emergency response person responded and arrived on the scene within two hours of the request for this assistance. The Ministry of the Environment officer took bacteriological samples and assisted the medical officer of health as required.

The ministry has continued to take water samples and monitor the situation. Ministry staff met with municipal officials and its consultant to formalize an action plan to restore a safe water supply. On May 25, the ministry issued an order requiring that the action plan be implemented immediately to review the municipality's operating procedures, to develop a plan to confirm the source of the problem and to return the town's water supply to its previous safe state. The ministry is also conducting an investigation of the cause of the E coli contamination.

At the request of the Premier, the Ontario Clean Water Agency has taken over the operation of the Walkerton water treatment facility for a six-month period. OCWA has advised that they intend to hire a hydrological consulting firm to assess the wells and the groundwater supply to the system.

As parliamentary assistant, I join Environment Minister Dan Newman in assuring you that the ministry continues to do its job and resolve the issues that resulted in the tragic events at Walkerton.

As I indicated, I will be sharing my time with another MPP, Speaker.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): With the consent of the House, I would agree to share my time with the member for Bruce-Grey, who would conclude.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr O'Toole: I would start to bring a human face to the story and say that each MPP has a duty to be informed when issues arise which affect the safety of their constituents. I have been in touch with my riding, the region of Durham, and the public health and public works departments. Durham region has six water supply plants, including five facilities which draw water from Lake Ontario: in Ajax-Whitby, Oshawa, Bowmanville and Newcastle. Another is located on Lake Simcoe in Beaverton. There are also several communities here which receive their water from municipal wells, including Cannington, Sunderland, Uxbridge, Port Perry, Green Bank, Orono and Blackstock. From what I've heard, I believe that Mr Tony Wong, manager of the environmental health division of Durham region's health department, along with the works department, are responsible for local water supply and its water quality. Mr Wong says:

"We are quite confident that our water supply system is very safe' 'There's no such thing as never,' Mr Wong admits of the possibility that Durham's water could become contaminated with E coli bacteria. But, he adds, 'It's highly unlikely. We have a very extensive monitoring and testing program in Durham.'"

1610

The reality is that it's the aspect of human responsibility that comes into the issue and the equation, but what makes our situation somewhat different than what's happening in Walkerton is, indeed, the human story. We have a very small community where almost everyone has been touched, touched with tragedy in a close-knit community, which is the human story. It's not subordinated to big-city anonymity. We have the real plight of real people, from children to frail elderly, who have indeed lost their lives.

Respectfully, what the Minister of the Environment, Mr Newman, has said today is for me a reassurance that he has taken positive and immediate steps to contain the fears that many people in Ontario might have. I can only say in defence in our riding that the MPPs I know have found the information to be reassuring, that their residents' safety is at the highest level of order for the day.

The debate today is in respect for the community of Walkerton and those individuals whose lives have been touched. I can assure you that the greatest sympathy goes with the thoughts in my mind of real people and the issues before us.

With that, I'll pass my remaining time to the member for Bruce-Grey.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): I thank some of the other speakers who have allowed me to have some time to debate this afternoon.

The people of Walkerton had faith in our system and something happened. We don't know what it is, but we will find out somehow. Every day we drink all kinds of water in this House, and I don't think any of us ever thought that something like this might happen. It is one of the worst catastrophes we've had in Canada. When you think things are safe and you don't even think about it and this happens, it makes it that much worse. They were living their normal lives, and all of a sudden this happened. Now we have people who have died over this. It's one of the worst catastrophes.

The people of Ontario have also rallied. I talked to the mayor, and he tells me there isn't a mayor from one city who hasn't phoned him and asked him if he wants some help. I've had ministers in our party, and the Minister of Agriculture right here, phone me personally to offer their help. I appreciate the opposition parties. Both parties have been up there to offer their help, and I appreciate the fact that you're here today to debate this, to try to find out what happened.

We don't know what happened. There have been all kinds of fingers pointed in all different directions, but we really don't know. It's a system we all believed in and it failed us; it failed the people of Walkerton. Basically, it failed the people of Ontario because we're concerned.

We have water here today, and I'll take a drink of it, and I don't expect anything to happen. But the people of Walkerton did the same thing, and something did happen and we all feel badly about that. I certainly do. I have a lot of friends and I've met a lot of people in Walkerton. It was new to my riding this time, and to have a tragedy like this happen I think is hard for you people to understand.

It's hard to go down to Walkerton. Just what can you do? You feel helpless. There's anger, there's frustration: "Why did this happen?" They feel that way. They don't know who to be angry at but they are angry. Again, people like myself, and all the different municipal councils and people from all over Ontario who phoned to offer help, what can they do? This is the helplessness that you have. It's not like a tornado, it's not like a wind-storm, rain or a flood where you can go and see the devastation. You can't see that. It's not there. There are people in our hospitals.

Before I finish, I want to congratulate our hospitals. Our hospitals have done a wonderful job. Walkerton people have just worked so hard in that hospital. But the hospitals surrounding it have also thrown in their help and were there when we needed them. That system worked and it was there to help them. But somewhere else in this system it failed.

A motion like this will certainly go a long way to find out the problems, but, as you know, there are three investigations on right now. Hopefully, they can come up with some answers. There have to be some answers, and I think that's what most people in Walkerton want. They look at you and say, "Why did this happen?" Even our medical officers at this point don't really know how this could get into our system without being detected. How did this happen?

Every day you get up and use water so much. I live on a farm; I know. I have a dug well that goes down about 350 feet into the ground, yet there are times when the pump won't work. Something happens. I know how it is to be without water. Boy, that can be pretty bad when you don't have water—and now, when you can't trust it.

It's going to take a long time to get over this. It's going to take the people of Ontario a long time to trust our water system. But we will do that. That's our job here as a Parliament, in all three parties, to work towards a solution. We can't use this to divide ourselves; we must work together and try to find a solution for the people of Walkerton and for the people of Ontario.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

Let me say at the outset that I sincerely wish this were not the kind of motion we are debating in this House. I sincerely wish that the events which have unfolded and tragically struck the people living in the community of Walkerton had never taken place.

I want to take the opportunity at the outset, on behalf of my caucus and my party, to extend my sympathies to the people of Walkerton and my sincerest condolences to those families who have lost loved ones. Unfortunately, there are still people who are very sick as a result of this

outbreak. I think their expectations of us today are very, very high. They are looking to us now to leave no stone unturned, to do everything that we reasonably can to ensure that a tragedy of this type never ever strikes any other community in our province.

I've learned that this is the second-largest outbreak of E coli infection that has ever been recorded. One thousand people were affected by this water contamination. Five people so far have lost their lives, 12 people are in critical condition, and I understand that one individual in particular is at death's door. I know I speak for all members when I say that our hearts are with that person and her family.

But now our responsibility here is very, very great. Given the severity of this epidemic, given how serious a matter this is, not only for people living in that community but for Ontarians living throughout the province who have had their confidence in their water shaken, it seems to me that we have no time whatsoever to lose. We must do whatever we can to get to the bottom of this. Political sensibilities now must take second place. Damage control must take second place. Our first and foremost responsibility in reacting to this crisis, to this epidemic, is to put in place an independent public inquiry which can act in a way to consider this matter as it affects people throughout Ontario, to make sure it has a broad enough scope to take into account everything that this government has done and, if necessary, what past governments have done, to ensure we have in place the fundamental safeguards that obviously were not there in this case.

It seems to me if you were to reduce our role down to its very essence, surely it would be to ensure that we protect the people of Ontario from harm befalling them. Surely one of the things that we have a responsibility to do in this Legislature is to ensure that when people go to their taps, from the time they get up in the morning until they go to bed at night, when they go for a drink of water or they bathe the kids in the bathtub, they are entitled to expect that their water will not in anyway cause them and their families harm. That was not the case in this particular community.

Now what we must do—we simply have no choice in this matter and we can't afford to waste another day. What should be happening here as I speak is that the three House leaders should be getting together and agreeing to terms for a full independent and public inquiry. That should be happening right now. That public inquiry should begin its work effective immediately, with full powers to subpoena documents, to subpoena witnesses and find out exactly what went wrong and what we should be doing throughout the province of Ontario.

Sure, we now know, in the most painful way possible, what happened when something went wrong in a particular community, the community of Walkerton. But what else is happening throughout this province as we speak? This government has effectively severed links with small water treatment operators, who are out there on their own operating primitive facilities, in many cases, and they simply don't have the level of sophistication,

they don't have the backup that they should be able to count on from this government. This government has abdicated its responsibility to provide a continuing supervisory role—this is the minimum, I would think—so that anybody today who is out there operating one of these water treatment facilities knows that they can count on the government for backup. That didn't happen in this case, and it should have happened. The government should have been there.

1620

I had the opportunity to speak to, coincidentally a former member of this House, Larry South, who worked as an inspector for the Ministry of the Environment and its predecessors dating back to 1953. He worked from the 1950s through to the 1980s. His responsibility was to achieve three inspections for each water treatment facility every year. Today, do you know what our objective is? One inspection every three years. This government must now assume the responsibility of a responsible government when it comes to ensuring that Ontarians have access to safe and clean drinking water. They have to get in the game. You can't just turn it over to the locals and say, "It's now up to you, have access to a private lab." There was no legal reporting requirement for those private labs until, apparently, this morning. We're now going to put something in place, but there was no legally binding reporting requirement that a private lab, upon receipt of a positive test result showing that the water was unsafe, communicate that information to the health officials or to the Ministry of the Environment. That is nothing less than shameful.

We've also got labs out there performing these tests which are not accredited; they haven't been certified to perform these kinds of tests. That is nothing less than shameful. The government has in many ways achieved some successes in branding red tape as something that is inherently evil. All red tape apparently is all bad. Do you know what? I happen to believe that some red tape, so to speak, happens to be a damned good thing. Some red tape shields our people from very real dangers, like unsafe drinking water, water that can kill them. So in their reckless haste to eliminate red tape, my advice to the government is to slow down and carefully consider the implications. There are people—the entire province, in fact, is relying on somebody out there somewhere—because we're all busy leading these hectic just-in-time lives. Somebody out there, surely to God, is making sure when I turn on the tap in the morning, until I turn it on again at night, that the stuff that is pouring out is not deadly, it's not going to kill me. This government now has a responsibility to get to the bottom of this in a responsible way. The only way we can do that is through an independent public inquiry.

To that end, I have an amendment to the motion put forward earlier this afternoon by the minister, Mr Newman. It reads as follows:

That Mr Newman's motion be amended by deleting that portion of the motion beginning with "That the standing committee on general government," and ending

with "that at 5:50 pm this afternoon the speaker will put all questions necessary to decide on the emergency debate motion," and substituting the following:

"That the government, under the Public Inquiries Act, appoint a public inquiry into Ontario's water supply to consider and report on the safety of the province's drinking water, in particular:

"To examine legislation and regulations governing the provision of, standards for and testing of drinking water in the province;

"To examine the adequacy of the inspection and monitoring programs for all provincial water systems, and the role of the province in guaranteeing adequate testing, including funding and staffing considerations;

"To examine any other matters that the commission considers relevant to the above terms of reference to ensure that the tragedy of Walkerton does not ever happen again anywhere in this province;

"That the three House leaders are consulted and must approve the government's appointee(s) to the commission, any changes or additions to the above terms of reference for the commission and the reporting date for the commission's interim and final reports; and

"That this motion be considered fully by the Legislature and be called again during orders of the day later this week."

I also want to indicate that I'll be splitting my time with the members for St Catharines, Windsor-Walkerville, Hamilton East, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Eglinton-Lawrence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr McGuinty has moved that Mr Newman's motion be amended by deleting that portion beginning with "That the standing committee on general government..." and ending with "That at 5:50 pm this afternoon the Speaker will put all questions necessary to decide on the emergency debate motion," and substituting the following:

"That the government, under the Public Inquiries Act, appoint a public inquiry into Ontario's water supply to consider and report on the safety of the province's drinking water, in particular:

"To examine legislation and regulations governing the provision of, standards for and testing of drinking water in the province;

"To examine the adequacy of the inspection and monitoring programs for all provincial water systems, and the role of the province in guaranteeing adequate testing, including funding and staffing considerations;

"To examine any other matters that the commission considers relevant to the above terms of reference to ensure that the tragedy of Walkerton does not ever happen again anywhere in this province;

"That the three House leaders are consulted and must approve the government's appointee(s) to the commission, any changes or additions to the above terms of reference for the commission and the reporting date for the commission's interim and final reports; and

“That this motion be considered fully by the Legislature and be called again during orders of the day later this week.”

1630

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm not delighted that I'm speaking this afternoon on this particular motion because I find it most unfortunate that these circumstances are confronting Ontario. All of us know that our hearts go out to the people of Walkerton, who have many ill individuals there, virtually hundreds of people who have been afflicted with E coli poisoning. We've had a number of people now—the last count I saw was five; it may be more—who have died as a result of this and many people who may face lifelong, debilitating medical conditions as a result of the poisoning of the water in Walkerton, Ontario.

This is not an isolated incident. When you increase the risk tremendously, when you play chicken with the safety of water in the province, one day the chickens will come home to roost. What we've seen through a consistent damaging of the Ministry of the Environment, through huge cuts in the budget and through huge cuts in the number of staff, is a ministry which is only a skeleton of its former self, and this is tragic for Ontario.

It's unfortunate that attention has come to this issue mostly because of the fact that we have people who have died in the town in Walkerton, that we have so many people who are ill, because many have warned about this over the past half-dozen years, about the potential for this kind of incident to happen right here in Ontario.

We have some important questions to be asked, particularly with ministerial responsibility of a variety of ministers. I might note that in this government we're back to the old Conservative days of ministers being involved in a merry-go-round. They're there for a short period of time. In one case, we had an individual serving as both Minister of Municipal Affairs and Minister of the Environment. That's significant because the environment ministry has been reduced substantially in its importance within the government. It is said by people who are well connected to the Kremlin, as we like to affectionately call it, the bunker, the Premier's office, that they refer to environment as the “E-word” among the Premier's staff. That's the kind of regard in which environment is held with this government.

If you want to talk about cutting taxes, they are the big-time tax cutters, no question about it. But there comes a point in time in the public debate when one has to decide what role government plays. I believe that the people of this province, given the choice of massive tax cuts to the corporate sector, of substantial tax cuts to the wealthiest people in this province, of a \$200 gimmick, of sending people a \$200 cheque as part of this budget—given the choice of that money being invested in environmental protection, in the protection of our drinking water in this province, or given away in tax cuts, the people in this province would choose to have our government resume its former role of protecting the drinking water in our province.

I have heard them say, as is always the case when an incident like this arises, that if anyone in the opposition dares to be critical, then that person is playing politics. Well, I saw a case of playing politics the other day on television. It was the Premier of the province trying to put the blame on the NDP for what has happened. The only thing that has changed from when the NDP was in power was a charge-back to municipalities that wanted to use the services of the laboratories of the Ministry of the Environment. They abandoned that strategy quickly because they found out it wasn't selling.

But it fits in with their strategy of being first in line to accept the credit and last in line to accept the responsibility. Clearly overall, the responsibility for drinking water in this province lies with the Ministry of the Environment and the government of Ontario. In order to do its job appropriately, the Ministry of the Environment requires adequate staff and adequate funding, the resources to carry out its responsibilities to protect the people of this province, and that has been virtually abandoned under the Harris government. Even those who will give the present administration credit in some areas where they believe that the administration has done the right thing, many of those individuals are critical of what they see as the total abandonment of the environment.

The Provincial Auditor—because we mentioned the fact that this is an issue which has been brought to our attention before—brought it to our attention previously, and the Environmental Commissioner brought it to our attention in her report, both in 1996. They've been quoted widely in the news media; they've been available. The penalty that Eva Ligeti, the former Environmental Commissioner, paid for being critical of the government in her reports was to be fired out the door, was to have her contract ended by the Harris government and a committee of the Legislature, dominated by Conservatives, voting in favour of the president of the Progressive Conservative Association in Nipissing—that is, North Bay—Mr Gordon Miller, who was also a Progressive Conservative candidate on two occasions.

This is to be an officer of the House. This is not the government appointing one of their own to implement policy. This is a watchdog. That's another clear indication that this government does not intend to brook any criticism from people in independent positions. We've seen a similar lack of co-operation with the Information and Privacy Commissioner when she investigated the government of Ontario giving the names, addresses, telephone numbers and bank account balances to polling firms and to a bank in this province.

We have environmental groups and the official opposition and the third party who have consistently in this House and in other venues given fair warning of the consequences of cutting the environmental budget to the bone. I can recall, when I had the privilege of being environment minister of this province, that there were substantial increases in the budget and substantial increases in staff. On many occasions I've heard members oppose, at the instigation of Guy Giorno or whoever writes

the notes for members who speak in the House, blame the opposition or blame the Liberal Party for spending too much money. I'll say something to the people of this province today: If you want to accuse me of being part of a government that spent hundreds of millions of dollars to protect the environment and the drinking water in this province and added hundreds of staff to protect the environment, then I plead guilty to that accusation and I'm proud of it. I think that is the role of government. There are many areas where government shouldn't be involved. One definite area where government should be involved is the protection of the environment. There's a mantra on the other side, almost a religion on the other side, that government is evil, that all government expenditures are to be criticized.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: If the member for Peterborough wants to defend one third of the staff of the Ministry of the Environment cut and over 40% of the budget and you've got five dead people in Walkerton, then you stand up and defend it. That's exactly what's happening in this province. I can tell you that when you take away from the Minister of the Environment the resources he needs to do his job—

The Acting Speaker: Refer to the Speaker, please.

Mr Bradley: I cannot believe that you would defend that, because the Minister of the Environment needs those resources to do the job. That's why he's going to have a difficult time implementing what has been suggested at a press conference today, because he needs the staff to do that. That's why you don't have the drinking water plan, the regimen that is there to report on drinking water in this province, why it doesn't come out every year now. They don't have the staff to do it. You're asking the Minister of the Environment to do a job and you're tying his hands behind his back. That is unfair and that's a decision which is made at the top, not by an individual Minister of the Environment, who would want those kinds of resources to do that job.

We've had not only cuts to the Ministry of the Environment, but to the Ministry of Natural Resources. Fully 50% of the staff is gone. Our conservation authorities, which protected many of our waterways in so many ways, and the Ministry of Natural Resources, which had the same role of protecting our natural waterways, have had half of the staff fired out the door and millions upon millions of dollars taken away from them while we've got lots of money for the corporations, all kinds of money to cut corporate taxes, while the richest people in this province get a huge tax cut and while the government engages in a public relations exercise of mailing \$200 cheques to people at a cost. If you asked the people of Ontario, "Would you like to get that \$200 cheque from the government"—something they learned from an American governor—"or would you rather have it invested in protecting your drinking water?" I say almost unanimously they would want that money applied to protecting the drinking water in this province.

1640

We've had specific cuts in the division that deals with water protection in this province as enunciated in the House earlier today: 52% in one division, 42% in another division, 25% in another division, 33% in another division, all dealing with water quality in this province, cut from the Ministry of the Environment. That's simply not acceptable. We've had a weakening of environmental regulations.

Do you know something that was very, very ironic? Almost at the time the situation in Walkerton was unfolding, a story in the press came out that talked about the fact that they are re-establishing the Red Tape Commission, with Frank Sheehan and Bob Wood as the chairs of that commission. I don't think either one could be accused of being a raving environmentalist in this province, whatever other virtues they might have. But what you have to know is that a senior Progressive Conservative MPP who headed the Ontario Red Tape Commission urged the Ministry of the Environment to drop its prosecution of a company that violated a provincial landfill regulation. In other words, while the government is in the process of weakening the regulation, the Red Tape Commission is saying to the Ministry of the Environment: "You may as well drop these charges, because we're going to weaken the regulation. We're going to remove the regulation. We're going to take it away."

How many regulations, of the hundreds of regulations that have been removed in this province, affect the Ministry of the Environment? Enough, I'm going to tell you, to keep one promise that a lot of people made behind the scenes: "We'll get the Ministry of the Environment out of your face." Well, the Ministry of the Environment is out of a lot of people's faces, unfortunately, in this province. It has to be strengthened; it has to be restored to what it was at one time.

You've downloaded responsibilities to municipalities in terms of more municipalities now having to assume water and sewer, and they're going to have to turn it over to privatization. I don't think privatization will be a good option for the people in this province.

You've closed down the provincial labs. Let me tell you the importance of those provincial laboratories to the province of Ontario. In Walkerton, it seems to me that if you had sent those samples to a Ministry of the Environment laboratory and they had read those results, E coli of such a virulent strain, the first thing they would have done was to phone the medical officer of health and say, "Shut down this operation, and cut off the water," because those people are accountable to this Legislature, to a minister directly and to the people of this province indirectly. That's what would have happened if that lab was in place to do that, and it wasn't there to do that.

I suspect that when there were some difficulties earlier this year and even back in 1998, when the regional office tried to take some action—the regional office is stretched to the limit now and cannot undertake the kinds of

activities it once could when it had the staff, when it had the financial resources.

I believe that as you come up with this resolution today, this motion, there will be those who will say that it's politically clever, and indeed you do a lot of things that are politically clever. But if the people of this province believe that political cleverness should win out over principle and dedicated public services, then I think this province is in for a great deal of danger. I call upon this government to have a full, independent public inquiry of this situation and to restore the kind of funding and resources that the Ministry of the Environment requires.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I want to begin by amending our amendment, Mr Speaker. I know it has been discussed with you. There was a mistake made in one line, and I just want to make sure that I place the correct amendment:

That Mr Newman's motion be amended by deleting that portion of the motion beginning with "That the standing committee on general government" and ending with "Ontario's water supply," and substituting the following:

"That the government, under the Public Inquiries Act, appoint a public inquiry into Ontario's water supply to consider and report on the safety of the province's drinking water, in particular:

"To examine legislation and regulations governing the provision of, standards for and testing of drinking water in the province;

"To examine the adequacy of the inspection and monitoring programs for all provincial water systems, and the role of the province in guaranteeing adequate testing, including funding and staffing considerations;

"To examine any other matters that the commission considers relevant to the above terms of reference to ensure that the tragedy of Walkerton does not ever happen again anywhere in this province;

"That the three House leaders are consulted and must approve the government's appointee(s) to the commission, any changes or additions to the above terms of reference for the commission and the reporting date for the commission's interim and final reports."

The Acting Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved that Mr Newman's motion be amended by deleting the portion of the motion beginning with "That the standing committee on general government" and ending with—

Mr Duncan: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker: Dispense? No. And ending with "That at 5:50 pm this afternoon the Speaker will put all questions necessary to decide on the emergency debate motion on Ontario's water supply" and substituting the following:

"That the government of Ontario, under the Public Inquiries Act, appoint a public inquiry into Ontario's water supply to consider and report on the safety of the province's drinking water, in particular:

"To examine legislation and regulations governing the provisions of, standards for and testing of drinking water in the province;

"To examine the adequacy of the inspection and monitoring programs for all provincial water systems, and the role of the province in guaranteeing adequate testing, including funding and staffing considerations;

"To examine any other matters that the commission considers relevant to the above terms of reference to ensure that the tragedy of Walkerton does not ever happen again anywhere in this province;

"That the three House leaders are consulted and must approve the government's appointee(s) to the commission, any changes or additions to the above terms of reference for the commission and the reporting date for the commission's interim and final reports."

Mr Duncan: Let me begin my remarks by expressing my regrets and condolences to the people of Walkerton about this terrible tragedy. I know the people of my community of Windsor share those regrets with what happened.

In the short time I have available to me, I want to address several issues; first, what we know at this point in time. I want to take a moment to address the government's motion, and then I want to take a moment to address the motion that my leader, Dalton McGuinty, has put on the floor of this House, in order that we can understand what is going on.

First of all, the two and three quarter hours we're debating this issue on the floor of the House tonight, in the view of the official opposition, is simply inadequate. I think it really shows where this government is at in terms of what it wants to do in response to this terrible tragedy.

What do we know? We know, first of all, that the Ministry of the Environment's budget has been cut by 40% since this government took office some five years ago; moreover, we know that 42% of the staff who were dedicated to water and drinking water were laid off as part of these cuts—this in spite of the promise of the Premier, then leader of the third party, Mike Harris, that his government would not make cuts to the Ministry of the Environment.

We also know that Bill 107 was passed in May 1997, and what did that do? It downloaded the responsibility for water and sewer plants on to municipalities, that is, it gave it to municipalities without giving them the resources or what they needed to continue to ensure that our water supply was protected as it had been up until those times. All Ministry of the Environment labs were closed in 1996. Some of the most advanced laboratories in the world—closed, privatized—and the proper procedures were not put into place at that time. This government was warned at that time about the potential for problems. It was warned by the official opposition. It was warned by environmental groups. As recently as two weeks ago, questions about the safety of Ontario's drinking water were put eloquently in a report prepared by a leading environmental group.

Finally, we also know today that in the last week, 1,000 people have fallen ill. We know that five people have died. We know that 12 remain in critical condition. Today the government brings forward a motion. Let's be clear what that motion does. In its main operative clause, the motion effectively precludes hearings from beginning until after the police investigation, until after everything else has happened, in short—a gag.

Mr Bradley: All legal suits.

Mr Duncan: All legal suits. It could be a long, long time. It's a stonewall; it's a gag; it's an attempt by this government to avert being held accountable and responsible for what happened in Walkerton. Make no mistake: It was this government, that Minister of the Environment, that Premier who are responsible for this debacle and the terrible tragedy that has befallen the people of Walkerton. You will be held to account. You'll be held to account by the courts; you'll be held to account by this Legislature through other matters.

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We have placed a motion that simply will allow a full public inquiry under our own act to go ahead. The terms of reference of that motion make it abundantly clear that it can go forward without prejudicing any criminal matters, without prejudicing any civil matters or without prejudicing the charter rights that are guaranteed and afforded to anybody involved in this. It can happen and it ought to happen, and it ought to happen right away.

The people of Ontario are only beginning now to see the consequences of the Common Sense Revolution. Sadly, five people have paid with their lives because of this government's inept handling of the deficit, because of this government's penchant for tax cuts over public safety, because of this government's lack of willingness to listen to the critics at the time, to listen to the people who advised you and said, "You're moving too fast."

This motion today that the government has put—we challenge them to vote for our amendment. If you really want a public inquiry—we've given you the terms of reference, the statute, in a manner that protects everyone's interests but allows it to go forward—then you'll vote for our amendment. If you don't, it's just a stonewall; it's just a gag. I suspect no matter how hard they try, they're not going to be able to bury the facts of this. They are not going to be able to escape accountability. They are not going to be able to escape the bottom line reality that it was this government's policy, this government's legislation, this government's ideology that has led directly to the tragedy that has unfolded in Walkerton in the last week.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Certainly, this is not a pleasant day for this Legislature or for this province. I want to extend, on behalf of the people of my riding of Hamilton East, my condolences to the families, to the friends, to the loved ones of five Ontarians who have died, to the thousand or so who are ill and particularly the ones who are critically ill.

What happened in Walkerton is a tragedy, and it is a tragedy that was preventable. These people who have

died were simply carrying out one of the most basic necessities of life, that is, the use of water, whether it was drinking or whether it was bathing. As a result of a let-down by the people who they believed were responsible for ensuring their safety and well-being, five Ontarians have lost their lives, and there may be more, unfortunately, as this tragedy continues to unfold.

I was astonished last week when I saw the Premier of Ontario go into town and instead of telling people what he knew and how he was going to fix it, he started pointing fingers. As people were still dying around him, as the community was in panic, the Premier decided that it was time to blame a previous government for what had happened in Walkerton.

What we see today, instead of trying to get to the truth of what has happened, instead of getting to the bottom of what has happened, is really a public relations ploy in a motion that doesn't allow a proper hearing into this, that does not allow proper investigation of the facts, that simply will delay any real information on what happened and how we can prevent this from coming forward for as long as two or three years. If there is a criminal investigation, if there are criminal charges, it may even be delayed beyond disposing of those charges. That could be years and years, and the people of Walkerton and the people of Ontario will not know what went wrong and will not know how to prevent this again.

This government has failed to take responsibility, through a lack of leadership, in protecting our environment and protecting our water. At the end of the day, you get elected to govern. When you form a government, when you're a member of a cabinet, you're the Premier of Ontario, there is an essential responsibility that comes with that job. Once your decisions contribute to a problem—and your policy decisions over the last five years contribute to what has happened in Walkerton—you've got to stand up and take that responsibility.

Let me tell you what some of the residents have said.

Dieter Weber, whose 89-year-old mother is ill with bacterial infections, says the Ontario government shoulders much of the responsibility. This gentleman said: "In a small town like this, the officials work with limited resources. The people who are now being blamed, I know them as basically honest people. They're good people, but this could happen in any town." Weber said the tragedy could have been averted if the Conservative government hadn't cut money from the environmental and health ministries and privatized the four laboratories responsible for water testing. This is a resident of that town; this is not an opposition politician.

Clearly, what we have seen occur here could have been prevented. We warned this government. I remember the environment critic, my colleague from St Catharines, and others warned this government, as you were privatizing these services, what would happen. We warned this government, as you were shifting responsibility to the municipalities, what would happen. We warned this government, as you went on this massive cut to the Ministry of the Environment in your first couple of years

where you've cut one third of the staff, where you've cut 40% of the budget, that this would start to happen and that tragedies would occur across Ontario. We were laughed at by the government at that time. We were told we were just raising hysteria. We were told we were just fearmongering at that time. Who was fearmongering, who was raising hysteria? What we were raising were concerns that we have seen now come to light. We have seen a tragedy of immense proportions to this town, to this province and, I would suggest, to this country.

What is even more of a tragedy is how this government is choosing to handle this and deal with it. We asked today for a public inquiry. We were ignored. What we have is a resolution that does nothing but stall, delay, whitewash. It is simply this government's efforts to put this issue on the back burner. I think we owe more than that to the people of Walkerton, we owe more than that to the individuals who lost their lives, and we owe more than that to their families. I would hope the government today, for the first time on this issue, does the responsible thing and supports the amendments we have put forward to allow the people across this province to peek in and get a clear look as to what went wrong and how quickly we can fix it: not six months from now, not a year from now, not three years from now, but today.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'd just like to again add my expression of concern on behalf of a lot of the people in the city of Toronto. I know the mayor of Toronto has sent tankers of water and bottled water to Walkerton. There is sometimes little we can do, but at least an offer to help has gone out from a lot of cities. Our hearts go out to everybody in Walkerton, because they certainly in no way deserve this or should have to go through this tragic situation here.

In many ways, I guess, this is a wakeup call for all of us in Ontario, no matter whether we live in a big city or a small city. Perhaps we have taken the protection and safety of our water for granted. I think in that, maybe we all share that loss of innocence as far as our water. We assume that because we live in North America, in a modern province like Ontario, everything is taken care of. But we know that if we don't take care of things, these tragedies can occur. Maybe the only good that can come out of this tragedy is that we ensure this never happens again.

We're not going to be able to ensure this never happens again unless we take proactive steps to defend not only small towns, the Walkertons of Ontario, but all of Ontario. You can't do this with this government's motion, which is a blatant attempt at political damage control. It doesn't want, and I think it's afraid, to open the doors for the public to look into the Ministry of the Environment, because the Ministry of the Environment is missing in action. They are not a ministry that is functional, that is doing its job. They are trying with their limited resources, but they cannot. How can they achieve any kind of protective results with a 40% cut in their budget? One third of their staffers have been laid off or fired. Maybe the ministry can prove—and I would cer-

tainly find that very hard to believe, but I'd be willing to listen—that those cuts had nothing to do with some of these problems. I'd like to see them prove that.

1700

Right now, though, they're telling me, and at the press conference this morning they were telling the people of Ontario, that they want to investigate themselves. That is not acceptable, because they are one of the parties that should be investigated. They should not be in any way, shape or form evaluating their performance. That is what we've been told they were going to do. That is not acceptable. We need an independent party or parties, a retired judge, to come in here and look into the operations of this ministry to see whether they've had the resources and have done their job as they're supposed to.

Obviously we've got a lot of conflicting bits of information that at first blush show a complexity of incompetence, basically, a miscommunication, a lack of even going to a site to ensure that the chlorination and the water purification were working properly. They assumed someone else was doing the job. You can't protect people's health by assuming someone else is doing it. At first blush it looks as if there's miscommunication, there isn't proper inspection, there's not proper certification, so I think there's more than enough evidence to indicate that the Ministry of the Environment should not be investigating themselves. For the minister and the Premier to tell the people of Ontario that that's the way they're going to come to the bottom of this is an insult to our intelligence. We need an independent authority to investigate that ministry because so far that ministry has shown that it is suffering from those massive cuts.

I've been involved in the Oak Ridges moraine, and that is about water. It's the rain barrel of Ontario. The Ministry of the Environment is missing in action there. They never speak out on the issue. They never show any interest in protecting the aquifers up there. So where are they in protecting our water supply? I do not trust that they have the resources or the direction from the Premier's office to do that.

The budget cuts speak louder than words in terms of where this government's priorities are with this ministry, and this ministry is a facade of its former self. Just look through the cuts, year after year. No one on that side has been standing up to say, "We need this ministry to protect certain public health interests." They haven't done that, so the cuts have been coming fast and furious. That is why we want a clean investigation, to see what is going on in that ministry.

We have, supposedly, two other investigations, and that's fine. We've got the police investigation, but it's a closed-door, confidential investigation. A lot of governmental information will not come out. We also have the inquest, but the inquest doesn't blame anyone; the inquest is limited. They're not going to come in and investigate the ministry and see who's been doing or not doing their job. We need someone to go into that building up on St Clair and Avenue Road and go to all the offices and find out what they've been doing, why they weren't

doing their job and, if it wasn't the ministry, who wasn't doing their jobs. At least we have all the information in a very comprehensive fashion before the people of Ontario so the people of Ontario can rest assured that there is a system that protects them.

The people of Ontario don't have the time or the expertise to protect themselves in these instances. They can't do it. They're unable to do it. That's why they pay their taxes. They assume government is doing that. In this case, they assumed wrong. Obviously one level of governance was not working, and I think you have to start to lay the blame at the top, because it shows that you just can't download recklessly on to small or large municipalities. You can't do it and expect everything to function as usual. You can't cut year after year.

It's not working, and we have to find out why it's not working. The only way to do it is for this government to stop taking the politically expedient route in trying to sweep this under the rug. I hope the people of Ontario don't accept that attempt to sweep it under the rug. Everybody in this province should be calling for an independent inquiry to get to the bottom of this and clean out that ministry and put in safeguards that are as strong as possible, and not listen to the special interests who don't want to protect the environment for their own personal profit.

Let's do the right thing. We need a complete, independent inquiry immediately.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I'm pleased to conclude the remarks this afternoon on this motion on behalf of my Liberal colleagues. I certainly agree with all my predecessors, most especially Dalton McGuinty, who addressed us just a while ago.

I want to agree with everyone who has spoken this afternoon by offering my condolences to the families who have lost loved ones and to those other families that are coping with family members who are, at the present time, ill. I spoke to a woman from Walkerton this afternoon who is in her eighth day of monitoring her health condition. She thinks she is getting close to the green light but she's not sure. She figures she's got another couple of days left.

So yes, we do the right thing in offering our sympathy, our support. As a Legislature, we have more to do.

Can you imagine, I say to my colleagues, if one of the deceased or one of the very seriously ill was your daughter, your mother, your spouse? Can you imagine the rage that would be overtaking you? Maybe it's just me. I would be apoplectic—I am apoplectic, and I don't have relatives involved in this. When I look at what I am asked to believe about something as basic as the safety and security of water, what do I see? I know there's more information, but if I listened to the minister and the deputy this morning, if I had read the weekend press, I would be incredulous. For weeks and months, I now have been told, there was toxic crap in the water of that community. Responsible people at the municipal and provincial levels knew and they did not very much about

it. Oh, they did something, but they clearly did not do enough to save my family member—my two-year-old daughter who is now dead, my 79-year-old mother who is now dead, my 45-year-old sister who is nearly dead, and hundreds of other people who, as Dalton McGuinty and others have said, have been sickened beyond belief. That's the reality.

What would I want? I'll tell you something: I would want and I would expect to get to the bottom of this, and getting to the bottom of this is clearly not a matter of leaving it to people who may very well be, and clearly appear to be, defendants in the action. I mean, it is just absurd to imagine that the town of Walkerton or the Ontario Ministry of the Environment should be materially directing any of these inquiries when we know—the reasonable person has to know—that they are almost certainly going to be defendants in the action.

If we believe anything of what we say routinely in this place about responsibility and accountability, and I have to believe honourable members on both sides of this aisle believe the rhetoric that spews from our mouths on a daily basis, we will say to those dead people in Bruce county, "On our solemn watch we will give you, as a minimum tribute, a full and impartial inquiry so that your loved ones and your neighbours will know the circumstances that led to your tragic and untimely death." Anything less than that is an insult to their memory and is a slap in the face to their relatives. That is the very least we can do. I know there is more information to be discovered. I'm quite prepared to admit that there may be some unbelievable testimony advanced. If what I'm already asked to believe is to be believed, it is sickeningly incredible. I want the facts.

1710

I was up in this place 10 days ago on the POSO matter, and apparently we're going to vote tonight on my motion. What do we know there? This is the Province of Ontario Savings Office matter. What we know in that case is this: For whatever reason, the Ontario government broke the law and released, quite inappropriately, sensitive and confidential financial information of 50,000 Ontario depositors to that bank. We know that. We've been told that by the independent, impartial arbiter, Dr Cavoukian, at the privacy and information office. We know that. But now we know more than that. We know that when she tried to find out how it happened, she has been frustrated and obstructed by the very people who broke the law. Apparently, later tonight or tomorrow, this Legislature is going to vote down a motion to give those 50,000 people a much better understanding of why their rights were impugned and why the law was broken in that way.

Do you expect me, as someone who has seen that in just the last fortnight from this government, to accept the kind of inquiry that is being offered up by the government in this motion, standing in the name of the Minister of the Environment? I just can't believe that we individually or collectively have such a low estimate of our own integrity that we would seriously offer that to anyone. I

don't have any great confidence that my leader's amendment is going to be accepted. I expect that it will be voted down this afternoon. What am I left with? I'm going to tell you something. I have not a jot nor tittle of interest in the kind of motion and inquiry that's being offered up by the government in this motion.

I have to tell you, sadly, as a member of this Legislature of some long standing, and I say "sadly" to the people of Bruce county, I'm afraid in the end you're only going to be left with two inquiries that you can count on. The first will be the coroner's inquest which, as my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence observed a moment ago, is obviously limited in scope. But I expect that to be an inquiry of some integrity and independence. Obviously the police investigation I expect will be as well. But sad to say, I think beyond that you're probably going to have to depend on independent legal action, because the kind of parliamentary offering you're getting today is an insult to you, and you should not, nor should we here, accept it, because it is a transparent nullity. I can tell you, I would not spend one moment of my time on such an inquiry. We owe those people who have died and those people who are still sick answers.

My colleagues have said—Mr Bradley knows far better than I—that there have been many things occurring, and not all of them very happy, at the Ministry of the Environment. I was saying at a caucus meeting earlier today, "Colleagues, as far as I can tell, from my constituency experience in eastern Ontario, the Ministry of the Environment is now rather like one of those Hollywood façades." There is just that: a façade with nothing behind it. It is a chimera. It is a fiction to actually believe that there's anyone there minding the store. You know, you can just talk to people at the ministry and they'll tell you that, in the field.

Those chickens are coming home to roost. Absolutely, there will be responsibilities that attach to the local government. You bet. Those will have to be detailed, and for those there must be some accountability and responsibility. But how many times have I heard Mr Clement and others like him say, "You know, the municipalities are children of this Legislature, and you're not going to be able to put a question on a municipal referendum without our approval"? Well, as Mr Bradley has said and others have agreed, water policy at its core is a provincial responsibility. Clearly, we have failed in that responsibility. How precisely it has come to pass is for an inquiry to determine. But we have failed, make no mistake.

It's not that many years ago, I say to the now Minister of Energy, the former Minister of Health, that thoughtful people in this province were saying to the Harris government, "You download responsibility for public health and water testing and land ambulances to rural and smaller municipalities at your peril." They were right. Let me make this sad and sorrowful prediction. What we've seen with water in rural Ontario we will see with land ambulances within the next five years. There is more tragedy just around the corner on that account, because we are downloading responsibilities, in the health area

particularly, that properly attach to the provincial government.

Let me just conclude by saying I've spent some of the day reading Henrik Ibsen's famous play *An Enemy of the People*. Some 120 years ago that marvellous playwright captured the moral conundrum that we face here today beautifully. If you haven't read this play, read it. I say to the Premier of Ontario, Michael D. Harris, my neighbour from North Bay, the next few hours and the next few days will make plain for me and the people of north Bruce whether or not the current Premier of Ontario is a friend or an enemy of the people.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Let me say at the outset that I want to share my time with the member for Broadview-Greenwood. We will hopefully share it in equal parts.

Let me also say at the outset that I was in Walkerton earlier today. I got to speak with a number of residents of Walkerton and the area. I suspect many of them are watching this discussion here tonight. I want to extend to them my condolences and the condolences of all the members of the NDP caucus. I also want to say to them that they need to listen very carefully and watch very carefully what this government is up to. This government has put forward a motion today which they say indicates that the government wants to get to the bottom of this. I want people at home to know that there are three parts of this motion which will ensure that there will be no getting to the bottom of it. In fact, what will result from this motion is the government's continuing to delay doing anything.

First of all, the government wants to put in place a legislative committee, dominated by Conservative members, to go out there and essentially examine what Conservative members have already done to the Ministry of the Environment. In other words, the very government that is responsible for cutting the Ministry of the Environment, for laying off the inspectors, the scientists and the enforcement officers is now going to pretend that it somehow has the political will, the moral conviction, to say that they were wrong and to do something about it. We've seen no indication of that here, no indication of that in anything this government has done. That's the first problem with their motion.

The second problem with their motion is that the standing committee on general government, which will supposedly do the hearings, will only be sitting when the House is not in session. I've watched this government. When they consider a matter urgent, they don't wait until the House is not in session for the particular committee to sit; the committee sits right away. Just by indicating that the committee will only sit when the House is not in session, it's a pretty clear indication that what the government is really up to here is an attempt to delay and to put this off.

Then you read further in the motion and it says, "That the committee commence its review by considering, as they become available, the results and any recommendations that emerge from the Ontario Provincial Police

investigation, the pending coroner's inquest, and the investigation by the Ministry of the Environment," that is, this legislative committee won't even get started until these other things are completed. That is another strategy for delay. This is not a strategy for getting out there and inquiring what happened; this is a strategy to put it off, to delay, to in effect put all of this on the back burner.

Then, in the next-to-last paragraph, is the part that really takes the cake. The government, in its motion, says, "That if legal proceedings arise from these investigations, the committee suspend its review of any specific issues that are the subject of those proceedings."

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Note that it doesn't specify criminal proceedings; it says any "legal proceedings." If someone out there starts a civil lawsuit at some point, and the civil lawsuit can cover everything from A to Z, forwards and backwards on this issue, the committee would have to suspend its proceedings. Again, this is not a strategy to get to the bottom of the issue, to find out what went wrong, why it went wrong, what can be done about it; this is nothing more than a strategy to put all of these issues on the back burner, so that if they ever see the light of day, it will be three or four years from now.

What a cynical ploy. What a cynical strategy. What a cynical, awful, ugly way to respond to a situation where people have died and other people are critically ill, to in effect put together a strategy which will amount to nothing more than a strategy for delay and a strategy for cover-up. That is why I'm going to put forward, and I'm putting forward now, an amendment to this government's motion. I want to state it clearly and get it on the record now.

I move that the motion be amended by deleting everything following the words "to that end" and substituting the following:

"That an independent inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act be called immediately, headed by a commissioner appointed by agreement of all recognized parties in the Legislature, to investigate all matters related to contaminated water supplies in Ontario, including the impact of government cutbacks and policy decisions and the expansion of intensive farming to ensure that all Ontarians can have confidence in the safety of their drinking water."

That is the amendment of the motion I want placed. I want to provide a copy of this to you, Speaker, and to the Clerk's officers.

The Acting Speaker: So I'm clear, this is an amendment to the amendment?

Mr Hampton: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: We seem to have at least a small technical difficulty in that the amendment you are offering needs to be to Mr McGuinty's amendment, and the wording does not follow that way, so I'll rule that out of order. You can perhaps find a way to remedy that.

Mr Hampton: I would just propose that we make an amendment to the main motion.

The Acting Speaker: That would be out of order.

Mr Hampton: Let me speak to why this kind of amendment is necessary, and I'll get back to how we're going to place it in a minute.

It's very clear that there have been substantial cutbacks at the Ministry of the Environment. Over \$100 million of the Ministry of the Environment budget has been taken, and 900 scientists, technicians and experts have been shown the door. It's very clear, for example, that the ministry is not able to conduct the kinds of investigations and prosecutions that it used to undertake.

When this government took office, \$2.6 million in fines were basically being collected every year from those who were convicted of infractions against the environment. This government's record is now such that barely \$900,000 in convictions and fines are resulting from the activities of inspectors and enforcement officers at the Ministry of the Environment, this while an independent, outside analysis suggests that this province now has the second-worst environmental record in all of North America after the state of Texas. While the independent advice from outside Ontario says that the province's environmental record is the second worst in North America, this government's capacity to do anything out there to protect the environment, to enforce the rules and regulations, and finally to prosecute has been greatly diminished over the last five years.

Just look, for example, at the issue of water inspection. I think many people in Ontario today would be greatly shocked to learn that this government, since taking office, has cut the MOE's staff assigned to water and drinking water quality by 42%. In 1995 there were 113 inspectors and staff devoted to water and drinking water quality. It's now down to 48. In 1995 there were 28 staff devoted to groundwater and hydrology. It's now down to 15, a 53% reduction in terms of the staff out there who are available to do this work.

It's not as if this government hasn't had warnings. This government has had warning after warning after warning. First the Environmental Commissioner, not once but on several occasions, in her annual report of 1995, which was issued in early 1996, and again in 1996 and 1997, said to this government: "You have serious problems out there with groundwater. You need a comprehensive groundwater strategy." What did the government do? Ignored it. The Environmental Commissioner came forward and pointed out that the budget wasn't there to adequately do the job that the Ministry of the Environment is supposed to do, and because technicians, scientists, inspectors and enforcement officers have been laid off, it was not capable of doing that job any further. She warned the government of that. What did the government do? Nothing.

Then the Provincial Auditor stepped forward and said to this government: "You've got a serious problem. This ministry is no longer able to do the work that it is, by law, required to do." What was the government's response? They cut more.

There is clearly a connection between this government's cutting of the Ministry of the Environment, this

government's cutting of the budget, cutting of the staff, this government's privatization of the water labs, 400,000 tests that used to be done by the four labs in the province, one in Thunder Bay, one in London, one in Toronto, and one in Kingston, all closed by this government—there's a very clear linkage between this government's cuts in that area and the inability of the province now to guarantee the safety and security of the water supply.

As you read Eva Ligeti's report from 1995 and 1996, it's very clear that this kind of disaster could have happened in a number of municipalities across this province. The fact that it happened in Walkerton is simply an indication of how unfortunate people in Walkerton are and how fortunate people in other municipalities are that it didn't happen there. The scale of the cutbacks, the scale of the inability of the Ministry of the Environment to now do the job that it was intended to do and that citizens of the province have a reasonable right to expect that they should do—the scale of all that is evident.

What kind of inquiry do we need? If we're going to get to the bottom of this, the very people who have been responsible for crippling the Ministry of the Environment, the very people who have fired the scientists, the inspectors and the technicians, the very people who have come forward and said that most of our environmental controls are nothing but red tape and should be eliminated can't now be in charge of conducting these kinds of hearings and this kind of investigation. That won't do.

When you see, as I say, the motion that they've put forward today, a motion which is intended to delay, a motion which is intended to move these issues off the front burner and back into the recesses, a motion which is intended to ensure that most of this information doesn't see the light of day, it is just further evidence that this can't be the process by which we deal with the issues that have been raised in Walkerton and are inevitably going to be raised elsewhere in the province. That's why we need an independent commission of inquiry. That's why the commission of inquiry should not be held up by when the Legislature sits and when the Legislature doesn't sit, should not be held up by when the coroner's report comes in, when an OPP investigation comes in or when the Ministry of the Environment does its own work, work which I already have a lot of doubt about. That's why an independent commissioner should be able to make his or her decision about whether or not a court proceeding somewhere goes to the root of the issues that need to be investigated and not have that decision made by the very people who are responsible in large part for the disaster that's happened; that is, the members of the government.

1730

If this government really wants to take some concrete steps to address in a hurry what has happened at Walkerton and provide some assurance to other people across the province, then I've got a list of things they need to do.

First, they need to release the most recent water quality test results for all municipal drinking water systems. It's shocking that in the aftermath of Walkerton

this government still hasn't released the most recent water quality results for other municipalities across the province so that other municipalities will have some understanding of where they are. This government should immediately tell the public which water treatment plants have outstanding orders against them from the Ministry of the Environment. It hasn't done that. One would think, in the aftermath of the Walkerton tragedy, that they would be front and centre doing this.

This government should release the most recent audit reports on the status of all Ontario water treatment plants. If those audits have not been done, they must be done immediately. The government hasn't done that.

The government must reopen the four provincial labs and put Ontario back in the water quality testing business, increase the minimum number of tests required and, if necessary, make financial support available to the municipalities. One would think that if the government were really serious about what has happened here and wanted to make sure that this didn't happen again, they'd be taking steps in this direction as well—no indication.

Revoke the decision to end the water protection fund, which is the money for water and sewer capital projects, now scheduled to end this fiscal year. One would think the government would have come forward to say, "We recognize, given what happened at Walkerton, that the water protection fund should not end at the end of this fiscal year but should continue into the future to ensure this doesn't happen again." There's nothing from the government.

Bring forward the comprehensive groundwater strategy that the former Environmental Commissioner Eva Ligeti began calling for in 1996. No indication the government is moving there.

These are all concrete steps that could be taken. These are all concrete steps that should be taken in the aftermath of what has happened at Walkerton. Do we receive any indication of that from the government? None.

We had the Minister of the Environment stand earlier today and make a statement. I want to indicate to the people just how shallow that statement was. He said he will pass new regulations requiring private labs to report test results about unsafe drinking water to the medical officer of health, the municipality and the Ministry of the Environment.

When this government came to power, there was an accreditation process in place for private labs that required those private labs to do just that. This government did away with it. This government did away with the basic protection that was there. It now admits that it was wrong and it's going to bring it back. I have to say to the government, if you're going to do this, you've got to put back some of the staff, some of the scientists, the technicians and the inspectors, to ensure that whatever your accreditation process is, it is in fact lived up to. There's no indication from the government that they're prepared to do that.

Then the minister says he will require that municipalities inform the ministry if they change labs. It's not a

bad idea, because what happened at Walkerton is there was a change of private labs. One private lab was meeting all requirements and going above and beyond those requirements; the second lab that came in made information available to virtually no one. But if the government hadn't killed the accreditation process that was there in the first place, this would be the law in Ontario. This would be the direction in Ontario. Once again, the government doesn't admit that they themselves are responsible for this. They did away with the very accreditation process that was guaranteeing that this happened.

The minister says he will pass a regulation requiring all laboratories doing municipal work to be accredited. There was regulation requiring them to be accredited. This government did away with it. Then he says, "The ministry will review all the certificates of approval in the province for water treatment plants," and he will pass a regulation requiring all water treatment facilities to have their certificates reviewed every three years. If that's going to be done, this government had better realize that is a very labour-intensive activity. If you're going to do the inspections, make sure the certificates of approval are being lived up to and make sure they're being renewed every three years, this government will have to bring back some of the scientists, some of the inspectors and some of the technicians you so quickly escorted out the door in 1995 and 1996. But there is no indication from this government that they're prepared to do that.

What does this amount to then? What it amounts to is this: The government says they're going to pass new regulations, new legislation, but they've given no indication whatsoever that the people who are so badly needed to enforce those regulations and that legislative regime are going to be put in place. In other words, the government intends to pass regulation and legislation but then isn't going to do anything to ensure it's enforced.

That's exactly where we are now. There was no one at the Owen Sound MOE office to ensure that test results from the GAP laboratory were being followed up on, that the information was being made available to the medical officer of health and was being acted on. There was no one higher up the chain of command in the Ministry of the Environment to ensure that this was treated as a priority issue. Unbelievable.

There are a few things that people in this province should have a right to expect from their provincial government. One of them certainly has to be safe, clean drinking water, but this government, in its rush to take money out of the budget, in its rush to finance tax cuts for the well off, simply said: "Oh, this is a matter of red tape. It doesn't matter." If we look at what was presented here today, there is absolutely no indication that this government has learned a lesson, that this government is prepared to admit that it was wrong and is prepared to get back on the right track and do something about this. There's no indication of that whatsoever.

What we see from the minister this morning is an attempt at public relations damage control but not much

there for substance. What we see in the motion that was presented this afternoon is nothing more—and I say it again—nothing more than a strategy to delay, delay, delay and try to keep this issue out of the public eye. I used the word "Ipperwash." It's very similar. Whenever someone brings up the issue of Ipperwash, this government says: "Oh, there's a legal proceeding. We can't say anything about this. We can't do anything about it." Nothing at all can be brought to bear in terms of justice for the people who were the victims or justice for the families that were affected. What we see here is a strategy which intends to do just that, over again.

The government is going to hang its hat on it, and they're going to say, "Oh, but there's going to be an Ontario Provincial Police investigation." The Ontario Provincial Police will tell you that they are only concerned with breaches of the criminal law. That is a very narrow definition.

Then the government is going to say, "But there's going to be a coroner's inquest." But we know that the Solicitor General can limit the scope of a coroner's inquest. The Solicitor General can make the coroner's inquest very narrow in its review of what happened. Then we're told, "There's going to be a review by the Ministry of the Environment." That's the same Ministry of the Environment that has contributed so much to this happening.

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As I go through what the government is offering here—a very narrow criminal investigation by the OPP, the potential for a very narrow coroner's inquest and then for the Ministry of the Environment to investigate itself—I say again, people across the province and particularly people in Walkerton should not be hoodwinked, should not be taken in by what is happening here. This is not a strategy to get to the bottom of this matter. This is not a strategy for a full hearing, a full inquiry for all of the facts, all of the ramifications to be put on the table. This is a strategy to get to the very narrow issues, the criminal issues, and then to delay and to ensure that the broader inquiry which needs to take place never happens. That is why this is so awful. In the context where five people have already died and we're told that more may die, in the context where literally dozens of children are already ill and dozens more children are on a daily watch because they may become significantly ill, this government's response is another attempt to dodge and weave and ensure that the issues which ought to be part of the public debate never see the light of day.

As I have watched this unfold, as I listened to the Minister of the Environment's press conference this morning and saw that it was nothing but an attempt at public relations damage control, and then when I saw the motion here tonight, I can only say that the people of Walkerton are not going to get what they need out of this inquiry, and the people across Ontario who are very concerned about safe, clean drinking water are not going to get what they need and what they have a right to out of this process. This is very much a process designed to

ensure that this government which has cut the environment ministry, which has laid off the scientists, the technicians and the inspectors, this government which has said to small municipalities, "You're on your own"—this is nothing but a strategy for this government to avoid political responsibility, to avoid public responsibility for something which is at its core absolutely a provincial responsibility: the provision of clean, safe drinking water that the citizens of Ontario ought to be able to depend upon.

Speaker, I said that I wanted to move an amendment to the motion, and you ruled my initial amendment out of order. I now want to move an amendment to the motion, that it be amended by adding the words "to examine the impact of government cutbacks and policy decisions and the expansion of intensive farming" following the words "staffing considerations" in the third paragraph, and by adding the words "and to ensure that all Ontarians can have confidence in the safety of their drinking water" following the words "anywhere in this province" in the fourth paragraph.

I make this available to you, Speaker, and to the officers of the Clerk's table.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Hampton has moved that the amendment to the motion be amended by adding the words "to examine the impact of government cutbacks and policy decisions and the expansion of intensive farming" following the words "staffing considerations" in the third paragraph, and by adding the words "and to ensure that all Ontarians can have confidence in the safety of their drinking water" following the words "anywhere in this province" in the fourth paragraph.

Mr Hampton: Allow me to conclude just by pointing out the sorry chronology of this government on this whole front. In 1996 the Harris government cancelled the CURB program, Clean Up Rural Beaches, which worked with farmers to protect against agricultural runoff into the water supply, the very thing which is so germane to what we're talking about here. This government, once again, cancelled it.

I've pointed out again that in 1996 the Harris government stopped direct testing of the province's drinking water. It closed the four regional Ministry of the Environment testing labs that performed 400,000 drinking water quality tests annually. In the former Environmental Commissioner's 1996 annual report, she points out the municipalities were barely given eight weeks to find private labs to take the place of the public labs that were shut down.

Then we had the drastic budget cuts. The Ministry of the Environment's budget went from \$287 million in 1994-95 to \$165 million in this fiscal year. The staffing was cut from 2,500 scientists, inspectors and enforcement officers in 1994-95 to 1,500 this year. This is actually from a study which was done in the Canadian Public Policy Review. Then I pointed out the cuts that are specific to this area, cuts to examination of water and drinking water quality and cuts to groundwater and hydrology inspection staff.

Then there's the whole issue of the failure of this ministry now to do the prosecutions and the enforcement that used to be a matter of course. In 1994-95, average annual fines for the Ministry of the Environment were \$2.6 million; they're now down to \$955,000.

Then there is this government's pledge to cut environmental regulation by 50% as part of its so-called red tape exercise. That's what this government believes: that environmental regulation designed to protect the environment, designed to sustain and protect safe and secure water, is nothing but red tape that should be gotten rid of. A 1996 outbreak of cryptosporidia in Collingwood drinking water should have been a warning sign to this government.

Then we had the sorry state of the drinking water surveillance program. The Ministry of the Environment didn't test Walkerton water. The last published survey was 1997. Then we have the February 1999 Ministry of the Environment delivery strategy, which directs staff not to enforce dozens of environmental laws and regulations.

This is the record of this government on this environmental front. Now this government wants the people of Ontario to believe that the very Ministry of the Environment that has done this, that has been so negligent, is somehow now going to conduct a responsible investigation of what went wrong. It's not going to happen. It's not going to happen, and that is why we think it is absolutely essential that there be the independent inquiry, an independent inquiry that is not going to depend upon this government's Ministry of the Environment, is not going to be delayed by a narrow focus on criminal charges, is not going to be delayed by what we think will be a coroner's inquest which will be equally narrowly focused by this government.

I call on all members of the House, especially the Conservative members, don't make a terrible situation worse by following what is set out in your motion. Accept that we need to have an independent inquiry into what just happened here, an independent inquiry that is not delayed by all kinds of other processes. That is the only way we'll get to the bottom of this. That's the only way we can assure not only the people of Walkerton but people across the province that the right steps will be taken to protect our water supply, that drinking water quality will be sustained and that this can never happen again in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I am now required to put the questions. Mr Newman has moved:

"This House expresses sincere regret and concern over the tragic events faced by the residents, families and friends of the citizens of Walkerton;

"That this House sends its condolences to those who have lost loved ones and its prayers for those who continue to struggle with the ravages of this tragedy;

"That, out of respect for the victims of this tragedy and as a sign that the entire province joins with the people of Walkerton in mourning, the staff of the

Legislative Assembly be directed to fly flags at half-mast for the remainder of the week;

“That this House pledge, as Premier Harris has, to do whatever it takes to get to the bottom of this tragedy, and, to that end,

“That the standing committee on general government be directed to review the circumstances leading to the tragedy in Walkerton, and to report its findings and recommendations back to this House;

“That for purposes of its review of this matter, the committee is authorized to travel from place to place in Ontario and to meet and receive evidence from witnesses when the House is not in session;

“That the committee commence its review by considering, as they become available, the results and any recommendations that emerge from the Ontario Provincial Police investigation, the pending coroner’s inquest and the investigation of the Ministry of the Environment;

“That if legal proceedings arise from these investigations, the committee suspend its review of any specific issues that are the subject of those proceedings, but may continue to review and recommend government action to ensure the reliability and safety of Ontario’s water supply.”

Mr McGuinty has moved that Mr Newman’s motion be amended by deleting the portion of the motion beginning with “That the standing committee on general government” and ending with “Ontario’s water supply” and substituting the following:

“That the government, under the Public Inquiries Act, appoint a public inquiry into Ontario’s water supply to consider and report on the safety of the province’s drinking water, in particular:

“To examine legislation and regulations governing the provision of, standards for and testing of drinking water in the province;

“To examine the adequacy of the inspection and monitoring programs for all provincial water systems, and the role of the province in guaranteeing adequate testing, including funding and staffing considerations;

“To examine any other matters that the commission considers relevant to the above terms of reference to ensure that the tragedy of Walkerton does not ever happen again anywhere in the province;

“That the three House leaders are consulted and must approve the government’s appointee(s) to the commission, any changes or additions to the above terms of reference for the commission and the reporting date for the commission’s interim and final reports.”

Mr Hampton has moved that the amendment to the motion be amended by adding the words “to examine the impact of government cutbacks and policy decisions in the expansion of intensive farming” following the words “staffing considerations” in the third paragraph, and by adding the words “and to ensure that all Ontarians can have confidence in the safety of their drinking water” following the words “anywhere in this province” in the fourth paragraph.

Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr Hampton’s amendment carry?

All in favour will say “aye.”

All opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1753 to 1759.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of Mr Hampton’s amendment to the amendment to the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Lankin, Frances
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Marchese, Rosario
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martel, Shelley
Bryant, Michael	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Christopherson, David	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Churley, Marilyn	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Cleary, John C.	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael D.	O’Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Tsubouchi, David H.
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Turnbull, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 33; the nays are 48.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

We will now deal with Mr McGuinty’s motion to amend Mr Newman’s motion.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour will say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1802 to 1807.

The Acting Speaker: Will members please take their seats.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Lankin, Frances
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Marchese, Rosario

Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martel, Shelley
Bryant, Michael	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Christopherson, David	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Churley, Marilyn	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Cleary, John C.	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael D.	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Tsubouchi, David H.
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Turnbull, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan	Young, David

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 33; the nays are 48.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

We will now deal with Mr Newman's motion.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1810 to 1815.

The Acting Speaker: Will members take their seats, please.

All those in favour of Mr Newman's motion will rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael D.	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Tsubouchi, David H.
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Turnbull, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan	Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Lankin, Frances
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Marchese, Rosario
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martel, Shelley
Bryant, Michael	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Christopherson, David	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Churley, Marilyn	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Cleary, John C.	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 48; the nays are 33.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1818.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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