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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 23 October 2000

Lundi 23 octobre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 October 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 octobre 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PREMIER'S VISIT TO SUDBURY

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The Premier will be slithering into my community to make a rare public appearance this week, not to announce an equal travel reimbursement policy for northern cancer patients, nor to promise he'll repay the Sudbury Regional Hospital his three-year-old, \$10.6-million debt in unpaid restructuring money. He won't be in Sudbury to acknowledge he has a responsibility to help defray huge costs associated with municipal restructuring, nor is it his plan to commit funding to help build a new water treatment plant to replace the current centuries-old facility that has caused water problems for south-end residents for years.

He won't be apologizing for ridiculing northerners and dismissing us as malcontents because we didn't want Toronto's garbage dumped in our area; and he won't admit to a change of heart about his responsibility as Premier to curtail rising fuel costs; nor will he reverse his government's dangerous decision to privatize air ambulance paramedics.

He will be in Sudbury visiting our community with his hand out at a \$150 fundraising dinner. If you count the number of times the Premier has visited our area, you will know what Sudburians know: that almost every visit is made for the purpose of begging for money to maintain his extravagant, lavish lifestyle.

I urge the Premier to have a change of heart, priorities and ethics. Premier, use this visit to pay your debt to our hospital and provide desperately needed money; use this trip to direct \$24 million into the municipal restructuring debt that you have created; and use this trip to end health care apartheid for northerners.

FEDERAL ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): When the provinces and federal government originally signed the Canada health and social transfer, the agreement called for the federal government to provide funding of 50 cents on every health care dollar spent. That funding has reached an all-time pathetic low in 2000, to a point where

the federal government is providing only 11 cents of every health care dollar spent here in Ontario.

Our Premier and our Minister of Health have worked tirelessly on behalf of all Canadians to have funding restored to a more realistic level, despite the fact that the federal government sits with billions in surplus because of revenues from the strong economic growth in provinces such as Ontario and Alberta, and despite the Liberal opposition's not supporting the Premier's health care resolution in the House back in April, and despite the Leader of the Opposition's complete failure to work with the Premier to have Ontarians' federal tax dollars spent on health care.

Our Premier has shown commitment in leading all of Canada's Premiers into shaming Jean Chrétien into agreeing to add federal health care dollars into our system just prior to a federal election, and he did this partially by investing in health care ads. The ad buster over there disapproved.

The new federal funding after five years will still not be back to pre-Chrétien levels, but now Jean Chrétien is spending millions of dollars on partisan advertising trying to take credit for an agreement he was shamed into signing. The people of Ontario would like to hear the opposition leader comment on our tax dollars being used on federal partisan advertising.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Let's face it, Bill 132, introduced by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, permits private universities to set up shop in Ontario. She said, "It's about providing students with a wider choice." She goes on to say, "This is big business" and "So why would we get involved?" Education is not a business. It's about providing students with skills to compete in this competitive labour market.

I have a great deal of respect for the minister, but she has been led down the garden trail by a government which has created a crisis in the educational system. This was their intent in all of their policies. They said, "We need to create a crisis," and that is exactly what they've done on the Mike Harris watch. Tuition fees have gone up by 60%; student indebtedness is, on average, \$25,000; there have been a plethora of additional incidental fees that students are now paying.

Now that the students have more choices, does this really mean they have viable options? The operative word here is “options”—options that are viable and valuable, which is highly important as we enter the new millennium. There’s a demand for skilled professionals in this highly skilled workforce. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals support increased investment in our public colleges and universities, not passing the buck to private operators whose main motive is to make a profit. We don’t support private universities that will extract funds away from public institutions. Where is the promise Mike Harris has offered, that every qualified student would have a space in our colleges and universities? That seems to be gone, and they should be reminded about their promise they have not kept.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I’d like to ask for unanimous consent to wear a white ribbon to commemorate the 12th White Ribbon Campaign Against Pornography.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr DeFaria: Today marks the first day of the 12th annual White Ribbon Campaign Against Pornography week, organized by the group known as Canadians Addressing Sexual Exploitation. The ribbon I wear today was given to me by members of the Catholic Women’s League at St Patrick’s parish, a church in my riding of Mississauga East. People across Canada are being asked to wear white ribbons to show their support for the ongoing battle against the degrading and demeaning pornography. Wearing a white ribbon this week is a way of expressing our concerns about the harm pornography has on individuals, families and communities, and especially on our children.

Today, more than ever, pornography that is illegal and depraved is available to anyone with access to the Internet. I am pleased to tell you that this year the Peel Regional Police have launched a cyberspace program which is in the schools already to teach children from grades 3 to 10 how to use the Internet safely. I commend the initiatives made by volunteer organizations in our community that have worked hard to raise awareness on this issue and bring about change.

I ask all members to join me in wearing a white ribbon this week to show our solidarity with them and to express our deep concerns about this problem.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): On October 17 I was very proud to join 150 very special people in my riding for the Jane and Finch community and family recognition evening. The Jane and Finch community is an area of our city where many new immigrants continue to settle and many working people live in dense neighbourhoods. It is an area where individuals and families need help and supports.

How fitting it was to hold a celebration honouring its volunteers under the banner, “Volunteering, a great way to grow.” There has been tremendous gain and growth indeed, due to the labours of these special people. Here is how the volunteer experience was described by these selfless and dedicated individuals, the true heroes of the Jane and Finch community: “Volunteerism leads to employment”; “You feel better about yourself and your community”; “You’ll learn better parenting skills”; “One gains an incredible understanding of community participation”; “You give for the sake of others”; “You’ll learn and grow because you don’t take your responsibilities lightly.”

I take this opportunity to express my congratulations to all the Jane-Finch Community and Family Centre volunteers, and a great big thank you to Richard de Gaetano, the outgoing president, for nine years of selfless leadership, commitment, passion, dedication and openness. All of you have done a tremendous job. You have given your best. You have once again made our community a very proud one.

1340

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It’s been 84 days since the strike between Mine Mill/CAW and Falconbridge began in our community. This strike is having a profound negative impact on the workers, their families and the community at large.

The fact is, it didn’t have to be this way. This Harris government repealed the NDP government’s ban on scab labour. Now there’s no incentive for companies like Falconbridge to sit down and seriously negotiate a new collective agreement. Instead, the company is using its management and contract workers to continue production at the smelter, taking jobs away from those who are legitimately on strike.

In court several weeks ago, in an attempt to get an injunction against the union on picketing activity, Falconbridge said it was operating at 60% of its usual capacity. If that’s true—and the testimony was given under oath—it’s no wonder there are no negotiations going on. If you can replace your own workers with scab labour, why negotiate? This has been the problem since the start of the strike.

Last Friday, Falconbridge claimed the strikers were picketing on company property. They demanded picket shacks be removed by 6 am this morning. If not, strikers would be charged with trespassing. Of course, there’s no proof that anyone is trespassing, as Falconbridge still needs to prove where their property begins and ends. This is another example of how far the company is willing to go to enflame the situation.

On day one of the strike, they brought in a southern Ontario security firm to survey picket lines with mounted and hand-held cameras on a 24-hour basis. They lost a court injunction in September and now they’re trying to

drag in the Sudbury Regional Police on unfounded allegations of trespass.

Time to get back to the bargaining table. Time to end scab labour.

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise today in this House to show my appreciation for the very sensitive, accountable service that is provided for all who work at or visit Queen's Park by our legislative security services. Security at Queen's Park is handled in a most efficient manner. If ever you have to contact an officer, your call is responded to very quickly. Many of us who work here have overheard officers handle very difficult situations in a very professional manner. Employees or members of the public are treated humanely, equally, fairly and with respect in an environment of open communication.

We feel confident that social order problems or problems of compliance with the law are identified, thus providing us with a safe environment in which to work, often into the wee hours of the night. The commitment and dedication of the security officers at Queen's Park deserves to be recognized. I am very proud of the work of our legislative security services.

Please join me today in thanking this group of men and women who provide us with an excellent security service.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all those who helped open the new nurse practitioner office in the riding of Brant this week, particularly the Victorian Order of Nurses, Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk branch; the Brant County Health Unit; the Children's Aid Society of Brant; the Brant and Brantford Housing Authority; the Eagle Place Neighbourhood Association; and the Brantford Parks and Recreation Department.

Stepping Stones Resource Centre is one example of how nurse practitioners in the province can play a vital role in providing primary health care, especially with the severe shortage of doctors we have. The province has about 400 nurse practitioners, of whom about 70% are unemployed or underemployed. However, they cannot and they do not want to replace family physicians.

I must continue to bring to the attention of this House the prolonged doctor shortage existing in this province. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus have offered concrete solutions. However, these shortages continue to be a stark reminder that this government is not doing all it can to correct the situation.

In my riding of Brant, there are currently 18 vacancies for general practitioners in Brantford and three GP vacancies in Paris. Due to these shortages, there are tens of thousands of people in Brant without a family doctor. In fact, in Eagle Place, where I grew up and where my

mother still resides, there are 8,000 residents with only one family physician. That is why I want to express publicly again my disappointment with this government for their continued lack of action for the people of Ontario.

MUNICIPAL REPORT CARDS

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I rise today to offer congratulations to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and to offer my support for the recently introduced municipal report cards. This is an idea whose time has come.

One of the hallmarks of the Mike Harris government has been our focus on increasing and strengthening accountability. These new municipal report cards will enhance municipal accountability and give taxpayers more information on how their municipal tax dollars are being spent.

However, not everyone in this Legislature likes the idea of increased accountability. In fact, our newest member, the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, has made it clear he does not care for them. The member has offered two criticisms on this initiative. In a statement to the House last week, he said it would be better if we worked with our municipal partners. Well, guess what? We did. Over 40 municipalities in Ontario helped to develop these report cards through trial runs.

The Windsor Star also notes that the member proposed provincial reports cards—a fine idea. However, I remind the Liberals that in this place we are held accountable by the auditor, the Ombudsman, the Integrity Commissioner, the estimates process, the public accounts process and many other mechanisms.

We in this Legislature have grown accustomed to Liberals being contrary for the sake of being contrary. However, in this instance, what we're really observing is the Liberal agenda, which opposes accountability.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On Monday October 16, 2000, the member for Brant rose on a point of privilege to indicate that his rights as a member were infringed upon because he was denied entry to the Genest Detention Centre for Youth on October 5, 2000. The member for Niagara Centre and the Minister of Community and Social Services also made submissions.

The member for Brant referred to subclause 103(1)(b)(iv) of the Child and Family Services Act, which reads as follows: "A child in care has a right ... to speak in private with and receive visits from ... a member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario or of the Parliament of Canada."

In response to this point, let me say that the statutory provision does not state that the member has a right to speak and visit with a child in care; it states that the child in care has the right to speak with and receive visits from a member. In short, the right belongs to the child in care, not the member. Further, the jurisdiction for interpreting

the right of the child in care belongs to the courts of law, not to the Speaker.

The member for Brant also referred to section 59 of the Ministry of Correctional Services Act, which reads as follows: "Every member of the Legislative Assembly is ... entitled to enter and inspect any correctional institution, community resource centre or other facility established or designated under this act for any purpose related to the member's duties and responsibilities as a member of the Legislative Assembly, unless the minister determines that the institution, community resource centre or facility is insecure or an emergency condition exists in it."

The member for Brant, and subsequently the member for Niagara Centre, suggested that the Speaker should extend the rationale of section 59 of the Ministry of Correctional Services Act, which deals with adult correctional facilities, to find that the member has a similar right to visit young offender facilities covered by the Child and Family Services Act.

Again, were I to do as the member suggests, I would have to interpret the law, something that our precedents and parliamentary authorities indicate the Speaker should avoid doing. As has been confirmed by my predecessors in this chair, and Speakers in many parliaments elsewhere, interpretations of law should best be left to the courts.

I must point out that the matter raised by the member for Brant relates to activities that occurred away from this chamber and were unconnected with the member's parliamentary duties. The procedural authorities and a multitude of precedents make it clear that privilege attaches only to a member's parliamentary duties and not to subsidiary duties away from Parliament.

Therefore, I find that a *prima facie* case of privilege has not been established.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I am pleased to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have a group of visiting dignitaries from Portugal, who are here for a major cultural celebration with the Portuguese-Canadian community. I am sure all members would like to welcome our guests from Portugal.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Motions? The government House leader.

Applause.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Wait until they hear the motion, Mr Speaker, and you won't hear much clapping.

I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, October 23, Tuesday, October 24, and Wednesday, October 25, 2000, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker: Mr Sterling moves that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i)—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? 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.

Carried.

1350

VISITORS

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): On a point of order, Speaker: I think that all members of the House would want to join with me in welcoming in the gallery the mother and sister of page Andrzej Samoraj: Dr Barbara Mederski and Andrew's sister Krystyna.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): On a point of order, Speaker: I also welcome the family of Mikhail Ferrara, our page from Hamilton Mountain. They are in the gallery as well. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question today is for the Minister of the Environment. Late last week the people of Timiskaming dodged a bullet, no thanks to you whatsoever. In fact, I will take this opportunity to congratulate my caucus colleague for his exceptional work on this matter in defence of his own community.

Minister, your pathetic abdication of responsibility in managing this issue is matched only by another area of pathetic abdication of responsibility and that's the fact that you have taken our province out of the business of the three Rs. This year we're going to have revenues in the neighbourhood of \$62 billion. What I want you to tell us is, how much money are we going to be spending on putting forward a program of the three Rs, and in particular providing leadership to our municipalities and the private sector when it comes to the three Rs? There is \$62 billion. How much money are you going to spend on the three Rs in Ontario?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): The Leader of the Opposition would know that we've formed the Waste Diversion Organization. That organization has completed its final report, and our government

continues to be committed to the blue box program. We want to ensure through this that it remains sustainable over the long term. That's why we had the WDO put in place. In fact, on November 3, 1999, the ministry announced the establishment of the WDO, which is a partnership of government, municipalities and industry, with a commitment of \$14.5 million from its members to help fund municipal blue box programs and other waste diversion programs in our province. That would include, among other things, items like composting and other special household waste depots that have been going on. In addition, the WDO was asked to develop options for a sustainable funding formula and to provide up to 50% of the net operating costs for municipal blue box programs in our province.

Mr McGuinty: It's wonderful to hear what the WDO has been recommending, but you in fact have been spending no money, zero cents in Ontario, on the three Rs. You came up with \$190 million for political partisan advertising, but you can't come up with a cent for waste diversion programs.

Before you people came on the scene here, we were spending significant dollars when it came to the three Rs in Ontario. We spent \$30 million to help municipalities with the blue box program. We spent all kinds of money for our municipal reduction and reuse grants. We helped household hazardous waste collection grants; we put some money into that program. We helped out with the industrial three Rs for their reduction, reuse and recycling programs. There was a grant to the Association of Municipal Recycling Coordinators.

We've got \$62 billion in revenue. We are going to have more and more cases where our municipal partners are going to be coming under heavy fire, tremendous pressure to put more waste into dumps, and you're not putting a single penny into diversion programs. How can you possibly justify that? In this time of unprecedented prosperity, these skyrocketing revenues, you haven't got a cent for the three Rs.

Hon Mr Newman: The Leader of the Opposition is right in only one regard and that's simply this: they spent all kinds of money, because that is the Liberal way. Unfortunately, they had nothing to show for it, nothing positive to show with respect to the environment, and that's shameful on behalf of the Liberal Party.

But again, the WDO, the Waste Diversion Organization, was asked to develop options for a sustainable funding formula to provide up to 50% of the net operating costs of the municipal blue box program in our province. In March 1999, the LCBO provided \$4 million to assist municipalities in offsetting the 1998 costs associated with recycling wine and liquor beverage containers in the blue box program area. In March 2000, the Waste Diversion Organization provided an additional \$4 million to assist with the 1999 costs, and funding to assist with the 2000 costs will be provided by the WDO in the fall of this year.

Mr McGuinty: It's interesting that the minister brings up this issue of the environmental levy collected by the

LCBO. This minister should know that for every year in the last six, the LCBO has been collecting \$40 million. That's a total of \$240 million which is supposed to be dedicated to recycling. You've only used—in fact, you haven't even spent this; you've promised to use—\$4 million out of \$240 million. What you've been doing, effectively, is stealing \$240 million through the environmental levy at the LCBO under the pretext, the guise, of dedicating that to environmental purposes.

Again, \$62 billion in revenue this year, including \$240 million collected through the environmental levy at the LCBO. The people up in Timiskaming just dodged a bullet. We have no diversion programs today in Ontario. We've got a government that is not promoting the three Rs. I ask you again, how can you justify not being in the business of the three Rs in the 21st century in Ontario?

Hon Mr Newman: The total net cost of the blue box program is currently estimated to be approximately \$46 million. Costs change according to municipal recycling service contracts and the revenues received from the sale of recyclable materials collected. I don't think the member opposite got into that.

But the fact of the matter is, the government established the Waste Diversion Organization to provide municipalities with blue box funding support and, more importantly, the tools they need to achieve greater waste diversion. Waste diversion is an important aspect of the long-term sustainability of our environment, and I would encourage all municipalities to include these alternatives in their waste management plans.

The province is committed to reducing waste by 50%. We think the WDO recommendations will help us to achieve that goal.

FLUOROCARBONS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy says you're all bluster; that there's lots of sizzle, no steak.

I want to talk to you about CFCs, though, because I think all members of the House will probably be under the impression that chlorofluorocarbons had been phased out in Ontario many years ago.

Interjection: In all the world.

Mr Bradley: Exactly. I think, as the former minister says, in all the world.

But the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy says that is not the case. They say the province may give recalcitrant industries that had six years to phase out CFCs from their operations, but failed to do so, an exemption that will last until the industries say they can comply. The government has decided to reward non-compliance on one of the most serious environmental issues confronting the planet. This decision devalues the accomplishments of industry leaders like Nortel, who figured out how to phase out CFCs years ago.

Can the minister tell us how on earth, in the year 2000, anybody is allowed to use CFCs and to not phase them out?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): In fact, the report that I think the member opposite is talking about spoke about various issues within the Ministry of the Environment with respect to the budget. What the report also does is look at other aspects with respect to monitoring within the environment. It also talks about enforcement. It deals with many, many issues.

But the protection of the environment is something we take very seriously within the province. When you look at what the federal Liberal government did with Camco in Hamilton by granting an exemption, it shows that they are not showing any leadership at all on the issue of greenhouse gas emissions. They talk a big story. Last week in Quebec City they spoke a lot about taking action. But the bottom line is that they were granting exemptions left, right and centre throughout industries in this province, in this country, and are showing no leadership with respect to the environment.

1400

Mr Bradley: Chlorofluorocarbons, CFCs, as most of us know them, are very damaging to the ozone layer. If you look at the ozone layer up there, it is there to protect us from such things as radiation that causes skin cancer on a much more frequent basis and causes other problems for us, damage to crops and things of that nature.

What I'm asking you is why you haven't phased out chlorofluorocarbons. I thought you had done so by now. You've talked about a lot of other things. You've pointed the finger somewhere else. You're looking frantically at the sidelines, hoping somebody's going to send you a note in to tell you what's happened. All I'm asking you is, why haven't you phased out chlorofluorocarbons? I thought they were gone a long time ago.

Hon Mr Newman: I say to the member opposite that nothing is farther from the truth. In fact, the word that you used was "may." That's what you used; you used the word "may." "Just because it's in a report, I guess it's true," according to you. But you're wrong in this fact again.

Mr Bradley: I was going to go to other parts of the report, but the minister obviously is not aware that he is allowing these people to phase out, over a long period of time, CFCs in this province. He's saying somebody's wrong.

What you're saying is that the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy, which does a very detailed analysis of government policy, doesn't know what it's talking about.

I'm saying to this minister, as the former minister says, we've got to be the only jurisdiction in the world that allows people to continue to use CFCs. When are you going to end the possibility of any company using CFCs?

Hon Mr Newman: Again, the member opposite was using the word "may." What needs to be noted is that we take the protection of the environment very seriously as a

government. You know that. We've taken strong measures in this regard, unlike the federal government, which is granting exemptions left, right and centre throughout all sectors of the economy with respect to greenhouse gas emissions.

RECYCLING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. I want to ask the Minister of the Environment why it is that, while he was pushing the disastrous Adams mine proposal, over the last eight months he has ignored all of the exciting technological advances in terms of the recycling and reuse of municipal waste.

Last Thursday, I visited a facility in Guelph, a facility that's designed by Ontario engineers and patented by a Canadian corporation, that shows in their demonstration facility how you can recycle the aluminum, the steel, the paper, the glass; how you can then take the resulting organic waste and process it so that the methane gas is used to produce electricity and the material that is left after the process can be used on peat, in gardens and on farmers' fields.

It's been an exciting proposal, but in eight months you've refused to answer their phone calls. Why, Minister, are you ignoring all of the potential for recycling and reuse of municipal waste?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): Protecting the environment is a responsibility that I take very seriously. My ministry has a department that is dedicated to encouraging new green industries, like the industry that the member opposite is talking about.

I can tell you first-hand that in March of this year, about two weeks after I was appointed minister, I was in Vancouver. I saw the technology there at the Globe 2000 conference. I'm very familiar with that technology.

I know that you were in Guelph on Thursday wanting a minister of the crown to endorse a particular product or service. I'm not prepared to endorse any product or service in this province.

Mr Hampton: No, I'm not asking you to endorse any product or service. Here is the reality: the city of Montreal is coming to visit this facility because they're interested in recycling, reuse and composting. They're not interested in sending it to a landfill.

The US Environmental Protection Agency, for the first time ever, is going to come to another jurisdiction to study the technology for the purpose of certification for US use, for use in American cities, and the Harris government won't even return the phone calls, won't even return the letters.

Minister, why are you ignoring an Ontario-designed solution, a Canadian-patented solution, that will allow us to almost totally, if not substantially, reduce the amount of municipal waste that will have to go to landfill sites? Are you so tied to your friends at WMI that you refuse to look at the progressive alternatives?

Hon Mr Newman: I think it's great that cities are looking at what other jurisdictions have available. I think it's wonderful that the city of Montreal is choosing to look at this type of technology.

I understand right now Mayor Lastman, the mayor of the city of Toronto, is in Edmonton looking at what they're doing with respect to compost. But the fact of the matter is that municipalities have the responsibility for long-term waste management plans. I would encourage you to encourage other municipalities to look at all other options and alternatives that are available, such as this.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. What are you doing? Are you taking any leadership here? The answer is no.

But minister, on another subject: Today the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy released their report, their fifth-year report on your government's environmental record—yet another report to add to the long list of reports that say your government has failed to protect the environment and the health of Ontarians.

Minister, this report tells us that since you came to office, the Ministry of the Environment's budget has been cut by a whopping 60%. That's both operating and capital combined. Facts and figures don't lie. Each damning report makes it clear that your government cannot and is not protecting Ontario's environment and the health of its people.

Minister, I'm asking you today: as a result of this report, will you commit to hire back at least 500 of the 1,000 staff that you have let go so we can protect the health of our citizens in Ontario?

Hon Mr Newman: This government is dedicated to the protection of the environment through good management, through strict standards and through strong penalties.

I think it's important that we look at historical trends to see functions that have been retained as programs and see how they've changed and look at how staff numbers and functions have changed. Contrary to what the member opposite says, any allegations of reductions of inspection and investigative staff have not happened. The reality is that there have been no reductions made to investigative staff within the ministry. Compliance funding has been reduced, but almost half the ministry's workforce, compared to only 40% during the NDP's government, deals with investigative functions.

The truth of the matter is the Liberals played smoke and mirrors with the ministry's budget by transferring in responsibilities such as the Niagara Escarpment Commission in 1991-92. The NDP continued when they merged the ministry with the Ministry of Energy in 1993 by adding \$55 million to a—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. It's about your government's failure to respond to the health care needs in northern Ontario.

The city of Kenora has a crisis in terms of a physician shortage. It is so bad that there are 2,500 citizens in the community who don't have a family doctor. They often have to go to Winnipeg to see a family doctor.

One of those people, and her name is Isabel Ulak of Kenora, besides having to access a family doctor in Winnipeg, then had to go to Winnipeg to seek specialist surgery. When she went to Winnipeg and back after the specialist surgery, she was told that the northern health travel grant wouldn't help her with the travel costs because she wasn't referred by an Ontario doctor. How is she supposed to be referred by an Ontario doctor when people can't get a doctor in Kenora?

Minister, you made the problem, first, by limiting the number of physicians in northern Ontario, and then you made a further problem by not allowing people like this, who have to go outside the province for surgery, to be assisted by the northern health travel grant. What are you going to do to fix these two problems and make sure people receive the justice they deserve?

1410

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I'm pleased to respond to the leader of the third party's question. In fact, if he wants to send the individual case over, we'd be pleased to look into it to help the individual receive the health care the individual needs.

We've made every effort to improve access to health care services across northern Ontario, northwestern Ontario, the Kenora area. In fact, I had a chance to visit earlier this past year to invest some money in the local hospital to help them out, to provide needed equipment to attract more doctors to the area. My ministry is, as well, investing in a Think North CD-ROM initiative, telecommunications initiatives to help doctors link up to help make better decisions and success for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in bringing more doctors to northern Ontario.

The new initiative recently announced by the Minister of Health to help provide tuition costs for new doctors to practise in underserved areas, like the Kenora area, is a step forward. It's a long-standing issue, but this government has done far and away more than Mr Hampton did when he was in power to bring doctors and specialists to northwestern Ontario.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Minister, the question was, what are you going to do to fix the problem? It's not an isolated one. We have the same problem in northeastern Ontario. I have constituents who live in Gogama who regularly have to travel to Sudbury to see a family doctor. The practice in Gogama is full, and they have to regularly travel over 100 kilometres one way to

access care, and they can't get any reimbursement from the northern health travel grant as a result.

The Ministry of Health estimates for this year show that your government is planning to spend \$2 million less on the northern health travel grant program than you estimated last year. We have more people than ever before without a family doctor in northern Ontario, we have more people than ever before who have to go to southern Ontario to see a specialist, and your government's going to spend \$2 million less on this important program. How do you justify that, Minister?

Hon Mr Hudak: In listening to the answers from the Minister of Health and Long-term Care on this issue, I believe she is in the process of reviewing the travel grant. I certainly will bring forward the views that I have heard from northerners to that table as well.

But the member opposite forgets her time in power and her time as Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In fact, there was a loss of 345 doctors in Ontario in the last full year of the NDP government, which had been cut by a third by 1997 by this government. We're reducing that; in fact, we're making progress to bring more doctors to the north, as I described.

She mentions a reduction in spending on travel. Their vision may be to send patients all across Ontario from the north to get service; our vision is to improve access to care in northern Ontario, to bring services closer to home to people so they can get that access within driving distance.

In fact, back to the northwest issue, Fort Frances recently received money for a kidney dialysis—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

ENERGY RATES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Minister, the greenhouse industry is a major part of the economy in Essex county, and I'd like to give you some facts.

The fact is that there are more greenhouses in Essex county than in the whole of the United States of America. Essex county greenhouse production is 80% of the Ontario greenhouse production, it creates a \$1-billion impact on the economy of Ontario, and now it's in jeopardy because of rising natural gas prices.

As you may be aware, natural gas is used almost exclusively by greenhouses throughout the province and particularly in Essex county. The price of a gigajoule of natural gas has increased from \$3.30 to \$6.50 over the past year, and it's still rising.

Minister, I'd like to ask you this: are you doing anything to help this industry which contributes so much to the economy of Ontario?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I want to assure the member opposite that we too, as government, appreciate the size and the quality of the greenhouse industry in the Essex area. I have in the past year been to the Essex area, I

believe three times. In fact, the industry invited me to come down and not only see it from the ground but to fly over the area to see the massive growth that they've had in that industry.

They also pointed out that they had a number of concerns with the growth of that industry, one of those being the price of the fuel it takes to grow their crops and to keep the climate control in the greenhouses. As recently as last week, I spoke with some members of the greenhouse association to talk about the impact that fuel prices are having on the growth of the greenhouse industry.

Some of them were talking to me about looking at some alternatives, other types of fuels that they could use. An interesting one is that one of the producers is looking to change the heating system for the greenhouse industry over to using corn. Of course, other parts of our agricultural industry are having problems getting a reasonable price for that corn. I encourage him, and we will be working with the industry to see if there is some potential for that in order to help us deal with the price of gas as it relates to the greenhouse industry.

Mr Crozier: Minister, we all know that energy prices are hitting the viability of the greenhouse industry, as you've acknowledged, and in fact are hurting the family farm. In addition to low commodity prices, farmers have had to deal with extremely high diesel prices. Now they hear there are going to be skyrocketing natural gas prices, which will cause ammonia and fertilizer costs to dramatically increase.

Farmers are facing a triple threat: first, they'll have to pay more for the fertilizer they use to grow their crops; second, they'll have to pay more for the diesel oil and fuel that they use to plant and tend and harvest their crops; third, they're going to receive historically low prices when they eventually sell their crops. Minister, what are you doing to address this triple threat to the farmers of Ontario?

Hon Mr Hardeman: I want to assure the member that we are very concerned about the cost of agriculture production in the province of Ontario and the amount of revenue they are getting in return for that. A lot of other industries of course have the ability to have their prices set or to increase their prices when the cost of production increases, and that is not the situation with our farmers. That's why it's so important that we have good quality safety net programs designed for Ontario farmers to make sure we can help farmers in these times when the commodity prices go down.

As it relates specifically to fuel prices, I suggest that impacts all industries in the same manner and that, in the competition for the product, all producers have the same problem with the increased fuel prices. But it's very important that we have safety net programs in place to make sure that farmers, with all the adverse conditions and all the adverse prices they have, have those programs in place so they will not be forced out of business—

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

ORGANIZED CRIME

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Solicitor General. As you know, Port Dover is in my riding, and every Friday the 13th Port Dover is a destination for bikers from not only parts of Canada but the United States. A week and a half ago, about 30,000 people arrived in Port Dover to take part in the traditional activities, an event that was uneventful, by and large; a law-abiding group there that evening.

However, as many of us are aware, there are organized gangs that conduct business centred around criminal activity, drugs and prostitution. Oftentimes this business involves murder. These are issues that come to mind to people in Port Dover on Friday the 13th, when the Harleys arrive.

Minister, what is the scope of the problem with respect to organized crime in Ontario?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I'd like to thank the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for his question. Organized crime costs people billions of dollars in Ontario every year. It also threatens the safety and very fabric of our communities.

Our government has taken a number of initiatives and certainly has made many investments in the area of fighting against organized crime. I want to commend my colleague the Attorney General, Jim Flaherty, because last August we brought together crime fighters from around the world, from many of the common law jurisdictions, to share ideas on how we can take the initiative and find new ways of combating organized crime.

But that's not all. Quite frankly, we felt there was a real need to make investments in this area. We have a \$2.7-million annual commitment to fight biker gangs. Just last week I met with the chiefs of police of Ontario to discuss other ways we can work with our policing community to combat organized crime. A lot of it deals with the sharing of intelligence, the sharing of information, which we have a commitment to try to coordinate among all levels of police services.

1420

Mr Barrett: Thank you for that explanation, Minister. I believe all the investments and initiatives by our government are helping. I see some evidence of this locally with respect to drug use. Could you tell the House, and certainly my constituents in Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, what measures your ministry, other ministries and the Ontario Provincial Police are taking to deal with biker gangs in our province?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I thank the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for the supplementary, which gives me an opportunity to speak a little about the provincial special squad. This was formed in 1998 under my predecessor, Bob Runciman. This squad is dedicated to investigating outlaw motorcycle gangs and criminal activity. This is under the direction of the OPP, but it consists of 17 other police organizations and agencies and is based on a national strategy to fight against these outlaw gangs.

Since 1998, the special squad has charged 56 members of biker gangs with 478 various criminal and narcotic offences. In September 1999 the special squad conducted an undercover investigation and seized 1,000 pounds of explosives, the greatest seizure in Canadian history for this type of police project. So there are results. We have a commitment to continue to invest in the fight against organized crime. We also have a commitment to find new ways to fight organized crime to make things better for people in Ontario.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Over the weekend it became quite clear that you had lost what little trust you had left with members of the Ontario building and construction trades. The resolution that was passed by the building trades on Sunday was not only to oppose any move you may come forward with to get rid of section 1(4) of the Labour Relations Act, but also they've adopted the position that they're going to oppose and fight any move from you to bring back Bill 69 or any similar legislation that would weaken their role in the construction industry in Ontario. Minister, you betrayed them and you changed the rules on them. At the end of the day, that is why the whole thing fell apart.

Clearly, as I told you last week, we are on the verge of a war in the labour movement, in the construction industry. You are going to declare war on unionized labour, particularly in construction, with your actions. Will you today declare a truce, stand up and tell us you have no plans to bring in any legislation to get rid of section 1(4) or any legislation similar to Bill 69?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): No.

Mr Agostino: It's that type of arrogance that's going to cause every single construction site in Ontario to come to a standstill, once you bring in your legislation as a favour to your friends who have raised a ton of money for you and who have lobbied you extensively. Now you are going to cater to their wishes.

You obviously are intent on picking a fight. You're obviously intent on starting a fight, and your actions are going to lead to a massive shutdown of every construction site in Ontario. That is not in the best interests of Ontario, and that is not in the best interests of workers. But your actions in failing today to rule out the possibility of section 1(4) being brought back for removal or any legislation such as Bill 69 are exactly what will cause that.

Again, Minister, you've got a clear opportunity here. You can continue to have your strings pulled from the Premier's office, which obviously wants a fight with the labour movement and wants a fight with the construction industry, or you can take some leadership as minister today and again assure Ontarians and the construction industry that you have no plans to bring in any legislation that's going to cause the type of disruption that 1(4) or 69

would. Will you do that and give me more than a smug, one-word answer?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I wasn't trying to be smug or arrogant. You asked me a question with respect to our having any plans or will we not adopt plans to make changes to the construction act, and my response was, very clear, no, I can't give you that undertaking. Your supplementary question was exactly the same as your first question: "Will you give me an undertaking that you will make no changes to the construction labour relations bill?" I've got to tell you I can't.

We think there is a competitive problem within the construction industry in Ontario today. We believe there is a competitive problem from the non-union and the union sections. We also believe that if we're going to have a competitive and viable construction industry, we need to make legislative reforms that allow both the non-union and the union to competitively bid on work.

As far as I'm concerned, if the question is, "Can you tell us today that you will not come in and change any of that part of the bill?" well, no. It's not smug, it's not arrogant; it's simply, no, I can't give you that undertaking.

ONTARIO WHOLE FARM RELIEF

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Farmers in my riding and across Ontario have been facing a very tough growing season and low commodity prices, resulting in financial hardship for many. I, along with my other Simcoe colleagues, have met with farmers, and they have explained the serious situation they face.

Last week, the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex made some disturbing remarks about the Ontario whole farm relief program. The whole farm relief program is very important to farmers in my riding, and many are counting on it to provide assistance this year. Minister, can you update this House on the successes and the problems associated with the program, and how do you respond to the remarks made by the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I want to thank the member for Simcoe North for the opportunity to set the record straight. I want to assure the member that the Ontario whole farm relief program continues to be successful and a needed part of our farm income support package. I am proud that we have been able to get \$130 million to over 7,200 Ontario farmers since the program was set up two years ago.

Farmers continue to express support for the program. They support the fact that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the country to come forward with a disaster program. They support our enhancements to the program and, more recently, they supported the extension to October 30 of the deadline for applying for the program for this crop year.

The Ontario whole farm relief program is the last line of defence for Ontario's farmers. We continue to work to

make the program more effective and efficient for our Ontario farmers.

Mr Dunlop: Minister, I know the whole farm relief program is a cost-shared program between Ontario and the federal government, 60%-40%, just like the rest of the safety net programs available to farmers. Earlier this year, I remember that the federal government asked Ontario to hold half of the federal funding for disaster relief. Many farmers do not understand this decision, and now they are calling on the federal government to pay their full share, as agreed to. I heard last Friday that the federal government put out a press release stating that they will now cover 80%, but still less than their full share.

When can Ontario farmers expect the full amount of federal funding for this program?

Hon Mr Hardeman: I thank the member for the question, as he brings up a very important point. As I mentioned, and as the member knows, the whole farm relief program is very important to our farmers. In Ontario we have made a strong commitment to our farmers to pay the full 40% of this program. The federal government chose a different route, only providing 50% at the start. Now they're going to increase that to 80% funding. Our goal is to get this money to the farmers who need it as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, the federal government often announces these farm programs but takes several months to get their money to us. We haven't yet received the 80% share of this program, and we have no indication of when they will live up to their agreement.

Safety nets are designed to help farmers during tough times, and we need the federal government to come forward with their full share of the whole farm relief program in order to get more money out to our farmers, as agreed in last year's safety net agreement. We are looking forward to receiving the money very soon, so we can get it out to our Ontario farmers.

WOMEN'S CENTRES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. I'd like to ask, why are you continuing at this time to cut funding to eight women's centres, when you have more money in the pot to spend on women's programming? In a really cynical attempt to cover up your actions and your cuts to women's centres, you issued a press release today re-announcing your government's funding plans for women's programs, which you originally announced months ago. But you artfully avoid the fact that you've cut funding to eight existing women's centres.

Women's centres in Toronto, Windsor and Ottawa might close because you pulled their stabilized funding. You cancelled the program for stabilized funding for women's centres, and you're now using that money to go to annual project funding for community organizations. The stabilized funding meant that battered women who live in communities could rely on a welcoming place to help them build their self-esteem and to take back power

and control into their own hands. They are most often the places and the kinds of services women need first, before they can take advantage of skills development programs that you are funding.

I think you just don't get it, Minister. Women's groups keep telling you that women's centres are best equipped to provide these first-response services. I want to know, why have you ended their program for stable funding and threatened their very existence?

1430

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. I'm pleased to admit that after a couple of weeks they recognize that we have increased funding to women's centres. That was the question two weeks ago: "How can you cut funding to women's centres?" At least this week we're recognizing that the funding has gone from \$855,000 to \$1.3 million to \$1.8 million.

Next week I'm sure they'll recognize that we've put funding into a number of important women's centres so that we can help women find jobs and get away from the cycle of violence that they've been associated with. I'm optimistic that as they continue to research it, the opposition will find that I've done the right thing by putting more money into this program and ensuring that women get the services they need and deserve in our community.

Ms Lankin: Minister, you continue, in a very cynical way, to use language that confuses women's centres with other community organizations. Women have been very critical of what you have done in taking away stable funding from women's centres. No one disagrees with funding skills development programs, but you've taken the money to do that away from women's centres. Not every organization you have funded is a women's centre.

Do you not know the difference, or are you, as I suspect, being very deliberate in using incorrect language? You are so cynical in reannouncing—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the member take her seat. Stop the clock.

You can't say that. The member needs to be very careful in saying that, and I would ask her to withdraw that and not say that in the chamber.

Ms Lankin: Speaker, I withdraw what was offensive.

What I am saying to the minister is that when she calls these organizations "women's centres," she belies what is going on in our communities and what these centres have done for so long.

You are funding annual project funding for programs now. You have cancelled stable funding for women's centres. We have asked you to produce the list, publish the list, of those organizations that got the funding. You have again, as of today, refused to do that.

Two things: will you re-establish the funding for the eight women's centres that you have cut, and will you publish the list of those organizations that you are now funding under your annual project funding?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me be very clear. We have increased the funding; we've doubled the amount that any

organization can apply for from \$45,000 to \$90,000. We are still funding women's centres.

Let me just give you a quote: "We are particularly excited this year. We can provide specialized services in the area of domestic violence specific to women in northern Ontario." That comes from the Sudbury Women's Centre. How can they say I'm not funding women's centres when I have quotes from women's centres that say that it's happening?

When they get their research finally done, they'll find out that we're investing in women's centres and that we've increased the amount of dollars. This funding is going to help women all across the province, and it's making a real difference to women in Ontario. We're not going to tolerate violence; we're not going to tolerate women not getting the jobs they deserve. We're going to do everything in our power to help women in the province of Ontario.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, you announced that Ontario would be opening its doors to private universities last April on a Friday afternoon when the students were either in exams or already home for summer session. It wasn't in your campaign Blueprint, and you didn't introduce any legislation before that announcement. You announced that there would be public consultations, and then you changed your mind and had private meetings. Last Thursday, a full six months later, you brought this April decision into the Legislature.

This is not what the people of Ontario voted for. You said in your press conference that you were finding better ways of delivering better quality post-secondary education. In fact, you're finding better ways of avoiding the funding of our excellent quality post-secondary institutions.

This is what Principal Leggat of Queen's University recently stated: "Our excellence is being eroded by forces beyond our control." He feels he has no choice but to ask that you grant him permission to deregulate undergraduate arts and sciences tuition, making it the first university in Canada to do so.

Minister, your very own young Tories have asked you to freeze tuition. Will you stand up today and guarantee that undergraduate arts and sciences tuition in our public universities will not be deregulated under the Harris Tories?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I would say to everyone in this House that it has been the commitment of successive governments to focus on the public post-secondary education system across this province. That is why our public system in fact has more funding, more than \$3 billion in funding, to support the operations of the public post-secondary system. That is why we are looking

forward to increased growth in our system: \$1 billion and 57 new facilities across the province.

I understand that my critic is concerned, but we are here to grow our public post-secondary system and to support our students with accessibility and excellence.

Mrs Bountrogianni: The minister once again didn't answer the question. My question was, will she promise not to deregulate undergraduate arts and science?

But the biggest insult at the press conference last Thursday was when the minister stated that education is a business. Education is not a business, Minister, it's a right. It's the great equalizer in a just society. It's what makes Canada and Canadians unique. Shame on you and your government for attempting to take this away.

What's next? Is your government going to privatize health care, too, because that's a good business? Does your government see this as a good business as well?

Minister, please tell us how these private institutions will not access any public monies when you have already admitted they will access OSAP and when the rules of NAFTA clearly outline how they can access public monies freely and by law once they're in.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I thought I made it quite clear with regard to the leader of the Liberal Party, who asked me the same question last week. I made it very clear that in this province our post-secondary institutions are about students. They're about a province that has the largest number of 18- to 24-year-old students—35%—in the history of this province and across North America.

I will say there is going to be a greater and greater demand for post-secondary education at all kinds of levels, whether we're talking about formal degree programs, informal seminar programs, two-day programs or 10-year programs. I don't think there is any possibility that current institutions can respond to that entire demand even if they wish to. I think the more options that are available, the better. Bernard Shapiro, principal of McGill University, former deputy—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I'll just give the member for Ottawa Centre a moment to wind up his conversation.

I have a question to the Minister of Education. I met with students from schools in my riding of Perth-Middlesex, a rural riding except for the city of Stratford, and they expressed concern about funding to the education system. In fact, I've heard concerns about funding to the education system on more than one occasion. What are we doing to help students who live in rural ridings like mine?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Supporting schools in rural and northern ridings is an extremely important priority of how we fund school boards to provide education services. We have a number of specific grants which go to rural and northern boards to recognize

their unique circumstances. For example, the geographic and school authorities grant has increased by about 7% just in this last year alone, which is much more of an increase than the increase in student enrolment. As a matter of fact, despite that increase some of those boards have actually had declining enrolments, and yet we have increased that geographic and school authorities grant because we recognize that's an extremely important support for those schools as they try to provide supports for their students. We've more than doubled the money as well in some other categories for rural schools. It's a very important priority.

1440

Mr Johnson: I'd like to thank you, Minister, for your response, and I'm glad to hear the government is committed to ensuring quality education for all students, regardless of where they live. However, there are rural schools in this province, including in my jurisdiction, that are facing declining enrolments. What are you doing to meet the needs of the students in these schools that are declining in enrolment?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, there's no question that the way we fund schools, the foundation grant as it's called, is based upon enrolment, and it is meant to rise and fall with the number of students that a school board has. But what we also recognized is that for rural and northern boards, even though their enrolment may have decreased, they still require resources to provide services in communities. That's why, for one example, the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board has received an increase of some 38% in their geographic grant from last year to this year to recognize the cost of those services. We also have increased by some 117% the grant for remote and rural allocation, another important support. We've also asked boards this year to report on what their long-range needs are so we can look and if there are further improvements required, we can do that.

JAIL CLOSURES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Minister of Correctional Services and it concerns the future of the Pembroke jail. Under your government's plan, the Pembroke jail is slated to close in approximately eight months' time: July 2001 was the announcement made by your officials a few months ago.

You will know—and I know that you do know—that there is a very high level of concern among the staff at the Pembroke jail and among the broader community in the upper Ottawa Valley as to what precise plans your department and the Harris government have to provide adequate and accessible correctional services to the upper Ottawa Valley. So I ask you now: what are your plans and what is your timetable to ensure that there will be adequate and accessible correctional services to the thousands of people who reside in the upper Ottawa Valley?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): The plans actually aren't too different from what

we've talked about in the past, and that is, I received a proposal from some local citizens that would have that jail stay there in some reduced format, but some reconfigured format, to deal with the needs of the local community as they relate to individuals who haven't yet been sentenced but are awaiting the conclusion of their trial. I've been encouraging that process to continue, because I would like to try to find a solution that would provide some correctional facilities locally if at all possible.

But clearly the current situation that involves the existing facility is just not something that can be maintained, because it's a facility that was built I believe before this country became a country. In spite of renovations in the past, it is in need of change and modifications we need to find in a correctional facility that will deal with the needs of that community, and I'm prepared to look at that inclusive of the local solution.

Mr Conway: Minister, you will know that there are approximately 35 to 40 full-time and part-time staff who work at the Pembroke jail, and they're watching this exchange today. They understandably want to know what their futures are.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Why are they watching in prison?

Mr Conway: My friend the Minister of Labour might want to make light of this, but I represent 35 to 40 families who have a very real interest, to say nothing of the Renfrew county bar, the ministerial association and all kinds of people who live in communities like Pembroke and Petawawa and Eganville and Barry's Bay and Deep River who want to know that they are going to have accessible and reliable correctional services in their part of eastern Ontario.

Can you tell the staff at the Pembroke jail what precise expectations they should have about their jobs and their futures, knowing as we both do that they've been told their jail and their jobs are going to be gone by July 2001?

Hon Mr Sampson: In fact, I have met with the representatives of the employees there and have mentioned to them that I am quite open to an option that keeps some operational beds in Pembroke to service the needs of the community, but the current operation of the facility is just not on the table—as it shouldn't be, because it's a facility that has outlived its time.

The current plan is, of course, to move those particular beds to a far more efficient and secure facility in Ottawa. Local individuals, inclusive of the employees, have said, "Is there not another option that you're prepared to consider, Minister?" I said, "Of course," and we've been working diligently to try to find that situation. It has taken longer than I would have liked, I will say to the member across the floor, but if in the end it means that we have a correctional facility in Pembroke that keeps some employees in the business of providing service to us, I'm prepared to spend the time and the effort to get there, if we can.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As you know, the mining industry is a significant contributor to Ontario's wealth. The strength of the mining industry is particularly important, needless to say, to the economy and the viability of the north, where so many communities have been built on the prosperity of this industry.

As we all witnessed, and continue to witness with the Bre-X story, decisions based on incomplete and inaccurate mining data can harm the individual investor and bring the integrity of the Canadian market into question. Will you please explain to the Legislature what actions your ministry is taking to protect the many good people in Ontario and across the world who invest in the mining sector and to help prevent scandal of this kind being repeated.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I thank the member for Peterborough for the insightful question. The member is right. The Bre-X scandal definitely impacted on international mining and capital markets, and because Ontario plays such an important role in those markets, with about 40% of the capital, we have been impacted significantly by that.

We want to make changes in this province to ensure that Ontario continues to be the most attractive jurisdiction in the world in which to invest for mineral capital, and that's why we introduced legislation this past June to establish a self-regulating body for geoscientists to ensure the information that is coming forward is accurate, is reliable and is reviewed by professionals.

I'm pleased to say, as well, I think that the importance of this legislation to the province was recognized, in that we had all-party support to move it through for third reading. The moving ahead, responding to the Ontario Securities Commission and the Toronto Stock Exchange task force, means we are on the right track to help restore confidence to this industry.

Mr Stewart: I'm glad to see that the ministry has taken positive steps to protect the public from fraudulent claims, through creating an accountability that geoscientists themselves want, but that alone will not stimulate the mineral industry in today's global market. Minister, what have you done to ensure that the Ontario mining industry can compete both here in Canada and internationally?

Hon Mr Hudak: As I mentioned, about 40% of the world's mineral capital is raised right here in the province of Ontario, in Toronto. It's a significant figure, but it's true. That's one thing, the legislation for geoscientists, but we wanted to make sure that we, as well, backed it up with real actions on the taxation front and on the regulatory front.

That's why we have brought in programs like Operation Treasure Hunt, a record investment in geophysical and geochemical survey; we're cutting the Ontario mining tax rate in half to make it the lowest tax in all of Canada. Similarly, for new remote mines open-

ing up in the province, we're creating a 10-year tax holiday and then a further reduction in the tax rate after that to spur economic investment in that area. As well, we've brought in an Ontario-focused flow-through share program, to spur investment in grassroots prospecting and development, a move that has spurred the federal government to finally act on that initiative. We're moving forward, and that's the bottom line.

1450

NATIVE FORESTRY ISSUES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Two weeks ago the Minister of Natural Resources announced a policy of allowing 10,000-hectare clear-cuts in the far northern forest, and he tried to justify it by saying it would be good for caribou habitat. A 10,000-hectare clear-cut is the same as 20,000 football fields or one football field 1,250 miles long.

Minister, since in your own words this is clearly intended for the far northern forests, could you tell us what consultations you've had with the First Nations people who live there and would clearly be affected by this disastrous proposal?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the leader of the third party for the question. This is something that's important. That's why changes in policy go on the Environmental Bill of Rights, as he knows. We get responses from the public, and we have provided for a time to do that. We are seeking public response to this question and other questions affecting forestry in the province.

Let me remind the leader of the third party that this comes out of and our policies on forestry come from the broadest public consultation on public land use in the history of this province. Under the previous minister we began a process where we sat on three round tables and talked to people who were interested in this subject right across the province, including First Nations people, who were invited to those processes. From that, we are developing a forestry—

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

Mr Hampton: Minister, the fact of the matter is that you didn't consult with First Nations then and you're not consulting with them now. At the same time that you're proposing 10,000-hectare clear-cuts, your colleague the federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is proposing all-weather roads all over the north to get the wood out, and neither of you has discussed any of this with First Nations.

The First Nations people are not going to allow you to come in and cut what would be the equivalent of the city of Etobicoke in one fell swoop and then take the wood out. When are you going to begin real and serious discussions with the First Nations before you promote all-weather roads, 10,000-hectare clear-cuts and mines all

over their territory? When are you going to consult the people who are going to be affected?

Hon Mr Snobelen: As always, the leader of the third party is entertaining, if not informative. In fact, he has attempted to confuse many different issues.

I can tell him quite proudly that we intend, on our forest regulations, to consult widely with the people of Ontario, including First Nations communities. We have had a track record of doing just that. In fact, we have spent more time and more effort talking to the people of Ontario about what to do with public lands than any previous government. That's why we've been able to add 378 new parks and protected areas and protect over six million acres of land in this area of the undertaking. We're proud of that record.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to standing orders 53 and 55.

With respect to the point of order, standing order 53 deals with notices to this Legislature about items to be considered. Standing order 53 reads, "All notices required by the standing orders of the House or otherwise shall be laid on the table before 5 pm and printed on the Orders and Notices paper for the following day." Standing order 55 states, "Before the adjournment of the House on each Thursday during the session, the government House leader shall announce the business for the following week."

You'll note that in today's orders there is no reference to what will be debated or discussed tonight. I draw this to your attention particularly in reference to the Camp commission of the 1970s, which basically set up these rules. They were adopted by the Legislature to ensure that the opposition would have a meaningful opportunity to prepare for debate and to know what items would be coming forward. It has been the custom of this House since approximately the mid-1970s that this would be the case.

What is happening more and more often, and I spoke with the table earlier today about this, is that they must go on the assumption that a motion will be passed before they can publish anything. Hence, on Monday, in the event that we're sitting at night, they don't have the opportunity to publish.

I would ask you, sir, to review this, because the broader context, it seems to me, has to do with the ability of the Legislature to adequately prepare for debate on issues that are coming forward.

The Camp commission in the 1970s was particularly concerned about the independence of the Legislature from the executive council. Among other things that came about as a result of that were the Speaker taking responsibility for the legislative chamber. Those rules were put into place, sir, to enable us to have a full and fair debate of the issues. Increasingly, we are not being told on Thursday what we will be debating on any given

day, and now, with this particular situation, we're left in a scenario whereby the government is not even compelled, as per standing orders 53 and 55, to publish at an appropriate time—certainly not to have it at the table before 5 o'clock the previous day.

I would ask you to review those standing orders and the circumstances which have come about as a result of that situation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member. The government House leader.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): The reason I think the order paper today could not have the business of this evening, even though I indicated to the House leaders last Thursday what that business would be, so it's not a secret to anybody who's in this Legislature what the business will be—the problem is that the Legislature can't put it on for this evening's sittings until that motion is moved today.

I don't know whether we can get around that with some way of at least revamping the standing orders.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Move the motions on Thursday.

Hon Mr Sterling: Perhaps that's the case. If we need a revision to the standing orders in order to do what I would deem a technical matter, then we'll look at it in good faith and do that.

I also would point out that section 54 of the standing orders says that, "Except as otherwise provided in these standing orders, government business will be taken up in the discretion of the government House leader."

Section 55 has always been viewed by the House as a matter as to whether the government House leader or another member of the government—often the government whip—puts forward the business for the next week. That has been done as often as possible, but it isn't always done and it hasn't always been done.

So, Mr Speaker, we're quite willing to work to revamp the orders in order to allow this to stand on the order paper. Basically, the opposition members do know what's going to be debated tonight. We're quite willing to work co-operatively if an amendment would make this clear, as long as the same discretion is left to the government House leader in terms of dealing with business.

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I say to the government House leader that it's fine for a few of us in here, perhaps, to know informally on a Thursday what may happen, but that doesn't do the public any good, because nothing's published. They, as much as anyone here, have a right to know what's going on.

I might suggest respectfully, Speaker—and I know you can't order it, but I would suggest it and put it on the record—that if we move the motions for evening sittings on the Thursday rather than on the Monday, that would accomplish all that we're looking at, and the government House leader still reserves the traditional right to call the business that the government would like to.

I would ask, Speaker, if perhaps you could talk with the government House leader and look at that suggestion to ensure that we do know what is going to happen here and, just as importantly, that the public also know.

The Speaker: I thank all of the House leaders, and I will investigate and try to come up with some type of solution.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition to the Ontario Legislature, and it deals with northerners demanding that the Harris government eliminate health care apartheid in this province.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

"Whereas a recently released Oracle research poll confirms that 92% of Ontarians support equal health travel funding;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

"Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Loughheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

Of course I affix my signature to it, as I am in complete agreement with it.

1500

McMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced Bill 112, An Act to amend the McMichael Canadian Art Collection Act;

"Whereas the McMichael Canadian Art Collection has grown and evolved into one of Canada's best-loved and most important art gallery collections of Canadian art;

“Whereas the passage of Bill 112 would constitute a breach of trust made with hundreds of other donors to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, vest too much power in the hands of the founders, who have been more than compensated for their generosity, diminish the authority and responsibility of the board of trustees, limit the focus of the art collection and hamper the gallery to raise private funds, thereby increasing its dependency on the taxpayers and significantly reduce its capacity and strength as an educational resource;

“Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to withdraw Bill 112.”

I support this petition.

ENVIRONMENTAL BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I have an important petition presented to me by Dr Tom Puk from Lakehead University related to the Ministry of Education exemption from the Environmental Bill of Rights.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights was intended to give the citizens of Ontario a way of getting involved in environmental decision-making; and

“Whereas the Environmental Bill of Rights requires Ontario government ministries to develop a statement of values to ‘guide the minister and the ministry staff when making decisions that affect the environment’; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education has been exempted from the requirements of the Environmental Bill of Rights despite the importance of environmental education; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education has eliminated environmental science as a stand-alone set of courses that focuses entirely on the science of the environment from the secondary school curriculum; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education is responsible for developing educational policies that directly affect the ecological literacy of future citizens and is, thus, partly responsible for the health of our environment; and

“Whereas the citizens of Ontario are being denied their right to shape the decisions being made about environmental education by the Ministry of Education’s exclusion from the Environmental Bill of Rights;

“Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to prescribe the Ministry of Education to the Environmental Bill of Rights without further delay.”

It’s a very important issue, and I’m very pleased to add my name to this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have another petition regarding the Harris government’s ongoing discrimination against northern cancer patients. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

“Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

“Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

“Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Loughheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario.”

I agree with the petitioners and have affixed my signature to this. I’d like to thank Gerry Loughheed Jr for all of his efforts.

PENSION FUNDS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health announced a new model on January 25, 1996, for improving and coordinating long-term care services. The amalgamation of the home care and placement coordination services function did shift to community care access centres (CCACs). The governing bodies of various pension plans, namely the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement Savings (OMERS), Victorian Order of Nurses (VON), Family Services Association (FSA) and Hospital of Ontario Pension Plan (HOOPP) have failed to successfully negotiate agreements for a transfer of pension assets.

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

“That the pension adjustments are a transition item which the ministry has not yet addressed. We are requesting a one-time adjustment to enable the transfer of pension assets. This transfer is required to ensure that employees transferred from predecessor employers (namely health units and the Victorian Order of Nurses) to community care access centres as part of the mandatory government reform initiative for ‘single access to long-term-care services’ receive pension benefits equal to those which they formerly enjoyed. Provincially over 3,000 health care workers are affected. The individuals who transferred to the CCACs had no control over what would happen to their prior pension contributions. Unless a one-time adjustment is made to enable the transfer of reserves, the typical employee will

lose about \$2,000 annually in pension benefits compared to the position they would have been in had they been allowed to remain in OMERS.”

It's signed by a number of residents of Chatham, Merlin and Wallaceburg, and I affix my signature to it.

FRAIS DE TRANSPORT AUX FINS MÉDICALES

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James) : J'ai ici une pétition des gens de la région de Hearst et Mattice à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Les gens du nord exigent que le gouvernement Harris mette fin à l'apartheid en matière de soins de santé.

« Attendu que, d'une part, le programme de subventions accordées aux résidents du nord de l'Ontario pour frais de transport à des fins médicales offre un remboursement partiel au taux de 30,4 cents par kilomètre » à sens unique « à l'intention des personnes atteintes de cancer, et que, d'autre part, la politique de déplacement pour les gens du sud de l'Ontario rembourse en entier les coûts de transport, de repas, et d'hébergement ;

« En conséquence, il est résolu que les soussignés exigent que le gouvernement Mike Harris propose immédiatement de financer en entier les frais de transport » pour les gens du nord de l'Ontario atteints de cancer, afin de mettre fin à cette situation non équilibrée.

WATER EXTRACTION

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we strenuously object to permits to take water being issued by the Ministry of the Environment without adequate assessment of the consequences and without adequate consultation with the public and those people and groups who have expertise and interest;

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

“We request a moratorium on the issuing of permits to take water for non-farm, commercial and industrial use and the rescinding of all existing commercial water taking permits that are for bulk or bottled water export, outside of Ontario, until a comprehensive evaluation of our water needs is completed. An independent non-partisan body should undertake this evaluation.”

I very happily sign this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): A petition to the Ontario Legislature:

“Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

“Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

“Whereas a recently released Oracle research poll confirms that 92% of Ontarians support equal health travel funding;

“Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

“Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Lougheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario.”

I will affix my signature to this.

1510

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

“Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and, therefore, that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

“Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

“Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

“Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities.”

I add my signature to those of my constituents who are concerned about this issue.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): As you can see, the northern health travel grant continues to be a great concern to all northerners. I have some more petitions that have come in as well.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and, therefore, that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

As always, I'm very pleased to add my name to this petition.

FARMFARE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly that reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario introduced farmfare on September 21, 1999, to supplement their workfare program, forcing social assistance recipients to work on farms for their benefits; and

"Whereas the Harris government of Ontario has not provided any consultation or hearings regarding this initiative; and

"Whereas the Harris government has excluded agricultural workers from protections under the provincial labour code by passing Bill 7; and

"Whereas this exclusion is currently being appealed under the Canadian Charter of Rights for infringing on the right of association and equal benefit of law;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to retract the farmfare program until hearings have been held and to reinstate the right of agricultural workers to allow them basic human rights protection under the labour code of Ontario."

I thank Stan Raper of the United Farm Workers for forwarding this to me, and I proudly add my name to those of these petitioners.

HUNTING IN WILDERNESS PARKS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Another important issue is the question of hunting in wilderness parks, and I have more petitions coming in.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources has confirmed that the province is considering allowing hunting in Ontario's wilderness parks, including Quetico, Killarney, Wabakimi and Woodland Caribou;

"Whereas the provincial government made no mention of opening up wilderness parks to hunting when it came up with the Ontario Living Legacy policy last year for a vast area of publicly owned land across northern Ontario;

"Whereas the province's wilderness parks were originally established to be sanctuaries where the forces of nature would be permitted to function freely and where visitors could travel by non-mechanized means and experience solitude, challenge and personal enjoyment of that protected area; and

"Whereas opening wilderness parks to hunters undermines the principles the parks were established to fulfil, threatens animals and exposes the public to risk;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Ministry of Natural Resources renew and reconfirm its ban on hunting in all of Ontario's wilderness parks."

I hope the Minister of Natural Resources does, indeed, do that soon, and I'm very happy to add my name to this petition.

OPPOSITION DAY

WATER QUALITY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I move that this House recognizes this government has abandoned responsibility for protecting our water by: ignoring repeated warnings about water safety from the Provincial Auditor and Environmental Commissioner; drastically slashing funding and firing staff from the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources who play a key role in protecting our water; and

That this House demands that the government take action on this serious problem by:

Finally keeping their long-standing promise to deliver a comprehensive groundwater protection strategy;

Beginning to restore the 45% cut to the budget of the Ministry of the Environment;

Beginning to rehire the one third of Ministry of the Environment staff that the government has laid off; and

Immediately passing a comprehensive clean drinking water act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I understand the time is split evenly between the three parties. If he would like to lead off debate, the Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Obviously, if you were to ask virtually anybody in this province which of the issues confronting this Legislature are of great importance, one they would certainly mention is the issue of the environment. There's a recognition out there, I think, that this government has not placed the environment as one of its high priorities. It's busy, as it would say, cutting taxes and dealing with a variety of other issues while at the same time it has been cutting resources to the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Natural Resources and of course to other agencies that are extremely important, conservation authorities in our province.

In fact, today we had a report released from the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy. It's called Ontario's Environment and the Common Sense Revolution: A Fifth Year Report. Many of the issues contained in the resolution that I have before the House this afternoon are in fact dealt with in this report. It is a report that no government member would look upon with pride, because while it has some compliments, from time to time, in it, by and large it is a report which is extremely critical of the government in the areas I have mentioned.

We mentioned, for instance, that we've had independent people talk about the record of the government and independent people offer some rather biting criticism. I guess one expects that those in the opposition are, from time to time, going to be critical of government policy or government legislation or regulations, or lack thereof. But what we have are two independent officers of this House: one is the Provincial Auditor, who looks at all of the expenditures of the government and determines whether there is value for the money that is being expended and whether there are any problems with those expenditures; second, we have the Environmental Commissioner, who assesses the state of the environment, the government's record, the government's action or inaction on environmental issues.

Both of these individuals have been critical of this government on more than one occasion for lack of adequate policy to protect our groundwater. The report by the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy talked this morning about 10 specific areas where it was critical of the government for not taking appropriate action. The first that it mentioned, for instance, was the drastic cutbacks that have taken place to the Ministry of the Environment and to the Ministry of Natural Resources. Both of those ministries have within their mandates responsibility for protecting our drinking water. In some cases it's the raw surface water, the raw groundwater. Of course, in the case of the Ministry of the Environment, they supervise the finished product; that is, the actual drinking water which comes out of the taps or out of wells in the province.

1520

When you have drastic cuts to these ministries, it means they are unable to do the job they used to do. If you go around the province you will find, for instance, that some area offices have been closed, some district

offices have been merged and the regional offices have fewer people than they used to have to protect the environment.

If I can be parochial for a moment, Springbank Creek in St Catharines has been impacted by pollution. Residents in the area of Springbank Creek are concerned that contamination has been spotted and, in their view, insufficient action has been taken to address this problem. You have to remember that Ministry of the Environment offices around this province have far fewer people, and the people who are there have been told to be business friendly. Both of those factors militate in favour of inaction in dealing with important environmental issues, and that is why the Provincial Auditor and the Environmental Commissioner have both been critical of the government over drinking water issues and over the lack of a groundwater policy.

If you talk about a strategy for groundwater, it sounds like it's rather theoretical. But it's extremely important, particularly in rural areas but also in some urban areas, because that is the source of our drinking water.

We obtained, through the freedom of information act—which means Liberal research had to pay for it, and it took a period of time to get it—a document which was supposed to be the groundwater policy of this government. There are several categories or headings. Under the heading “Action Plan,” there is a blank. In other words, there is no strategy to deal with groundwater problems in the province. This is extremely sad, because what we've had is the situation in Walkerton, where six people died from drinking the water, which was contaminated, and several hundred people were seriously ill as a result of consuming that water.

There is an ongoing investigation at this time and, of course, a public inquiry which Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the official opposition and leader of the Liberal Party called for and pressured the government to come forward with. Of course, we have that inquiry. My colleague who sits beside me, Gerry Phillips, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, is looking for a similar inquiry into the situation at Ipperwash. So far, we've had the government resist that and hide behind legalities.

When we look at the cuts, various figures are given out. I'm going to be conservative in my estimate—small-c conservative in this case—and say that one third of the staff of the Ministry of the Environment is no longer with the ministry. Forty-five percent of the budget has been cut. Some people say that if you count both the capital budget—that's things they build—and the operating budget of the ministry, you would have as much as a 60% cut in the Ministry of the Environment.

The conservation authorities used to do a great job dealing with groundwater and with the impact of farm runoff and other runoff going into our waterways. They're down to bare-bones budgets now. They've been forced to sell some of their land as a result of lack of funds available to them. They want to do that job. They need a significant investment of public money in that area.

Because significant tax cuts have already taken place, most people in this province today are saying, "Please don't send me that \$200 with the letter from the Premier saying what a great guy he is and so on. Don't bother with that. Put that money into protecting my drinking water." Yes, if you send it to them they're going to cash the cheque and they're going to use it. But most people in this province want to see it used for health care and the protection of our environment, and those two are related.

We have to recognize what the Environmental Commissioner had to say. This is an individual appointed by the majority of government members on the committee. As you'll recall, Gordon Miller was the Conservative candidate for Mike Harris in 1995 in the Timmins area, near North Bay. He's been a candidate for this party twice. He's also been president of the federal Progressive Conservative association in the Premier's own riding of Nipissing.

Even this individual has had the following to say about water taking—we seem to have all kinds of water being taken from this province, huge water-taking permits given. Here's what the Environmental Commissioner had to say. I want them to listen carefully; I know the former Minister of the Environment will be particularly interested in this. He said: "The ministry continues to approve permits for potentially massive takings of groundwater without adequate technical analysis. At best, this may result in an inappropriate private allocation of a public resource. At worst, it may threaten the sustainability of the water supply of hundreds of people drawing on the same aquifer."

He went on say: "In addition, on at least two occasions, the Ministry of the Environment has appeared to deliberately mislead the public by announcing management measures that were not carried out. Such actions are entirely contrary to the ministry's Statement of Environmental Values and to the purposes of the Environmental Bill of Rights."

I am not saying this. This is not Jim Bradley, opposition person, saying this. This is not one of us in the opposition. I am quoting what the Environmental Commissioner had to say about water-taking permits. It's quite obvious there has never been a moratorium and that what the commissioner says is correct: there has been incorrect information provided to the people of Ontario about that.

I think the resolution we have before us today, if adopted, would be a beginning of restoring the Ministry of the Environment, restoring the Ministry of Natural Resources and starting to make some inroads into protecting the water supply of Ontario.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I am happy to speak on this resolution before us today, and say that I and the NDP caucus will support this resolution.

The question of a Safe Drinking Water Act in this resolution before us today is interesting. As members know, a few weeks ago I brought forward what I would call a comprehensive framework of a Safe Drinking Water Act that covered a lot of the issues we've been talking about

in this Legislature since the tragedy in Walkerton. This Safe Drinking Water Act wasn't just dreamed up overnight to deal with this problem. It wasn't smoke and mirrors. It was a real, comprehensive framework which we hoped would be passed in this House and would go to committee.

Everybody who is following this story knows what happened the day we debated this bill. Tory members stood up in support. I was told that Tory members were going to support the bill, and I was very happy about that—surprised, but happy. I didn't realize that underneath there was a cynical political ploy being planned to kill the bill. Mr Speaker, I think you were in the House when this happened.

After the debate, there was all-party support. I believe there was only one person in the Legislature who actually voted against the Safe Drinking Water Act. I'm not quite sure why he did it, except I heard him talking to a member of the press later, and he said, "It's more red tape, and besides, I don't like the NDP." That was the member for—I forget which Etobicoke he's from. Will you look that up for me?

Mr Bradley: Etobicoke North.

Ms Churley: Etobicoke North. I won't mention him by name. In a way, I congratulate him because he was true to his convictions. He stood up and voted against the bill and he had his reasons why. But everybody else in the benches over there stood up and piously voted for the bill.

Let me explain what traditionally happens here when a private member's bill passes. There is a thing called committee of the whole. Those of us who are here understand that when anything goes to committee of the whole, it is dead. It goes into a black hole and disappears forever. We all know that. So what happened was—

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Oh, they're getting angry over there, because I'm about to expose them once again. What happened was, they voted for the bill. For the viewers out there, the way this archaic process works is, I stood up and said, "I don't want it to go to committee of the whole. I request that it go to an actual committee with public hearings," and I picked general government. Lo and behold, to my surprise, the Tory members forced a vote on it. They stood up and voted—

Interjection: Forced a vote?

1530

Ms Churley: Yes, forced a vote. If you know how the House works, Tory members stood up. Enough people stood and forced a vote and voted down the Safe Drinking Water Act going to committee. So on paper it looks like these guys supported the Safe Drinking Water Act, but then they voted against it going to public hearings. Let me say, this is a new trick being played in this House. I've seen them do it to a couple of other bills now as well, and it's a cheap political ploy to get away with—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: You know all about cheap political ploys over there, don't you, because it's done repeatedly in this House. So the bill got killed.

The Minister of the Environment likes to stand up and say we don't need a Safe Drinking Water Act. In fact, when I first asked him if he was going to support it, in his first answer, he referred to it, part of it anyway, as "more red tape." That's in the record, Minister.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Don't make fun of me. Let's just get this clear: what happened here—

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to just remind speakers that when they are in debate they should direct their attention to me, direct their comments through me. If we don't have the finger pointing, if we don't have the comments directed at people, I think we will all have a better afternoon.

The Chair recognizes the member for Toronto-Danforth.

Ms Churley: What they did, Mr Speaker, is destroy any possibility for the Safe Drinking Water Act to go out there. I want to tell people that this is a bill that I had been working on for some time before the tragedy in Walkerton happened. Some of it was original, made in Ontario, I suppose, by me and my staff and others we were working with, experts in the field, as well as being based on some existing laws in the US. I don't know if the minister and the others are aware, but just a little while ago, around the time we were debating second reading of the Safe Drinking Water Act, the US was celebrating 25 years of a safe drinking water act there. The reason such an act was brought into being 25 years ago is that they were having problems similar to the problems we're having in Ontario right now with safe drinking water and the lack of comprehensive laws in place to deal with it.

So here we are at a point, particularly after what happened in Walkerton, where we have an opportunity in a non-partisan way, which is what I thought was happening that day when the bill was brought for second reading, to bring this bill forward to public hearings and have a good discussion. It could have been changed, amendments could have been made, and at the end of the day we would have had a very strong Safe Drinking Water Act in this province. The Tories decided not to go ahead with that.

I'm sure the minister, when he stands up, will talk about his regulations. I want to say clearly again that it's no good to keep repeating over and over again that we don't need a safe drinking water act because these new regulations have been put into place. The experts out there in the field and those environmental groups and others who have been calling for a safe drinking water act made it very clear, I say to the minister, that your regulations don't go far enough and that it's not what's needed now, that it needs to be enshrined in law and that the regulations have all kinds of problems and gaps in them. No longer are we comfortable with the hodgepodge

of regulations and guidelines and policies that have been in place for a number of years.

Certainly I was aware of that when I was in government. We had started to move in the direction of bringing in a safe drinking water act. We didn't do it, but the NDP did introduce a comprehensive safe drinking water bill which got scuttled by the Tories.

One of the reasons why now, more than ever, we need a safe drinking water act is because, as I outlined in a question today based on this latest report that came from the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy—we know that about a third of the staff has been cut and everybody's been saying, "Well, there was a 30% cut from the Ministry of the Environment since they came into office in 1995." If you look at this report—and the numbers are all there. They don't lie. They are fact, and they come from the government's own table. The cuts now add up to 60%. That's six zero. It's unbelievable. When I first saw it, I thought, no, there must be a mistake in this report, but then I looked at the figures and got my calculator out and, sure enough, we're talking about a 60% cut since these guys came to power.

They stand up and say, "You guys wasted money. You had all these staff in the minister's office and all these staff doing things." These staff were protecting the environment. That's why it became very clear to me, more than ever, that we needed a safe drinking water act and we needed it enshrined in law so that the government would be forced to make sure that the laws were being upheld and our drinking water actually was kept safe for the people of Ontario, that enough staff were in place to inspect and enough money and resources were in place so that the government could ensure, particularly for the smaller municipalities that need the financial support and other resources, that drinking water is kept safe. So it's all the more important to enshrine it in law, because if it's not in law, there's really no way to enforce it. Regulations can be changed by a stroke of the pen.

As I had mentioned earlier, many of these experts and environmental groups gave about a page-long list of reasons why these regulations weren't good enough. Dr Murray McQuigge, the medical officer of health who blew the whistle on the problems with the water in Walkerton, the first one, also went public and said that the regulations which the Minister of the Environment will proudly speak of again today are not adequate.

You would think that after what happened in Walkerton one of the biggest priorities of this government would be not to play games, not more PR, which is what we've seen repeatedly. This government's response to what happened in Walkerton is to come up with more smoke and mirrors to make it appear to the public that something is actually being done. We saw that in terms of the increased-penalties bill that we're debating throughout the days ahead of us in this House, although I've heard that they might be bringing in closure on that tomorrow. I'm sincerely hoping that doesn't happen, because a number of our members have important things to say about that particular bill. But in this bill as well,

you'll note in the accompanying document that there are more changes to the Ontario Water Resources Act, I believe it is, that are, again, if you look at it, just smoke and mirrors. It doesn't address the kinds of issues that need to be addressed if we want to protect drinking water in Ontario.

I found this cut of 60% from the ministry in such a short period of time—for instance, in 1994-95, when the NDP left office, the annual budget for the environment was \$559 million. I can assure you—I was there at the time—I didn't think that was enough, given the aging infrastructure that we have. It's the industrial heart of Canada. With all of the industry and all of the pollution and all of the problems that were looming, we needed more resources. During the time of a very deep recession in this province, an NDP government continued to invest in the environment and make sure the resources and staff were there to at least do an adequate job. So as I said, and this again is all documented, in 1994-95 there was \$559 million. For the year 2000, after five years under this government's guiding hand, what they call leadership, the annual budget will be \$223 million.

This damning report that is before us today—and I advise the minister to not dismiss it as he did in question period today and as the ministers before him have done with every damning report that has come out since they came into office and started treating environmental protection as red tape and started cutting staff and the budgets. They have ignored and ignored and ignored and said that these people are wrong and they are right.

I want to say to the government that nobody believes them. Nobody believes you. They know that you have a lousy record on the environment and they want you to do something about it.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): That's partisan.

1540

Ms Churley: You're darn right it's partisan. It's time to take the gloves off on this. I don't know if they've been off before but they're sure off now, because it's a disgrace when we get report after report coming like this that document very well all the areas of failure.

The cabinet document that the NDP released, shortly after Walkerton happened, said very clearly that less than 10% of all sources of pollution that are affecting our health and the environment in this province are being inspected. That's a fact. Sixty-five new staff, the so-called SWAT team, are not going to make a dent in that, and yet they get up and brag about it. That cabinet submission said that you needed up to 500 more hired back to do an adequate job, but they knew you weren't going to do that so they suggested a 139-member SWAT team, even then saying they'd have to pick and choose over some priority areas and there'd be a lot of areas left out. But what did this government do? They came back with a SWAT team of, what was it, 35, 36? That's ridiculous. They're going to dress them up in little uniforms and put them in the car, call the press and say,

"Come out for a photo op," slap a fine on somebody and that's the end of it.

In closing, because my leader and another member want to speak to this resolution today, I'm going to come back to the stiffer penalties act that we're debating. I'm going to say again today to the minister, and I'm sure we'll have another opportunity to get into this, there are some very serious problems with that bill. He is actually weakening the bill by taking out a clause, a very powerful clause that his predecessor put in—or one of them, anyway, out of the five ministers you had.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Was it only four?

There was a time when CEOs could have administrative penalties imposed on them. That was very important if it showed that they were failing to protect the environment. This government took it out. That's why we're not supporting this bill, by the way, because they are actually making it weaker; that's a fact. Plus the fact that a Supreme Court decision recently now allows corporations to claim for income tax purposes any fines that they get. On top of that, we already have pretty stiff fines here in Ontario and this government isn't doing the inspections, they're not doing the prosecutions. There were 3,000 last year and only one prosecution. That's their record to date. This is all smoke and mirrors. They're actually weakening the existing law and talking about having the greatest penalties in all of Canada. It sounds so good except when you look at their record: they're already not enforcing the present law.

This is a very important resolution before us today and I hope that the minister is not going to get up and say the usual things he says in dismissing everything else that anybody else who has any knowledge about the environment says is wrong with your government. The way you're treating the environment, as red tape, and the damage that your cuts and deregulations, through the Red Tape Commission, have been making has got to change. There's got to be a turning point. This is the time to do it, Mr Minister.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I am pleased to stand before my colleagues in the Legislature to speak to this motion being debated this afternoon. As the Minister of the Environment, I'm proud of our accomplishments as a government, whether it's land, water or air. The Mike Harris government has taken a leadership role in protecting the environment for this generation, for our children and for our children's children. But since this motion from the member for St Catharines deals primarily with water, I'd like to deal with that first.

No discussion of water today is complete without talking about the events in Walkerton. We did react quickly. From the beginning our commitment has been to provide immediate support to the community. That support continues, but we're also working closely with the community and others to ensure the return of safe drinking water to the people of Walkerton.

It would have been my hope that the member from St Catharines and his party would have joined with us from the beginning to work together.

Along with all members of this House, we support the public inquiry just started by Mr Justice Dennis O'Connor and we await his findings and his recommendations. But we are not waiting for His Honour's report to act.

Even before the events in Walkerton, the province of Ontario was taking steps to protect our drinking water from source to tap. Other members will speak in more detail about various aspects of Operation Clean Water, which focuses province-wide efforts to improve water quality and delivery. But let me touch on just a few items and some other measures we've taken to ensure clean, safe water in Ontario.

This past spring we started work on the provincial groundwater monitoring network in co-operation with Conservation Ontario, its member authorities and municipalities across the province. This will give us a more accurate picture in order to make decisions about this very precious resource. The network is the first part of a far-reaching provincial groundwater strategy that is currently under development. That strategy builds on important work that's already been done. Under the provincial water protection fund, introduced in 1997, we have provided funding for 34 groundwater management studies covering roughly 120 municipalities across the province. The fund also provided funding for more than 85 projects to improve water and waste water treatment facilities in Ontario. Support for both groundwater studies and improvements to our water treatment infrastructure continue to be available through the SuperBuild initiative headed by my colleague the Minister of Finance.

We've also introduced unprecedented new requirements for the facilities which provide most of our province's drinking water. A key part of Operation Clean Water is Ontario's drinking water protection regulation, which applies to all municipal and other large water systems in the province. For the first time ever, Ontario has water quality standards, as well as testing and reporting requirements, that have real teeth. They have the force of law, and I am very proud of this. It should be noted that the standards go beyond previous objectives and introduce more health-related parameters that must be met. The regulation also ensures that Ontarians will also have access to more information than they've ever had regarding the state of their drinking water. This point is well worth repeating: it is their drinking water. The people of Ontario have a lot at stake when it comes to protecting air, water and land. This point is not lost on the Ontario government, or me as minister.

We have introduced bold new initiatives to help protect the environment. We have brought in many high-quality initiatives like the anti-smog Action Plan, Drive Clean, tough landfill standards, the climate change fund, the Waste Diversion Organization, the most stringent hazardous waste regulation in the province's history, the provincial water protection fund, Operation Clean Water,

the drinking water protection regulation, and the list goes on.

But we are taking it one step further: we are backing our strong actions with strong enforcement. We are doing this with the major offensive against law-breaking polluters that I announced on September 21. This is a twofold offensive, including an environmental SWAT team and the introduction of a bill which incorporates the toughest penalties in Canada for major pollution offences. Both of these initiatives were promised by our government during last year's election campaign.

We are moving in on the small group of companies and individuals who would sacrifice the environment for their own gain. The SWAT team will be a new group of environmental officers with an innovative approach to identifying new and emerging problems, a group with a mandate to act quickly and effectively. The team will be very strategic and mobile. The ministry will be able to quickly deploy SWAT to address immediate threats to our environment. The SWAT field units will be able to draw on the broader resources of the Ministry of the Environment while staying on the front lines. The team will complement ministry district staff, who will continue to conduct inspections and respond to pollution reports. Its members will be able to focus on targeted sources, sectors or areas of concern, and they will be able to conduct inspections and follow up on them.

One point I would like to make here is that in 2000-01 the Ministry of the Environment's staff will increase, with 65 new positions created for SWAT, not the number reported by the member for Toronto-Danforth.

As I said, we are also ensuring compliance with environmental laws through the introduction of a bill that would bring in the highest fines and the longest prison sentences in the country for major environmental offences. If passed, the toughest penalties bill would increase the maximum fine for a first conviction of a major offence for a corporation from \$1 million to \$6 million per day, and for a subsequent conviction from \$2 million to \$10 million per day. It would increase the maximum fine for the first conviction of a major offence for an individual from \$100,000 to \$4 million per day, and for subsequent convictions from \$200,000 to \$6 million per day. It would increase the maximum jail terms for a person convicted of a major offence from two years to five years. It would increase the administrative penalties from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per day.

This is the first bill that I have introduced as a cabinet minister, and it's a bill that I'm very proud of.

1550

That's not all. On June 16, the government announced it had retained the services of Valerie Gibbons, a top public sector management expert, to assist in improving the ministry's environmental protection efforts. Ms Gibbons and her team are identifying the best environmental health and safety practices for the protection of water, land and air. They're also applying their expertise to the full range of Ministry of the Environment activities and functions and are making recommendations on im-

provements to the ministry's operations and on the implementation of best practices.

The activities of the past several months have been focused on supporting the people of Walkerton and ensuring the return of a clean, safe, reliable supply of drinking water. Along with all members of this Legislative Assembly, I salute the people of that town for their courage in meeting this very difficult situation and continuing to show strength and incredible community spirit in the face of such adversity.

Much has already been done, and much more is on the way. We're going to ensure that from source to tap, Ontario residents are able to enjoy a water supply that is second to none.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I am pleased to speak in favour of our motion dealing with the whole issue of the environment, particularly with water.

I heard the Premier, the other day, say something to the effect that, "Well, it's easy to criticize in hindsight." But let me just say to the public, and to all of us, that this isn't criticism based on hindsight. In October 1996, almost exactly four years ago, the Provincial Auditor, the person the taxpayers pay several million dollars a year to be an independent watchdog, to give us and the public advice on problems that the auditor sees and recommendations on how to solve them, was extremely clear to all of us here about the problems that we were heading toward with groundwater, and begged the government to take some steps.

This wasn't looking back in hindsight at Walkerton and saying, "None of us saw it coming." Our independent auditor saw it coming and begged the government to take steps. This report is filled with things now that, in hindsight, if the government had paid attention, may have been different.

The auditor points out that there are eight aquifer maps currently available in the ministry, but they all were developed before the 1980s and cover only a small part of Ontario. The auditor went on to say, "We noted that groundwater was not monitored systematically throughout the province." He noted that the study was carried out in 1991 and 1992 and not done again. That 1992 study showed that, in all these wells that were tested, 31% exceeded the maximum acceptable limits. The auditor went on to point out that in one of the towns in Ontario in the early 1990s, 74 wells were contaminated because of runoff, not unlike what happened in Walkerton. He said, "However, the network has been discontinued, and the ministry has not developed an alternative approach to systematically monitoring groundwater quality."

The auditor, in 1996, told the government, "You're heading for problems," and quoted some of the problems that are eerily very similar to Walkerton's. What does the government say? "Oh, well, we are doing a review and we are developing an overall groundwater management strategy." Essentially the government just said, "We're doing this. Go away."

Fortunately, the auditor does follow up to find out whether the government had done what the government

said it was going to do. In October 1998, two years after this first report, the auditor went back to the ministry and said, "Listen, I told you about these problems that were coming, I told you that you were not doing an adequate job, and I told you that you had to take action. You promised you would take action. Now tell me, what have you done?" You remember I quoted from the 1996 auditor's report about the need for this aquifer update. What did the auditor say in 1998, two years after he begged them to take action? "The aquifer maps have not been updated"—nothing done about that.

You remember the government said, "We're going to prepare a groundwater management strategy." What that really means is a plan for dealing with some of the extremely serious situations that can occur when there's a significant downfall of rain either near factories or, as it turns out, I gather from preliminary information in Walkerton, on a farm where there can be a serious runoff of materials that can infect wells. The government promised it was doing this groundwater management strategy. There's one sentence here: "As of June 1998, a groundwater strategy had yet to be finalized."

My leader, Dalton McGuinty, just last week was able to secure a recent cabinet document, here in the year 2000. In 1996 they said they would do something; two years later, in 1998, nothing done; two years later, the cabinet document. There was a background analysis done on the situation and then when it got to the page where it said "Action Plan"—this is what the government was going to do—the page was blank in the information we received in this cabinet document.

So I say to all of us that Walkerton didn't come out of the blue. The Provincial Auditor, paid for by the taxpayers, who is independent and reports to the Legislature, is the person we should be listening to. The government promised the auditor to take action in 1996 and did nothing. The government promised the auditor to take action in 1998; again, the auditor found that nothing had been done. You can understand why people are pointing fingers and saying Walkerton was not something that simply happened as an isolated case with no possible warning, just came as one unique situation. Nothing could be clearer than the Provincial Auditor's report about the problem that we were about to face.

The auditor, to his credit and to the staff's credit, pointed out some of the extremely dangerous things that could happen without action by the government and talked about the danger of contaminated wells, the danger to human life and clearly the enormous cost. When we were bringing this resolution forward, the Premier was saying, "It's easy for anyone to look in the rear-view mirror and criticize." The auditor wasn't looking in the rear-view mirror; the auditor had his eyes focused way ahead. The government promised action and didn't act. I think you're going to be held accountable and I think you should be held accountable for that lack of action.

Then what we find is—I think it was in the paper today actually—that in response to all of this, here's what another independent environmental group says—this is

the Fifth Year Report by the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy—"It's more bluster, it's all sizzle and no steak, in terms of the action by the government. The auditor pointed that out to us all four years ago, the government ignored it and now we have the situation that we're dealing with."

1600

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I was most intrigued and amused by the comments by the Minister of the Environment when he talked about how proud he and all the government members were about the record of the government on the environment. I thought, it takes a lot of gall for somebody to walk into the House and say something like that, considering that if this government has failed on a number of fronts, one place that stands out like a sore thumb is the issue of the environment.

Since coming to power in 1995, they have declared war on anything that stands in the way of companies doing business in the province of Ontario by way of regulation, and they have undone much of the positive and progressive environmental legislation and regulation that, quite frankly, were in place to protect people from issues such as Walkerton, to protect people from atrocities or accidents within the environment.

For the Minister of the Environment to walk into the House and all of a sudden say how proud he was, and how proud he is, of that record tells me it doesn't take him very much to get excited, it doesn't take him a lot to get proud on anything. It goes to show that basically he's proud about nothing because the facts are that first of all we've got to remember what happened here. The government came to power back in 1995. It came specifically to the path that will lead from Walkerton back to the cabinet and to Mike Harris and his government, fairly well demonstrated. The government came to power and one of the first things they did was to say that municipalities no longer had any provincial labs to send their water testing to. They closed the four provincial labs that did that. The second thing they went out and did was to make no requirement on municipalities to even have this testing done. The third thing they did was give municipalities eight weeks to find an alternative place to do their water testing.

There were a number of events that unfolded that point back to the government in what happened to Walkerton. And for the government to stand up in this place and to say how proud they are of the work they've done to protect people from environmental disasters—I would say it's their record, unfortunately, that will be proven to be the one that goes back to demonstrate what happened at Walkerton was a cause and effect of the policies of this government.

I remember that they came in here with red tape bills. Back then they didn't call them red tape bills; they called them omnibus bills. Well, the former Speaker couldn't say "omnibus," so he said, "onimous," "anonymous" or whatever it was, but we all know what he was talking about, that they were "obnibus" bills—now I'm doing like the former Speaker did; this is pretty bad. But

anyway, they came in by way of Bill 26, I believe it was, the omnibus bill, and by way of red tape, and they undid much of the environmental legislation that stood on the books in this province.

What bothers me, and I've spoken about this before, is that the government did this without recognizing where that legislation came from, why those regulations were put in place, what the rationale was of members of this assembly and former cabinets of this assembly in the past and why they put those in place.

I'm going to give you one very small example—and I talked about this the other day—the question of the Hagersville tire fire. If we remember, back in 1988 or 1989, somewhere in that time period, there was a huge tire fire in Hagersville. You'll remember, Mr Speaker, because it's not far from where you come from. At the time it was allowed, by way of regulation and legislation, for people who dumped tires to contain them in one huge site, not thinking about what the danger would be if there was a fire and the oils and whatever that come out from the melting of rubber were to get into the groundwater, where the danger is. The history is that the fire happened.

As a result of that fire, the government of the day came to this House, supported by New Democrats and Conservatives, and made changes to the environmental legislation, and also enacted regulations under that legislation, to limit the ability of people to dispose of tires in the way it was done in the past. Why? Because when we looked at what happened, there were not sufficient laws or regulations in place to protect the public from those types of catastrophes happening in the future. So the government in the past made changes, and we did them at the time because we wanted to protect the public from the type of atrocity or the type of damage we saw in Hagersville.

This government was elected in 1995 and forgot the history of this province, forgot how it was that legislation came to be put in place, and said, "We're smart, we're Tories." Bang, legislation gone. Next, boom, another piece of legislation gone. In the first three years in power of Mike Harris, legislation flew off the books in this province quicker than we've seen legislation go in at any time in the history of this Legislature.

I remember the members of the government standing up at the time and being so proud of how they were getting rid of all this legislation, because, after all, they all knew that stood in the way of the province being able to develop its economy and got in the way of progress. They forgot that you have to have rules in a province, you have to have rules in a nation to make sure we balance the need of somebody to make money against the interests of the community when it comes to having a safe environment.

This government, without having any regard for what happened in the past, without any regard for the consequences of their actions, basically did away with all that legislation. No wonder we had Walkerton happen. Frankly, we had Walkerton happen because this government made a number of changes that were basically

part of the links that made this happen. So I say to the government across the way, you don't have a record to be proud of.

The other things we haven't talked about too much in this House are some of the other changes the government made that didn't necessarily lead to Walkerton but certainly are going to lead to other problems in the future, and I'll predict that here. One of those things is that when the government came in, they made a 60% cut in funding to the Ministry of the Environment, when you look at the capital budget and the operating budget. The members across the way shake their heads and say, "No, we didn't do that." Yes, you did.

There were in place capital dollars in the Ministry of the Environment through the Clean Water Agency to help municipalities build water and sewage treatment plants, plus there were operating budgets within the ministry to have the people in place to make sure permits were being followed and that we policed what was happening out there when it came to the possibility of people not following the legislation of the day. This government cut by 60% the funding at the Ministry of the Environment when you fold in the capital dollars that were taken out. In addition, they laid off over 1,000 people in the Ministry of the Environment. Then they wonder why Walkerton happened?

Walkerton happened because when the lab—the private lab, in this case—found there was a problem, they reported it to the ministry, but there was nobody there. There was nobody at the Ministry of the Environment to respond to what was coming in from the private lab in regard to the dangers of what was happening when it came to E coli contamination at Walkerton. If memory serves me correctly, there were two such reports from the private lab that were not followed up on.

So I say to the government across the way, not only did you get rid of the environmental legislation and regulations, but you went in after and got rid of 60% of the budget that was earmarked for the environment and, on top of that, got rid of 1,000 staff. You say, "What does that have to do with it?" I'll tell you.

I had an opportunity to meet with some environment ministry people about four weeks ago. In that meeting I asked them, "One of the things your ministry is responsible for doing is monitoring the discharge from plants across this province into the environment." In other words, if you're running a mine or a mill of any type, and you're discharging any kind of fluids outside your operation, what is being discharged out of the pipe and where it's being discharged to have to be verified every quarter by way of a test and have to be reported to the Ministry of the Environment.

The Ministry of the Environment is now collecting those tests, but they're backlogged eight months. This means that if they went out on January 1 and found there was a problem within mining company X or plant Y, and something was being discharged that was toxic to the environment, there would be no way of knowing that until fully eight months after the test had been taken, because

they're eight months backlogged in processing the results of those tests. When you factor in that it's done every quarter, a company, without knowing—I'm not arguing they are doing this on purpose—could be discharging toxics into the environment up to a year before the ministry would even know. I say to you that's unacceptable.

1610

I would argue that it's in the best interests of most companies, especially the bigger ones these days, to operate a safe and efficient plant that respects the environment, because hopefully we've gone past the bad old days of the old corporate polluters and they want to keep their image up. I don't think too many companies out there, especially the larger ones, want to be seen as polluting the environment, but even if they didn't know, there would be no way of picking it up for up to a year because the government has got rid of the inspectors out there doing the work. They've laid off 1,000 staff at the ministry and they don't necessarily have the people to watch what's going on when it comes to the environment.

It would be the same as going into a municipality and saying, "You currently have 500 police officers and you have X amount of crime in your community. We're going to get rid of half of your police officers." What do you think is going to happen? The criminals are going to have a field day because they know there wouldn't be the police officers there to deter the crime from happening, and when it does happen there would be nobody there to catch them and to prosecute them. It's a bad enough problem we have now without having to eliminate the number of police officers in this province. That's akin to what you've done at the Ministry of the Environment. I say to the government across the way, that's another one waiting to happen when it comes to a disaster in the environment.

Mark my words: I'm saying today, on October 23, 2000, in the Legislature that we are going to have a discharge into the environment on the part of some corporate polluter out there and nobody's going to know until a year after that pollution has been let out into the environment. There's no way anybody is going to know until then because of the cuts you've made at the ministry and that you refuse to this point to go back on.

The Provincial Auditor pointed it out in reports to you dating back to I believe 1997, possibly even 1996. The Provincial Auditor was pointing to the problem happening because the ministry didn't have staff and what that meant to making sure that existing legislation was being followed. I say to the government across the way that it's a disaster waiting to happen.

In the mining sector it's even worse, because they've made changes to the Mining Act. It used to be before the changes to the Mining Act were made that every mine had to put in place a closure plan. The closure plan had to be financed so that if the mine goes under—in other words, it goes bankrupt and it has no more money or they run out of ore—and the company doesn't rehabilitate the

land that it was operating on, there would be a pool of money there for the crown to go back to, to make sure we're able to do the rest of the work on the site to restore the site as closely as possible to its previous condition.

I'll give you an example of how well that legislation works. The Detour Lake mine is about 80 miles southeast of Moosonee. That particular mine closed about six or eight months ago. It ran out of ore. Unfortunately, many people lost their jobs, but such is the nature of mining, what happens when these mines lack ore. But that's for another debate. What's happened under the Mining Act and under the closure plan is that Placer Dome is having to rehabilitate that entire site to as close to its former condition as possible. They're going through and doing that process. I'll ask anybody to travel up to where Detour Lake mine is now and then to return in two years' time. You will not know, other than if you had been there before, that there was even an operating mine in the place, because of the way they're rehabilitating it.

Under the changes you've made to the Mining Act, you're making these companies now self-assure themselves. Placer Dome is caught under the old legislation, which is that they had to put in place a closure plan when that mine was started up and they had to make financial assurances that they had the money to do that. But if you had a new mine created today and that company went under, under the current Mining Act and changes that you made by way of the red tape bills, you would find yourself in a position where if that company decided to not follow its obligation, guess who's caught paying the bill? We, the taxpayers. We see that every day in mining companies.

For example, I went to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines two years ago and secured, along with him and Rick Bisson, the municipal councillor for the city of Timmins, and Vic Power and the entire council, money to do reclamation work at the Kam Kotia mine. The taxpayers had to pay the bill because that former company skedaddled out of the country when it closed down and we were left with an environmental mess. It took about a year to put it together, but we finally got the dollars by way of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. That came out of the taxpayers' pockets to fix this.

So I argue, why did you make the changes to the legislation? Why would the province put itself in a position of having to foot the bill when clearly it's a cost of doing business? If you damage the environment by way of the operation you've got, you should put in place the money that you need in order to put things back to where they were, and if you can't do that, maybe the project is not worth doing.

The other thing I want to get an opportunity to say, because it's related to the environment, is that there was a very good decision finally on the Adams mine this last weekend. We know that when this issue went to debate, the New Democrats at Toronto city council were pointing out time and time again that there were clauses in the deal that Notre Development wanted the city to sign. The

clauses said the city was on the hook for whatever damages there may be when it comes to the environment; it wouldn't be the operator of the program. Mayor Mel Lastman forced that resolution through anyway, forced the vote so that they could go ahead and conclude the deal with the developer in order to get garbage into the Adams mine. But at the end of the day, the developer was not willing to take that clause out, and as a result, that deal is now dead.

I want to say hooray, hooray, hooray. It's about time. I'll tell you, if garbage had been coming into northern Ontario, into that mine, we would have been in an awful position down the road when that thing stopped operating as far as when the plant had been finished and they would have filled that hole up with garbage. We would have been sitting on top of an aquifer, and you can imagine what those leachates would have done to the groundwater in the area. So I want to say that one turned out quite well.

The thing I found interesting when I listened to CBC this morning on the way down from Timmins is that there was somebody on the radio—I think it was somebody from the provincial government; it might have been the municipal government—who was making comments about, "Oh no, now we can't allow this to go because we're going to be sending garbage by way of the 401 down to Windsor." I say yes, probably a good reason not to, but why is it that all of a sudden people are concerned now that garbage is being shipped south? All of a sudden there's a huge hue and cry from certain individuals where there wasn't when it was being sent up north.

It only tells me we've got a problem, and the problem is that this provincial government is not taking a leadership role when it comes to developing policies that get municipalities to deal with their garbage crises within their own boundaries. Why is it that the city of Toronto is allowed to go ahead and not do the kinds of things that it's doing when it comes to having to put in place programs that basically take garbage out of the stream so that we can reduce our reliance on landfill sites? I say the government is going to have to take some initiative on that.

With that, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to have time in this debate.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): As part of this resolution we're debating today there is a proposal for the preparation of a groundwater strategy. That's a good idea.

Interjection: An excellent idea.

Mr Barrett: It's an excellent idea, as my seatmates are indicating. This idea is so good that in fact we're already doing it. We're putting much effort toward the goal of ensuring high-quality, sustainable groundwater for generations to come.

To say that groundwater is a valuable resource for communities across the province is an understatement. It's absolutely essential to the health and well-being of Ontarians and it is one of the foundations for healthy and prosperous communities. These are the beliefs of the On-

tario government and of my colleagues on this side of the House.

It follows quite naturally that we recognize the need to protect groundwater and monitor its uses. We have taken bold steps on many fronts to protect Ontario's groundwater resources.

The members may recall on May 8, during Groundwater Awareness Week, we were acting. On that date, Ontario's Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Dan Newman, announced the creation of a groundwater monitoring network for Ontario. We are working with municipal partners and conservation authorities in the development of this network.

To begin with, we're providing \$6 million over three years for monitoring in 38 key watersheds. This includes an allocation of \$3.6 million for the fiscal year 2000-01. The network will help establish an effective water management and drought response strategy in order to ensure the sustainability of Ontario's water resources. Over the next three years, we'll be working with both our municipal and conservation authority partners to install more than 350 electronic monitors. These monitors will measure groundwater levels across the province.

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For the benefit of my colleagues in the House, I would like to make explicit our intentions by quoting from Minister Newman's announcement when he announced the groundwater monitoring network: "Protecting Ontario's water is a top priority for this government. We need sound information about the quality and the quantity of our groundwater supplies to be able to make decisions about how best to protect them. All Ontarians, in one way or another, depend on the sustainability of our groundwater. This initiative will help preserve one of our province's greatest resources."

I add that our efforts have been recognized and appreciated. Allow me to quote Rick Potter, chair of Conservation Ontario: "The direction the Ontario government is taking in order to protect groundwater resources is encouraging. This partnership is a positive step toward establishing an effective water management strategy and we, on behalf of Ontario's 38 conservation authorities, are pleased to be part of it."

Clearly, we are moving in the right direction to create a groundwater monitoring network. However, this is just one of a number of initiatives we're taking in this important area. Our actions do not end there when we talk about our commitment to protect our groundwater. For example, the PWPF, the provincial water protection fund, was introduced in 1997 and has assisted dozens of municipalities to undertake crucial groundwater management studies. A total of 34 groundwater studies involving over 120 municipalities have been approved, with a ministry funding commitment of \$4.3 million.

The fund provided funding for a number of types of studies. A few examples are groundwater resource assessment, to identify and assess key groundwater areas, and contamination assessment, to identify and assess the sources of contamination to aquifers that supply muni-

icipalities with water for drinking and other uses. Another initiative is groundwater management and protection measures. Incorporated into management plans, these measures deal with land use, watershed stewardship and other important issues. Monitoring these measures will ensure the continued long-term protection and management of municipal groundwater for drinking and other uses.

We are continuing to provide support for these important studies under the Ontario small town and rural development initiative, also known as OSTAR, which members know is a SuperBuild initiative first announced in the May 2000 provincial budget.

I would now like to turn to another key initiative of this government, the water-taking and water transfer regulation, which came into effect on April 30, 1999. This, some may recall, is the regulation that prohibits the transfer of water from water basins, for example, the Great Lakes-St Lawrence basin and the Hudson Bay basin. The regulation also tightens requirements for the issuing of permits to take water from Ontario waterways.

Before continuing, I would like to take a moment to point out that currently the Ontario Water Resources Act does not allow the granting of a permit that would interfere with existing uses. This has not changed. Also, the ministry's permit to take water program, the PTTW, is designed to prevent water taking from interfering with existing users of both ground and surface water. But that's not the only consideration. Applications are carefully reviewed, not only to prevent interference but also to ensure that proposed water taking is sustainable and will have no adverse effect on the environment.

Last year, the Ministry of the Environment improved its procedures for reviewing permits to take both ground and surface water. They were also involved in holding a series of focus discussion groups with stakeholders around addressing low-water issues. As a result, applications are now subjected to increased scrutiny and will only be approved where the sustainability of the resource can be assured. As an example, during the summer of 1999, the issuance of permits was curtailed in light of the anticipated drought. We placed conditions on permits to take water, which may include the restriction that takers may not withdraw more than 10% of stream flow, in order to protect the natural stream functions.

For intensely farmed regions in Ontario, the ministry has encouraged the farm community to consider off-line pond storage in order to take water into storage at less critical times during the year. We have also imposed conditions that require permit holders to gauge the available stream flow in order to comply with permit conditions.

With the water-taking and water transfer regulation, the Ontario government has shown international leadership on the issue of water taking and how our surface and groundwater resources are used. Under this regulation, Ministry of the Environment directors must take the following factors into account when reviewing permit to take water applications: protection of the natural functions of the ecosystems, effects of ground and sur-

face water taking on other source uses, interests of others in the permit to take water and, finally, the Great Lakes Charter.

The resolution before the House today also refers to budget and staff levels, and I would like to set part of the record straight. Over the past decade there have been many changes to the ministry's programs, but a focus on compliance has always been maintained. It's important to take a look at some of the historical trends to see the functions that have been retained and how, as programs changed, staff numbers and functions have also changed. It's very important that we know these facts.

The Ministry of the Environment, as I think we all realize, now focuses on policy, standard setting, compliance and enforcement. In 1994-95, staff dedicated to compliance comprised 40% of the workforce. Today compliance staff make up 49% of the workforce. Enforcement staff comprised 4% of the workforce in 1994-95. Today they make up 6%.

One thing I want to make very clear, and I stress this: no investigators in the Ministry of the Environment field offices were reduced. There were 44 investigators in 1995; there are 44 investigators today. Some reductions have been made. In 1995 the ministry provided funding to municipalities and others under the 3Rs and the blue box strategies to build the infrastructure that today enables almost 40% diversion of municipal solid waste. This was funded by subsidies which, at the time, required 73 staff to administer. Today the waste diversion organization, the WDO, which was created by former Minister Clement on November 3 last year, is in charge and is undertaking its activities with \$14 million initially from the LCBO and the private sector. Subsidies for the 3Rs and other programs, such as grants for energy efficiency and environmental groups, had climbed to \$130 million by 1995-96, not counting water and sewage grants.

If time permitted, I could run through additional explanations of both the ministry's budget and the ministry staffing level, but I think it's clear to all honourable members in this House that our government takes very seriously our responsibility to protect Ontario's water resources. We are acting on this responsibility with the development of a comprehensive groundwater protection strategy. As I mentioned, our goal is high-quality, sustainable groundwater for generations to come.

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Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm very privileged to stand in the House today and speak to the motion that's been brought forward by the member for St Catharines.

I have to say that I was rather amused when the government member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant stood up and one of his first comments to the motion on the floor was, "We are already doing it." If you read the preamble to the motion, it says that this House recognizes the government has been ignoring repeated warnings about water safety from the Provincial Auditor and the

Environmental Commissioner. I would agree with the member that, yes, you are ignoring the warnings that you've been receiving from these two arm's-length agencies. I would suggest that really isn't anything to boast about.

We hear from the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant that this government is moving forward in the development of a provincial groundwater strategy. My question to the government: so what else is new since 1996 when your government first made that commitment? We are a full four years later. There has been a serious tragedy that has occurred in this province as a result of your lack of movement in this area, something that I think is shameful. You stand in this House to suggest to the people of Ontario that you're doing something. You made that commitment in 1996 when the Provincial Auditor said that this is an area of serious concern and, to date, there is nothing in writing that says this is the plan that we have in place.

I just had passed to me from my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton, who makes it a point of being very well read on issues that impact our environment, a very interesting document she has received from the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy. I'm just going to quote one section of this document that I think is very applicable to the debate we are having this afternoon: July 3, 1999, so this is reasonably recent information. Maybe I better just frame this and indicate that when we talk about groundwater strategy we're talking about understanding first of all the resource that we have and how much of it we have and how it's being used, how it's being taxed and then, following that, how it's being protected.

So, initially, with regard to the amount of water that we have and how it's being used, Ministry of the Environment figures show that the ministry approved 18 billion litres of water a year to be drained by commercial bottlers, free of charge, from Ontario's water supply. The Minister of the Environment has given permission for 18 billion litres of our water to leave our province.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): How much?

Mrs Dombrowsky: Eighteen billion. It is reported that the Ministry of the Environment has issued 48 free permits that grant long-term access. This gets more frightening as I read along. These are long-term access permits. Now, long-term permits are for 10 years or more, so there's going to be attacks to our provincial water supply for a period of at least 10 years or more.

The Minister of the Environment insists that the water resources in the province are being managed well. However, concerns of drought this year and low water tables prompted the Ministry of the Environment to announce that the government will no longer issue automatic permits. Up until this summer, when there was a crisis with regard to water levels provincially, permits were issued automatically. So when members of the government stand and suggest to this House that they take our water resources seriously and are doing all they

can within their power to manage them responsibly, it has only been this summer that they decided it might not be a good idea to simply issue a permit automatically.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Shocking.

Mrs Dombrowsky: It certainly is shocking, my colleague would say, and most disturbing.

When I hear the kind of presentation that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, with regard to the water-taking permits, has presented: "Well, you know, we've insisted that these people who have the permits monitor the stream to make sure they don't take any more than 10% of the total flow," the people of Ontario need to understand that the very people who have asked for permission to use our resource are the same people who are put in charge of monitoring the flow. It's not up to the Ministry of the Environment to do that monitoring. The person who actually depends on the permit is the one who's going to report to the ministry whether or not the flow is sufficient.

I don't know about you, but that's some cold comfort for me, particularly if I am to understand that the permit holder has some financial stake in whether or not that permit is sustained.

Ms Di Cocco: The fox in the henhouse.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Yes, the fox in the henhouse theory.

So when I hear members from the government talk about the priority that this government has given environmental issues, it's certainly already in the motion brought forward by my colleague from St Catharines: this House recognizes that the government has drastically slashed funds and fired staff at the Ministry of the Environment.

I would suggest, and it's been presented to me on many occasions, that if you really want to come to understand the priorities of an individual or the priorities of a company or a business, look at where they spend their money. This government has chosen to reduce the amount of money it spends in total on our environment, and I would suggest that we, as a province, are paying a very dear price for that sad shift in priority.

Interjection.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Very sad indeed.

The government has indicated that it is working on a provincial groundwater strategy. It has been doing that since 1996, so, understandably, many people on this side of the House and many people throughout the province of Ontario continue to be very concerned. There's a real question about when, if ever. We hear some wonderful plans but we don't hear any commitment in terms of, "This is when we will be bringing it forward." Since we've been hearing this since 1996, I think that there's some very justifiable question around whether we will ever see a groundwater strategy come from this government. Certainly, more is the pity.

Just last week there was an opportunity when the government could have shown that it certainly was interested in taking a step toward the establishment of that strategy when Bill 121 was debated here last Thursday, a bill that

would have required that a director from the Ministry of the Environment notify municipalities and conservation authorities when permits to take water are issued in their community. It's certainly not what one would describe as a comprehensive strategy, but what many stakeholders within the province saw as a very reasonable and supportable first step in comprehensive groundwater management.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has petitioned the minister to move on this. He didn't, and the government didn't last week. Conservation authorities from across the province supported this initiative. One hundred and sixty-seven municipalities supported this initiative, and yet members from the government had the nerve to stand up here and say, "We don't need to support it because it's already being done." Why did many conservation authorities, why did many individuals say, "This would be a good first step," if it was already being done?

That's pretty frightening to me, actually, when I hear members of the government present that and present it as if it were fact. If it were fact, then why did we hear from people who would ask that it would be implemented, if it were already happening?

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I didn't hear from members of the government any figures to support their statement. I did not hear from members of the government that, of all of the water-taking permits that had been lodged, these many actually had been followed through in that way, that these many municipalities had in fact been notified, that these many conservation authorities had been notified, so in fact this bill is redundant. No figures of that nature were presented. If that is in fact the case, I would love to get the record corrected. I would gladly stand corrected on that point.

I have to say that in my research municipalities would say they have not once been contacted about a permit to take water in their community. I've had conservation authorities share the same information with me. So I really have some question and I'm a little bit uncertain about how that presentation could have been made or why it would have been made.

With regard to the motion that's before us today, certainly I support what my colleague from St Catharines has brought to the floor for discussion and debate. I believe we need a groundwater strategy in this province immediately. We need to work toward it. There have been four lost years where there have been nothing but promises, unkept promises, on this very, very important issue. So I congratulate the member who brought the motion forward. This is an area of great importance to the people of Ontario, and I certainly hope the government will recognize its importance and take this opportunity to move forward this afternoon.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's a pleasure to stand today in the House and to talk about this motion that was brought forward by the member for St Catharines.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to address the

resolution that has been put forward. I can assure the honourable member, and all the members of the Legislature, that we are firmly committed to the development of a strong set of safeguards for Ontario's environment.

You have heard about some of the initiatives that we are undertaking to ensure cleaner communities for all Ontarians. I would like to talk about one special group of Ontarians that we are committed to helping, and that's the people of Walkerton. They have endured a very difficult situation following the E coli outbreak in their water supply this past May. We have a responsibility to the victims and their families to get to the bottom of the problem. We will not rest until we do so. Our government is fully supportive of the work of the O'Connor commission, and we look forward to their results.

Right from the beginning of the events in Walkerton, the government has been active in that community with two key objectives: to provide support to the people of the city of Walkerton, and to restore clean, safe drinking water.

When it comes to providing necessary support, this has been a coordinated cross-government effort. The time that I have doesn't allow me to list all of the things the province has done, but here are some examples.

From the beginning, the Mike Harris government has provided additional physicians, emergency medical care and air transportation for the people of that area. We have supplied an on-site mental health team with on-call services. We have provided additional children's mental health services in recognition of the trauma faced by the people of Walkerton, particularly the young.

As the government moved from addressing the immediate crisis in Walkerton, we began to put in place the services and facilities necessary to help residents cope while the water system was being restored. Early on, we established the Ontario support centre to help meet the needs of the Walkerton residents. The centre's responsibilities include emergency relief for local businesses for all direct water-related expenses and overhead, working jointly to ensure an adequate supply of bottled water, and providing long-term recovery assistance to businesses through the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade.

Through the Ministry of the Attorney General, the government has provided a comprehensive package of compensation to individuals. The plan provides the same compensation that an applicant would receive through a successful lawsuit without waiting for the courts to determine who is at fault. The applicants who accept a compensation offer will immediately receive 100% of the compensation offered, and no one will be deducting commissions or fees from that settlement.

Through the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the province has provided significant financial relief to the municipality of Brockton. This includes interest-free loans for legal and technical services to aid the municipality in restoring safe drinking water, to finance municipal operations and

allow the municipality to postpone property tax instalments and to allow the deferral of Brockton's payments to school boards.

We have also suspended monthly payments by Brockton to the province related to local services realignment, guaranteed that the municipality will not incur additional costs for policing services, and we have advanced the second, third and fourth quarter community reinvestment fund payments in one lump sum, and suspended payment deadlines for businesses for retail sales tax, corporate tax and the employer health tax—all for the people of that community.

In addition, the Ministry of Education guaranteed that students in the community finished their school year last year in June and that schools reopened on time this fall. We have also provided support for additional ground transportation and the installation of an alternative water supply in Walkerton schools.

It's clear that the government of Ontario's support to the people of Walkerton has been immediate, comprehensive and ongoing. In addition to this support, we've worked with the local municipalities and others to restore the community's water supply. These efforts have been led by the Ministry of the Environment and the Minister, the Honourable Dan Newman.

The work to restore the Walkerton water system has been impressive by any measure. It includes ordering house-to-house disinfection and the swabbing, disinfection and testing of Walkerton's water system; working with the Ontario Clean Water Agency to sample every house and building in the community; overseeing the replacement of over 4.6 kilometres of water mains; and continuing to work with the Ontario Clean Water Agency in the installation of an interim filtration system which should be in place very, very soon.

These efforts have been unprecedented, but they all have one goal in mind: the restoration of clean, safe drinking water for the people of Walkerton.

As I said earlier, we are all watching the work of Mr Justice O'Connor. His inquiry will tell us what happened in Walkerton and, most importantly, what we need to do to ensure that this never happens again anywhere in Ontario. It's clear this government hasn't waited, either to help the people of Walkerton or, as other members are telling us today, to restore province-wide confidence in the safety and quality of our drinking water.

There is a large number of people who visit Ontario parks from time to time during the summer, and I want to reassure them that we take the issue of safe drinking water for all of our guests and staff very seriously in Ontario parks. The practice of testing and re-testing water parks on a weekly basis is well established and has been in place and ongoing for decades. Ontario Parks has a long-standing and well developed public health program employing a classified public health policy officer and a seasonal environment sanitation inspector.

The program deals with drinking water quality, yes, but it also deals with the water quality of swimming areas, food preparation and handling areas, and the sani-

tation of park facilities. There has never been any reported outbreak of water-related illness in Ontario parks.

Ontario's regulations on how water should be tested and treated have changed to keep pace with new technologies. Ontario parks will meet this new standard and will continue to provide safe, clean drinking water for all of our visitors at some of the highest standards available in North America, or the world, for that matter. Work is underway, and we're following the monitoring requirements set out in the regulations, which means that weekly bacteriological testing will take place. Instant reporting of unacceptable test results to MOE and the local medical officer of health will take place. The immediate rectification of a problem, followed by a written confirmation that our staff have corrected the unacceptable test result, followed by an additional test to make sure the remedial action was effective.

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Ontario Parks has reviewed all water systems and has detailed, up-to-date blueprints which will pave the way for system upgrades and improvements. We have proceeded with chemical analysis of all Ontario Parks water systems. The Ontario Parks quarterly report is being completed as per the new guidelines. Ontario Parks is now working to bring all of our water systems into full compliance with all of these new and upgraded regulations.

We look forward to meeting this challenge and we will continue to provide the unforgettable natural experiences and unmatched level of service and safety our guests in Ontario parks have come to expect when they visit that most magnificent part of Ontario.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm also pleased to rise to support this bill. I recognize that this government has made commitments over the last few weeks to increase the testing and monitoring of our water. That's certainly commendable, although it would be more commendable if they also employed people to do the testing and to do the inspections. However, to me, the question isn't more tests. While the Titanic was sinking, they could have done all the tests they wanted to see if there was ice on board and it still wouldn't have remedied the situation. The challenge is to prevent the ship sinking or to prevent the water going bad.

Water is an extremely intriguing commodity here in Ontario; in fact, everywhere. We can determine how much natural gas we have in reserves and we can determine with some accuracy how much oil we have underground in reserves. It's measurable. It does not change other than the change brought about by our utilizing it. But water is a transient sort of item, in that the amount of water available subsurface changes profoundly from one year to the next. We talk about our weather, and engineers, of which I am one, design for one-in-100-year storms: the greatest amount of water that will occur once in 100 years. Except those storms can happen two days apart or they can happen 500 years apart. So we can't really determine with great accuracy what the quantity of water is that we possess. It's one item, in fact, that we

can't learn from history on, saying, "We had this much water in 1915, so we'll have this much now." It's an item that requires constant surveillance on the part of a government to determine what the status of the water is.

We have learned the hard way, unfortunately, that it's not inexhaustible. I've watched with some interest in the southern States, where they have seen their population grow while they have not had an increase in their natural resources, of course. In Florida they now have a greater requirement for water than actually exists within that state. We're seeing some reactions in that they purchase water, some of it from Ontario, some of it from within my community, to take to the US to use for drinking. They also continue to drill wells and pump groundwater out, but they're pumping it out at a greater rate than it's being replenished. They have a phenomenon called sinkholes down there, when you have this large underground cavern that's no longer filled with water—because water can't be compressed. As long as you've got water in the subsurface, it's going to hold whatever is above. In Florida they have what I'm sure is not amusing to a community, occasions when these empty sinkholes collapse and houses and buildings and highways and so forth fall down into them.

We know that our water situation has changed profoundly in Ontario with our increased population and with the changes in weather. All of us have stories about how much snow we used to have when we were growing up and how we had to walk through four feet of snow both ways to get to school and so forth. But the reality is, in the last few years we've had considerably less snow in southern Ontario than we've had in previous years. That snow in fact forms part of the groundwater resource that we don't have any longer.

Now we rely on rain, and this requires monitoring by the province because as we listen to how many inches of rain we've had—and I'm going to speak in imperial. I'm too old, I think, to be absolutely comfortable in metric. We've had more rain—

Mr Bisson: About 2.5 centimetres equals one inch.

Mr Parsons: Thank you very much to my colleague. I don't know what that is in real numbers.

We've had rain occurring, a lot of it over the past summer, that has caused a great deal of grief for farmers. Unfortunately, we tend to go through heavy rain and then drought, and heavy rain and drought. But even the way in which it rains is of profound interest, as to whether it comes quickly over about an hour and runs off the land or whether we have a slow, steady drizzle which goes into the land and forms our groundwater resource.

The protection of our groundwater isn't something that can be done simply by just the Ministry of the Environment. There are other ministries that cross over into this. I watch the number of houses that are being built in Ontario. Certainly, the houses themselves will have an increased demand on the water, but houses profoundly influence the groundwater in a number of ways. There are people who believe it's a good thing to put housing developments on the Oak Ridges, and believe that that

won't affect our groundwater. When you put a subdivision on an area such as the Oak Ridges, it has a number of influences on the water. First of all, the footprint occupied by that house is no longer available for the water to go into the ground. Then they construct lovely manicured lawns around the House. I take some pride in my lawn, but when you have just a superb, manicured lawn, what you have is an extremely tight-knit system of roots that does not allow the water to penetrate. Then we catch that water that can't get in where the house was and can't get in where the lawn was and we put it into a storm sewer system and we run it immediately away from the area, so that area isn't getting the benefit of it.

The Oak Ridges has a fabulous quality that we need for water and that is its ability to filter. Water when it enters the ground is not filtered by loam, it's not filtered by clay, but the best filter we can achieve for our groundwater is for it to pass through gravel deposits. The greater the depth and the greater the length of gravel deposit, the purer the water we will have coming from it. When the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing allows houses to be built overtop a massive gravel deposit, it influences the water available to this province, both the quantity and the quality, for a fantastic number of our residences. We need to deal with that. In fact, we need to deal with, in some areas, the permits that are being taken for gravel removal, because that gravel serves purposes other than being available to build highways.

If you're in Toronto, it is extremely easy to think that if we need more water we pump more out of Lake Ontario. But Lake Ontario comes from somewhere. It comes from the numerous streams and it comes from the numerous underground aquifers that drain into it. For rural people, water is an absolute lifeblood for them. A house or a farm in a rural municipality that does not have potable water available has a resale value of virtually zero.

This government has been quite free and easy in giving away water-taking permits. But the water-taking permit that is given is given without any ability on the part of the Ministry of the Environment to know what effect this permit is going to have on the groundwater. We don't know how much water is in our streams. We can't look in a book that shows the flow per hour for a certain stream five years ago, because that varies month to month and it varies year to year. The Ministry of the Environment obviously needs people to determine what is the existing resource of water, not as a one-time—don't bring in a group of people to do it now and determine what it is and say, "We now know how much water we have in Ontario," because it changes from day to day and from week to week. It requires constant surveillance, which is not now the case.

Even worse, the water-taking permits require no input from the citizens in that community who would be most affected by it. The member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, with a private member's bill last week, was right to try to recognize the expertise that

exists in that community, to recognize what people know about that particular flow. Not all expertise exists in Toronto on rural affairs. The people in rural Ontario need to be given a voice on their water.

Some of the water-taking permits make perfect sense. Where the water is being taken into a plant for cooling purposes and returned, or being brought in for vegetable cleaning and then returned, makes a great deal of sense. Irrigation of a farm: to spray the water on the field, it returns extremely quickly to the groundwater.

The water-taking permits are not in themselves wrong. It's a matter that some of the permits are for water for export. As we are crying with distress about the effect of gasoline prices on our province and on industry, I would suggest to you that there will be a day when the price of water will be a critical factor. But money won't solve the problem once it's polluted.

1700

I am extremely pleased to support this motion that's before us today, because I believe it is long overdue for this government to recognize that their role is not just to test the water and tell us that it's not drinkable, but to protect the water up front to ensure that it is safe and clean for us and future generations. There cannot be growth in Ontario unless we can provide some assurance that we have safe, clean drinking water.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to join the Liberal opposition day, as this isn't a bill we're debating; it's actually an opposition day resolution by Mr Bradley. With that, perhaps they are taking some issue with the bill that will be debated later tonight, Bill 124. But it is my opportunity to speak to the actions the government has taken to continue to ensure that everyone in Ontario has confidence in their drinking water, that this government is fully aware and fully committed to making sure that this is a given.

I think this whole debate today has been cast against the background story of the summer, the Walkerton issue. Clearly the Walkerton issue was a wake-up call for everyone. To think that the Walkerton issue just emerged this summer is to a great extent a bad place to start from, because I have an article here that was published by the Toronto Star, believe it or not, in October, in preparation for Justice O'Connor's inquiry.

In here they gave a fairly detailed chronology of what's happened over the years at that particular well, or a couple of wells. I'm quoting from the Toronto Star of October 16, "Problems identified in Walkerton's water system date back to 1978, when the well identified as a key factor in the outbreak went into operation." The article goes on—without boring those who might be listening—that there were a number of calls even prior to May from the water testing people and in fact from the medical officer of health. I think the inquiry will come out and very clearly identify that a number of things went wrong.

What our minister and the Premier did was introduce and launch Operation Clean Water. This is well underway. Operation Clean Water is our comprehensive

Action Plan to give Ontario residents the cleanest, safest drinking water in all of Canada, and arguably all the world. I also want to always keep in mind: let's demonstrate our commitment to this by looking at Walkerton as a model, as kind of an experiment, in saying as a government we were asked to take over this situation to some extent.

Here's what Mayor Dave Thomson said in the National Post of August 9 with respect to the regulations we introduced, "It's good news for all of Ontario. It's going to restore faith in the quality of water, so hopefully these tests will be a big benefit to everybody." Not to think that in any respect the mayor may or may not have the technical background to make those claims, here's Ken Ogilvie of the environmental watchdog group Pollution Probe, which is not known to always compliment this government—as it should be. They should stand and observe. He called the new law "a good piece of work because it transforms what are presently guidelines into legally binding standards." That's the Canadian Press, August 9. So we have it kind of from the front line, those people using and drinking and concerned about the water—that's Mayor Thomson—and we have it from Pollution Probe. I could go on and make much more of a testimonial here, but I have another part that I want to get to.

It's to assure you about the Walkerton experience. I think the best summary was at AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. The mayor of Brockton, Dave Thomson, said, "From day one, Premier (Mike) Harris, the Minister of Environment Dan Newman, the Attorney General (James Flaherty) and the Ontario support team have done whatever it takes to restore clean and safe water to the residents of Brockton." That's the Toronto Star, August 17, 2000.

We can look and we will learn from Justice O'Connor's hearings, and it's not to point blame. It's to go back to the fundamentals. It is to have the safest, cleanest drinking water in Ontario—not just Ontario but all of Canada.

Our continuing efforts to improve water quality and protect public safety include a number of separate initiatives, all coordinated under Operation Clean Water. These initiatives address a wide range of water management and environmental health issues. Protecting drinking water throughout Ontario is a key goal for Operation Clean Water. All members are aware of our tough new drinking water protection regulations.

We are consulting on the small waterworks and what they could and should do to provide and safeguard the drinking water they provide to the public. The consultation paper released in August invites Ontarians to provide ideas and comments on a number of questions that need to be answered in order to develop an effective approach for ensuring clean, safe water in all our waterworks across the province.

On a more personal note, I have been working with people in my riding of Durham, specifically in the Port Perry area, and more specifically, on the Fralick's Beach

area. For years, they've had a private well that's serviced some 60 homes. That well—it's quite a deep drilled well—has always tested 0-0. I have been working with those residents to make sure that Durham region and the people in the area have their water tested and it meets those regulations, and that they're not placed under any hardship. That's my goal as their elected representative: to make sure that any outlay of funds is certainly addressed in OSTAR and other programs.

As of October 19, the ministry has inspected 441 of the more than 620 water treatment plants in Ontario. Orders requiring corrective action have been issued to ensure that problems are corrected. Of course, these inspections are being conducted by the inspectors, the enforcement portion of that ministry. Over the summer I have had a number of issues with respect to private wells and other water sources, and in every case I have had very good support from the York-Durham office and getting out in a rather timely manner to inspect and look at what the inquiries were about.

We want to meet provincial treatment standards, adequately test drinking water and have qualified operators running systems. The result of our inspections will continue to be publicized on a regular basis so that Ontario residents are aware of potential issues with the drinking water supply in Ontario.

Here's a symbolic little gesture. I'm drinking the water here at Queen's Park. It's quite potable, actually. I was getting a little bit dry.

In addition, beginning in July, we began posting all reports of adverse drinking water quality on the Ministry of the Environment's Web site. If you have any questions at any time, you can call my constituency office or any constituency office and members will give you that information.

We are committed to providing the public with continuing information on the drinking water issue. On September 20, the Ministry of the Environment released the 1998-99 results of the drinking water surveillance program as part of the regulations. The program is a voluntary monitoring program carried out by the ministry and participating municipalities to provide information on the quality of municipal drinking water. The data is provided to support standard-setting and provide an early-warning system of emerging problems. The water surveillance team, as well as the regulations, I believe, is the right thing to do, and publishing them and putting them in the context of the legislative framework is clearly what we've done. The minister is moving forward; there's no question of that.

I'd just like to point out that more than 99.9% of the samples analyzed under the program met health-related objectives. It's not to send any sense of alarm; it's more a sense of accountability, which is very sympathetic to the tone of this government. It is not just to spend money, but to account for it and to have standards—among the highest standards in the world, in this case.

We are committing to support a program of quality drinking water in the province. To do that, we are also

making investments toward making Ontario's water supply clean and safe. On August 10, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Tony Clement, announced immediate infrastructure investments that focus on water safety as well as long-term water and sewer infrastructure investments. The previous member has spoken about the OSTAR program and other Ministry of Finance initiatives.

1710

In the interest of maintaining some harmony with my good friend from Northumberland, I will save him a few minutes, although I have it on good information that my speech is far more interesting. I want to sum up with one small thing, with permission: a very good article, in the context of the Ministry of the Environment and how to look at it—not cynically. It's an article from the Ottawa Citizen on Monday, October 16: "10 Myths About Global Warming." Some might say that's not related. Well, the environment is water, air and soil, and I'm going to quickly read this.

The myth is that "The Kyoto accord, and other climate change initiatives, are focused on solving environmental problems." Now this is from Professor Patterson, an earth sciences professor at Carleton University in Ottawa. Tim Patterson is qualified to say this, not me; it's just giving us another point of view.

"Houghton calls global warming a 'moral issue.' Reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, will, he says, 'contribute powerfully to the material salvation of the planet from mankind's greed and indifference.' Former Canadian environmental minister Christine Stewart said, 'No matter if the science is all phony ... climate change [provides] the greatest opportunity to bring about justice and equity.'" It makes you question what the real agenda is.

"Paying developing nations billions of dollars to buy the pollution credits awarded by 'environmental' treaties may be the true objective of many alarmists. The transfer of wealth from rich to poor countries should be debated for what it is, not incorporated into environmental agreements." So what price for environment is the issue—buying credits. Do you understand? That's the point he's making; it's a very cynical thing.

"In the meeting today in Quebec City, the federal government will attempt to convince provincial representatives to make commitments similar to the \$500-million climate change program recently announced by Environment Canada. However, elaborate schemes 'to combat global warming' may be akin to combatting continental drift—of highly uncertain value and unbelievably expensive."

The point this sends is that some of the stuff we're hearing in the media must be questioned, and scientists and Justice O'Connor are just doing exactly that. Let's listen to the results before we jump to conclusions.

Thank you, and I'll share my time with the member for Northumberland.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to stand and say a few

words in regard to the ongoing saga of this government's mismanagement of water.

I think it has become apparent since the spring and the tragic occurrences in the town of Walkerton, as the previous member from the government side said, that Walkerton has acted as a wake-up call for all of us in our regard and respect for our drinking water supply, which, probably up till then, most of us in this province had taken for granted.

As somebody who lives on a farm and basically every year has to maintain his well—clean it out, make sure the pipes are clean—I have a direct interest and knowledge that I am responsible for my water supply. It's my responsibility, and I certainly want to make sure it is right. I've always had that respect, but I think most of us just turn on the tap and there it is. Until this spring, we certainly believed there was no danger in turning on the tap and drinking a glass of water.

In a way it's been a wake-up call, but in a way it hasn't, because I haven't seen any fundamental change from this government in their respect and regard for water. I haven't seen any new programs that really declare that Ontario will be a clean water province and that we have a clean water act that basically sets the highest standard in North America. That's something we should do, because we in this province are the possessors of the greatest fresh water supply in North America. We're the guardians and stewards of that water supply, and we should be the most vigilant in its protection.

Lately, as everybody has known, there's been another water issue I've been very close to; I've considered it to be a water issue. That was the Adams mine landfill. Why that was a water issue, and again why I don't think there's really been a wake-up call with this government, is that to this day this government has issued a certificate of approval that would allow the proponent to place garbage in a man-made lake.

I think we should have learned that regardless of a mechanical system or whether or not this pit would leak, just the idea of putting millions of tonnes of household waste, or any type of waste, into a man-made lake, using the inflow of groundwater that is so precious and that can be used to sustain life—to use it just to clean up garbage, with the hope of capturing it and cleaning it up again before it's discharged into the environment, is just wrong. Yet that certificate of approval for the Adams mine site remains today. That just means that Toronto has decided not to send garbage there in the next five years. That's all it means. That site still has approval to receive garbage.

I think the decisions facing Toronto will be almost as controversial, and who knows what they may face in regard to the methods of transportation of waste along our highways if they don't go with the rail-haul option that they could to Michigan. Of course, as we in this House and people in the press have been saying over the last few days, what is the will of the people of Michigan and of the state of Michigan to accept millions and millions of tonnes of Ontario trash over the next few

years? I think Toronto may not have a choice in the short term, but we really do have to find a made-in-Ontario solution.

So the government has to look at all aspects of water. Whether it's what my colleagues talk about—water-taking permits and how much groundwater we extract—or how we would wastefully use groundwater and pollute it through dumping garbage in a landfill, we must have total respect for our water supply, whether it be groundwater, our river systems or the Great Lakes.

I would say to the government that if they wish to show that Walkerton was a wake-up call, they would pull the certificate of approval that has been issued for the Adams mine and never again allow garbage to be put in that site. In fact, I think it would be a good idea, as part of a comprehensive water policy, to protect all future sites such as that in Ontario.

I know my colleagues would agree that we in the north are probably more vulnerable to this type of siting of a landfill, because we're basically the centre of the mining industry. As you know, you either extract the rock by driving a shaft through the surface of the earth, through the Cambrian Shield in the Canadian Shield area of northern Ontario, or you do like the Adams mine and basically dig an open-pit system. These open pits, which on a smaller scale are the quarries you more often see in southern Ontario, are very vulnerable to the temptation we've had for thousands of years of humankind to put our garbage in.

We've had that debate with the Niagara Escarpment, and I believe there is a law that forbids the dumping of household waste, any type of waste at all, in the Niagara Escarpment. I think we now have to extend that to any spent mining operation anywhere in the province, whether it be a shaft or an open pit, so we never use these fractured rock quarries, pits or shafts for garbage. Why? Because of water. I think we finally need to understand we have to preserve our groundwater resources in this province. We can't squander them.

You can imagine that only a Canadian, and specifically maybe an Ontarian, who has access to such tremendous, pure, pristine water resources, would even dream of wasting as we were going to with Adams by dumping out 3.1 billion litres of water that's accumulated there, that's drinkable as it sits, and to continue to do that for years—that we would squander that.

You can imagine, as the world continues to develop a water shortage over the next 25, 50 and 75 years, that a vast quantity of water that is in the reserve we'll call the Adams lake, and the rest of the groundwater reserves and surface water reserves that we have in this province, will basically be the crude oil of the 21st century. As that gave the wealth to western North American and the Arabian states, water is going to be the wealth generator in this century, way before the end of it.

1720

We must right now decide that we are going to preserve our water resources, that we're not going to squander them in any way, that we're going to, as we

develop them, charge properly for water so that people don't squander the resource and so that we never use such a freshwater resource, any water resource, to clean out our water.

We have a lot of other options available to us, and we are lucky now with the tremendous development of emerging technologies in waste control that we don't have to bury garbage at all anywhere in the ground. I would think that would be the next step, after we forbid the dumping of garbage in any spent mine workings in this province: we go the next step as we start to fund at the provincial level, as we should, because it's not just a municipal problem. You can't just download the total provincial waste problem on our municipalities. I think the federal government and the provincial government have to understand that it's a national and a provincial problem to handle our waste, and to do it in a sustainable manner we have to contribute financially to our municipalities to find the proper solutions for that.

Those emerging technologies are there. They are doable. Many of them have been developed in this country. The patents are held by Canadian companies; the engineering has been done by Canadians. The examples are not very far away from where we sit here in Toronto today. We need to go out and embrace those technologies. We need to support those Ontario and Canadian-based companies and utilize those resources to take care of our garbage problem that people take for granted and save the environment, save our water resources, and do the right thing with our waste stream.

Through that, we have to educate people on how we have to create less garbage to begin with. We have to pass legislation for our packagers to make sure we create less waste to begin with and all the way along so that we are better users of our resources, so we produce less garbage and in the end preserve our environment. I think that's what this government should be doing.

Water should be the base; water should be the start of what we should be doing to protect our environment. We should be looking at our air, and through this we should be managing garbage properly. So I would say to the government, let's please recognize Walkerton as a wake-up call and respect the water resources of the province of Ontario.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to be able to participate in this debate, if only to outline some of the many mistakes that have been made by this government and also to emphasize what I regard as continuing errors and likely new errors that are going to be made.

I think we all know the record. This is a government that came into office and immediately cut the budget of the Ministry of the Environment by 45%: over \$100 million taken out of the Ministry of the Environment budget. It's a government that at the same time laid off over 900 inspectors, scientists, technicians and enforcement officers, the very people who have the expertise, the knowledge and the experience to be out there doing the work to inspect and ensure that water treatment

facilities and sewage treatment facilities are working appropriately.

They closed all of the provincial laboratories whose job it was to conduct the water tests and other tests to ensure that people's drinking water was safe and also to ensure that water generally in this province was being adequately safeguarded.

This is a government that, despite a number of pleas from the community of Walkerton itself for financial assistance in terms of its water treatment facilities and its sewage treatment facilities, responded by saying, "We have money for tax cuts for corporations and the well-off, but we have no money to help you with your water treatment facility." It shows the true priorities of this government.

When presented with the Safe Drinking Water Act earlier this fall, as put forward by my colleague Ms Churley from Toronto-Danforth, this is a government, members of which voted for the Safe Drinking Water Act, but then, to ensure that it could never become law, instead of sending it to committee for public study and public comment, sent it off into the nowhere land of committee of the whole. In other words, the government and members of that government showed, in my view, how cynically they take all of these issues.

That is the record of what's gotten us here.

There are some other things that we need to take note of today and that I think the public needs to know about.

We already know from the studies which have emerged from Walkerton that the E coli which got into the water system came from manure runoff from cattle operations. We know that. It's been very clearly established by all of the tests.

We know that across major portions of rural southern Ontario, community after community is concerned about the runoff from large-scale cattle operations. The government held sort of a dog-and-pony show seven or eight months ago where the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy went out and talked to some folks. We know the Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Food went out and they talked to folks, but the government refuses to make public their report. The government refuses to make public the details of what they found. Instead, what this government has done is they've presented a whitewashed summary which leaves out all of the details of the evidence that is out there.

Then they come into the Legislature and, in terms of dealing with this problem of large-scale factory farms and the large-scale problem of manure and runoff from these farms, their approach is that they want to study it some more and then they want to hand the responsibility off to municipalities. Municipalities are going to be charged with the inspection and the enforcement.

Well, figure this. You have a water course that runs through several municipalities. How can the municipality that is at the bottom of the water course enforce against someone who may be polluting the groundwater, the

surface water, further up in another municipality? It won't work. How are small municipalities which are already suffering from the downloading of ambulances, suffering from the downloading of public housing, suffering from the downloading of a number of other expensive services supposed to afford this enforcement and this inspection capability?

The government doesn't seem to really care about that. All this government seems to want to do is to hand off these very important responsibilities.

I think people across this province would be shocked, perhaps mortified, if the government came to them and said, "Municipalities will now be responsible for inspection, enforcement and regulation of the chemical industry." No one would say that municipalities have either the financial wherewithal, the historical knowledge or the expertise to do that. But in a sense that's what this government's position now is with respect to large-scale factory farms.

People in this province would be shocked, I suspect mortified, if the government came out and said, "Local municipalities are now in charge of policing, of inspecting and enforcement, with respect to the pulp and paper industry," another potentially major polluter. People would say, "You're crazy if you suggest that. Municipalities don't have the expertise, the knowledge, the money, anything." Municipalities wouldn't be able to enforce environmental regulations in any adequate way with respect to the pulp and paper industry, just as they wouldn't with respect to the chemical industry.

The evidence of Walkerton is that agricultural runoff can kill people just as quickly, can make several thousand people very ill, yet the response from this government so far is, "Municipalities should regulate these issues."

I think that shows us all that this government continues to fail to take seriously how important protection of the environment is, continues to fail to take seriously that if you're going to protect the environment, you must put in place, first, the legislation; secondly, the expertise that can do the job; and thirdly, the budget that will allow the expert people to do the job.

1730

What we see from this government is that they refuse to pass a Safe Drinking Water Act. They refuse to restore the budget of the Ministry of the Environment so that the Ministry of the Environment can go out there and hire the necessary experts, and they refuse to then provide the resources so that those people can do the job.

In terms of agricultural runoff, they refuse to take responsibility, they refuse to introduce legislation. Instead, their position is, their plan is, their strategy is: hand the responsibility off to municipalities.

It's clear that this government, despite the tragedy of Walkerton, despite the dozens of communities in this province that now have to boil their water, despite the several dozen communities that acknowledge upfront they have problems with their sewage treatment facilities, with their water treatment facilities, this government has

no strategy to help them address this. None, other than to say, "It's your responsibility. We, as a provincial government, refuse to take any of the responsibility that is properly the responsibility, properly the place of a provincial government."

It doesn't end there. We know this government's next strategy to try to avoid responsibility will be to hand responsibility for the operation of sewage treatment plants and water treatment plants over to private sector companies. We know that the whiz-bangs who work for the Minister of Municipal Affairs have been plotting away at this strategy for some time. That is, if they can't take responsibility for it, they refuse to take responsibility for it, hand it over to private companies.

Fortunately for people, there are examples of what happens when you do that. The greatest example comes from Great Britain under the Thatcher Conservative government there, where Margaret Thatcher, in 1989, proceeded to privatize many of the sewer and water operations in Great Britain. What was the result of that two and three years down the road? Let me summarize quickly. The private companies took over the water utilities, they took over the sewer utilities, and immediately raised the user fees, raised the rates that were being charged local people in order to cover the cost of operations. By the way, the executives of these new companies fattened up their salaries and extracted literally hundreds of millions of dollars from the operation of the utilities for their own pockets. They then went out and did what this government has already done, they laid off people whose job it was to maintain the operation of the sewer and water treatment facilities. They laid off thousands of employees, then they raised the rates. When people complained and said, "We don't have the money to pay these rates," they went out and cut people off and they simply stopped doing the maintenance work.

So what happened three years down the road? Three years down the road the British Medical Association was annually writing letters to the Thatcher government and then the Major government in Conservative Britain, saying to them, "Your privatization of sewage treatment plants and water treatment plants is creating a problem wherein water is becoming a number one public health threat in Great Britain. We are seeing infectious diseases being spread by inadequately maintained water mains and inadequately maintained water facilities that we have not seen in Great Britain for 70, 80, 90 years."

Whole lower- and modest-income neighbourhoods suddenly found that there was no maintenance work being done on the water distribution system, that there was no maintenance work being done or improvements being made in the water treatment facility. Why? Because the private company wasn't interested in providing safe, clean water. They were interested in getting as much as they possibly could in terms of profit out of the system.

We know from the leaked documents that that is what this government has in mind next. We're headed for a situation in this province where, if you have money,

you'll be able to pay for safe, clean drinking water. But if you don't have money, or you don't have sufficient money, this government's strategy will be, "Well, too bad for you." Whole neighbourhoods are going to be put at risk by this government's strategy.

So today's debate is a timely debate, a very timely debate. We are seeing the gradual degeneration of what I believe is one of the essentials of our society and one of the essentials that all people who live in our society should be able to count on regardless of their income. This is one of the reasons why governments were created: to ensure that people will have safe drinking water; just as I believe that government has a responsibility to ensure that we have schools that operate efficiently and effectively, something else that isn't happening in Ontario today; just as I believe it is government's responsibility to ensure that all of its citizens can have access to health care, something else that isn't happening in Ontario today.

That's why this debate is so timely.

Just to summarize again, this is the government that, upon taking office, laid off 900 inspectors, enforcement officers and scientists in the Ministry of the Environment. This is the government that cut over 45% of the budget. This is the government that ignored all of the warnings, not only from their own internal civil service but from outside agencies. This is the government that ignored pleas from the community of Walkerton itself. This is the government that has no strategy for dealing with the problem of agricultural runoff from large-scale factory farms. In fact, this is the government that thinks that large-scale factory farms are always a good idea, everywhere. This is the government whose only solution to the water crisis that they have created and presided over is going to be to say on the one hand to municipalities, "It's your responsibility," and on the other hand to say to people, "Oh, you want water. Well, you now have a private company running your waterworks and if you want water, then you should be prepared to pay whatever inflated, exploitative water rates they demand." That is clearly where we're headed.

I want to draw to people's attention something else that's happening. This is a government that's sending out to folks across Ontario lots of propaganda, paid for with their money—taxpayers' money—telling them how much they've cut taxes. People need to know that Mike Harris's tax cuts will not do anything to ensure that we have safe, clean drinking water. Mike Harris's tax cuts will not do anything to bring back the lives lost at Walkerton, and people whose health will suffer forever in that community. Mike Harris's tax cuts won't do anything to help those communities that are now on boil-water directives and those other communities that are likely to end up on boil-water directives.

Yes, Mike Harris's tax cuts are very good for corporations. Yes, they are very good for the most well off. But for the citizens who deserve to be able to count on clean water, they won't do anything.

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

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'm pleased to be able to wind up the debate on this rather silly resolution that's been put forward by Mr Bradley. He's the person who waived environmental assessments when he was the Minister of the Environment.

Before I get into the discussion about Operation Clean Water that I wanted to talk about, I'd like to correct the leader of the third party in some of his comments, and I wish he would just stay here while I explain it to him. He was asking about the release of the intensive agriculture report. I'm pleased to report to you, Mr Speaker, that the report was released publicly by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Ernie Hardeman, just an excellent minister, in early July.

Now we tried very hard to write it in Dick-and-Jane language so people could understand it, particularly people like the leader of the third party. I don't know if he didn't understand it or he didn't bother to look at it, but it is out there and he is very welcome to have a look at it. We can send him the report whenever he'd like it. We received support from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers, and having no objections from environmental groups, I interpret that they support it as well.

1740

The other area I wanted to comment on, just before I get into this debate, is in today's Toronto Star, "Recycling May be Reborn," being led by Councillor Jack Layton. Everything that's in here that they're going to do is being done in rural Ontario today. It's certainly being done in my riding. I know it's been carried out for about five years in Guelph, and certainly four years in Northumberland. The member from Broadview-Greenwood wants to ban organic material from landfill sites. All they have to do is start doing it in Toronto. They've been doing it in rural Ontario for some time. Mel Lastman is going to fly to Edmonton to see how it's done? All he has to do is take a short drive up to Guelph and see how it's done. He doesn't have to go to Edmonton. He must have some friends or relatives out there to go and visit. Then he talks about, "If it's going to cost a couple of bucks ... people will put it in front of someone's else lawn. We can't have that. It won't work in Toronto." It works in rural Ontario.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Who said that?

Mr Galt: That's Mel Lastman.

I don't know why it wouldn't work in Toronto. It's user-pay for the garbage that's going into a landfill.

Then, "Gord Perks, of the environmental alliance, remains sceptical about Lastman's commitment to recycling." I can understand that, particularly as they haven't done it yet. The rest of Ontario is doing it. He goes on to say, "It's my experience—and I've been doing waste work in Toronto since 1987—that as soon as they find a hole in the ground, they forget about recycling." I expect he's probably quite right there.

They didn't have to start with all of Toronto. They could have started with a small portion of Toronto and tested the market to see how it worked. But, no, they lagged behind the rest of Ontario. I guess the rest of Ontario should be showing them, but, lo and behold, he has to go to Edmonton. He's got to go out of the province. It must be better there.

I wanted to spend a few minutes talking about Operation Clean Water and how our new drinking water protection regulation is going to enhance the protection of people here in Ontario. This will now have the force of the law so that it must be done. It's going to be more than the drinking water objectives, although the drinking water objectives were very ideal guidelines.

This government didn't wait to act. The new regulations took effect in August, as quickly as new regulations could be brought in.

These regulations have some of these kinds of requirements. There will be regular and frequent sampling and testing of drinking water. There will be stringent treatment requirements for all drinking water. There will be quarterly reports for consumers and they will be kept up to date as to what's going on. The first one will be tabled on October 30. There will be microbiological and chemical testing carried out by accredited laboratories. There will be absolutely clear requirements for the immediate, person-to-person communication of those reports of potentially unsafe water situations. It will go to the Ministry of the Environment, to the medical officer of health and to the waterworks owner to ensure that the kind of mishaps that happened in Walkerton won't happen again. There will also be full public access to water quality information.

Having a little further look at some of those points I've just mentioned, it will ensure water quality standards with this testing and reporting and it's going to go beyond some of the previous objectives, that we will have this increased protection with the strict, regular testing. There will be the quarterly reports, as I mentioned, and they will be quarterly public reports, and the public can easily get to see just what's going on. There will be notification certainty whereby they will ensure that the people on the other end do get the information and they will certainly be very responsible in that notification. It will be to a live person, not just voicemail left, and it will be assured that there will be within 24 hours a follow-up of those reports in writing. But I think in this day with voicemail it's very important that it is one-to-one, that the message is sent on so there's no confusion. It will ensure that the proper authorities get the information so that they can take the quick and effective actions that are so important.

It's also important that these laboratories be accredited. Anybody can hang out a shingle and call themselves a laboratory, but they need to meet the standards of the Standards Council of Canada, or at least that equivalent, if they're going to be in the business of checking how safe our water will be. If there's any change to those laboratories, that has to be in writing to

the Ministry of the Environment to notify them to ensure that the new lab they're going to is a certified laboratory.

We talked about the people being made aware, and certainly notices must be very publicly placed so that people are aware that there's water that may be of unacceptable standards or that unacceptable testing may have been going on. It must be in prominent locations.

The staff who do the sampling of water at these various plants will have to be licensed.

Of course we've also brought in that there will be an engineer's report of all of these waterworks, one in the immediate future and from there on every three years, to let the Ministry of the Environment know the status of those waterworks. It will help with issuing of new certificates for their operations and it will also be a basis for requiring the owners of those waterworks to upgrade those facilities.

It's refreshing to see that this is going to have the force of the law and that it will be in regulation. Before, it was drinking water objectives that, if followed, there was no question the people's health would be protected.

We're also, as a key goal to this package, looking at the small waterworks in the province. The consultation paper was put out in August, and we know there are thousands of small businesses and institutions, mostly in rural Ontario, that use these small waterworks, and they should have the same protection any of the large municipal water systems has.

I repeat that we didn't wait to act. This government took immediate action by passing the drinking water protection regulation, a regulation that for the first time gives the force of law to tough standards that are designed to ensure clean drinking water for the people of Ontario. I stress that we didn't wait to act. We acted as quickly as we possibly could to bring in new regulations to protect the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate.

Mr Bradley has moved opposition day number 2:

That this House recognizes this government has abandoned responsibility for protecting our water by: ignoring repeated warnings about water safety from the Provincial Auditor and Environmental Commissioner; drastically slashing funding and firing staff from the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources who play a key role in protecting our water; and

That this House demands that the government take action on this serious problem by:

Finally keeping their long-standing promise to deliver a comprehensive groundwater protection strategy;

Beginning to restore the 45% cut to the budget of the Ministry of the Environment;

Beginning to rehire the one third of Ministry of the Environment staff that the government has laid off; and

Immediately passing a comprehensive clean drinking water act.

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

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; it will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Bradley has moved opposition day number 2. All those in favour will stand one at a time until they're recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn
Bountroggianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie
Boyer, Claudette	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce		

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

Nays

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

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 31; the nays are 48.

The Acting Speaker: The ayes being 31 and the nays being 48, I declare the motion lost.

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

The House adjourned at 1802.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Alvin Curling, Gerard Kennedy,
Frank Mazzilli, John R. O'Toole, Steve Peters,
R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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Finances et affaires économiques**

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Rosario Marchese, Julia Munro
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Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Leona Dombrowsky,
Bert Johnson, Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Joseph Spina, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Mushinski
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Brenda Elliott, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Brad Clark
Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Caroline Di Cocco,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Jerry J. Ouellette, R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N.
Tascona, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John C. Cleary
John C. Cleary, John Gerretsen, John Hastings,
Shelley Martel, Bart Maves, Julia Munro,
Marilyn Mushinski, Richard Patten
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Brian Coburn,
Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
Frances Lankin, Bill Murdoch
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

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