



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 37th Parliament

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de l'Ontario
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 7 November 2001

Mercredi 7 novembre 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 November 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 7 novembre 2001

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ
CONSERVATION ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LA CONSERVATION
DE LA MORAINÉ D'OAK RIDGES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 6, 2001, on the motion for second reading of Bill 122, An Act to conserve the Oak Ridges Moraine by providing for the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à conserver la moraine d'Oak Ridges en prévoyant l'établissement du Plan de conservation de la moraine d'Oak Ridges.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'm really quite excited, really thrilled to be able to talk about this bill on the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, and the bill is numbered 122.

This is indeed a very unique piece of geology here in Ontario. I know we have several other moraines, and I'm sure that in the not-too-distant future we will be addressing this Legislature to protect them as well. But this is one where a lot of it's in the greater Toronto area and it extends east into Northumberland all the way through to Cramahe township, a little north of the village of Castleton. I wouldn't be surprised if the water that comes into my well actually comes from some of the aquifers that originate from the eastern end of the Oak Ridges moraine.

As I mention the well that we have at our country home, I think in terms of the fact that when you're out in the country you pay 100% for the development of the well, the maintenance and its operation. It's the same with a septic system; you pay 100%. Not only that, you have to pay for the inspection. It makes it just a little difficult for people in the country sometimes to see all the dollars that flow into the water treatment plants and the sewage treatment plants in some of our built-up areas, but I guess that's the way it goes. There's really not very much support when it comes to these private wells such as ours that probably is fed by the Oak Ridges moraine.

Bill 122 is just one more step in what our government has been doing that's very environmentally sound. I would challenge any other government that's been here in Ontario or, for that matter, in Canada or the US, that's

been doing as much as we have for the environment of our great province. I think back to some of the things like Lands for Life. Here was an opportunity that previous governments had, but what did they do? They talked a great story, but did they come through with anything? No.

What did our government do? We developed enough conservation area in Ontario to equal the square area of Lake Ontario, and that is dotted in different places throughout mostly northern Ontario. That's the kind of conservation the Harris government has been doing. It's going to be one tremendous legacy that will live on to remember what this Harris government has been doing in Ontario. I bring just that one example to you.

I think back and also reflect on the Niagara Escarpment Act which the Honourable Norm Sterling was very instrumental in bringing in.

Interjection.

Mr Galt: Sure, other governments could have been doing that kind of thing, but did they? No, that kind of thing didn't happen. I also reflect, when I was parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of the Environment working with the Honourable Norm Sterling and Brenda Elliott, on the kind of regulatory change we brought in. For example, there was a regulation that required people to bury pesticide containers rather than have them recycled, yet the ministry was trying to get them recycled, which was illegal. It just didn't make sense.

That's the kind of regulatory change we brought in, but also some of the legislation that was environmentally sound, such as the Environmental Assessment Act. Here was one where environmentalists, some people, seemed to think the way to protect the environment was to make it as complicated and as red-tape-ish as you possibly could make it. They thought the environment would be protected that way. But that isn't the way to protect the environment. What you want to do is get to a quicker answer: yes, to protect the environment, or yes, to go ahead with whatever project in an environmentally friendly way.

1850

With the Oak Ridges moraine bill, what we're protecting and the concern that the public had was pretty extensive. Certainly, once it was introduced last spring and we had unanimous consent to carry it through first, second and third readings—that was the bill that froze development on the Oak Ridges moraine for some six months—there was a tremendous amount of interest. When I was on the street, whether it be in Port Hope, in

Cobourg, Grafton or Colborne, people were asking about this. They were phoning in, genuinely concerned about this Oak Ridges moraine, a rather unique geological area where oak trees grow and it's very porous. They often talk about it as the headwaters for many rivers and also for a lot of the fish, particularly trout, that are in our particular area. The public were very concerned.

They were also concerned about some of the water-take permits that have been requested. Between the Oak Ridges moraine and water-take permits, there were a very significant number of calls coming in to my constituency office. They are indeed very pleased with this legislation that's been introduced by the Honourable Chris Hodgson to recognize the importance of protecting an area such as the Oak Ridges moraine.

I was reflecting for a few minutes there on some of the other bills that we've had to protect our environment and protect some of our conservation areas. We also think in terms of how, just on Monday, the Honourable Cam Jackson brought in the bill to assist, protect and help our disabled community, our disabled people. That has been very well received by that community. This is a kind of compassionate government that the Harris government is all about. You may ask why. A lot of people see a Conservative government as all about economics. Yes, maybe that's where you start from, but you have to put a house in order before you can really go ahead. You have to put a foundation under it. Without a foundation under a home, there's little point in putting on a fancy door or repairing some of the walls if that foundation isn't there. I guess I see the difference between the left and the right: with the left, they'll spend for the social programs regardless of where it comes from or how it happens. The Conservative philosophy is you spend what you have and you get that sound economic foundation in place before you go ahead just spending money willy-nilly. Sure, some people do that and they go bankrupt, and so do countries on occasion.

But what a turnaround in the province over this last five or six years. Yes, there is a downturn in the economy right now, but we're now in a position to weather it with the cut in the taxes; over \$15 billion a year in increased revenue coming into the province—\$15 billion more, way in excess of \$1,000 for every man, woman and child—that's there for programs. It's almost \$1,500 for every man, woman and child that's available for programs. It's balanced the budget. We are now not spending more than we're taking in. We are spending some \$6 billion a year more in health care, about \$500 for every man, woman and child. Even though the feds started out with a commitment of 50% for health care, where is it now? Down to 14%, and I think that's most unfortunate.

I just wanted to bring to your attention these things that were happening as a basis for the development of Bill 122, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act. You need to understand that as a basis to see where the government has been coming from in developing sound environmental legislation. I wanted to draw to your

attention the kind of support that the government is getting for it. These are just a few quotes. I expect you're particularly interested, because some of these quotes come right from the official opposition.

This one on the Oak Ridges moraine comes from the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. He said, "I want to thank the minister for taking a brave step that his predecessors refused to do."

Then from the third party, the NDP, the member from Toronto-Danforth said, "I do want to take this opportunity to congratulate the government today. I think it's a very good move.... It is incumbent upon me, on behalf of the NDP caucus, to congratulate the minister and the government." I think that's a really good endorsement, both from the official opposition

as well as from the NDP.

Then I look at some of the other quotes that have come out, such as from the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, the executive director, Jim Faught. In his release he was quoted: "The government has proposed a bold ecosystem-based plan that will see 62% of the moraine off limits to most development and 92% off limits to urban expansion."

As I look further, "STORM"—Save the Oak Ridges Moraine is what that acronym stands for—"applauds the government for moving forward with much-needed legislation for the Oak Ridges moraine." It goes on to say, "The government has shown a commitment to enacting a comprehensive ecosystem-based plan that puts in place strong policies to protect ground and surface water, natural heritage and the rural character of the moraine while directing new growth to settlement areas. We have been looking forward to this day for a long time now."

Mr Speaker, I'm sure you'd be interested in some of the things that came out in some of our newspapers. One, for example, in the *Globe and Mail* on November 5 says of the legislation, "Overdue? Yes. Welcome? Absolutely. Better still, imaginative brokering, swapping moraine land for less sensitive crown land elsewhere, let all sides claim a measure of victory."

Also from the *Globe and Mail*, from John Barber in his article, "When the full effect of this week's work becomes apparent—in 40 or 50 years' time—the Mike Harris memorial greenway will be seen for what it is: priceless." This isn't coming from some of the spin doctors the opposition like to talk about that we develop our sound bytes from, but this is coming right from the *Globe and Mail* saying it's the "Mike Harris memorial greenway." I think that indeed is a real compliment for our government.

Then, of course, from the *Star*, which isn't exactly writing a lot that supports our government, and we recognize that, I think it's interesting what they said on November 2: "Welcome Decision to Protect the Moraine." It went on to say, "Hodgson and his cabinet colleagues deserve credit for listening. Three provincial governments have grappled with this tough issue. Finally this government has acted. This is a huge victory. It pre-

serves the moraine as a continuous green corridor and guarantees that scenic Bond and Philips lakes remain in their natural state.” This editorial is concluded by saying, “An important landmark has been saved for future generations.”

I have two more quotes. I’m sure you’re sitting on the edge of your chair, Mr Speaker, just waiting to hear them. This one is from David Lewis Stein in the Star. He comments on November 2, “Tories Earn Kudos for Moraine Ruling.

“A round of cheers to the Mike Harris government and Municipal Affairs Minister Chris Hodgson.” Later in the column it says, “They listened to the people. It’s called democracy, and I love it.”

In the Toronto Sun, an article by Connie Woodcock, who actually comes from my riding in Port Hope. She’s making the comment, “You have to hand it to the Harris government. When they get behind an idea, they carry through.” She concludes that the moraine “was like many other issues the Harris government’s dealt with—it was just common sense.” That’s dead on.

As I think of that moraine and think about the calls I was getting into my office, a concern about this pristine water supply—some of that probably is still glacial water that’s trapped in some of those aquifers. People get very concerned about their water supply, and that’s certainly very understandable.

Just recognizing some of the things that are in this act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act would “protect natural and water resource features on the moraine, preserve agricultural land and direct development to approved settlement areas.” This statement is pretty important in my area.

1900

First, I notice a press release from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, which is very, very supportive of this particular piece of legislation. Of course, I can understand why. It recognizes agriculture, and agriculture will continue to operate on that moraine, using common sense approaches, of course, when it comes to the use of pesticides, soil nutrients and conditioners. But also, there will be some approval in settlement areas, and that was of concern in my area.

The warden, Bill Findley, certainly expressed that in the hearings when they were in Cobourg in the middle of September, somewhere around the 15th or 16th. They have responded and acknowledged that, yes, some development in the hamlets and in-filling of lots would be in order but certainly not the subdivision kind of planning. When you get into subdivision planning you have a lot of pavement, some contaminants can get on that pavement, such as dripping oil from cars, and what happens is that sooner or later that ends up in the groundwater, ends up in our aquifers. So anything that occurs on a moraine such as that, the headwaters or where the water ends up filtering into the ground and getting to the aquifers, is particularly important.

Of course, this legislation would require all new Planning Act applications made on or after November 17

of this year to conform to the proposed Oak Ridges moraine plan. That just makes common sense. It fits in with having to coordinate the plans that are already present in municipalities in those areas and they tie in with the proposals in this particular bill. Most municipalities are going to look forward to and agree with that.

Within 18 months the municipalities would be required to amend their official plans and zoning bylaws to conform to the proposed plan. I think that’s a more than adequate length of time, some 18 months. Certainly they can get things in order in that length of time.

The proposed plan would be ecologically based and, of course, that’s what this is all about: responding to the needs of our environment, responding to the ecology.

It goes on. One of the major things that we’re talking about here is the protection of water resources. It would include strong policies to protect water quality and quantity. It would protect headwaters, cold water streams such as those running into Lake Simcoe and all kettle lakes on the moraine.

Of course, if there’s any error of direction in some of that planning and protection, it would certainly be on the side of caution, particularly when it comes to managing storm water because of the potential to contaminate the groundwater. I think, Mr Speaker, that you’re familiar with some of the advertisements we’ve been recently hearing from the city of Toronto talking about what’s on the streets. Sooner or later what’s on those streets ends up in Lake Ontario, and that’s where Toronto draws its water from. So it’s important that we look after those pavements, and that’s what’s being stressed in this particular bill.

The plan is going to require innovative storm management practices, of course. Limits would also be placed on the amount of impervious or hard surfaces within watersheds. This is needed to protect the natural hydrological cycle, maintain groundwater recharge and reduce potential flooding and erosion. Certainly the recharge was a big concern this past summer with the extremely dry conditions we had. An awful lot of our shallower aquifers almost became nonexistent. A lot of people, particularly in my area, are very, very concerned about their wells, the lack of water, and had some concern with water-taking permits, even those water-taking permits that were for much, much deeper aquifers. They were certainly very concerned about what was going to happen to their water supply.

This goes on to discuss, for all natural core, natural linkage and countryside areas, that upper- and single-tier municipalities must prepare watershed plans and incorporate those plans into their official plans. These watershed plans would have to include a water budget and a water conservation plan.

In the last point in this particular section, I think it’s interesting that it talks about having to include environmental management practices, such as pollution prevention, reduced pesticide use and road salt management. Of course, all these things that might be applied would end up in those aquifers sooner or later.

In the last minute in my presentation this evening, I would certainly compliment our Premier, our cabinet and the Honourable Chris Hodgson for bringing this bill forward. It's certainly a win-win in my riding, particularly the west end of it, about where the Big Apple is along 401. That's about where the Oak Ridges moraine ends—the north of it. Approximately eight miles to the north you come to a touch of the Oak Ridges moraine. Certainly the people in Grafton, Cobourg and Port Hope, who get a lot of their water from that moraine, are very appreciative of this piece of legislation.

I look forward to a speedy passage. It might be nice if it went through as quickly as the bill to put a freeze on the Oak Ridges moraine, but I trust that all parties will support this bill in the end.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions, comments?

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): It is a pleasure to rise to remark on the speech of the member for Northumberland. I was also here on April 12, 2000. There was an opposition day motion related to the Oak Ridges moraine. The opposition day motion that day said, "That this House affirms the necessity of protecting the Oak Ridges moraine and the importance of having a planning system in Ontario that protects our drinking water, wildlife habitats and other natural features." It goes on to call on the government to freeze development on the Oak Ridges moraine.

On that day the member who just spoke, the member for Northumberland, said, "I find it rather irritating to have a member from downtown Toronto coming out to tell us in rural Ontario how to run things. We've had Toronto solutions for so long, trying to handle and look after rural Ontario. I think it's just about time that maybe they started looking after some of their own things in Toronto rather than attacking rural Ontario all the time." The member proceeded to vote against that resolution, as did all government members for that matter, on April 12, 2000. That is the record of Hansard in this House. It is astounding that somehow now, on the road to Damascus, members of the government have found religion. Hallelujah. It's amazing.

I have one other comment. The member talked about Lands for Life. It's very interesting that, at the time, the announcement was hailed in many quarters. Of course, after the election in June 1999—the member doesn't like to talk about this—the ministry allowed mining in those parts. They allowed aggregate mining in the Mellon Lake Conservation Reserve. They permit hunting in existing wilderness parks—in Killarney Provincial Park. They have rejigged the boundaries in environmentally sensitive areas like Kahshe Lake conservation area.

So come on. No more shams, no more double-talk. That's enough.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I must support my colleague from Toronto-Danforth in her comments congratulating the government on this move. It certainly came as quite a surprise to all of us that they would do this. I think it's a progressive move, and that needs to be

said. However, as with anything else, I don't think we can just pass it without some comment, some critique, some looking at the overall purpose and swath of this bill. It does require one to take a great deal on faith. On the other hand, it would be hard for the government to risk the wrath of its 905 voters by going back on the promises it made last week, which are for the most part carried through in the draft plan.

One important question on this, though, is whether the government is giving the developers more than they are legally entitled to, and is the government, in turning over land in the Pickering area, solving one problem while perhaps creating another? I don't know, because I'm not personally aware of the uses right now of the land they're targeting in Pickering. But I do know that in southern Ontario there is a concern about prime farmland, that we should be protecting it. I would hope this isn't opening the gate for the government simply to let her rip. They've done this very valuable and important progressive piece of work where this area is concerned, but it should not give them carte blanche to simply turn their back on other environmentally sensitive areas and farmland in the province.

1910

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I'd like to commend the speaker from Northumberland for his eloquent remarks on what is going to be a very significant piece of legislation in Ontario's annals. Protecting a large piece of Ontario, as we're doing with the Oak Ridges moraine act, is a heroic and wonderful thing to do.

It was only a short while ago—and I've been having a small debate with the member from the official opposition as to what happened on April 12. As my memory serves, I stood up and supported a motion that would have protected the Oak Ridges moraine, and I think I was one of only two members of my party who voted that way on that day, the other being Mr Gilchrist, who was sitting back there at that time and has since moved around a lot in the House. I believe he is sitting over here now. After that vote, I recall being called on the carpet and asked why I did such a thing as to vote in a manner that didn't support government policy.

I want to say that I'm extremely pleased this evening and extremely pleased in this session that my party has now brought in this piece of legislation, which is going to protect a vital part of Ontario so that my grandchildren and the children of our future generations can be assured that the kinds of ecological values that are in the Oak Ridges moraine—as are on the Niagara Escarpment and as are in many of the lands we have protected under Lands for Life—are going to be protected for future generations. I think that's an extremely important thing a government can do for the people of Ontario that will be significant in the years to come, and I'm proud to be part of a party that can not only make those contributions, but can change its direction when necessary.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I'd like to thank Doug Galt too. Doug is, of course, a member of our caucus who under-

stands our rural-urban issues very well, because he represents a rural area. People in that area have a conflict between wanting good planning but also wanting the right to develop and use their land in any way they wish or desire. Resolving that conflict is a very difficult and tricky thing for politicians to do, particularly at the provincial level.

We heard from Mr Caplan, the member for—it used to be Oriole. He talked to this Legislature about the resolution that the Liberals brought to this Legislature some time ago. But we've heard lots of resolutions by the Liberals, all about motherhood: "We love the moraine. We want to preserve this. We want to do that. We want to write cheques to solve our school problems." They want to do all these kinds of things, but no fiscal responsibility, no plan put forward on how you do these things. Everybody has the same goal: they want to preserve the moraine. The genius of the Mike Harris government is that we can put together the plan, the legislation that will work and in fact protect the moraine. That's why our government should be very proud of this. If, God forbid, the opposition ever got into the position of being the government, I can't believe they could (1) put together a plan that would work and (2) do it within a reasonable period of time, like six months, as we have, to save the moraine. Thank God for Chris Hodgson and Mike Harris and their support for the moraine.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Galt: I was particularly moved by the comments of the member for Halton and the member for Lanark-Carleton. I was a little disappointed in the members from Don Valley East and Sault Ste Marie, who have not seen it quite the same way—maybe I did get converted on the road to Damascus. I'm not sure. However, I believe that the member from Lanark-Carleton explained reasonably well one of the reasons why we don't stand up en masse and support some of the opposition days. Generally those resolutions are written such that it doesn't matter how you vote, you're in trouble. It's kind of interesting, the way they are posed. I haven't gone back to look at this particular one, but it's such a tradition that you get so you don't even pay attention to it just because of the games they like to play. I can understand why I probably did vote against it at that time.

My compliments to the member from Halton and also the member for Scarborough East in maybe standing up and supporting what might have been an opposition day motion to protect the Oak Ridges moraine. If that was a straightforward motion at that time on opposition day, I compliment the opposition for bringing it forward. But so often it isn't straightforward. It has a few twists in it and curves so that it just doesn't matter how you go about it, it doesn't matter what you say, it's going to be wrong. Some people would talk about this as a wedge issue. They went on to talk about, and the member from Don Valley East also talked about, Lands for Life being a sham. There's more to conservation on a given piece of land than just one particular item or another. Do some of those things happen there? Yes. But at least it's owned by

government and it's going to be looked after by government in the future.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I am most pleased to have this opportunity to speak on Bill 122, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001. Over the past year I have watched my Liberal colleague Mike Colle, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, work endlessly trying to save the Oak Ridges moraine. I also feel that your government was forced to bring in this legislation, which we appreciate because of the Vaughan-King-Aurora by-election. This by-election, by the way, was not won by Mike Harris, who I noticed was your candidate in Vaughan-King-Aurora; it was won by the Liberal candidate, and now member of this Legislature, Greg Sorbara. The real winners in all of this are the people who fought so hard to save and not pave the Oak Ridges moraine.

I commend the government for finally listening to the people and taking this step forward to protect our environment. The Liberals would like to see a few amendments to the bill that we feel will result in even better protection for the moraine. When I think of the Oak Ridges moraine, I see many similarities to the Alfred Bog in my riding. In the case of the Alfred Bog, the united counties of Prescott and Russell as well as many environmental groups have been trying to get this government to listen to their concerns. On June 14, 2001, I presented a bill in this Legislature to permit municipal regulation of peat disturbance and extraction in order to assist the united counties in saving the bog. Extraction in that bog is going as deep as 16 feet, and we advised the government on many occasions. I spoke to the minister. He was briefed twice on this. I invited him to come down and we would have a helicopter just to fly over this bog so he could see what is happening. The Alfred Bog is the largest example of a raised or domed bog at this latitude on the face of this planet. Can you imagine something as unique as this, and this government has not taken any action on my bill or replied to the request of the united counties of Prescott and Russell for assistance.

1920

Another fact about the Alfred Bog that this government may not be aware of is that it is by far the largest peat bog in eastern Ontario and is considered more important than the Mer Bleue bog in the city of Ottawa, which is a Ramsar wetland. Ramsar is the designation given to wetlands that are of world importance, and the Alfred Bog is being considered for Ramsar designation. Imagine that.

You can see why I am so interested in this legislation for the Oak Ridges moraine. There are so many similarities. The government is not listening. Nothing is being done.

The original size of the Alfred Bog was more than 35,000 acres. It is now less than 10,000 acres and shrinking. The bog, although not being paved like the Oak Ridges moraine, is being reduced by agriculture and peat extraction on a daily basis. If you were to go around, you would see trucks coming out of there every 15 or 20

minutes. That peat moss is being sold all over the world. This is why they don't want to get rid of it.

At the present time all we have asked this government for—and I'm so pleased to see that we are committed to investing \$15 million in cash for the Oak Ridges moraine—for the Alfred Bog is \$2.5 million. The federal government has committed to paying their share toward saving the Alfred Bog.

We must ensure that the Alfred Bog as well as the Oak Ridges moraine are protected. I am going to ask Mike Colle and Greg Sorbara to join the united counties of Prescott and Russell and the local environmental groups to ask this government to help save, and stop the peat extraction from, this great environmental jewel.

The Alfred Bog, like the Oak Ridges moraine, is a crucial component of the groundwater system, retaining and filtering tremendous amounts of water. It ensures clean drinking water. Remember Walkerton? If this case, like what we experienced with Walkerton, happens to be coming down in the area of Fournier, Alfred, the Champlain township or the L'Orignal area, the government would be stuck with the invoice afterwards.

The area adjacent to the existing bog used to be a peat bog. It was destroyed and now these lands are in the flood plain, where they flood annually. The Alfred Bog needs your help the same as the Oak Ridges moraine needed your help. The Alfred Bog needs your help to protect the environment and it needs your help financially to guarantee its survival.

The remaining available private land within the Alfred Bog must be in public ownership. As you have proposed land swap deals in the Oak Ridges moraine to ensure its protection, I ask that you consider reviewing Bill 83, which I brought in on June 14 at the request of the united counties of Prescott and Russell to help save the Alfred Bog. This wetland is of world importance and must be saved.

To go back to the moraine, the moraine is actually a 160-kilometre-long ribbon of sand, silt, gravel and rock dumped by a retreating icefield 15,000 years ago. This porous material absorbs rain and snow like a giant sponge. It stretches through three regions, Peel, York and Durham, from Orangeville in the west across roughly 20 kilometres east to Rice Lake, just south of Peterborough. It is environmentally important because it plays a major role in southern Ontario's surface and groundwater supply. It has been called the rain barrel of southern Ontario. It is the last large green space left in the GTA.

Once again, I will definitely support this bill but I hope this government, which has said—I don't know, but besides the \$15 million that the government will spend, I'm told there would be something like \$80 million set aside to make sure we save this piece of land, the Oak Ridges moraine.

Tous les membres de cette Assemblée législative ont reçu une carte par le courrier. Plusieurs membres m'ont retourné cette carte. Sur le devant de la carte est écrit « Alfred Bog », et nous avons aussi un historique de ce terrain. J'espère que tous les membres de cette

Assemblée législative, qui est formée par 103 membres élus, ont lu cette carte et ont considéré l'importance de ce marécage qu'on pourrait appeler, qui est surnommé, le Alfred Bog. Si nous sommes capables de nous arrêter après avoir eu des pressions de tous les gens et surtout par mon collègue Mike Colle de la circonscription d'Eglinton-Lawrence, je crois que le gouvernement devrait prendre le temps nécessaire, et surtout le ministre des Richesses naturelles, d'aller survoler la région et regarder avec attention la région du Alfred Bog. Je disais tout à l'heure que cela comptait au-delà de 35 000 acres. Aujourd'hui, nous sommes rendus à environ 10 000 acres. Plus nous attendons, plus nous allons avoir l'extraction de ce matériel qui va jusqu'à une profondeur de 16 pieds.

Donc, actuellement, pour les gens de la région, nous sommes très, très concernés. Nous sommes concernés parce que ce marécage est nécessaire pour la filtration de notre eau potable, et ça conserve la région. On doit conserver les animaux sauvages et surtout les différentes plantes que nous avons dans la région. Comme je l'ai mentionné en anglais, c'est le marécage le plus important de cette planète en entier.

Donc, c'est encore une fois une raison pour laquelle je dis au gouvernement que oui, je vais appuyer le projet de loi 122 ; oui, je crois que le gouvernement devrait prendre le plan nécessaire et se rendre dans la région de l'est ontarien. Vous savez, l'Ontario ne s'arrête pas à Ottawa. Après Ottawa, on a encore 125 kilomètres avant de se rendre à la frontière du Québec.

Donc, je crois que c'est encore très important que nous, les élus au niveau provincial, prenions en considération l'importance de la conservation de marécages comme celui que nous sommes en train d'appuyer, qui est le marécage Oak Ridges moraine dans la région du Grand Toronto.

The Acting Speaker: Questions, comments?

Hon Mr Sterling: Of course, the Alfred Bog and this particular part of the province is familiar to me because I represent a part of eastern Ontario. I want to say to the member opposite that I'm very pleased that he raises the issue. I'm pleased that he has stated his position, that he wants to freeze development on the Alfred Bog. I'm also interested in getting from him, and I wish he would share with me perhaps, the commitment by the federal government to put money toward the Alfred Bog. I'd like to see that in writing, quite frankly.

This government, in terms of the Oak Ridges moraine, has now put forward about \$70 million in money and in land toward the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine. We're hoping that the federal government is going to come forward with its equal share for the preservation of this very important source of water and beautiful part of our province. We have noted in the past that while the federal government talks a big storm. They've been talking for the last two years about a transportation infrastructure, and when the province came forward with a \$3-billion plan for transportation for this province and said to the federal government, "You've been talking all

this time. Put your money where your mouth is," we haven't heard a peep from Ottawa since that day.

I respect the member Jean-Marc Lalonde very much, and I'm glad he has placed his positioning on this issue clearly, that he wants to limit development on the Alfred Bog, but I want to see from him the commitment from the federal government, the fact that they're going to write a big cheque to preserve this part of our province. I'd really like to see that commitment.

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Mr Caplan: I certainly want to congratulate the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for his comments. I thought he presented them very well and talked about an ecologically sensitive area in his riding. This is not new ground for Liberals. It may be very new for the Progressive Conservative government, for the Mike Harris government, for the former Minister of the Environment.

I wanted to bring to the attention of the House an exchange that happened about a year and a half ago between Dalton McGuinty, our leader, and the then Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Tony Clement. Mr McGuinty asked Mr Clement, on May 8, 2000, a very lengthy question but it goes, "What we want to ask you then is, given your new-found commitment to the moraine, when exactly will you introduce a bill providing comprehensive protection to the Oak Ridges moraine? And when exactly will you put into place a freeze on all development pending passage of that same legislation?" Minister Clement said at the time, "I think the position of this government is that in a province of prosperity and in a province where growth and opportunity are happening, we should always seek to balance properly the interests of present and future generations." He went on to say, "Our position has been clear. We have a Planning Act. We also have a provincial policy.... We also have the 1991 guidelines that are specific to the moraine that were instituted by the previous NDP government. All of that is on the table." So what Minister Clement said is, "We've done everything. We've done enough."

Well, the real answer is that one man—and that's Mike Colle, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence—almost single-handedly forced this government to do the right thing—finally—which is to put a freeze on development on the Oak Ridges moraine. So I say, kudos to Mike Colle. Thank you, Mr Colle, for all your tireless work and effort. Finally the government is taking your very sage advice.

Mr Martin: I want to again go on the record on behalf of our caucus to say that this is a very important step toward protecting our water as well as public open space and wildlife habitat. It certainly is a progressive move, and we thank the government for it and we appreciate it. I think it's important, when something is done by whomever, and particularly in this instance the government, that we give credit where it's due and we offer our appreciation. Although I would suggest that the Liberals are being a bit over the top in terms of the contribution that their caucus and Mr Colle have made.

He certainly did. There's no doubt that he was out there as champion to this and promoting and pushing and encouraging.

But we had a member in our caucus too, Marilyn Churley, who has become known across this province as a champion for the environment, always there, always ready to speak out, always working in partnership with those of whatever political stripe or from whatever organization to support progressive and forward-looking initiatives to protect our environment. She knows, as we do here, that without an environment that supports life, without an understanding of how the ecosystem works, without understanding the role that water plays in all of our lives, and air—and the need to do everything possible to make sure that any development we enter into is sustainable, that we protect that environment, and certainly Marilyn Churley has been a big champion of that and in this instance probably contributed as well with her challenge and push.

We have some concerns, and we'll be putting them on the record over the next few days as we debate this issue. It's not all peaches and cream or positive; there are some things that I think people out there need to be aware of.

The Acting Speaker: Response. The member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Mr Lalonde: I really appreciate the comment made by the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Let me say that the member for Lanark-Carleton, who is a former Minister of the Environment, surely knows the area of eastern Ontario, because he's one of the longest-serving members of this House. But I'm taking his word at the present time, because it was confirmed this afternoon that the federal government at the present time is ready to give us a letter saying that they would pour in \$510,000 at the moment, and if the provincial government is ready to put in more money, they will match whatever this government is going to give to the united counties of Prescott and Russell. But I will definitely come up with the letter that I will be giving to the minister and also to the MNR minister in a very short while, which will now be in two weeks, confirming the commitment of the federal government.

It's the greatest news that I ever heard tonight here, that this government will be ready to share in preventing the development of or extraction in the Alfred Bog. Once again, when we talk about the Oak Ridges moraine, it's just to show he understands the importance of saving that area, but again, the Alfred Bog is one of the most important areas on this planet, and when he looks at it—and I'm sure he has seen it before—he knows what I am talking about.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): It certainly is a pleasure for me to rise in the House tonight to speak on Bill 122, which is An Act to conserve the Oak Ridges Moraine by providing for the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

It's interesting to see that the member for Don Valley East seems to think that the member for Eglinton-

Lawrence single-handedly forced this government to go this route, to introduce the particular bill. It's also interesting to see the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell talk about the \$510,000 that the federal government is willing to put into the project at the Alfred Bog. It will be interesting to see how much money the federal government will be willing to put into the program or into the project concerning the Oak Ridges moraine.

Let me tell you, Mr Speaker, that this government acts after previous governments only did the talking. Why do I say that? I say that because this government has taken decisive, very clear, very forceful action to conserve the Oak Ridges moraine.

Because there has been some discussion as to some of the resolutions that have been brought forward in the House in the past, I'd like to go back, and maybe we'll have a little history here, to see what occurred between 1985 and 1990, when we had a Liberal government in power. Between the mid-1980s and 1990 the government of the day created the Office for the Greater Toronto Area and the Greater Toronto Coordinating Committee to look at issues related to growth in the GTA. I would imagine that probably the Oak Ridges moraine would fall in the GTA area. They also undertook work related to greenlands, including the Niagara Escarpment, the Lake Ontario waterfront, river valleys and the Oak Ridges moraine. That was between 1985 and 1990.

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The government at the time established a Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront. It commissioned and released the GTA Urban Structure Concepts Study, including a background report on greening and the environment. In the meantime, I must point out that development was still occurring.

In July of 1990, they released *Space for All: Options for a Greater Toronto Greenlands Strategy*, better known as the Kanter report. Mr Ron Kanter identified the provincial significance of the Oak Ridges moraine and noted that it was the only one of the four greenlands that did not have, but should have, a management framework. The government of the day then announced a provincial expression of interest in the Oak Ridges moraine, which had no legislative status. They also announced their intention to begin a two-year study of the moraine.

Guess what happened to the study? I know the member for Don Valley East talks about the member for Eglinton-Lawrence forcing the government, but the member for Don Valley East was not in government between 1985 and 1990. But some of the members who are in the opposition today were there, and I would ask on the other side of the House as to where their concern with regard to the Oak Ridges moraine was at that time.

Let's go back a little further, between October 1990 and June of 1995. I'm glad to see that the member for Sault Ste Marie speaks favourably of the bill. But during the term that his government was in power, between 1990 and 1995, in June of 1991, the NDP government of the day released the Oak Ridges Moraine Implementation Guidelines. They outlined ecological and land use

matters to be considered in proposals on the Oak Ridges moraine. The guidelines were intended as a temporary measure until an Oak Ridges moraine strategy could be developed, and I stress the word "temporary."

In May of 1994, a draft Oak Ridges moraine strategy was released for comment. A final strategy was presented to the Minister of Natural Resources in December of 1994, but the government put it on the shelf.

In March of 1995, the government of the day put a new planning system into place. Let's remember that they had already commissioned a report in May 1994. A comprehensive set of policy statements was developed as part of the new system. They included enhanced and new policies on environmental, ecological and natural resource interests, but no explicit Oak Ridges moraine policies were included.

By the spring of 1995, after two successive governments had talked for nearly a decade about the importance of the moraine, development applications on the moraine continued to be approved, and I would strongly suggest that a lot of development occurred during those 10 years. The only tool available to planners was the 1991 implementation guidelines, which were supposed to be a temporary, stop-gap measure.

What did this government do? This government was elected in 1995. During the late 1990s, our government moved quickly to reform the planning system to put authority for local decision-making into the hands of local municipal decision-makers. Ontario Municipal Board hearings on applications in Richmond Hill helped to explore and clarify planning issues related to development decisions on the Oak Ridges moraine and to narrow the points of dispute and disagreement.

It became clear that the best way to deal with moraine issues and to avoid a repetition of long and expensive Ontario Municipal Board hearings in the future was to deal with the whole moraine at one time.

Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent that for the balance of the week third party questions during question period be reallocated to the government and the official opposition.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? No. I heard a no.

Mr Beaubien: At the same time, Minister Hodgson began discussions on Ontario's Smart Growth strategy. Preliminary discussions made it clear that only a comprehensive approach to the Oak Ridges moraine would produce a result that would stand the test of time. In May 2001, the government moved decisively to place a moratorium on planning applications on the moraine and to seek a consensus on a solution, and finally to introduce the legislation we are debating today.

Now, I would like to refer to section 4 in the bill. Section 4 talks about objectives of the plan: "The objectives of the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan are,

"(a) protecting the ecological and hydrological integrity of the Oak Ridges moraine area;

"(b) ensuring that only land and resource uses that maintain, improve or restore the ecological and hydro-

logical functions of the Oak Ridges moraine area are permitted;

“(c) maintaining, improving and restoring all the elements that contribute to the ecological and hydrological functions of the Oak Ridges moraine area, including the quality and quantity of its water and its other resources;

“(d) ensuring that the Oak Ridges moraine area is maintained as a continuous natural landform and environment for the benefit of present and future generations;

“(e) providing for land and resource uses and development that are compatible with the other objectives of the plan;

“(f) providing for continued development within existing urban settlement areas and recognizing existing rural settlements;

“(g) providing for a continuous recreational trail through the Oak Ridges moraine area that is accessible to all including persons with disabilities;

“(h) providing for other public recreational access to the Oak Ridges moraine area; and

“(i) any other prescribed objectives.”

What did our government do after the objectives were introduced into the bill? There's no doubt that one of the reasons why I think there is somewhat of a consensus in this House with regard to this particular bill is that many of the stakeholders were at the table when this situation was discussed, prior to the bill being introduced. Once all the interested parties are at the table, usually you can find some reasonable solution. There's no doubt, as I pointed out, that we're looking at providing benefits to future generations but also to the people who are living in the area today. Let me relate some of the plans that have been undertaken in my area in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex in southwestern Ontario.

One of the projects that I would like to speak briefly about is the Grand Bend trail, which takes you from Grand Bend to the Pinery park. The Pinery park is a provincial park—

Hon Helen Johns (Minister without Portfolio [Health and Long-Term Care]): A fabulous provincial park.

Mr Beaubien: A fabulous provincial park; I totally agree. Basically, the people who live in that area realized that there was merit, not only recreational but financial gain, in having this trail between the Pinery park and Grand Bend. Did they rely on government funding to do it all? There was government funding, but there's no doubt that the Rotary Club of Grand Bend took the project, ran with the project, got people involved, and a couple of years later, guess what? They had a trail which is about 15 kilometres long that people can enjoy today.

Some people in the St Clair Parkway area also did the same thing in the past couple of years, and they have a trail now that leads from Corunna in Sarnia-Lambton all the way down to Sarnia. Again, there's no doubt that there is government participation, but the reason the project is successful is because the local people took a stake, took an interest, and made this project work.

Now, I would like to point out that if this legislation is passed, the government will establish a trail that stretches from one end of the moraine to the other. Again, it will be interesting to see how much money the federal government is willing to invest in this project. This trail would be designed to maintain the moraine's ecological and hydrological integrity. The trail would span the entire 160 kilometres that the moraine covers, from the Trent River in the east to the Niagara Escarpment in the west. I would strongly suggest that for the people who live in this area it's probably going to be a boost to their tourism industry, because I'm sure by having a trail of this magnitude it certainly will help with tourism. It's also probably going to help with people's health, because there are going to be walking trails and hopefully bike trails and whatever else the stakeholders see fit to—

Interjection: Good healthy stuff.

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Mr Beaubien: Exactly. This trail would also link to river valleys running north and south from the moraine. The trail would give people continuous access across the moraine, and it would be accessible to people with disabilities. Since Minister Jackson just introduced the Ontarians with Disabilities Act this week, I think it's very apropos that we recognize the fact that people with disabilities should also be able to use this type of facility, and I'm glad to see that this facility will be designed keeping in mind people with disabilities. This particular trail would be located as much as possible in the moraine's natural core and natural linkage areas. People would be able to use the trail for hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing and other uses that don't involve motorized vehicles.

To support the trail, we would create the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, which would be a non-profit organization. The foundation would be an arm's-length partnership body. Its role could include—and I stress the word “could”—advising the government on a fair and transparent process for land evaluation; funding land securement and conservation easements among willing sellers and buyers to protect high-priority sites; paying for the construction of bridges, interpretive centres and other necessary facilities; funding stewardship programs to encourage landowners to improve water quantity and quality, improve forest cover and enhance buffers for wetlands, rivers, streams and kettle lakes; paying for research, monitoring and public education.

Again, as the member from Huron pointed out, the Pinery Provincial Park is an excellent provincial park, and there is public education. There is a centre people can use, free of charge, to learn about nature, to learn about the environment, and I'm sure this could be duplicated here. Funding for the foundation would come from various sources, including the public and the private sector. This government has committed \$15 million in cash as seed money, plus a substantial land donation.

I think many people commented this past week that this government is able to make the tough decisions, is able to make the right decisions and is not afraid to make

the decisions. For the member from Don Valley to suggest that the member for Eglinton-Lawrence single-handedly forced this government to act on this particular bill, especially when we look at what happened between 1980 and 1990, I would certainly question that.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm a relatively new member to this chamber, as members of the House know. I like to fall back on that once in a while. If it wasn't for that speed-reading course I took at university so I could catch up on a lot of the history, I'd really be out of the loop on a lot of this stuff. I want to thank the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for outlining some of the history for us. In his own words, he convinced me of something that I was believing but was in need of more convincing on. That namely is that there were people from all parts of Ontario and all parties who have had a long-time interest in this issue and in doing the seemingly right thing.

It's distressing sometimes in this House to sit and listen to people. It's almost like you're waiting for someone to say, "Gosh, golly, gee, together we did something that nobody thought we'd ever get done." I don't much care if there are some people on that side of the House who want to take the credit, or Ms Churley or Mr Colle. I just want to say for the record that anybody who stood up for doing the right thing here should receive our applause and our praise. I think the good member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex went some great distance in outlining that to us.

I guess the other comment I would make just quickly is with respect to the federal government involvement—and I was pleased that my colleague made reference to that. I know the minister from Lanark-Carleton was out; he was probably calling the Prime Minister to compliment him on the good news about the announcement. I'm pleased to hear that.

Mr Martin: First of all, I want to go on the record again as saying we think this is a progressive move and a step forward. But I'm having a hard time tonight understanding why the government can't just take that at its face. They continually go back and attempt to drag up reasons why nobody but them can take any credit whatsoever for the move they've made where this Oak Ridges moraine development is concerned.

I think it's a progressive move, but we have some concerns. Our concerns evolve around the trade-offs that happened because of that that initiative. With this government, there are always trade-offs. What presents initially, upfront and right away as the trade-off isn't always the real, behind-the-scenes horse-trading that's going on. We're not quite sure yet exactly how this parcel of land in Pickering that's going to be given in return for the developers' leaving the moraine is going to pan out. If I'm not wrong, there are already some voices being raised in that area of the province that some of the land being given away is being given away below its value and that the stake which others have in that isn't being recognized.

As I said earlier, I am also very fearful that now that this government has done the right thing on the Oak Ridges moraine, it's going to just turn its back on a whole lot of the very valuable farmland that's out there, which it needs to protect, in its rush to appease and pay off its developer friends.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I will be addressing the issue of trails, because it's something of strong concern to me. But in regard to the comments by the member for Sault Ste Marie on backroom deals and things like that, I know the piece of land—the Seaton area—very well, and there is a lot of potential there. The 407 currently goes through these provincial lands, which were taken over a number of years ago when a federal airport was to go in there. I know the residents in that area—through the Brougham area—and I don't think there's going to be a lot of opposition. Yes, there may be some individuals who are concerned about the change, but I think it's going to be for the best.

As well, when you talk about the people and the dedication toward this, I know Mr Gilchrist was probably one of the frontrunners within our caucus, and Mr Chudleigh did stand with the opposition to express his concern. There were others of us as well who happened not to be here for the vote on that day. In another way of showing our concern for that area—sometimes it's difficult to vote against the government and show your concern. But I'm glad that Minister Hodgson has finally come forward with the Oak Ridges plan as such.

In the time remaining, I want to mention the trails. I know the area very well. As a Boy Scout I've done night hikes and winter hikes through that area. The 10th Concession is an area of popular choice, whether for snowmobiling or four-wheeling or snowshoeing or cross-country skiing. It has a huge trail that goes through there now. As well, I've also fished Shelter Valley Creek, right up into that area as well.

Interjection.

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Mr Ouellette: Yes, in Mr Galt's riding. So I know the area through the Ganaraska very well, and I think the trail is going to be a significant component of that. I hope it's going to be a multi-use trail, so that all those who are currently using the trail will be able to access and use it on a regular basis, but I think time will tell. I know my kids enjoy it, and I look forward to future years for future generations.

Mr Lalonde: I always appreciate the comments of the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I always wonder if this guy is sitting on the right side of the House, because he tends to be more to the centre than to the right. His thinking is more to the Liberal side, and that is why I say I always appreciate his comments.

He mentioned in his speech that I should be asking the federal government if they would commit financial assistance to the Oak Ridges moraine. At the present time, your government has committed \$15 million to the Oak Ridges moraine. All I'd be asking for, for the Alfred Bog, is one fifteenth of that amount, which is only

\$1 million, and we'd be really satisfied. The Alfred Bog is unique. There's no other bog like it in the whole world, so I'm not asking too much. If you agree to it, we could buy the 3,000 acres of land we need to preserve at \$750 an acre. Everybody in the province of Ontario, in Canada and in the world would be very pleased with the commitment of this government.

Also, Pierre Mercier, who is the official planner for Prescott and Russell wrote to me this afternoon and said, "Jean-Marc, you have to ask the minister to come down and take a look at it."

Once again, I appreciate the comments by the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Beaubien: I'd like to thank the members for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, Sault Ste Marie, Oshawa and Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for their comments. It's kind of nice to see that the debate is very friendly. Some changes have been mentioned, and people may have some concerns, but overall I think people are very supportive of the bill. I appreciated the fair comments the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot made with regard to the debate in the House tonight.

It doesn't surprise me to hear that the member for Sault Ste Marie is concerned about some of the trade-offs and the backroom deals. When you arrive at a solution to any problem, there are always trade-offs. I think reasonable people usually come up with reasonable solutions, but I guess some people always have doubts. I guess that is something they have to deal with themselves. But I firmly believe that reasonable people will come up with reasonable solutions.

With regard to the trails, I may not be as physically active as I used to be, but I certainly agree with the member for Oshawa with regard to the trails and the multi-use of them. I look at the trail at the Pinery. Over the years it's been used for cross-country skiing. Even though we don't have an awful lot of snow, it's always enjoyable to put on your skis and use it.

With regard to the comments of the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell as to whether I'm on the right or the left, I'd like to inform him that when I play hockey I shoot left, when I throw a ball I throw right and when I hit the ball I bat left. So if you're confused, so am I.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr McMeekin: I'm pleased to rise and speak on Bill 122. I just want to repeat for what it's worth that I don't want to take any unwarranted credit for having contributed in any significant way to this, other than to say that as a member of this assembly I try to keep as informed as I can on issues and try to trace whatever history there is on an issue. And this issue, like so many others, has a very long history. I suppose it would be helpful for the viewers out there to perhaps treat with some concern the comments from various members who want to claim exclusive credit for something on which we should all be joining hands together in celebrating. It's clearly a win-win for so many people.

I can relate a similar kind of sense about the Adams mine. I didn't know the Adams mine from the Timmins train until I arrived at this place and heard the arguments. Having been forged in the fire of that debate, I know waste is an issue that is bigger and more difficult for municipalities to handle than they would often care to admit. I noticed as well when we had that debate that there was all kinds of finger pointing, from all sides of the House, but not necessarily a lot of pointing of direction.

I want to compliment everybody who's had anything to do with the good parts of this. That having been said, I'm not here necessarily to be the government's cheerleader. There are some concerns I intend to raise. That's part of what legitimate debate in this people's House is all about. I will move to that momentarily.

I want to add that in my hometown, formerly the great town of Flamborough, we're very concerned about environmental issues. We know a lot about drumlins and moraines and wetlands. Some of my good friends who, along with some of us, founded a new Ducks Unlimited group in our area tell me that in fact some 93% of all the wetlands in Ontario have disappeared over the last 50 years. That's really tragic because wetlands provide such important habitat for so many endangered species. I think we want to put on the record here that while we may well have inherited our environment from our forefathers, we've only borrowed it from our kids, and we need to take steps to make sure that the diversity not only of our society but of our ecosystems is maintained, and that we're intentional about that.

Over the last few days of doing some research, I've learned an awful lot about the moraine. I was at the technical briefing the other day, which I found very useful. By the way, I recommend that to any member of the House who actually wants to get some information about what's happening. The technical briefings are very extensive.

It was helpful for me to have it confirmed that the area in question extends from Rice Lake all the way to the Caledon area, where my wife is from, so she has a particular fondness for that area. It is water source for some 35 rivers and streams, such as the Don River, the Humber River, the Rouge, the Holland River, Duffins Creek and Carruthers Creek, and as I mentioned earlier, shelter and habitat for many of our animal species, some of which are on the verge of extinction.

It's been a long and winding road to get to this place—the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex traced the history only from 1991 on—and some have even spoken about the road being the road to Damascus. Well, I've travelled the Damascus road. Not by camel; it's too dangerous to do by camel. I took a taxi. I was at the house of Ananias. As you Biblical scholars may recall, that's where St Paul was touched and had his sight restored. He then went on to do a number of community development projects around the world, as my good friend Tony knows. We make reference to that.

If there's a road to Damascus in this context, I guess the road went through the King City area and involved a lot of those brave people from King City who went out of their way to articulate concerns. They took some of the assurances, and I won't mention any names, from some members of this House that municipalities had all the tools they needed to do the job, acknowledged them for what they were, largely hammers and screwdrivers, and went on to fight the good fight. Fighting the good fight meant doing a lot of consciousness raising about this issue. There were members on the other side of the House who had a fair bit to do with that, and I know my colleague Mike Colle had a fair bit to do with that, and we want to acknowledge that.

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Whatever the circumstances, there's never a wrong time to do the right thing. Some members opposite talked about stakeholders coming together. What an affirmation. I remember the late Margaret Mead once suggested to never be put off thinking that a small group of people can't change the world, for history will record that they're the only folk who ever have changed the world. I think Dr Mead was saying something pretty important to stakeholders on any issue. If you've got something you really believe in, you stick with it with a passion. Who knows? There may come a day when you've actually got a consensus in this people's place about something that's good and right to do. I want to footnote that circumstances, be it massive public or even political pressure, or even from time to time some debate in this illustrious assembly, can touch people's hearts and minds and move them to new positions.

It appears that this legislation was forged in a lot of different fires, and to a certain extent it has given some who hold the political process in very low esteem, for those who hold nothing sacred, perhaps something to believe in. This seemingly new coalition of enlightenment that has conspired somehow to come together to bring these circumstances is really good to see, particularly when we know there's been, at least en passant, some checkered history here, with letters from certain ministers going to regional chair people, rejecting calls for a freeze.

I think it was Minister Clement who said on November 25, not that long ago, that there simply wasn't going to be a freeze, and other ministers, particularly ministers of municipal affairs, have claimed that municipalities really have all the tools they need to get the job done. Clearly that wasn't the case; otherwise we wouldn't be here today with this legislation.

Like the member opposite who spoke about trails, I want to say how important that is, as one whose former municipality is intentionally riddled with trails because of our concern for leaving that legacy. It's good to see that has happened.

I want to talk a bit about some of the good things I see in this piece of legislation. All partisan politics aside, it appears to be fairly comprehensive. It's clearly broadly reflective of stakeholder concerns. There appear to be

some efforts to be fair, particularly with respect to some of those who have property rights, although time will tell as to just how that shakes down. We have a history in this province, through the Ontario Realty Corp, of not always seeing the right thing done. I just want to footnote that concern and really urge the government to be particularly careful in the weeks ahead, so that we don't get into any of the ORC-type scandals that have been so prevalent over the last few years.

There are limits on the Ontario Municipal Board around environmentally sensitive areas and I think that's really good. We've all had the experience, at least those of us who have had the privilege of serving in municipal office, of seeing an occasional developer—there aren't very many of them but there are some—come forward and say, "I'm not even going to show up at the hearing. I'm just going right to the OMB." That ain't going to work here. At least we have some reason to believe that.

I want to compliment the Honourable David Crombie, who seems to have done some very good work here in terms of trying to find some balance. He has a very good reputation for environmental vigilance and being able to negotiate between competing interests. I want to flag as well that there is a requirement in this proposed legislation with respect to the rehabilitation of aggregate pits, which has plagued a number of municipalities, although I would point out that there also seems to be some pretty unfettered licence for potential future aggregate pits, which causes me some concern and makes me wonder whether they see the right look in our eyes when that kind of window is opened in the legislation.

There is some very specific guidance to municipalities which suggests that they can't do anything to weaken the plan, they can only move to strengthen it, although it's noted "except in the aggregate area." So again I note that concern, although everyone in this House knows that the aggregates are very important and there is a limited number of places that they come from.

The 10-year review commitment and the reference to the establishment of a foundation I think are useful ideas as well.

As we reflect on some of the good things, let us not forget that we have had some interesting history over the last six or seven years in particular with respect to developers perhaps being rewarded beyond their risk and/or accessing the occasional sweetheart land deal through the Ontario Realty Corp. I want to take the minister at his word that he's going to be particularly vigilant with respect to that. I guess one of the difficulties I have as a member of the House is the propensity to change ministers. In the five and a half years I was mayor and in the little time I've been here, I think we've had five different Ministers of the Environment. The minister we currently have is probably the one who has got the best look in his eye, although he still has to deal in the context of a government that doesn't always appear to share the kinds of values that many of us on this side of the House hold.

All of that having been said, I want to spend a few moments offering some critique, as my good friend from

Sault Ste Marie did as well. It's offered legitimately and in the hope that as we move to committee and hearings, those who have ears to hear will hear. So it's in that context. The devil doesn't need an advocate, but suffice it to say that the devil is in the details here, very much so. There are many potentially devilish aspects to this legislation. We saw, for example, in the Lands for Life program, which was initially praised by all, that there really were some problems with it. There appeared to be a secret agenda around mining interests at the time. There seems to be an almost explicit front-loading of this same reality with respect to the aggregate potential here as well.

The fact that very much of this legislation, like the new Municipal Act, will be handled through regulation and therefore not subject to debate or vote in this House causes me and members on this side of the House some concern, particularly when there's a reference in the actual legislation that the Minister of Municipal Affairs may amend the plan at any time and that the amendment the minister takes—and we may be OK as long as the current minister is there, but you never know with this place—any decision taken, will be final and subject to no appeal. That's pretty powerful stuff. I think, as one who has for years been an environmental watchdog, here we have some responsibility to be policy and procedural watchdogs as well. This part needs to be strengthened. The plan needs to be approved and needs some person independent of the minister or a commission given some oversight here. I know the Niagara Escarpment Commission, although it's had its faults, has by and large worked fairly well with a number of areas that I'm familiar with.

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The concern about the GTA versus the eastern municipalities also should give us reason for pause. After referencing in the backgrounder information—not in the act—that certain areas aren't subject to the same kinds of development pressures, the government then proposes to release them from many of the obligations which are explicit in other areas, so one can only wonder. I know that many of these areas are in the Minister of Municipal Affairs' bailiwick. I think the very rationale that they offer could be used, I would suggest, as a rationale for in fact extending the very same protections beyond.

We were told in the technical briefing that there are some 15,000 mostly Richmond Hill potential housing units to be built. When I asked how many were in the settlement area, I was told about 94% or 95%. That begged the question, where are those units that are outside that 8% that's prescribed as the settlement area? And what sorts of extra tests, which we're told will apply, should apply here?

The reference to the potential land swap raises some flags. I want to say for the record that I, for one, appreciate the fact that people do have property rights and property interests. But, having said that, I don't think that the compensation should be disproportional to the risk that land speculators have taken in this area. Again, I want to say there needs to be a really clear and enhanced

sense of vigilance and transparency here. We were told in the technical briefing that would happen, but I would like to see that firmed up a little bit more in terms of the act itself, particularly given that for all intents and purposes, the land in question has been identified and is either frozen or in limbo. There's no reason—we're not acquiring land here, we're not selling land; we're talking about value and added value: the value of land when it was purchased, the value of land when it's disposed with, what kind of transaction makes sense and what constitutes a sweetheart deal. I think that needs to be—

Mr Beaubien: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to draw your attention to my two daughters in the gallery. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order, but welcome.

Mr McMeekin: That was worth being interrupted for. Welcome, young ladies. I have three daughters of my own and I suspect that, like you, they too are very concerned about this legislation and some of the potential it creates for all of us for a brighter, better tomorrow.

We need some stronger watchdogging here, particularly, as I said, with the Ontario Realty Corp having some history of selling off property below market value.

I'm concerned about potential roads and infrastructure through the moraine and I think we need some enhanced clarity there.

While I'm pleased with the legislation that's before us and the cumulative stakeholder involvement and the fact that everybody in this House seems to want to own a piece of this—I sincerely acknowledge that—I think before we crack open the champagne and start celebrating, we had better take the time we need to be faithful stewards of the i-dottings and t-crossings. As I mentioned at the outset, the devil is in the details and there are lots of potentially devilish aspects to this legislation which I'm sure every member of this House will want to make sure don't mitigate negatively on this act.

The Acting Speaker: Questions? Comments?

Mr Martin: I want to thank the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot for his comments—

Mr Caplan: It's hard to get his riding name.

Mr Martin: Yes, it's a mouthful—and for raising some of the issues that he has. He's certainly right. This isn't as black and white as it presents. There are all kinds of sidebars on this one that we really need to pay attention to because they will come back to haunt us if we don't and will be very much reflective, I think, of the priority of this government, which is to, yes, I suppose in this instance on one hand call on the carpet their developer friends, but on the other hand, behind closed doors and from another pocket, give them a lot more than some would figure their due in this instance. That's not what I want to spend my short few seconds here talking about this evening.

I know the member from Ancaster will agree that this is also a diversionary tactic by this government. You don't all of a sudden out of the blue do a complete about-face on an initiative because it makes everybody feel

good or because you've become an environmentalist overnight. This is about getting people's thoughts away from the very difficult economy that's coming at us and the fact that literally thousands of people across this province are now losing their jobs and this government has no plan to deal with that. They've literally spent more money with their tax cut to people than either the Liberal or NDP government ever spent year to year in their terms of office, to the point now where they find themselves having raised the debt in the province and having absolutely no money left in their coffers to come up with the very important programs that are going to be necessary to make the adjustments for communities, industries and workers in trouble.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm pleased to add my comments and join my colleagues who've been speaking on this bill in the Legislature tonight. I come from the riding of Guelph-Wellington. In our riding we are particularly proud of having a very green conscience. That has been noted in many things we've done that have set examples of leadership for many parts of the province in many different ways. Wet-dry composting, for instance, the first municipal composting system that has worked effectively in North America, was specifically designed for my community. People in my riding are really interested in green activities the government has undertaken. This is one of the many projects our government has undertaken and has been instrumental in its scope. This particular one has been applauded by so many folks across the province because it contains many elements that a lot of us who are interested in conservation particularly appreciate.

I was just looking through some notes here. There are a few things that stand out: for instance, words like "linkage areas"; "preserving agricultural land"; "preserving natural core areas, countryside areas"; "continuous trails"; and "establishment of private foundations." Many of us who have been involved in environmental projects before coming to this place understand full well that for a conservation or for a preservation project to be solid and to be long-lasting, key elements like those that I just read must all be put together for a project to be successful in the long term.

I want to particularly congratulate Mr Hodgson, our Minister of Municipal Affairs, for doing such an outstanding job of first of all getting everybody together, for the most part, for a project that is well supported, but, most important, understanding what the key principles are and making sure they were part of this.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I am pleased to respond to my colleague Mr McMeekin from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot and begin by saying that it was the prodding of my colleague Mike Colle and the environmentalists north of Toronto that brought this government to a change of heart that's Biblical in proportion, not unlike Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. I don't think we are going to let these folks forget it. The provisions of the bill itself in our view are well and good and we will support them.

We hope to have the opportunity, as we do on most bills, to provide some amendments.

I want to put the government on notice today that we are going to be watching that land deal in north Pickering and Seaton to see how it works out, to see who gets what, to see how the monies are apportioned because, frankly, we don't trust this government on land deals, certainly not something of this magnitude. The record on numerous occasions of the ORC is certainly not a stellar one. Now, that's not part of the bill, I realize that, but it is an important component of this entire package and merits the scrutiny of this Legislature. I certainly hope the government will be more forthcoming about the land deals involved here than they were, say, about the 407, the deal to privatize that.

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Mr Caplan: Still secret.

Mr Duncan: Secret to this day, although we now know that at the time the government gave away future huge toll increases against the people they represent in order to get some cash in the till before the last election.

I applaud this conversion on the road to Damascus. It is Biblical in proportion. But we'll be watching that land deal, and I suspect that's where the real debate is going to occur.

Mr Chudleigh: I was listening carefully to the member's comments. It was interesting to hear his comments. I don't believe he spoke very much on the Niagara Escarpment Commission, which runs through his riding, a very beautiful part of Ontario. It runs through my riding as well. I thought he perhaps might comment on the effects that kind of land mass, that is protected, that has certain planning restrictions on it, might have on a municipality, on a community, as it develops and moves in time.

The Niagara Escarpment Commission has done a marvellous job in protecting the natural heritage issues along the escarpment, and it has caused some disruption among certain property owners. From time to time, as the members on the commission ebb and flow, as they change from one particular viewpoint to another viewpoint, that causes disruption in a community. That disruption is really based on the types of people or the bent of those people who sit on those commissions. If those kinds of things can be moderated to ensure that people who live on those types of lands like the Oak Ridges moraine are protected—the individual landowners, the individual people who live and work and take part in those special parts of the environment along those areas—if those kinds of things can be taken into consideration when the plan becomes implemented, it can be dealt with in a much more affable way so that people don't get upset when they deal with these issues.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr McMeekin: I appreciate the comments of all those who spoke, and particularly the last comment from the member from Halton. It's said that every saint has a past and every sinner has a future. Well, maybe we're seeing some of that played out this evening.

I'm pleased, like other members on this side of the House, if we've helped in any small way to move this government away from their propensity to be lean and mean to being, at least momentarily, keen and green.

The member opposite asked about the importance of controls in a plan. He's right. We want to make sure that's here with this legislation.

I don't pretend to understand this government's sudden move to the centre on so many issues. I know that one of my political mentors, Bobby Kennedy, has suggested that governments and politicians tend to campaign in poetry and govern in prose. We're seeing a little bit more poetry these days. One would almost think there was a campaign on of some sort.

We note for example that in the race to the centre there's an acknowledgement now that transit belongs to the province; that we've got an ODA, although it doesn't include any housing entitlement rights; that we suddenly found some Christmas money for little kids; that the Oak Ridges issue is finally here; that two-tier Tony has become one-tier Tony—have you noticed that? We even have the Minister of Finance disavowing any involvement he's had in the private school tax credit.

It's almost like there are a whole bunch of camels on the road and a lot of conversions taking place. I personally don't believe any of that. I think it's the incredible influence of my colleagues in the Ontario Liberal Party on this side of the House convincing—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate? I would remind members we are now at the 10-minute time limit.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to take part in this debate because what I find most interesting about this bill is the history which led to it. I just want to take members back to the summer of 1995. It was fresh after the provincial election, and the member for Scarborough East was sworn in as the Minister of Municipal Affairs. He did a fairly audacious thing, for this government. He indicated that summer that he believed part of the Oak Ridges moraine should not be developed and should be set aside for protection.

For making those statements in a public way, we understand, we are told, the developers who wanted to develop virtually all of the Oak Ridges moraine then began a storm of phone calls to the Premier's office insisting that the Minister of Municipal Affairs abandon his position regarding the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine or be removed from his position. As it would happen, within two months the Minister of Municipal Affairs in fact was removed from his position and the member for Scarborough East was no longer Minister of Municipal Affairs. That was for having the temerity to suggest that some of the Oak Ridges moraine should be protected.

With his removal, however, the issue hit the public in a big way. It suddenly became the focus not just of people who lived north of Toronto along the Oak Ridges moraine, it became the focus of the national media, certainly the regional media. It became the focus of a

number of public rallies and public meetings that were held. The government was asked to commit that it would not allow development on the Oak Ridges moraine; of course, that commitment was not forthcoming. That then sponsored at least two private members' bills, one by the member for Nickel Belt and one I believe by the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. The member for Nickel Belt was successful, despite the government's opposition, and this is quite something for a private member's bill. The member for Nickel Belt's private member's bill actually received support on second reading because a few of the government members voted for it, most notably the member for Scarborough East, who had become by then the former Minister of Municipal Affairs.

That private member's bill succeeded at second reading and was referred to committee. That private member's bill basically set out a regime for environmental planning on the Oak Ridges moraine which would have essentially resulted in the protection of the majority of the moraine.

The government was asked if it would bring forward that private member's bill so that it could go out for public hearings. There were a number of scenarios that resulted in other government legislation being put before it and there were some other scenarios which meant that that bill could not come forward for second reading. That was essentially 1999 and the spring and summer of 2000.

The government hoped, I believe, that the public concern, the public demonstrations against development on the Oak Ridges moraine would subside, but in fact during that summer, the summer of 2000, there were even more public meetings and larger public meetings and information sessions and there were documentary television programs done on the Oak Ridges moraine, such that in the fall of 2001 there were two more private members' bills dealing with setting aside the majority if not all of the Oak Ridges moraine to be protected from development. In fact, what the public was now asking for was not just a protection of some of the moraine lands; the public was now beginning to say, "No development on the Oak Ridges moraine."

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Of the private members' bills that came forward then, one of them again succeeded in getting to second reading. The government was then faced again with the prospect that a private member's bill setting out how the moraine should be protected would become the focus of the public at large, which again caused the government some embarrassment.

We then get into the spring of this year, 2001, and the by-election that was held. We all know that the issue of the Oak Ridges moraine was a major issue in that by-election, which the government lost. The government lost, the Liberals won. I think that caused the government some concern once again that despite their best efforts to get this issue out of the public spotlight, despite the government's best efforts at trying to get this issue off the public radar screen generally, it was not going away, it was becoming bigger.

The Speaker will know and I suspect a lot of people in the 905 region will know that by this time a number of opinion surveys were being made, and the opinion surveys were showing that a very large percentage of the residents, certainly a majority of the residents who lived in the 905 region north of Toronto, basically where the Oak Ridges moraine follows, were saying two things: (1) that they wanted the moraine lands protected and (2) that they were opposed to further urban sprawl. Actually, they were also saying a third thing, that they were becoming increasingly concerned about traffic gridlock in their part of the province.

There then followed some more public meetings and public rallies in the municipalities north of Toronto. The government then tried to float a plan which would have protected not a majority of the moraine but would have protected some of the moraine and would have left the rest open for development. That proposal was probably all that the original Minister of Municipal Affairs would have asked for back in 1999, but it became obvious by this summer that that was no longer acceptable to the public. So after floating that plan and finding that it was going to meet with a barrage of public criticism, we finally arrived at where we are today.

This was not a government that came easily or quickly to doing the right thing. This was clearly a situation where the government has been forced to recognize that while its developer friends wanted to do X, the public—and by that, I mean an overwhelming majority of the public—were not interested in X, were not interested in development of the Oak Ridges moraine lands in any shape or form. People wanted to see protection.

So a government that was starting to fail in the polls rather severely and a government that was clearly out of step with people who are considered to be its core constituents, its core supporters, was forced to recognize that it had to do what people were demanding, that it had to give up its own favoured position of allowing development, in fact encouraging development, on and near moraine lands.

So what is this a lesson on? I guess it's a lesson on democracy. I guess it is a lesson that if people are willing to come together collectively and work together collectively and are willing to raise their voices and speak as one, they can even force a recalcitrant government to change its ways. So it is I think very much a victory for democracy, and it's a victory for the environment. I don't think we need to recount again how sensitive these lands are, how important they are, in terms of water resources etc.

We will support this legislation and, most of all, we will support the democratic process that got us here.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Martin: I want to thank the member for Rainy River for that very interesting history lesson this evening. We sometimes forget the everyday efforts of members in this place, as they put forward private members' bills, to respond to issues they see out there, or hear about from constituents out there, or in their own work identify as

needing to be addressed, and how over time, persistent, doing their homework, coming back day after day, they move the agenda forward to a point where they have raised public consciousness enough that the government, which always has the power to do the right thing, ultimately ends up having to respond in a way that reflects the public interest in this case.

It's really helpful when from time to time chronology is pointed out, when the dots are connected and we can all go, "OK, so that's how it all came about." We certainly have heard tonight of the various people who have contributed in different ways. We hear the Liberals talking about Mr Colle and we hear ourselves in this caucus talking about Marilyn Churley, the member from Toronto-Danforth. Tonight we've heard of the very real, important and dogged contribution of the member from Nickel Belt to this end.

It's important we all understand that in this instance we've had all three parties make a contribution. There was also reference by the leader of the third party to the member from Scarborough East and the contribution he made and the price he paid for having made that contribution. All of us somehow, in some interesting and unique way, contributed so that tonight we could be standing here debating a bill that, at the end of the day, I'm sure we will all agree is worth passing.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I listened with a good deal of interest to the remarks of the member, via my office, electronically. I was listening at this time—

Mr Hampton: You were so moved you came down here.

Mr Bradley: Yes, it pumped me up so much I came down to comment on it. I wanted to commend the member on recounting why we are where we are today. It could be described, I suppose, if one wanted to be unkind, as kicking and screaming to a decision that, first of all, in their wildest dreams this government had no intention of making, and to the moment we stand in this House does not want to make even today. So if people are under the impression that this is what the Tories are about, they're sadly mistaken. If they believe the Tories are about tax cuts, they are, and I think that's a mark they've put on themselves. There's nothing wrong with that, if you want to take that position. But I want to say that this road to Damascus I heard the member for Windsor-St Clair mention is crowded indeed with those who are now cloaking themselves in an environmental robe.

I remember all the questions that were directed to the government last year, and there were stop signs put up to the opposition even asking questions about the Oak Ridges moraine. There was ridicule of the member for Eglinton-Lawrence when he asked these questions. But then we had a by-election, as the leader of the third party has mentioned, in which the government was virtually annihilated, two to one, in an area where they expected to win big time. That was the turning point. We don't have

converted environmentalists across there; we have political pragmatists.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Response?

Mr Hampton: I want to thank the members for their comments. I want to remark a bit on some comments that were made by the former Minister of Municipal Affairs, the member for Scarborough East. When the government was finally forced to bring forward this legislation, this plan, which was last week, he was of course interviewed by a number of people in the media who asked him what he thought. I think his comments to the media were most revealing when he said, "When I, as minister, said we should protect some of the Oak Ridges moraine, some of the land and some of the features, I was hoping we might get to, gee, 50%." He said he would have been enthusiastic about that.

But he said that the government, by removing him from his position over that issue, made the issue that much bigger and that much more important in the eyes of the public, especially in the eyes of the residents who live along the moraine or who feel attached to it environmentally, and in the eyes of environmentalists. So he admitted that by trying to strike him down, to take him out, to eliminate his idea to protect some of the moraine, the government created the seeds of its own undoing on this issue, seeds that eventually have responded to the public and to our environmental appreciation. Some appreciation needs to go, some credit needs to go to the member for Scarborough East for having said that and for having—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Chudleigh: It is with great pleasure that I get to say a few words about this proposed Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act. This act is more than an accomplishment; it's indeed a feat that exceeds all expectation. I am particularly pleased that our government has come to the point where we have protected this very important part of Ontario.

Robert F. Kennedy was quoted as saying that this plan is a good example of what government and political leaders are supposed to do.

Mr Bradley: That's not what he said two months ago.

Mr Chudleigh: Toronto Councillor David Miller says it gives everyone in southern Ontario a reason to celebrate—everyone in southern Ontario, I suppose, except the member for St Catharines, who apparently is not celebrating too much tonight. He said, "Today is a day to commend the province for making this decision that will protect one of the last natural regions in southern Ontario for future generations." Even critics are calling the proposed act and its corresponding land-use plan a "huge victory," a "monumental accomplishment," "a spectacular gift for our grandchildren."

If passed, this legislation will forever protect 100% of the moraine's natural features and water resources. It would focus development on approved settlement areas and preserve precious agricultural land. Even in settle-

ment areas, which would cover just 8% of the land, development proposals would be subject to strict environmental controls, in much the same way as they are under the Niagara Escarpment plan.

Given its importance, I urge my colleagues to support the proposed legislation and to pass it as soon as possible.

In 1994 the most anyone could hope for was a plan that protected 26% of the moraine. That recommendation was shelved, like the ones that came before it. This government's plan would make 62% of the moraine off limits to most development.

Every stakeholder—environmentalists, developers, local governments—agrees with the proposed legislation; indeed most celebrate it. For that accomplishment, which no one thought was possible, we owe thanks to my colleague the Honourable Chris Hodgson. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing had the difficult task of bringing together a group of people with competing interests and asking them to agree on which areas of the moraine needed protection, where development could safely go and what conditions would apply to any approved development.

This group reached general agreement on almost every issue the minister asked it to review, and that consensus formed the basis of a document that we released in August for public comment. In a few areas, the public asked that the government go further than the panel's recommendations. Not only did we listen, but we also found ways of fulfilling the public's wishes in those areas. The government's plan generally follows the advisory panel's major recommendations. In a few areas, we propose implementing policies differently from what the panel recommended; nonetheless, the objectives are consistent.

I mentioned earlier that our plan would protect 100% of the moraine's natural features and water resources, and would do so forever. The proposed legislation includes a clause that says any review of the plan cannot consider reducing core and linkage areas.

The plan also includes strong policies to protect the quality and quantity of water on the moraine. It protects wellheads. It protects all the kettle lakes on the moraine. It protects coldwater streams, such as those running into Lake Simcoe.

It calls for innovative practices to manage storm water, thus protecting sensitive recharge areas. It prohibits technologies that cause storm waters to rapidly infiltrate groundwater, and it requires municipalities to incorporate watershed plans, water budgets and water conservation plans in their official plans.

As I said earlier, the proposed legislation focuses development in existing settlement areas on just 8% of the moraine. This is land that is already approved for urban uses in official plans.

In natural core areas, which make up 38% of the land area, permitted use would be restricted to: existing uses; forest, fish and wildlife management areas; conservation, flood control and erosion control areas; agricultural uses; necessary transportation, infrastructure and utilities;

accessory uses, such as bed-and-breakfast operations or home businesses in permitted residences; low-intensity recreational uses, such as hiking trails and picnic areas; and single residences on existing lots.

Countryside areas make up 30% of the moraine's land areas. Permitted uses in these areas would be limited to the same ones allowed in natural core and natural linkage areas. In addition, they would have agricultural and related uses, such as grain elevators and those kinds of things; small-scale commercial and institutional uses outside prime agricultural areas, such as schools and retirement homes; and major recreational uses outside prime agricultural areas, such as golf courses, serviced campgrounds, ski hills and those types of recreational activities. Lord knows, we can never have enough golf courses in Ontario, as the member from Ottawa will be sure to agree. In other words, the proposed legislation protects farmland and fosters growth in areas that are suitable for those kinds of development.

Another major accomplishment of the proposed legislation is that it protects critical pieces of the moraine, in Richmond Hill and Uxbridge in particular. These areas were under intense public scrutiny before the Ontario Municipal Board. Through an agreement with developers, we are taking over more than 400 hectares, a little less than 900 acres, of environmentally sensitive land to protect it from future development. Some of this land is being donated, most of it by the developers. Getting land donated by a developer is no mean feat. However, while some of it is being donated, most of it is being transferred to the province in exchange for provincially owned land that is not located on the moraine. It's in Pickering, in an area that would be suitable for development. Perhaps it's in the area that used to be defined around the Pickering airport lands.

The province would create a spectacular park with this land, a lasting legacy for the people of Ontario. As the *Globe and Mail* reported, this legacy will be larger than New York's Central Park. That's not all. We would establish a trail stretching across the entire 160 kilometres of that moraine, and we would make that trail accessible to people with disabilities.

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We would also create a foundation similar to the Living Legacy trust. The foundation would be involved in funding public education programs and stewardship programs to encourage landowners to protect water resources and natural features on their own land. As well, it would support the trail by funding the purchase of access points and the construction of facilities, bridges and interpretive centres. Funding for the foundation would come from various public and private sources. We, as a government, have committed \$15 million, plus a substantial land donation, and we're challenging the federal government, municipalities and the private sector to contribute as well.

In closing, the proposed Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act protects one of southern Ontario's most significant natural areas. It ensures the safety of drinking

water for more than 250,000 people. It protects the habitat of countless species, some of which are not found anywhere else in Ontario. I imagine there are some salamanders in that count. They seem to mutate rather quickly in various sections of Ontario.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): They multiply.

Mr Chudleigh: They also multiply, as the member for Scarborough Centre points out.

It gives developers clarity on where development can occur and, finally, it establishes clear rules for that development.

I urge my colleagues on all sides of the Legislature to pass this bill as quickly as possible. I think we can agree that the preservation of Ontario's parklands and sensitive areas is one of the truly great things a Legislature can do. If we can do that together, with the unanimous passing of this bill, I think it would go a long way to ensuring the public's respect for these very hallowed halls of our Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bradley: I heard the member earlier make reference to the Niagara Escarpment Commission. I happen to believe that a commission would be very useful, as part of this legislation, to ensure that this land is indeed protected. I know the member has had his clashes in years gone by with the Niagara Escarpment Commission. I heard him make reference to that when he was making a comment on the remarks of Mr McMeekin.

It seems to me that while what we see so far is certainly supportable by the opposition, it's really going to be interesting to see who gets the land in Pickering, how much they get and how much it's worth. I challenged the members of the media the other day, once they get off anthrax, to send their investigative reporters to Pickering to try to determine who's getting what in terms of the developers. The silence of the developers after this announcement is ominous indeed. It tells me somebody is making big money in terms of the land exchange that's taking place. Of course, because there was mention of agricultural land being saved in this case, there will be considerable agricultural land lost for potential production when the transfer takes place. Of course we want to retain as much farmland as we can.

I'm one who always feels the government will compliment itself enough. One thing I want to say I agreed with was that the minister announced his plan at a press conference and announced it in the House. I hope that's the end of it. I don't think there's going to be the need for a multi-million-dollar advertising campaign, self-congratulatory in nature. I urge members of the government to ensure that's not part of this package. I know the member for Halton will be urging his members not to engage in such a public relations exercise.

Mr Martin: We in this caucus will of course be supporting this bill and working with whomever to make sure it does all that the government is projecting at the moment that it has the capacity or potential to do. We will, however, be opposing letting developers whose

proposals have already been given approval by municipal councils to proceed with their developments. I think that needs to be challenged and put in the context of this very important and progressive initiative.

Our caucus will be raising the question of what happens to all the other land in the 905, especially class 1 agricultural land. Will it now be "Let 'er rip" on those lands by this government, a free-for-all, so to speak? For example, the Smart Growth councils that are replacing the GTSB have yet to take form, so who's going to oversee this? The government has confirmed that developers will sit on these bodies, and this could provide an opening for the government to deliver for the developers on that prime agricultural land. We know that some developers will be quite upset with this piece of legislation. However, I'm convinced that there have been those difficult discussions behind closed doors and I think promises have been made. You can be sure that this government, if it gets a chance to come back and rule again for another four years, will deliver on those promises. So we all have to be very cautious here and be careful of what we're getting and make sure we understand all the consequential fallout from this.

Mr Galt: I'd first like to compliment the member for Halton for just an exceptional presentation, one that I thoroughly enjoyed. It was just very well done, with a lot of thoughtful comments and input there.

I wanted to comment: he talked about developers and lands being donated from developers. I heard I think from the member for St Catharines and others earlier that developers are all terrible people. In all professions, all trades and entrepreneurs there are the bad ones and there are good ones. I really don't know that many all that well but as reeve, as warden I ran into some who were really struggling to try and make ends meet, make things happen. I've seen some go bankrupt.

Where would we be if there were not some developers with our communities? Where would places like Toronto be? Where would St Catharines be? Would it be expanding at all? I don't think it would be. These are the developers, the entrepreneurs that take a chance and stick their necks out. Should they make a profit? Sure, they should make a profit with their necks stuck out as far as they have. I see them also going bankrupt. I don't think we should just paint them all with the same brush, that they're all bad just because they happen to be trying to develop a community and expand it.

I think the member for Halton very capably talked about a legacy for the people of Ontario, how it's going to protect this very significant area across southern Ontario. He talked about the importance of looking after the drinking water that goes into those aquifers and the importance of this area that will be protected which consequently will protect the habitat of many species that live in that area.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): Here we are with another bill that all three parties look like they're going to support. I think we're going to support it only because it's an initial first good step that deserves to

be supported. But, as people say, the devil is in the details, and the details here are really involved in that land swap. As the member for St Catharines says, there's a lot of money that's going to be made in this land swap, and I think we need some independent commission to make sure that this swap is supervised properly so there aren't unseemly profits being made here.

While it's good to move this development off the moraine, we are now going into the Pickering lands, where there is tremendously good farmland, in the south end of this province. We may be swapping one problem for another problem, even though in this case we certainly have protected the hydrogeology of southern Ontario through protecting the moraine.

Also mentioned in some of tonight's speeches, by the member for St Catharines in particular, was the possibility of the establishment of a commission down the road that parallels that of the Niagara Escarpment Commission. I think that's a good idea. In fact, I might even go further and suggest that we look at some sort of provincial park mechanism for this area. I think that in 10 years' time, what's going to happen is that this whole thing is going to open up again and the pressures are going to be back. We need to do something on a permanent basis to make sure this area is protected in perpetuity.

I was very proud to be part of the Peterson government when we faced the challenge of the Rouge Valley and what to do with that area, whether we should develop it or make it into the largest urban park in the world. We bit the bullet on that one and made sure we made it a park. I think we have to do the same for the moraine.

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Mr Chudleigh: It was interesting listening to the member for St Catharines, who talked about perhaps the innuendo of what may happen when the land transfer deals are done. There's always a bogeyman hiding in those areas. I suppose for the opposition it's their role, it's their duty to ensure that those kinds of deals are open and transparent.

I wasn't so fond of his comment that there is some innuendo around the conflict that I may have had with NEC. I challenge him to come up with one conflict that I have ever had with the NEC. I've supported that organization from its inception. In fact, when that organization was formed in 1973, I was a civil servant and I wrote a report that supported the formation of that. I was in on that one long before he was. His innuendo and comments in that area I take great exception to.

Interjection: Nobody takes him seriously.

Mr Chudleigh: You're quite right. No one takes him seriously because there are too many cheap shots coming from that area to ever be taken seriously.

I was pleased to hear the member for Sault Ste Marie say that he supports the act. I'm pleased that he mentioned that it's an important and aggressive initiative for Ontario. I congratulate him on those comments and support his position that this is a wonderful place to live, and to protect that land. I would support his reasons for

expressing concerns. Again, he's in opposition. He should ensure that the people of Ontario get a fair deal out of this process.

The member for Northumberland, as always, was eloquent and succinct and I appreciate his concerns, as I do the member for Timiskaming—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate.

Mr Duncan: I'm pleased to join the debate. I'll use the time I have to review some elements of the bill, review some amendments that our caucus and party will be putting forward and then talk about the land deal that, while not part of the bill itself, is an integral part of this deal that we believe will require very close public scrutiny.

First of all I want to congratulate my colleague Mike Colle, who, I think most would agree, led the charge on this right from the very beginning. He took an issue against all odds. He said in this House that at times when the government was clearly working against him, when the development industry was clearly working against him, when big money interests were working against him, he and a bunch of very dedicated people all along the moraine, that 160-kilometre stretch of extremely important lands, a few courageous people, stood up and defended and defended and, as I said earlier in the evening, almost like the conversion on the road to Damascus, we see the government finally responding, we think largely because of the result in the Vaughan-King-Aurora by-election. That was the key turning point.

Our late colleague, someone we all respected tremendously, Al Palladini, won that riding with 59% of the vote. That was a testament to him personally, I believe, I always did believe, but it also had become a relatively safe Conservative seat in the 905 belt. Mr Palladini's unfortunate and untimely passing precipitated a by-election at about the time that the Oak Ridges moraine issue was at its apex. Remember, the government had rejected numerous attempts, most particularly my colleague's bill, to protect the moraine. And lo and behold, within two years of the general election the result had turned around completely—one of the safest Conservative ridings in the province. The Liberal candidate, my colleague Greg Sorbara, got 61% of the vote: two to one. So I guess that deathbed conversion, the conversion on the road to Damascus, doesn't really take us by surprise. This is all about crass politics.

The bill itself is a good bill. It incorporates many of the features that we called for first in Mr Colle's bill. I think we also had two opposition days over the course of the last couple of years dealing with this, and many of the provisions that we called for have been incorporated in the bill.

I remind you that the bill is late, not just because they didn't move quickly enough but because some sensitive lands have already been developed. They've been lost. We're going to talk at another time in greater detail about the whole question of not only environmentally sensitive lands—wetlands—but also agricultural lands and how quickly our top agricultural lands are diminishing.

Remember, this was a big issue back in the 1970s, when my colleague from St Catharines first was elected to this place, and it continues to be an issue. The only problem is that more and more of our good prime agricultural land has been gobbled up in the last 20 years. So that too is a key issue.

We believe that the protection of these lands and the hierarchy of protections, if you will, spelled out in the bill are appropriate and we believe that the bill itself can work well. Let me talk about where we will propose some amendments to the bill.

First of all, what we call transition issues: development applications in settlement areas that were in process but that had not received final approval before the government's May 17, 2001, development freeze will be allowed to proceed under the old planning rules. We're going to bring forward amendments to try to deal with that. Again, that comes down to the question of the lands that have already been impacted. A significant number of hectares—we're now on the metric system—have been taken out and have been developed already.

Development applications that had started in rural areas will be allowed to proceed under the old rules, with only minor environmental protection. This is important: overall, 15,000 new homes may be allowed to sneak in under the old planning rule. That's an important area that we want to spend a little time discussing in committee. We will have some amendments to do what we think will make it a better bill and preserve more land and have less land paved over in the moraine. We can never forget the significance of these lands to our water system and to our water supply. So it's extremely important, from that perspective, that we have the opportunity to bring forward those amendments.

The final aspect of the issue that I want to address is what I believe will become the most controversial part of this bill: the land exchange involving north Pickering and Seaton. We are very concerned about the land deals that are going to happen.

Mr Bradley: We're not hearing much from the developers.

Mr Duncan: It is very quiet, isn't it? It's extremely quiet.

I want to review for a minute what this is about. Some people would argue, and I must say I don't agree with them, that those who are losing their opportunities now should not be compensated for what was essentially a speculative purpose. There are people out there who believe that if you were speculating in land development, you ought not to be compensated on that basis alone. I don't share that view because essentially what you're doing—

Mr Bradley: I do.

Mr Duncan: My colleague from St Catharines and I differ on that. But what you're essentially doing, in my view, is in effect down-zoning lands that people hold and they do need, in my view, to be compensated. But the question will become, who gets compensated, how much compensation do they get, over what period of time do

they get that compensation and what other aspects of development deals will be cut in order to make it a more profitable venture?

Mr Bradley: There will be some sweetheart deals.

Mr Duncan: Will there be sweetheart deals? That's the term I was looking for: "sweetheart deals."

Any time government, and I must say in particular this government, involves itself in land deals, we get very nervous. We have seen a number of situations that we've found questionable, that the public auditor has found questionable, that others have found questionable. They give us nervousness. I think of the deal to sell the 407. The government needed a few dollars in the till before the last election and they let it go for a song. But they also let the private interest have the right to raise the tolls you pay over the next few years in an astounding fashion.

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Mr Bradley: They'll be at all the fundraisers.

Mr Duncan: They'll be at all the fundraisers. We still don't know the details of that transaction.

Mr Bradley: Why is that?

Mr Duncan: I think that's because the government didn't want us to know. Maybe they're embarrassed by what's in that. Maybe if we had good transparency laws and freedom of information laws—Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals are putting forward a package of amendments to the various laws that will impact on that very soon. I expect an announcement any time now that will show that this Liberal Party will govern this province very differently, in a more open and a more democratic fashion. It will make us even more different from the gang that closed down democracy in Ontario. That's what they did. They closed down democracy.

My colleague from Ottawa West: his own government, in this House, two weeks ago, forced his bill not to be considered in this House, without even telling him. What they did was they brought forward their—

Mr Bradley: It was an ambush.

Mr Duncan: It was an ambush when he wasn't even here. It was up to myself, my colleague from St Catharines and other members to defend him, while his own colleagues in the government sat back—I should say, however, that the member for London West came to the passionate defence of Mr Guzzo in what was a very good effort on his part.

We like the bill. We will vote for the bill. But we are going to watch the land deal. That's key. I am absolutely glad the government finally listened to what my colleague Mike Colle, our leader Dalton McGuinty and every member of this caucus have been saying for over three years: save, don't pave. They finally responded. We are going to watch the land deals that come after. We are going to vote for this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Martin: To reiterate, we on this side will be supporting this bill. However, we will be very much engaged in the debate around issues that affect it and may be consequential to this. We believe this is a victory for the environmental community and the people of the 905.

They forced this government to do something it didn't want to do, to save the Oak Ridges moraine. The people of the 905 deserve special credit. They turned out in droves to public meetings. They forced a freeze on development. Then they forced amendments to an initial plan that would not have provided enough protection. We say good for them, bravo. This is a very important step toward protecting our water, as well as public open space and wildlife habitat. We in this caucus have always been and will continue to be committed to that.

We are, however, disappointed that the protections for the moraine area east of the GTA are weaker than what the advisory panel proposed. This includes an area in the minister's own riding. Aggregate extraction in natural linkage areas is also a concern. The advisory panel didn't take a position on that one. The land swap may be reasonable as a compromise, though we'd rather have seen the development moved to the Ataratiri lands or another urban brownfield site. We think that would have made more sense in conjunction with the bill on brownfields development that they're putting through the House at this point in time as well.

We are also concerned the government may have given more to the developers than required by law. We hope that in compensating developers the government is not paying them what the land would have been worth under residential zoning, because the lands that were before the OMB did not have that zoning. The government should be upfront about which developers get land and the rationale for giving it to them, as well as the relevant prices. This information should be tabled in the House, among others things, so we might have a fuller debate on this very important issue.

Mr Ouellette: As we consider debate on the whole issue of the land and the areas near it being used—I know the area fairly well. I've spent a number of years, about 15, rather extensively through that area. I can describe some of it. South of Highway 7, there is a market garden just outside of Brougham that people regularly visit. Everything is south of Highway 7. West of sideline 24 is about 200 acres of corn that run right down to the creek where the Seaton Trail connects up through there. I hope that when the trail system comes through there, it will be able to connect with trails like the Seaton and the Durham Trail that actually comes through Oshawa. Hopefully, we'll be able to connect those.

Mostly, the areas or the lands north of Taunton Road, which is all in through there, are pretty much fallow. There are a lot of empty fields that aren't used for pasture or grazing or anything else. There is a bit of agricultural land in there, yes, but the majority of it, I would say in that whole area, is fallow land, with some abandoned gravel pits as well. With the 407 having come through that area, access has been substantially increased for infrastructure with Highway 7 and the Taunton Road four-laning, which will help traffic flows when the developers eventually build up that area.

I don't think I'm going to get a chance to debate it tonight, but there are a number of other areas I hope are

taken into consideration. As to forestry practices, when that takes place, I hope the management program that's currently utilized in the Ganaraska forest, which is part of the moraine, will be practised throughout the entire moraine, as it promotes a lot of new growth, yet allows the wise harvesting, the selective harvesting, of forest products through that area.

There are lot of things that we, as a government, are looking at. I know the trail system is very significant to me and the other members here, and I appreciate the opportunity to discuss it.

Mr Bradley: I want to commend my friend the member for Windsor-St Clair on an excellent address. He didn't have time to pay tribute to the Honourable Norm Sterling, the author of the Niagara Escarpment plan that has been so successful over the years. Unfortunately, Premier Harris yanked away from Mr Sterling the responsibility for the Niagara Escarpment Commission—and I have this theory—because he was so protective of matters related to the escarpment.

Second, the member for Windsor-St Clair said we have to have something that's as transparent as possible, as open as possible. One of the pet projects of Mr Sterling over the years has been freedom of information and privacy legislation. We will be looking forward to his assistance in getting the deals that are going to be done for the developers out in the open, very transparent and open, so we can see that nobody has been engaged in a sweetheart deal where they are better off with the new land they get than with the land they had on the moraine.

I don't happen to agree with those who would say that a developer should be compensated if he purchases the land on speculation and there is no change to the zoning.

If there's a down-zoning, there's a case to be made, but if it is just purchased on speculation, then I don't think there's a need for compensation because you take your chances. You don't compensate people who lose money in the stock market.

I know the member also would have wanted to pay tribute to Richard B. Wright of St Catharines, who won the Giller Prize in literature last night. If he had had the opportunity, he would have mentioned that in his speech, or the fact that this very evening, the annual meeting of the YMCA of St Catharines is taking place and the wonderful job they do on behalf of the people in our community. If he had had the time, I know he would have said that. But he had a wonderful address nevertheless that's really contributed immensely to this debate.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Response?

Mr Duncan: I will be voting in favour of this bill. I thank my colleagues for their responses and for sharing their thoughts with me on this. We will be watching the land deals. That will be the key here. We look forward to the government committing to public hearings on this bill. I'm sure they'd want to do that. They're proud of this accomplishment. We think they should be. They should have hearings and let us put the amendments we think will make it a better piece of legislation. Then let's vote on those. Overall, we will be watching very carefully how those lands in Seaton and north Pickering are disposed of.

The Acting Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Finances et affaires économiques**

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Doug Galt, Ernie Hardeman, Monte Kwinter,
John O'Toole, Gerry Phillips, Joseph Spina
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General government / Affaires gouvernementales

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Michael Prue, Marilyn Mushinski
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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Michael Gravelle
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Bert Johnson, Tony Martin, Frank Mazzilli,
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Carl DeFaria, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Tina R. Molinari
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Jean-Marc Lalonde, Margaret Marland, Julia Munro,
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John Hastings, Shelley Martel, Bart Maves,
Julia Munro, Richard Patten
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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Rosario Marchese, Ted McMeekin, Bill Murdoch,
Wayne Wettlaufer
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Sources de carburants de remplacement**

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