



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Third Session, 37th Parliament

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de l'Ontario

Troisième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 2 October 2002

Mercredi 2 octobre 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 October 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Let me tell you about the senior citizen on a fixed income in Wawa whose electrical bill has increased 60% year over year. Let me tell you about Les and Pauline Hillstrom, dairy farmers near Bruce Mines. Their hydro bill has gone from \$1,000 in August 2001 to an astonishing \$2,020 for August 2002. Let me tell you about the small dry cleaner on the Manitoulin whose monthly electrical bill has increased 300%. Let me tell you about the Goulais truck driver, with two small children and a wife who is disabled, whose electricity bill has doubled.

Let's not forget about the sawmill in Dubreuilville, which has seen electrical bills increase by 110%. Here is what the mill manager had to say: "Our electric bill has more than doubled in less than three months when there has been absolutely no change in the product or the service being delivered to our mill. The electricity is still being produced less than 30 miles from our mill, still being distributed over the same grid that has carried the power for the last 40 years and still through the same company. Absolutely nothing has changed, that is except for the drastic price increase and the huge profits the electrical producers are raking in at our expense."

It is time to stand up for Ontario consumers. Yesterday, Liberals called on the government to roll out the rebate. Today, I call on electricity retailers to provide payment extensions and flexibility for those who are about to be bankrupted by these unconscionable rates.

e-LAB

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to tell my fellow members about a great public-private partnership that is giving high school students in my hometown of Listowel the opportunity to learn in a state-of-the-art computer lab.

This project, known as e-Lab, was spearheaded by Listowel District Secondary School teacher Blair McKay and Mike Lazaridis, president and CEO of Waterloo-based Research in Motion, the creator of the Blackberry.

McKay and the Avon Maitland District School Board also worked with technology companies like Hewlett

Packard (Canada), Epson Canada, as well as local partners including D & D Automation, Ideal Supply, Listowel Technologies, Rockwell Automation, Campbell's Soup, Hammond Manufacturing, and Mornington Communications, to make the e-Lab a reality.

As a result of the commitment shown by these companies, Listowel students will not only be better prepared for post-secondary education and careers in the high-tech field, but more aware of the opportunities available in this area.

Last school year, I attended the official opening of the e-Lab and saw what a great facility this partnership has created. I think it's a model for other schools, and boards of education should study it.

I want to thank the Avon Maitland District School Board, Blair McKay and the companies involved in e-Lab for their commitment to improving the technical education that Listowel students receive.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): This is a government that clearly knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing.

Insulin pumps, at \$5,700, have been proven by all experts to be an excellent investment for individuals. It can save the government literally hundreds of thousands of dollars on kidney dialysis or heart operations.

If you have money in this province or you have insurance, you get it. If you do not, this government will not assist you. Not only will it not buy insulin pumps; it won't assist families even in buying needles for their children. They do not care about the needs of our population.

What is particularly appalling is this government's handling of macular degeneration. The health minister, with great pride, announced they would fund macular degeneration. Everyone thought that was wonderful. Following it, he brought in a surprise restriction that said you must be 50% blind before they will fund it. If you're 40% blind, you have a choice of borrowing money, selling your house or waiting until you have lost 50% of your vision. It doesn't save the government one penny, is the first reaction. It's the same cost if you're 50% blind or 40% blind. What people are doing is putting up with great financial sacrifice when they are 30% or 40% blind to get the treatment, rather than wait until it's 50%.

What a weaselly, cheap way out of handling our citizens. Why does the government attack our senior

citizens? We've heard of a kinder, gentler government. This is no different from the Mike Harris government. Our seniors are under attack and are being mistreated by this government, and I find it appalling. Fund it fully now.

APPLE BLOSSOM AWARDS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to congratulate the many gardeners in the municipality of Clarington who were honoured with the Apple Blossom Awards just recently awarded. These awards have become an annual tradition in Clarington.

Businesses and homeowners are invited to enter the contest directly or to nominate exceptional gardeners. Entire streets can also be nominated. The judges of these gardens are volunteer members of the Bowmanville, Newcastle and Orono horticultural societies. Their evaluation is based on points such as neatness, selection, diversity, arrangement of materials and the harmony of the garden with its surroundings.

A number of gardens and gardeners were recently recognized in the local press as Apple Blossom winners. These included Judi Radnoti, Deb and Paul Vanherrewegen, Peter and Joan Tax, and David and Johanna Bryant. The award for the best business landscape went to Northcutt Elliott Funeral Home in Bowmanville. Newcastle Community Hall, the Bowmanville Museum and the Bowmanville Zoo were each selected for honourable mention in the business category. The Apple Blossom Awards show the care and pride that residents of the riding of Durham take in their property.

I also thank the horticultural society judges for their great work, and the ongoing support by the municipality of Clarington mayor, John Mutton, and of course municipal staff.

Members of this House know that each day I stand and pay tribute to the constituents in my riding of Durham. Durham truly is a great place to live, work and raise your family.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I rise to express my serious concern about the actions of the Attorney General. The shooting death of Dudley George at Ipperwash Provincial Park is a serious issue, and I believe there is considerable evidence of inappropriate political interference in police actions.

On Thursday, September 26, the Attorney General said he had a signed affidavit from former Commissioner Tom O'Grady, saying it "clearly states that the former Premier in no way directed the OPP to act in any certain way in relation to this incident." The signed affidavit does not say that. It says the Premier did not participate in "command decisions." Commissioner O'Grady has never said he was given no direction from the government.

The Attorney General has on a key point said something that is incorrect; he has incorrectly quoted the commissioner on a point where the former commissioner has always chosen his words carefully.

This issue is central to Ipperwash. Ontario looks to its Attorney General to play a unique role above the political fray. The Attorney General chose to abandon that role and attempted to attribute words to our former police commissioner that he never said. These words are at the root of the Ipperwash affair, and I believe the Attorney General has a responsibility to correct the record.

1340

TRUCKING SAFETY

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Each year 600 Canadian motorists are killed and another 12,000 injured due to collisions with trucks. That appalling statistic is poised to get much worse.

New regulations on the number of hours truckers can drive were recently endorsed by transportation ministers. Each province and the federal government must now pass the regulations to put them into effect.

In Ontario now, truckers can drive 60 hours in seven days, 70 hours in eight days or 120 hours over 14 days. With the changes, a trucker can work 70 hours in five days and is supposed to take 36 hours off before driving again. But if that driver starts a new driving cycle immediately after 36 hours, that next shift puts him at 84 hours of driving in just seven days. That's a huge increase from the current standard. That will have a profound impact on driver fatigue and motorist safety on our provincial highways.

Most independent truckers will be hard-pressed to tell employers they're not willing to work 84 hours in seven days if they're told to. When the bottom line is at stake, some employers won't care about driver fatigue. The real losers are motorists, who will face more weary truckers coming at them on our highways. I predict more deaths and injuries as a result.

I call on the federal Liberals and the provincial Conservatives to reject longer working hours for truckers. Six hundred dead and 1,200 injured Canadian motorists each year are more than enough casualties from collisions with trucks.

PAULA JONGERDEN

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): At 6:37 am this past August 23, 49-year-old Paula Jongerden emerged from the choppy waters of Lake Erie as the oldest person to ever swim across the lake. Mrs Jongerden spent 23 hours and 30 minutes battling wind, three-foot-high waves and strong currents after setting out on her 55-kilometre swim from Erie, Pennsylvania, across the lake to Long Point in my riding.

Her drive and determination have served as an example for the rest of us 49-or-so-year-olds in Ontario of what we can do when we believe in a cause.

A nurse at West Haldimand General Hospital in Hagersville, Jongerden leapt into the water to come to the aid of the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve. This is an environmental jewel on our part of Lake Erie and, I might add, one of the most beautiful and pristine areas in southern Ontario.

Mrs Jongerden is a volunteer board member for the biosphere reserve. It's an organization that promotes research, education and monitoring of 8,000 acres of natural wonder and wilderness.

I'm also happy to say her accomplishment has not gone unnoticed in Haldimand and Norfolk where, after numerous newspaper articles recognizing her achievement, Mrs Jongerden will be feted by the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation on the evening of November 2 at the Vittoria Community Centre.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): At the same time as the Premier and the Minister of Colleges and Universities are telling our students and their families that there is nothing to worry about and that the double cohort has been solved, their own report shows that up to 40% of students may not have a place at a college or university. This government report, only a small part of which was released, shows that not only are students intending to fast-track this year, but the monitoring of their credits proves this fact. Yet this government refused to release the report.

To add more insult to more injury, another study from the University of Toronto shows that poorer students are going to university a lot less than they did before this government came into power. Our poor can't get in because of your cutbacks that led to tuition increases, and the rest of our students won't get in because of your poor planning for the double cohort. Your private university scheme didn't get you out of this one, did it?

On behalf of the thousands of students and their families, I demand that this government release the report to the public and begin to feverishly do what you should have done properly seven years ago; that is, plan for the double cohort.

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I rise today to speak about Dalton McGuinty's and Jean Chrétien's plan to increase our hydro rates, our gas prices and his plan to send over 100,000 Ontario jobs to Mexico and the United States.

Dalton McGuinty has been travelling around Ontario talking about everything under the sun except his support of the Kyoto accord. He's not telling Ontarians why he's supporting a plan that will kill Ontario jobs.

Dalton McGuinty is fully aware of the facts on Kyoto. He knows that under Kyoto the cost of gasoline may rise to \$1.10 per litre, as estimated by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association. Dalton also knows

that according to CMEA estimates, Ontario homeowners who use natural gas will see their heating bills increase from \$40 per month to \$225 per month. In addition, according to the CME, electricity rates for a typical Ontario home will rise dramatically, from \$93 to \$144 per month.

Dalton McGuinty also knows that those nations that produce 80% of greenhouse gases are exempt from or have not signed on to this accord.

Ontarians want to know why Dalton McGuinty and Jean Chrétien are so intent on killing jobs in our province. Why is Mr McGuinty supporting a scheme that will increase our taxes and home heating costs? It is time for Dalton McGuinty to come clean with Ontarians and say no to killing jobs in Ontario.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of that very provocative and interesting statement, and seeing the government's desire to debate the Kyoto accord, I seek unanimous consent to waive the orders of the day and engage in a debate where the Ontario Liberal Party will support Kyoto, and let's see if we can find out just what is the Progressive Conservative Party's position on Kyoto.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Reports by committees? Introduction of bills? Motions? Statements by ministries?

Moving along—we could be out early here—it is now time for—

MINISTERS' ATTENDANCE

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We've been informed that several of the ministers will be here. I only see two. None of the ministers whom we have questions for are here yet.

Interjections.

Mr Duncan: Maybe the members opposite would like to engage in a debate. We have a lot of questions, but we want the Premier and a number of ministers, and unfortunately none of them happen to here right now.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I see some of them are coming in.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: This signals clearly to the ministers lingering in their lounge that they are being called upon and that indeed they are somewhat tardy. It's very frustrating to be notified of ministers who are going to be absent; so be it. But then when question period does start for those ministers about whom there has been no notification about being late or absent, for there to be this incredible vacuum in the House on the government side, I would surely want, and I'm sure you would want, to hear from government members. Perhaps the House leader or whip can explain for their caucus as to the absence of these ministers.

The Speaker: I thank you very much, and I think the bus has arrived. A few of them have come in. Hopefully we have the members that have the first questions.

Mr Duncan: Point of order.

The Speaker: Just very quickly, before we go on to the point of order, it is customary for somebody to handle it if the Premier isn't here—the Deputy Premier. I don't know if that's been taken care of or not. We don't even seem to have the Deputy Premier.

On a point of order, the member for Windsor-St Clair.

Mr Duncan: Perhaps we could call Bigliardi's to see if the Premier's lunch is finished.

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

I'm looking for some direction on whether the Deputy Premier will be here.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Mr Speaker, I find the comments of the member opposite regrettable, but the Deputy Premier of the province of Ontario has arrived.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The opposition was informed that the Premier would be here for question period. Our questions are prepared for the Premier and we would like the opportunity to put those questions to the Premier.

The Speaker: I thank the member. As you know, we did wrap up very early—one of the reasons maybe for having a set question period time start. We may want to look at that in the standing orders in the future as way of help.

Hon Mr Baird: I'd be certainly strongly in support of us having a fixed time for the start of question period.

I am informed that the Premier is on his way.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In response to one of the comments, I have never had a problem being served at Bigliardi's without a tie, but then I've always picked up my own tab.

1350

VISITORS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I would like to take this opportunity to introduce guests in the members' gallery today: Mike Wszolek; Josephine Wszolek, his wife; and their sons Len and Tony Wszolek. The two senior Wszoleks are visiting Queen's Park for the first time in their lives.

The Speaker: We welcome our guests.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Mr Speaker, I want to inform the House that yesterday was the birthday of one of our pages, Vanessa Casey from Hamilton East. I want to wish her—I'm sure on behalf of the whole House—a happy birthday one day late.

The Speaker: Happy birthday, Vanessa.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: While we wait for the Premier to arrive, I seek unanimous consent for second and third readings of Bill 7, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr Bartolucci: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: While we continue to wait for the Premier to arrive, I seek unanimous consent for second and third readings of Bill 20, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require the appointment of a workplace carcinoma committee.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: While we wait for the Premier to arrive, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Mr Wayne Munday from the St Thomas and District Chamber of Commerce to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker: The only problem with waiting for people to arrive is that the pages and I have to keep getting up and down.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Bill Pr22, An Act respecting the demolition of rental housing units in the City of Toronto, as the Speaker knows, is a private bill—not a private member's bill but a private bill. It's the tradition of this House that whenever a private bill passes private bills committee, it comes before the House and then, as a matter of course, passes.

For some reason, it has never come forward—

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): No, that's not true.

Mr Bryant: It is true.

Mr Johnson: It's not.

Mr Bryant: Name me a private—I'm trying to provide a point of order and you want to have a debate. I would love to have a debate on Pr22.

In any event, in lieu of that, I seek unanimous consent for Bill Pr22 to receive second and third readings in this House.

The Speaker: The member has asked for unanimous consent. I'm afraid I heard some noes.

The member will know that that did happen in the last session, and there is the issue of timeliness.

Mr Bartolucci: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: While we wait for the arrival of the Premier, I seek unanimous consent for second and third readings of Bill 32, An Act to provide for an interim freeze in the price of certain petroleum products.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Sorry, there is not unanimous consent.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: After two days' absence of the Leader of the Opposition, 14 cabinet ministers are waiting for the Liberals to start question period.

The Speaker: I appreciate it very much. My feeling is hopefully we will get a set question period time in the new standing orders.

As you know, when the Premier says he's going to show up and doesn't show up on time, it allows for this to take place. In the beginning it was fun. We kidded around a little bit, and then all of a sudden the other side gets upset, even though it's their Premier who has not shown up on time. I'll rag the puck for a while.

We can continue to waste time like this, or we can stand down question period and wait for the Premier. In fairness to him, with not having a set period of time—question period sometimes starts at 10 to 2, sometimes 10 after 2, sometimes 2:30—it's very difficult to plan. I understand that. When the House leaders look at the standing orders in the future, they may look at that. I know ministers who are out at speaking engagements or luncheons don't know what time to get back for question period as well.

Having said that, we're always here for prayers at 1:30, and if members come in for the prayers at 1:30, they won't miss anything.

We will continue for a short period of time. I am looking for some guidance because if the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Being a goaltender, I am not used to ragging the puck, but I think we have ragged the puck and killed the penalty, so question period can begin.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question, Speaker, as you might have anticipated, is to the Premier. Premier, Ontario families and businesses are continuing to pay a very heavy price as a result of your gross mismanagement of the hydro issue in Ontario. I want to give you some specific examples so it is brought home to bear on you in a very real fashion.

Mr Monette, living in Ottawa, is a 71-year-old retired man living on a fixed income. His hydro bill has increased by \$100 a month compared to what he was paying last year.

Darlene Falconer lives in Hamilton. She just received her hydro bill. It's \$403. Last year at this time it was \$194.35. She is on disability and cannot work.

Here is a case from St Catharines. Mrs Cathy Calder is living at home. She is a widow. She has two children. One daughter, 12 years of age, is severely disabled. She receives social assistance in the amount of \$970 per month. Her rent alone is \$515 per month. Her hydro bill was \$60. Now it is \$221 as a result of four years of your mismanagement with respect to hydro. She had assistance last time around from the church; she can't get it this time.

My question to you, Premier, on behalf of all those families and thousands of others who are taking it in the shins as a result of your mismanagement: what are you going to do specifically to help those families?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): First of all, the leader of the official opposition will know that this has been in place since about May of this year. I note with some interest that neither he nor the leader of the third party have stood in the House and complained about the fact that prices on

average were lower in the months of May and June. I didn't hear any questions about why these people were paying less in May and June.

I am hearing now, when we've had the hottest summer on record since 1955, that obviously if people use more energy—there are two things that go into the calculation of the price of your electricity in the province: how much power you use and the price per kilowatt hour. Obviously if the weather is hotter and people use more power, they are going to pay more this year than they paid last year.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, these people have had their bills doubled. They don't want your sophistry with respect to hydroelectricity policy in Ontario. What they want is some help from you. Their bills have doubled.

And it's not just families. Here is the case of Marc's Fine Foods in Tecumseh. He is a small business man. He operates the place himself, with the help of a few part-timers. He is selling prepared and frozen foods. His bills have gone up over \$1,000 compared to what he was paying before deregulation. His highest bill last year was \$1,200; one bill this year has been \$2,200.

You may dismiss this as being something of concern only to poor families in Ontario, but it's also affecting businesses. What are you going to do to help both families and businesses who are having to experience traumatic hikes in their hydro bills as a result of your gross mismanagement?

Hon Mr Eves: Objective observers and consultants who are in this business and people who have been in this business for a long period of time have all indicated that it will take a year of operation under a free market system to determine what the price of power is over a year compared to what they paid last year. Obviously on a daily basis or an hourly basis or a weekly basis, there are going to be wide fluctuations. In the months of May and June the rate was down, I say to the honourable member for Sudbury. I didn't hear him on his feet, screaming, "Stop, my people are paying less than they paid last year." I didn't hear that.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: And if he will wait—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Premier, take a seat, please. The member for Essex, come to order, please. We can't continue when you're screaming across like that.

Sorry, Premier, for the interruption.

1400

Hon Mr Eves: If he will kindly wait until the situation has been in effect for some period of time—we are now responsible, I suppose, on this side of the House for the fact that it's the warmest summer on record since 1955. That's our fault as well, I suppose, I say to the leader of the official—

The Speaker: The Premier's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, these people can't wait. These small businesses can't wait. Their bills have skyrocketed as a result of your policies. They need help now, and not from the kind of Premier who denies the existence of global warming, not from the kind of Premier who denies that his policies have resulted in skyrocketing

hydro rates; they need help from a Premier who understands some of the basic challenges that families have got to grapple with, day in and day out, when it comes to balancing their budget. They need help from a Premier who understands that in small business this presents a real and sometimes insurmountable challenge. That's the kind of Premier they're looking to today.

I ask you again on their behalf, Premier: what specifically are you going to do to help these families and these businesses?

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the official opposition is blustering and going on and on about specific individual cases for a month. He's not going on and on—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Please take a seat. Come to order. This time the member for Hamilton East come to order, please.

The Premier may continue.

Hon Mr Eves: This is the same Leader of the Opposition who voted against a tax cut of 41% for the most modest-income Ontarians. That was all right to do. "We don't care about the man or woman who has a taxable income of \$16,000 a year. We don't care that the government wants to reduce their taxes by 41%. I'm against that. I'm voting against that. I'm going to make them pay 41% more."

How do you justify those two gross inconsistencies, I say to the leader of the official opposition? How can you vote against every single one of those tax cuts for modest income earners in Ontario and get up here on your political high horse today and try to cash in?

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. I will convey on your behalf, Premier, to those families and those businesses that they should be more than satisfied with their tax cuts. I'll convey that to them.

Premier, the people of Sault Ste Marie came of age in a sad way in the Mike Harris-Ernie Eves Ontario. Yesterday they recorded their first smog day ever and they had it in October. That's just another in a long line of records that your government has broken when it comes to polluting our air. We had a record number of smog days this year—

Interjection.

Mr McGuinty: Apparently smog is a matter of some humour and levity to the members of the cabinet. The fact that it's killing 1,900 Ontarians prematurely, that it's sending 13,000 people to emergency rooms—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Take a seat. The member for Brampton Centre, come to order right now.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The leader of the official opposition had the floor.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, if it's at all possible, I want to get your position on the Kyoto accord. You're for it

one day; you're against it the next; you're straddling it in between. One day it's going to create jobs; the other day it's going to cost us jobs. I just want to know, are you on Ralph Klein's side or are you on the side of Ontario families and Ontario Liberals, who are strong supporters of the Kyoto accord?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): These would be the same strong supporters who are supporting Paul Martin, I suppose. I don't know where you stand on that, but I see that Paul Martin is now saying exactly what I've been saying for six months, which is very simple: surely the federal government must have a very specific plan as to how it's going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, comply with the Kyoto accord and not cost 450,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector.

They've had five years to think about it. They've had two years since the Prime Minister of this country verbally said he was going to sign on. Most Premiers across this country are saying what I've been saying for six months: let's sit down and have a very specific plan to reduce greenhouse gases—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The premier take his seat, please. I apologize for cutting the Premier off on the most important part. The member from Hamilton East, this is your last warning. We're not going to continue with you yelling across like this. We can't keep getting up and down. Again, I apologize to the Premier for cutting that part off. Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: The Premier's idea of strong leadership when it comes to reducing greenhouse gases and cleaning up Ontario air may be to wait for somebody at the federal level to produce some kind of plan so that we might make things better here for Ontarians, but that is not our definition of leadership.

We put forward a plan that will take us three quarters of the way to satisfying this province's responsibilities under the Kyoto accord. We've got a plan to clean up our electricity generation, a plan to clean up our gasoline, a plan to bring back conservation into Ontario. All those things will take us three quarters of the way to satisfying Ontario's responsibilities under the Kyoto accord.

How much longer are you going to wait for somebody at the federal level to do something about cleaning up Ontario air when we've got a plan right in front of you today?

Hon Mr Eves: If the leader of the official opposition is standing in this House today saying that any pollution that occurs in Sault Ste Marie occurs only on the Ontario-Canadian side of the border—his seatmate is from Windsor, Ontario. If you shut down every plant in Ontario tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock, you would still have over 90% of the pollution in Windsor, Sault Ste Marie and Sarnia from our great American neighbours to the south. Do you think there's some kind of invisible shield up and down the middle of the Detroit River?

I can't believe the leader of the official opposition actually thinks that if we eliminated every source of

emission of any kind, we stopped every car, every factory—all came to a grinding halt at his bequest tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock—that we would not still have over 90% of the smog in those border communities that we have today.

1410

Interjections.

The Speaker: OK, that's enough. Starting now we're throwing people out. If you want to keep yapping, you're going to be the first one to go. While we're at it, we're putting the Minister of the Environment on last warning, and the member from Sudbury is on his last warning as well, and we've got Hamilton East and the minister. That's right. If you want to continue on, you will be out of here. The next person who says a word is going to be the next one out. All the members of the cabinet who are laughing: do you want to take me up on this? Be my guest and say something and you'll be out for the day. We're not going to continue on like this. We had our fun in the beginning. Now we start throwing people out—and if it's just me and the pages left, so be it—starting right now.

It is now, I believe, looking at the table, the final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: It's pretty obvious we have a do-nothing Premier in charge today in Ontario. This is a Premier who has raised vacillation to a high art. This is a Premier who says, "So what if 1,900 die prematurely every year as a result of breathing bad air. So what if there are 13,000 who have to go to emergency rooms. So what if the rate of asthma for kids in Ontario has quadrupled in the last 20 years. So what if it costs taxpayers over a billion dollars annually."

Interjections.

The Speaker: Take a seat. We don't need any of that, because I could have thrown half of your members out too. I will make the decisions in here. The heat is up today and I would ask all members—we've got people sitting in the gallery. Half of them are shaking their heads at the performance going on here. Half of you should sit in this seat for a little bit of time and watch the goings on and see what you look like yelling at each other: duly elected representatives of the province of Ontario and you're screaming at each other like a bunch of eight-year-olds. I can't believe it.

The leader of the official opposition for his final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, leadership is not an option. You've got the big job. You're going to have to do a few things now. One of those things you have to do is take responsibility for cleaning up Ontario air. I put a plan before you. I've got a plan. It's going to take us three quarters of the way to satisfying our province's responsibilities under the Kyoto accord. By the way, they're laughing at us in the States. We can't go to any international tribunal unless we've got clean hands. Let's clean up our act and then we can assert our rights before the US. I'm asking you again, Premier, where do you specifically stand on the Kyoto accord? Are you with

Ralph Klein or are you with Ontario families and Ontario Liberals?

Hon Mr Eves: If he's talking about the Ontario Liberals who are with Paul Martin, who I presume are vastly greater in number than the Ontario Liberals who are with him, then they happen to be with our side of this discussion.

We have taken great steps in the province of Ontario—we've taken them not just through this government but through predecessor governments—to lower emission levels in Ontario. He will know that Premier Harris, for example, a few years ago talked about the phasing out of coal-burning Lakeview by 2005. He will also know that this summer I turned down the sale of Thunder Bay and Atikokan coal-burning plants because the prospective purchaser would not agree to convert them to natural gas or to shut them down. That will be a condition of any sale or they will be shut down. So those are three of the five plants. Lambton and Nanticoke, he will also know, will have technology on board by next year, by 2003, to reduce emission levels—

The Speaker: The Premier's time is up.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. On Monday I visited Paul Eckstein, a dairy farmer near Woodbridge. Hydro-electricity powers his milking machines, his milk cooling system—virtually the whole farm operation. His hydro rates have increased by 72%, and his hydro bills have doubled. Like thousands of small businesses across Ontario, your Hydro privatization and deregulation screw-up has put Paul Eckstein's livelihood in doubt. Does a 72% hydro rate increase tell you that something is wrong?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the leader of the third party has a differing point of view when it comes to the marketplace. I know he drove around the province of Ontario in his bus urging people not to sign fixed-price contracts. The same leader of the third party who urged people not to lock in to low prices is now in the Legislature saying, "For the people I encouraged not to lock in to low prices, their prices are going up and down; they have fluctuation in them." Why don't you make up your mind which side of this argument you're on? Should people have locked in to low prices or not? Yes or no?

Mr Hampton: I've talked to some of those people you say should have locked in. Their hydro rates have gone up by 40%. Is that the choice? They can get ripped off at a 40% rate increase or a 72% rate increase. That's Ernie Eves's vision of good electricity policy for the province.

Look, Premier, Paul Eckstein hasn't increased his consumption by even a moderate amount. The only increase in consumption is 6%, but his bills have doubled, and his rates have increased by 72%. Is that your answer to Paul Eckstein: he should have signed with one of your door-to-door rip-off artists so he'd only get ripped off by a 40% increase? Is that your answer?

Hon Mr Eves: I would appreciate the details of Mr Eckstein and any other particular cases you have with respect to hydro prices increasing by 40% when they are on a contract, or 72%, I believe you stated, when they're not on a contract. I'd appreciate receiving that information.

Mr Hampton: Paul Eckstein isn't alone. Consumers across Ontario are being hit with huge hydro bills because of your Hydro privatization and deregulation screw-up. It's also the case in the United States, which you are following. The Consumer Federation of America just released their review of hydro deregulation in that country. That review is called All Pain, No Gain. You should read this report, Premier, because it details that the costs of hydro deregulation for consumers are 10 times greater than any supposed benefit. One example is Montana, which one of your former Ministers of Energy used to talk about. Since deregulation in Montana, prices have gone up four times. In fact, Montana wants to get control of their hydro system again.

Why are you proposing and following a scheme that is all pain and no gain for hydro consumers?

Hon Mr Eves: At the end of the day, what the government hopes to achieve by opening up the market in terms of generation of electric power in the province of Ontario is to end up with four, five, six, seven or more major players in the marketplace, all of whom will be competing with each other. Even the leader of the official opposition has said he agrees with that.

Mr Hampton: That sounds like California.

Hon Mr Eves: Well, this is not California; this is not the United States of America. We have the ability to generate power here in Ontario. In fact, we actually export it at certain times of the year.

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, you've said that you won't sign on to the Kyoto Protocol unless you know what the effects will be. The Ontario Medical Association tells you what the effects of signing in will be: it will help prevent 6,000 premature deaths yearly in Ontario due to respiratory problems; it will help save our medical system over \$1 billion a year for treating smog-related illnesses; it will give Ontario a head start in ensuring that any jobs in the old energy sector that are lost are more than offset by new jobs in green energy and energy efficiency.

Premier, now that respected organizations like the Ontario Medical Association are telling you what the positive impacts will be, will you make Ontario a leader by supporting the ratification of Kyoto?

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Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the leader of the third party, obviously the province of Ontario and every other jurisdiction that I can imagine is in favour of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. I agree with his statements about

green energy. I think this is a great opportunity not only for Ontario but for Canada as a whole.

But the Kyoto accord is not the only way to achieve that. All I have said is that leaders across this country should sit down with the Prime Minister and hammer out a plan of exactly how it's going to work.

Are you, for example, advocating the loss of 450,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector, the majority of which are in Ontario, as the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association projects? Are you in favour of eliminating 30,000 jobs in the steel sector of the economy, as that industry suggests might be the effect of signing on to Kyoto without a game plan in effect?

Everybody is in favour of improving the environment. I argue that we can do better than Kyoto. Kyoto is not some magical solution. It is one suggestion as to how you can reduce greenhouse—

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

Mr Hampton: I think the people of Ontario just got another lecture from your corporate friends on Bay Street. Premier, 77% of the people of Ontario were opposed and are opposed to your scheme of Hydro privatization and deregulation, yet you are listening to your corporate friends on that one just as they rip people off. Some 77% of the people in this province want you to support Kyoto. But what are you doing again? You're going to listen to your corporate friends on Bay Street.

Premier, it is very clear. It's the oil industry, the coal industry and people who want to preserve the corporate profits they have now and who are not willing to make changes that will benefit all of us who are telling you not to support it. Just once, will you listen to the people across Ontario and not pay so much attention to your corporate friends on Bay Street?

Hon Mr Eves: There isn't a great coal industry that I'm aware of in the province. Maybe the leader of the third party is aware of one that I'm not.

When you're talking about 77% of Ontarians supporting Kyoto, do those 77% support Kyoto if they lose their job as a result of implementing it willy-nilly? You might want to ask the question fairly when you ask them the question.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Tourism. This is just one volume of the expenses that you submitted to the government for taxpayers to pay in the last two years. You and your staff billed over \$100,000. Included in this total, you spent \$3,000 at—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member, you can refer to it, but you don't need to hold it up as a prop, please. Continue. Sorry for the interruption.

Mrs Pupatello: Thank you. You spent \$3,000 at Morton's of Chicago Steakhouse. You spent \$3,000 at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse. You spent more than \$14,000 on Toronto luxury hotel rooms even though you live 45

minutes away and you can drive; you have access to a car and a driver. You once billed a meal that cost \$842, \$252 of that on booze.

Minister, we think you should explain this kind of excess in your ministry, and specifically on your expense account. I think the taxpayers deserve an explanation.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I want to thank the honourable member for her question. In fact, upon review of our ministry's complete expenses and those of our staff, it was discovered that some of the expenses were inadvertently submitted and claimed in error. Upon learning of this, we immediately took action; we put procedures in place. The money was reimbursed to the government fully and the matter has been taken care of.

Mrs Pupatello: There is nothing inadvertent about your repayment of those bills. It wasn't inadvertent that you found 44 or 48 of the 752 bills to repay. There are bills in this book of samples that you didn't repay, which include alcohol. On what basis did you choose your 48? There was nothing inadvertent. This was wilful. It was a wilful, repeated and regular submission of expenses to the taxpayer far in excess of what the members of the public would deem to be reasonable as part of your job. This from a government that purports to be a defender of the taxpayer; this from a government that was supposed to be the tax fighter.

Minister, I think you owe us a better explanation. There was nothing inadvertent about 48 bills that you decided to pay one day before you knew this was going to be released to the public. How many more bills are in here that should not have been paid by the public, that you yourself should have paid for, bills that are completely inexcusable? As the public, we think we deserve an explanation for these bills.

Hon Mr Jackson: First of all, these expenses fall within a comparable range of previous governments and ministers, both Liberal and NDP. That is a matter of public record.

Cabinet ministers in this province, both in the present and in the past, have been routinely called upon to perform functions, to host delegations, whether they be heads of state, whether they be foreign or domestic journalists, and even lobbyists. Frankly, earlier this summer we hosted a major delegation from the Vatican on three separate occasions during World Youth Day. Ontario wine was served at those functions. Last Sunday night I hosted 21 Asian journalists who were here doing travel stories about Ontario. Again Ontario wines were served at that reception. This Friday night I will be in London, hosting 88 international travel buyers and journalists; I will be hosting those individuals, and again Ontario wine will be served.

ACADEMIC TESTING

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Deputy Premier and Minister of Education. As you well know, on Monday the education quality

assessment organization released some very promising numbers with respect to literacy in Ontario. From my understanding, 87% of students enrolled in the academic stream passed both the reading and writing sections of the literacy test. For me, this is good news and is proof that our tough new curriculum is working and that the students, teachers and parents in the province are rising to the challenge.

But as you know, a portion of these students, particularly those in the applied stream, did not do as well. Can you perhaps explain the results to us in the House, the rationale for this test and what those numbers in the applied stream mean?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): If we keep in mind the reason the government created the test, this really was in response to the request of the public—parents, employers and others. They wanted to ensure that students who were graduating had the essential reading and writing skills they would need in their future.

If we take a look at the applied results, although the pass rate was 44%, I think we can be proud of the fact that students and teachers worked very hard, and that is an improvement of 14% from the year before. But, having said that, there is more that needs to be done and we certainly will continue to support our students and teachers to achieve better results in literacy.

Mr Dunlop: I realize there is more to do and I am happy to hear that such a marked improvement has occurred in the results not only of our academic stream students but also of our applied students. Clearly, these improved results can be attributed to Ontario's hard-working and excellent teachers, along with our dedicated and hard-working students who are rising to the challenge of our tough new curriculum.

But, Minister, I am still concerned about the applied students. I am worried that many of these students may be at risk of dropping out or simply giving up on school because they can't pass this test. What is our government doing to address the needs of these students to ensure that they have their basic literacy components and can graduate with an Ontario secondary school diploma?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I've had the opportunity on two recent occasions to actually meet with students and teachers who are involved in some of the applied programs. I've travelled to Burlington and Guelph. I can tell you that there has been a personal commitment made on the part of school boards throughout Ontario, on the part of dedicated, hardworking teachers and principals. There's a tremendous desire for the students to improve the rate of success, the achievement.

If we take a look at the Limestone District School Board, for example, they decided after the first results came out that they could do better and they got to work as a team. I have to tell you, they actually increased their results this year by some 19%. They did that by giving their students extra help during the summer, by bringing in tutors from Queen's University and by providing other remediation programs. What this information we've just

received is going to allow us to do is to better help those students.

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MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'd like to return to the Minister of Tourism. Minister, you suggested a moment ago that you had a number of inadvertent submissions of expenses, that at the 11th hour, one day before your expenses were to be made public, you repaid \$7,000. There is nothing inadvertent about the expense claim form you have to fill out and then sign at the bottom. It's not a matter of an expense chit that got in the pile by accident and, "Oh, Jeez, that was inadvertent." This is your statement that you have to sign. You are the authorizing signature on it.

I believe the taxpayers need to have an explanation for the kind of excesses that are found in your ministry of over \$100,000—Toronto's finest steakhouses; the best hotels, when you live 45 minutes away. You come from Burlington. You have a car and a driver available to you. We are here trying to defend people who can't pay an electricity bill and you're out having the best steak at Morton's. Please stand up and give us an explanation for this kind of excess. It's just not to be tolerated.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I have indicated, first of all, that I do not have a driver. I drive myself, and I have throughout my tenure in cabinet. I do not have accommodation in downtown Toronto. Management Board guidelines are very clear. They were not violated. In fact, it specifically says that members and staff, if they are detained or required for late-night meetings or early morning meetings, can apply for accommodation support from time to time.

The fact of the matter is that, as minister, I'm called upon to host international dignitaries. In fact, in November I will be hosting all of Canada's tourism ministers. I really wasn't thinking of taking them to Swiss Chalet. I was figuring on taking them to a nice restaurant because Toronto is very proud of some very good restaurants in this city.

Mrs Pupatello: I can't accept that as an answer because when you did your cursory review to come up with the \$7,000 you should repay for those expenses that were against the rules, you forgot this one. You forgot the one from Bigliardi's that included \$120 just in the tip alone. You forgot this one. Of your \$145 dinner bill, \$40 was in booze. It's against the rules, but you didn't pay this one back.

My question is, how can we be certain that the \$7,000 you decided to pay back is in fact the correct amount that was against the rules? These are your rules. You know what they are. You didn't inadvertently slip them in, because you had to fill out these statements of expenses and then sign them, so it wasn't inadvertent, it was deliberate, it was methodical and it was repetitive.

This has got to stop. Your repayment has to go far beyond that \$7,000. Everyone in this House is embar-

rassed by the fact that you look like you're living a gluttonous lifestyle on the back of the taxpayer. Please give us an explanation for these excesses.

Hon Mr Jackson: I have indicated that it has been the practice of this government and previous governments, Liberal or NDP—I believe one of the reasons the question is being asked by an opposition member who's never served in a previous Liberal or NDP government is partially because they don't get the responsibilities as has been the custom in this province. I'll give you one example. When Jim Bradley was the minister, in a Liberal government in a Liberal cabinet, responsible for marketing the Niagara Peninsula, would you have us believe that every time international delegates came to look at purchasing wine, he would tell them they must drink water and not drink Ontario wine? That was his mandate in those days, and it's the mandate of the new minister to market this province. I think it would be inappropriate to suggest that these activities have not been going on for years.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Attorney General. Monday's speech from the throne addressed a number of important justice issues. There are pledges from Ottawa to reform the Criminal Code to increase penalties for abuse and neglect, and also to improve service for children involved in the court system as victims or witnesses. There is also a promise to reform family law with a greater focus on the interests of children, as well as an expansion of the Unified Family Court system. More interestingly, there is a promise that they will work with provinces to renew the legal aid system so that Canadians can access legal representation. What is your reaction to these announcements?

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the honourable member for the question. Certainly there are a number of commitments in the federal throne speech that we welcome. I want to particularly highlight the fact that they have announced a willingness to move forward with an expansion of the Unified Family Court system. It is a system that has proven to be one that shows greater sensitivity for the needs of those involved in very difficult and emotional court proceedings.

We would appreciate having amendments to the Criminal Code that would allow for greater penalties and for stronger protection of children who find themselves in abusive situations. I would ask the federal government to mirror the changes we have made to the Child and Family Services Act. Similar action by them would certainly be welcome.

There was also reference to legal aid in there, and I appreciate that. The federal government used to contribute about 35% of the total legal aid budget in this province—they're down to about 12%. For those of you who think that sounds familiar, it is because of course it's very analogous to what has happened in health care. We

hope the federal government will re-enter this field and allow for greater spending in this very important area.

Mrs Munro: Certainly a greater commitment by the federal government would be welcome. However, there were a number of long-standing issues that were not discussed in the throne speech. There was no commitment to move forward on needed amendments to the DNA data bank. There was also no mention of changing the Criminal Code to require reverse onus bail hearings in domestic violence cases. Are you concerned that these issues will not be part of the federal government's agenda this fall? Will you keep the pressure on Ottawa to address those problems?

Hon Mr Young: I'll be meeting with Minister Cauchon in about 10 days' time. That is in anticipation of the federal-provincial—territorial conference that will begin early next month. There are a number of issues that we have prioritized and intend to bring forward again.

I must tell you first and foremost is that of the DNA data bank. It is our view that there some amendments that must be made in order to collect DNA evidence from those in custody right now, some of whom will be released. There are some very easy changes that should be made that every province has agreed must be done. I will continue to encourage the federal government to move in that direction.

Similarly, as was indicated in the Hadley jury recommendations that we received, it is essential that there be a change to the Criminal Code, in our respectful opinion, that would ensure that for anyone involved in a domestic abuse situation, if they breach their bail they automatically go to jail. We would encourage the federal government to move in that direction forthwith.

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DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Premier. A report released today by the Ontario Association of Radiologists is truly shocking, in terms of the number of people who are waiting for basic diagnostic tests and the number of communities where people are waiting. In the north, for example, people are waiting 17 weeks for an ultrasound in Sault Ste Marie, seven weeks in North Bay at the Scollard site, six weeks in Kenora. They're waiting 12 weeks for nuclear medicine tests for cardiac disease in Sault Ste Marie, six weeks for the same in Kenora and Timmins.

Premier, the lists are long and the waits can be deadly for some of these patients. The association this morning presented your government with a series of recommendations to deal with these waiting lists. Are you prepared to implement them?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'll refer the question to the Minister of Health.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): We have just obtained a copy of the report ourselves and are reviewing it in quite a detailed manner.

I can tell you that the last time this organization did take part in these examinations, some inaccuracies were found, for instance in Peterborough and Windsor.

I can tell you that in the 2002-03 budget, the Ernie Eves government has committed \$250 million in additional funding for diagnostic services. I can tell you that another report, the Fraser Institute report that was published recently, said that Ontario had the shortest waiting lists in Canada.

I will take this report as seriously as it deserves to be treated. I understand there were some methodological issues that we will examine, and we will give it the fullest consideration.

Ms Martel: Minister, I don't think you can underestimate how serious this situation is. Let me give you some more examples: in Sault Ste Marie, people are waiting seven weeks for a mammogram. Women who are at risk for osteoporosis are waiting 12 weeks in Sault Ste Marie, 10 weeks in Sudbury and seven weeks at the Scollard site in North Bay for a bone density test. These waiting lists for these tests are repeated time and again right across the province in communities that are big or small and in community-based or large teaching hospitals.

You need to look seriously at these recommendations, and frankly you need to implement them as soon as possible. Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Clement: I want to assure this House that the Ernie Eves government takes its responsibilities extremely seriously. You mentioned mammography and the Ontario breast screening program. My information is that the average waiting time to have mammography done is approximately one to two weeks, not the five, seven or nine weeks you just mentioned.

Again, I am confronted with this data; it seems to be at variance with data that has been put forward by other reputable organizations. However, I take the report seriously. I want to examine the report and ensure that data we are collecting from other independent sources is verifiable. If this report uncovers some additional information, of course we'll take it seriously. But I have to say this report is at variance with other independent tests that have been done of our health care system that have said Ontario is either the best or absolutely tied with the best with what is on offer in the rest of Canada, and we in this government are proud of our record.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. I want ask about the behaviour of your Minister of Tourism and about your standards as Premier and first minister. I think most Ontario families, when they become aware of these facts that have been put forward today and will appear in the media this evening and tomorrow, will be shocked. I think most families struggle to make ends meet, day in and day out. I think most families are very interested in where you stand on this kind of behaviour in your cabinet

and in your government. Can you tell me exactly what are you going to do, understanding what this minister has done?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): There are rules that cabinet ministers are supposed to follow. I will certainly look into whether or not this particular minister has followed those rules in this particular case—we had this discussion in the House a few months ago with respect to another cabinet minister. I firmly believe that if ministers have stepped over those bounds, inadvertently or otherwise, it is incumbent upon them to repay to the province and to the people of Ontario any and all sums of money that were spent in excess of or outside the bounds of those rules.

Mr McGuinty: I gather there's going to be some kind of process. I'm sure there's going to be some independent review of these expenses, which will be made public, and we'll understand which were inappropriate and which should be reimbursed. It's pretty clear that some of these are patently inappropriate; some of these are absolutely shocking. What I want to know from you is what responsibility you will now assume as Premier. What are you going to do to set the standards so you can apprise all other ministers of your high standards and so you can tell Ontario families you're not going to put up with this kind of nonsense, you understand the daily struggles that they go through, you understand what it's like to have to pay 200 bucks more for a hydro bill? What they want to know from you today, Premier, is, what exactly are you going to do, knowing what this minister has done?

Hon Mr Eves: As I said to the leader of the official opposition in response to his initial question, I will look into the matter of this particular minister's expenses; I will reassure you and the House and the people of Ontario that the rules that are set for conduct for cabinet ministers are not breached. I haven't prejudged the expenses of the honourable member, but I will certainly look into it and I will make sure that the right thing is done.

OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, this House passed unanimously the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act. My constituents and people across the province are particularly interested in how that act is being implemented. I want to thank you for meeting in my riding at the Oak Ridges Public School to discuss with the teachers there, as well as the students, who particularly have a vested interest in the future of this province, how that Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act is being implemented. I'm interested to know how stakeholders are responding to that piece of legislation that this House passed unanimously.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): As the member mentioned, this was a great accomplishment. I had the pleasure of being with

Mr Klees at a school in his riding to launch a booklet to explain it. It's being implemented in a number of ways.

The Legislature unanimously approved the plan, which was created by a panel of people representative of environmental groups, municipal leaders and business leaders. This is truly a great accomplishment. It was recognized by the Environmental Commissioner last week in his report where he's giving the award this year to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for this great accomplishment.

Municipal governments have to bring their official plans into compliance. There's money for conservation authorities to come up with the water budget. Truly, this is an accomplishment that we should all be proud of in this House.

Mr Klees: The Environmental Commissioner, in his report, also specifically made the following statement: "It is essential that the elaborate details of the proposed land swap and the details of implementing the broad plan on the ground are carefully monitored and adjusted where necessary so that the spirit and the intent of the plan are realized." Minister, can you tell us what you're doing to ensure that that in fact will be done?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As the member points out, this plan will be implemented, what was passed by the Legislature and what was recommended by the advisory panel. We couldn't find an on-site solution for the Richmond Hill corridor, and it was a very important feature of the Oak Ridges moraine to have it connected across 160 kilometres east and west. They wanted to have a robust corridor. The panel recommended that David Crombie mediate a settlement that was before the OMB, and that was successfully done. But it requires a land transfer and a land swap with lands that are in the local municipality's official plan for a settlement in Seaton. Mr Crombie is right now consulting on the principles for that swap, and it's following according to plan.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Premier of Ontario. Many of us have been aware of these expenses out of the Minister of Tourism for some time. We'd like you to tell the House when you and your office were aware of these excessive expenses from that minister. Just tell us when you became aware of this.

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): A few weeks ago a member of my staff came to me and suggested to me that the minister's expenses along with, I might add, other members' expenses had been asked for under the freedom of information legislation. My response was just to ensure that the minister does the right thing if there are any breaches of any rules or guidelines that have been set down; that they are complied with, and if they haven't been complied with, then the individual, whoever it is, will have to repay that amount to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and to the people of Ontario.

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Mrs Pupatello: Premier, you're the representative of all the members of your cabinet. You knew a month ago about this kind of excess. You knew the details a month ago. Today we ask a question about it in the House and suddenly you decide that you're going to get on a white horse and protect the taxpayer. You have not set up a process to say that the \$7,000 that was paid back was in fact all of the appropriate expenses to be paid back. I want to know, Premier, if you've set something in motion to ensure that your own cabinet ministers are actually paying back expenses, and if they aren't, they have broken the rules.

We have a host of examples where bills were not paid back by this minister and they included expenses that the taxpayers should not have been paying for. If you knew a month ago and you didn't see to it that all the inappropriate expenses were already paid back, I'm asking you, Premier, what kind of standard are you setting, to walk into the House today, after we've made it public, and suddenly become the taxpayers' protector?

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member obviously didn't listen to the answer to the first question. I did not have knowledge of the particulars of this particular minister's expenditures until today, as a matter of fact. You asked me when I first had knowledge of the request for Minister Jackson's expenses and I said that I learned through my staff several weeks ago that his expenses had been FOI'd. I asked that the right thing be done. If the right thing has not been done, I will see to it that it is done.

INVESTOR PROTECTION

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, many of us have followed the news of accounting and corporate problems in the United States. Obviously reports of those scandals and the effect they've had on the markets are quite troubling. Brampton is home to numerous corporate headquarters and I have people in my riding asking me about Ontario's markets and what protection we have for the people of Ontario. What is Ontario doing, not just to ensure the jobs in these companies but also for the protection of our consumers?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I'd like to thank the member from Brampton Centre for the excellent question. It's extremely important that we take steps in Ontario to protect our consumers and investors, to make sure there is not fraud in the system and to make sure that we have strong, competitive markets here in Ontario and in Canada.

While we have some advantages in the rules we have in Ontario—for example, continuous disclosure has been part of the regulatory regime here—we recognize the need to do more. The Ontario Securities Commission has been working with the industry, with government and with our colleagues across the country to do that. For example, they have increased enforcement. They work

with the Canadian Public Accountability Board to ensure more rigorous oversight of accounting firms that audit public companies. We have the five-year review. There are a number of things we have been doing, reviewing the disclosure of our major companies through the OSC and proceeding with regulatory changes this fall.

Mr Spina: There were comments made this morning by David Brown, the chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. In speaking to the economic club of Toronto, Mr Brown discussed the potential benefits of a national regulatory system. This idea was raised in the federal throne speech; I'm not sure they're going to go very far with it. Nevertheless, what is our response as a province to this proposal that there be a solid, consistent national regulatory system?

Hon Mrs Ecker: If we are looking at making sure we have effective regulations, good consumer protection and good, strong markets in Canada, I think moving away from 13 separate regulatory bodies is an important step. Ontario has long been in favour of moving to a national securities regulator or national securities regulation to harmonize our rules. Through the OSC there have been a number of informal consultations and conversations with our colleagues across the country to this end and we are prepared to work with either the federal government or the other provinces to see if we cannot indeed improve protection for investors and consumers here in this province and make sure our markets are attractive for investment, not only from across the country but from overseas as well.

TORONTO ISLANDS COMMUNITY

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Premier. Yesterday the Minister of the Environment went on a bit of a diatribe about the residents of the Toronto Islands community. Without a shred of authority or evidence he wants to literally force people from their homes. He dismissed people with legal and lawful binding contracts as squatters. The legislation is quite clear as to what is prescribed that can be done. It is the purchase price for sale of homes, prescribing the amounts to be paid to the island trust, or prescribing a purchase price for land lease.

Premier, a two-part question: first, who speaks for your government on this issue? Is it you, is it the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing or is it Chris Stockwell? Second, will you stay within the law as it exists at this time and allow the law-abiding citizens to get on with their lives?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Municipal Affairs speaks for the government on this issue. Different members may have different opinions on different subjects at different times. This is an issue that I understand the Minister of the Environment feels very passionately about. Unfortunately for him, it's not within his purview to make those decisions.

MINISTERS' ATTENDANCE

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Reluctantly, the government House leader on a point of order.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, Mr Speaker, mine is a point of order arising from earlier on today. Under the standing orders that we have before this House, there are opportunities for opposition parties, should a minister or the Premier not be in the House at the time they wish to ask a question, to set the question aside. I appreciate the fact there is some leeway and latitude provided for that. It seemed like today was one of those perfect opportunities—I will make this a point of order and ask you to consider it—when we could have set those questions aside. It clearly didn't happen and it turned into a rather rambunctious period of time. I would only ask, if you could consider it, that in future we invoke this clause in the standing orders.

The Speaker: The problem we've got is that sometimes there are members here to ask what's happening. I looked at the benches and there was nobody here, including yourself, to ask. You are very helpful, I know, in circumstances like this in saying, "The Premier's just coming."

I explained that it is very difficult without having a time frame. Question period could be in 45 minutes and it's very difficult for ministers, and particularly for the Premier, who's very busy, to plan his time.

Normally what we do—we have done this in the past. The member for St Catharines has some fun doing a point of order and the member comes in. In future, what will happen is, if the Premier or ministers are late because of the time difference and we get through quickly, perhaps someone could please let us know what the circumstances are, but when we look at the government benches and there's no one there, it makes it very difficult, quite frankly.

Today was an exceptional day. We got through very fast. We will take it into consideration. What I find strange is that we normally can have a little bit of fun in here and carry on. Quite frankly, it was the government benches. There was nothing out of the ordinary. There's a little bit of fun. We were going into some of the bills doing unanimous consent, and it was the government members who turned it into something rather nasty with their point of order as well.

In future, I would ask that all members, if they are planning to be here, be here on time, and if they're not going to be here, the very simple solution is to let everybody know.

I thank the member for his help. I'm sure, like we've done in the past—holy smoke, the most difficult question is, what's going to happen next on petitions?

I would ask all members' co-operation in this. It is not something that should take a great deal. This House should be able to operate on something as simple as

members arriving without getting into heated exchanges and heated debates. I understand that when we get into matters of policy that isn't always possible, but surely the honourable members can work it out, getting the questions on in an orderly fashion.

I appreciate the government House leader's intervention. I believe it is now time for petitions.

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PETITIONS

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I have a petition signed by hundreds of my constituents living in communities like Pembroke, Petawawa, Beachburg and Deep River. These petitioners request the following:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province is considering closing the cardiac unit at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Ottawa, we request that the Legislative Assembly refrain from this action which will cost the lives of children in this area who require emergency care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—and the government—"as follows:

"Keep open the full cardiac unit at Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Ottawa, Ontario."

I'm happy to personally endorse and sign this said petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been sent to me by St Paul's United Church in Sudbury. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government increased fees paid by Ontario seniors and other vulnerable people living in long-term-care facilities by 15% instead of providing adequate government funding for long-term care; and

"Whereas the Conservative government has therefore shifted the costs of long-term care on to the backs of the frail elderly and their families; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas in 1996 Ontario abandoned its minimum requirement of 2.25 hours of nursing care per nursing home resident; and

"Whereas the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas, according to the government's own study, government cutbacks have resulted in Ontario seniors receiving just 14 minutes a day of care from a registered nurse; and

"Whereas the report also found that Ontario residents receive the least nursing, bathing and general care of nine other comparable locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the Conservative government eliminate the 15% fee increase for residents in long-term-care facilities, increase the number of nursing care hours for each resident to a minimum of 3.5 hours per day, and provide stable, increased funding to ensure quality care is there for Ontario residents in long-term-care facilities."

I agree with the petitioners, and I have affixed my signature to this.

COMMUNITY CARE HEALTH CENTRE

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas Sarnia-Point Edward and area is experiencing a crisis in a shortage of health care professionals, specifically doctors; and

"Whereas community health care centres are a proven primary health care system that can attract professionals and deliver primary health care in a cost-effective, efficient manner;

"Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario approve a community health care centre for Sarnia-Point Edward and area as soon as possible."

NATURAL GAS RATES

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Energy Board has consented to allow Union Gas to retroactively charge \$40 per month for a three-month period to recover additional system operation costs that occurred during the winter of 2000-01 totalling approximately \$150 million; and

"Whereas Union Gas will recover accrued costs over the peak heating season, causing undue hardship; and

"Whereas this retroactive charge will affect all customers who receive Union Gas, including new homeowners and new customers to Union Gas;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Ernie Eves government issue a policy directive under section 27.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act disallowing the retroactive hike granted to Union Gas; and we further demand that the Legislature examine the Ontario Energy Board, its processes and its resources, and make changes that will protect consumers from further retroactive rate increases."

This petition is signed by a number of residents of Chatham, Blenheim and Ridgeway.

RICK KERR

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my privilege to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

on behalf of my constituents. By the way, most of them are students from Durham College.

"Whereas Rick Kerr has distinguished himself as a dedicated member of Durham College through 25 years of service; and

"Whereas his commitment to student success and professionalism has set an outstanding example for Ontario's college education sector; and

"Whereas his nickname of 'Captain KPI' should in no way diminish his accomplishments of organizing program mapping when no one else would; and

"Whereas Rick's proficiency as a squash player and his status as the most physically fit person on campus has earned him only passing glares; and

"Whereas his commitment to student fashion has made the police foundations program clothing order an international event for the textile industry; and

"Whereas the Kerr family has an outstanding reputation in the community for teaching, and Rick also teaches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize Rick Kerr's long service and dedication to the Durham College community as follows."

I'm going to sign this in support.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I will sign this in support and, Carley, I will ask you to give it to the table.

RICK KERR

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I'm happy to present this petition on behalf of the people of Ontario as well as my esteemed friend the member for Durham. The petition reads as follows—I know you're paying full attention; I see that.

"To the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas Rick Kerr has distinguished himself as a dedicated member of Durham College through 25 years of service; and

"Whereas his commitment to student success and professionalism has set an outstanding example for Ontario's college education sector; and

"Whereas his nickname of 'Captain KPI' should in no way diminish his accomplishments of organizing program mapping where no one else would; and

"Whereas Rick's proficiency as a squash player and his status as the most physically fit person on campus has earned him only passing glares; and

"Whereas his commitment to student fashion has made the police foundations program clothing order an international event for the textile industry; and

"Whereas the Kerr family has an outstanding reputation in the community for teaching, and Rick also teaches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize Rick Kerr's long service and dedication to the Durham College community as follows."

I'm pleased to send this petition down to the table with Rachel.

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

"Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

"Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

"Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of a government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Eves government has failed to do so;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Eves government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease."

Of course, I affix my signature, and I give it to our page Carley Gallagher from Peterborough to bring to the table.

1510

RICK KERR

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): "Whereas Rick Kerr has distinguished himself as a dedicated member of Durham College through 25 years of service; and

"Whereas his commitment to student success and professionalism has set an outstanding example for Ontario's college education sector; and

"Whereas his nickname of 'Captain KPI' should in no way diminish his accomplishments of organizing program mapping when no one else would; and

"Whereas Rick's proficiency as a squash player and his status as the most physically fit person on campus has earned him only passing glares; and

"Whereas his commitment to student fashion has made the police foundations program clothing order an international event for the textile industry; and

"Whereas the Kerr family has an outstanding reputation in the community for teaching, and Rick also teaches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize Rick Kerr's long service and dedication to Durham College."

I'm proud to present this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have hundreds of signed petitions here from people from Oakville, Kingston, Markham, Toronto, Cornwall and many other places. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ernie Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15%, or \$7.02 per diem, effective August 1, 2002;

"Whereas this fee will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario;

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas, according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last among comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas the government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors, who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I agree with the petition and I've signed it accordingly.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Conservative government hastily amalgamated Niagara's ambulance dispatch services into the Hamilton Central Ambulance Communication Centre;

"Whereas an independent review of Hamilton Central Ambulance Communication Centre found several major shortcomings, including inexperienced dispatchers, high call volume and out-of-date equipment, hindering the dispatch of ambulances in Niagara and in other parts of the province;

"Whereas poor training of central ambulance communication centre dispatchers by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has led to improper emergency coding, resource misallocation and waste and increased wait times for those requiring ambulance services;

"Whereas the Central Ambulance Communication Centre dispatchers are handling 1,300 more calls a year than recommended by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"Whereas these shortcomings in ambulance service restructuring are putting lives at risk in Niagara, Hamilton and throughout the province;

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has been in possession of the independent review since October 31, 2001, which provides recommendations to greatly improve ambulance dispatch services in Niagara and Hamilton;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately act upon recommendations presented in the independent review of the Central Ambulance Communication Centre and eliminate the grievous imperfections which are placing our citizens at risk."

I affix my signature; I'm in complete agreement.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Excuse me. I hate to interrupt the conversations going on back and forth across the floor; I really hate to. But I'm going to, and I will. I'll even stop them if it's necessary.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a further petition dealing with long-term care which is slightly different from the earlier one I read. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% over three years, or \$3.02 per diem in the first year and \$2 in the second year and \$2 in the third year, effective September 1, 2002;

"Whereas this increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 per month after three years;

"Whereas this increase is above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario for the year 2002;

"Whereas, according to the government's own funded study, Ontario will rank last among comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care;

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas the government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors, who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in the comfort of this province;

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

"We demand that Premier Eves reduce the 15% increase over three years in accommodation costs to no more than the cost-of-living increase annually and the provincial government provide adequate funding for nursing and personal care to a level that is at least the average standard for nursing and personal care in those 10 jurisdictions included in the government's own funded study."

I also agree with this petition. We request that the government act accordingly and I will file it now with the clerk.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, minister responsible for francophone affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to see if the House would agree to put forward the following motion without debate and have a vote on it:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ask the CBC to reinstate Ron MacLean.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I think the standing orders define points of order and that probably qualifies, but I'm really questioning it. But I will ask the

members here: is there unanimous consent? No. I assume that was a little frivolous.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSTAINABLE WATER AND SEWAGE SYSTEMS ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LA DURABILITÉ DES RÉSEAUX D'EAU ET D'ÉGOUTS

Mr Stockwell moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act respecting the cost of water and waste water services / Projet de loi 175, Loi concernant le coût des services d'approvisionnement en eau et des services relatifs aux eaux usées.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): To start off debate, there will be leadoff time, and that will be used, initially anyway, by the Minister of Environment and chief government whip.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I'm splitting my time with Mr Martiniuk and Mr Hardeman before I start my speech.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this bill. I think it's a good bill to have a good debate on. I think it's a bill that we can discuss in rational terms and come to what I think will be a consensus amongst this House. I'll tell you flat out that I'm not opposed to seeing this bill go to committee. I'm not opposed to seeing this bill dealt with at committee and amendments offered up by both sides. It's a bill—

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): An hour or two?

Hon Mr Stockwell: No. I think it's a bill that is truly non-partisan, because, obviously, everybody understands the water issue we face today and the cost of sustainable water and sewage systems in Ontario. It's hard to imagine sewage systems being a political issue. I used to say, on local council, it's hard to believe we can have political issues on poop-and-scoop bylaws. In a lot of respects you would get down to the point that we all are trying to achieve the same thing with this bill. We're trying to achieve clean, safe drinking water, properly treated, properly capitalized and properly dealt with for the people of Ontario.

1520

I'm looking forward, frankly, to the discussion on this bill. I don't think it will be a lot of rhetoric. I don't think there is going to be a lot of hand-wringing and name-calling, because I think we can probably get ourselves together on this one to try and build a bill that the people in Ontario would accept. I know my friend from St Catharines is stalwart at looking for compromise, never political, hardly ever partisan, and will find his way clear to maintain that apolitical composure he brings to this place and will be speaking only when he truly wants to

speak on certain issues, not just jumping up at any point in the discussions to offer an opinion, get his mug on TV or be looking for CAT scans or anything like that for his local municipalities.

Petitions would be a perfect example. He brings in a number of good petitions here. We've seen them with two or three people's names on them, so he's obviously done a lot of road work.

This government is sparing no effort to give Ontario residents access to clean, safe drinking water. We are committed to enforcing the best and toughest drinking water standards in the world. I think that clearly, from the Walkerton report by Justice O'Connor, and the embracing of that report by the Premier of Ontario, it's fairly obvious. All 93 recommendations were embraced by the Premier and were given his unilateral commitment to move forward, and all those recommendations would be implemented. I don't think there's anyone in this House who would say that you could have come forward with any more of a ringing endorsement than what the Premier gave to the O'Connor report, or Walkerton two, as it's known in the Legislature.

We must ensure that Ontario's water supply and water services are safe and sustainable for the future. Here may be the wrinkle, and I understand there could be a bit of a wrinkle with respect to services safe and sustainable. I know that there are going to be members across the floor who want to talk about watershed protection and that there's a lot of concern that possibly, in Bill 175 and potentially when the Safe Drinking Water Act comes in, we aren't dealing with the watershed protection portion of that.

I can only say to the members opposite that watershed protection is going to take a little bit more time, I think, than Bill 175 or the Safe Drinking Water Act. First and foremost, you have to basically study and determine exactly what the watershed protection is, what the tributaries are, what the water flow is in Ontario, and determine how best to go about protecting that. It isn't simply done by passing a piece of legislation. There's a lot of groundwater, a lot of groundwork, no pun intended, that needs to be implemented to ensure you can do proper watershed protection, can introduce a bill into the Legislature that can in fact do what you want it to do.

Rather than operate willy-nilly on that front, we thought as an administration that it would be better to move forward on the Safe Drinking Water Act component of it, and on Bill 175, with the third component being the watershed protection. We put out \$21 million to the conservation authorities around the province to help assist us in developing this plan for Ontario. I think I can safely say that I don't think there's anyone on the opposition benches who would oppose that: having the conservation authorities, funded by us by \$21 million, assist us in having a comprehensive review of the watershed in Ontario. That's where we're at, at that point.

We would be pleased to take part in debate, and I'm very pleased to take part, on the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act, which is before us today.

Now to the legislation itself. This legislation continues the decisive action we have taken since the summer of 2000 to ensure clean, safe drinking water. We believe in Commissioner O'Connor's report of the Walkerton Inquiry and, because of that, have committed to implementing all of the 121 recommendations he made. We agree with him that sustainable municipal water and sewer financing is essential. I think we're all going to have to deal with this in a very pragmatic, systematic way.

We know we need sustainable municipal sewers in Ontario. The question then becomes the financing portion of this process. There is no magic number. There is no magic person in this Legislature who is going to snap their hands and figure out a financing program for this particular act. The devil is in the details, they often say, and yes, that is the part of the details that the devil is in fact in: the cost component. There are wide variations of how much it will cost to make it a sustainable, state-of-the-art system for the entire province. Some of those numbers have operated up in the billions of dollars. But before we can move forward to make those kinds of decisions, we have to pass the act that will allow us to implement them. That would be Bill 175.

I'm hoping that both the NDP and the Liberal Party will support this bill. I think it's a good bill. I think it's a bill that's down the right road, and I'm not really sure if there is anything in the context of this bill that they would oppose. Possibly there are things, as I said earlier, that may not be in the bill and that they wanted to see in the bill, but if they just wait, the time will come with the water protection that will be in the following bill. So I'd be surprised if there is anything in this bill that you would oppose, because fundamentally it's looking for safe drinking water.

Sustainable financing makes for good planning. It promotes water conservation and will help provide clean, safe water. There has been an argument over the years about what is clean, safe water and how you make it sustainable, and the cost recovery component. There's an argument made, and I'm not so sure I disagree with it, that as long as you subsidize water and it doesn't have a full cost recovery component, people will use it differently than if it had a full cost recovery component. If they knew what it cost to turn on the tap, they might have a better conservation idea about how they should be using water appropriately. If it's subsidized to any great degree and they turn on the tap and don't have an appreciation of the cost of turning on that tap, they may in fact use it differently.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): How about oxygen? You could do the same thing.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I say to the member for Timmins-James Bay, this is something that your party has often campaigned on, and I'm not so sure you're all wrong on that one. In a non-partisan way, I think when all is said and done, if you have the total cost of water, people will have a better understanding of what it costs to produce clean water and they may conserve it to a greater degree

than if you subsidize it at a great level. I've heard your party argue that point of view, and I'm not so sure you're all wrong.

I know the member for St Catharines has said that as well, and I think it's important that we determine exactly what it costs to provide water to people's homes and let them know that's the cost. They will have a better chance of conserving it, in my opinion, if the cost does go up. Obviously, in providing water and these kinds of capital improvements, the cost of water is probably going to have to go up. Sustainable financing makes for good planning. It promotes, as I said, water conservation.

I'd now like to turn to the details of the proposed bill. If passed, the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act would require all owners of these systems to undertake a full-cost accounting of their water and sewer systems. Now, I'll tell you something. It probably happens in jurisdictions around Toronto. I'm not so sure about St Catharines. I think St Catharines probably has full cost recovery. I look to the member opposite from Don Mills. I know the member for—I don't know your riding today, but it used to be Riverdale.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Toronto-Danforth.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I know our water is pretty much cost recovery, because we have set aside accounts where we charge people who drink the water, and that is put into a special account that is spent specifically on water.

In a lot of jurisdictions around the province, it isn't like that. The question then becomes, how much is water subsidized, and how do you afford to make the capital improvements for clean and sustainable water if you're in a small town of 600 or 700 people and your cost of water improvement under capital programs could total in the neighbourhood of \$200,000, \$300,000 or \$400,000? That's the question we need to ask. But if we're all committed to providing clean water, I'm sure we can find our way clear to figuring out a capital program that will help pay for it.

The systems are to undertake a full cost accounting of their water and sewer systems. Detailed analysis would include all operating and capital costs, all sources of revenue, and the investment required to maintain and expand their systems. A lot of the small communities out there don't have the capacity to expand their systems as their cities grow. We know that first-hand. I know areas surrounding Windsor and surrounding St Catharines have small communities that don't have the capacity to pay for the water and the capital improvement costs they need to have clean water.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I heard the comment that we should charge the developers a lot more.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): No, I said that's why they charge developers.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You're right. It's true. In larger urban centres, they can get the money from developers. But in these small, rural settings, there isn't development, so when they need clean water and capital improvements, there's no developer to charge.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): So they have to go to you.

Hon Mr Stockwell: So they have to come to the provincial government. You're absolutely right. The member for St Catharines is once again bang-on in answering that. He must have been a great student. I would have loved to be his teacher. He has all the answers, eh, Bob?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): He used to be a teacher.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's right.

If passed, Bill 175 would also require system owners to develop comprehensive asset management reports and then provide a plan for implementing full cost recovery. That's the private systems as well. We got them into the situation where the public system and the private system are providing the same clean water. I live in Toronto, and the people in Toronto have clean water. It's fully cost-recoverable. But when they travel in this great province to outlying posts, to their cottage and so on, they want to be equally certain that the water they are drinking there—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: —or Ottawa—is just as clean as the water they are drinking in Toronto. I think we as a government have a fiduciary obligation to ensure just that.

If passed, we would implement this bill in two stages. Count on it. The first step is aimed at assessing the full cost of water and sewage services in each municipality—that's the first stage. Obviously we've got to figure out much it costs.

The second stage would involve bringing full cost recovery forward in a way that makes sense for municipalities. It hearkens back to the argument I made about smaller rural settings that don't have the capacity to tax to put those capital improvements in place to provide that kind of water.

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I want to be very clear about the apolitical nature of this debate. You can go on and on and on about that, and you can demand and demand and demand. But the reality is, if certain communities have 60 or 70 homes and their water capital improvement cost is going to be \$1.2 million, the simple fact is that they can't afford it. So in the second stage we're going to have to figure out how we finance this over a long period of time, if we're dealing in billions of dollars. I think everyone agrees that if we're going to do that, we'd better put a financial plan in place.

Justice O'Connor said, "In my opinion, if passed into law"—and he was speaking about this act—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Well, it's basically the same act.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's a good question. I'll you why. What happened was, when the shuffle came and Mr Bradley got his way and energy and environment were separated, Mr Baird was put into energy and I stayed as Minister of the Environment. All water-related legislation or activity was put on to the Ministry of the Environment.

Bill 155 was at municipal affairs. They moved that over to the Ministry of the Environment. The reason I had to reintroduce it was because it was under municipal affairs. I reintroduced the exact same bill, only under the Minister of the Environment, to be in order in this august chamber, rather than under the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It's a matter of splitting hairs, I suppose, but it's exactly the same bill; they just changed the front cover.

So Justice O'Connor said, "In my opinion, if passed into law, the act will address many of the important issues concerning the financing of water systems." You've got to admit it's a ringing endorsement from a learned man like Justice O'Connor when he says, "If passed into law, the act will address many of the important issues concerning the financing of water systems." I would ask you in opposition to think about that when you're thinking about voting against this, because when you vote against this bill you're not just voting against the government, you're not voting against Chris Stockwell, you're not voting against Bob Wood, you're voting against Justice O'Connor, and I don't think anybody would want to do that.

Mr Bradley: Nonsense.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Oh, no, he said that.

Mr Wood: You have a moral duty here.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You have a moral obligation on this one. I'll read again what Justice O'Connor said: "In my opinion, if passed into law, the act will address many of the important issues concerning the financing of water systems.... The requirements for full cost report and cost recovery plan, as generally expressed in the proposed act, are in my view appropriate." Now, that's not a ringing endorsement for me. That is from Justice O'Connor, the learned justice who produced the two Walkerton reports that you embraced. I'd hate to think you would disagree with Mr O'Connor, that you'd go back on what he wanted us to do. I know you won't. I have such great faith in the opposition parties; I know you won't challenge Justice O'Connor's thinking.

Mr Bradley: That's histrionics.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Histrionics? I know the good members opposite will not challenge Justice O'Connor's thinking.

He also strongly supported the implementation of asset management and full cost recovery plans in relation to drinking water treatment and distribution systems.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): That's going to be tough.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Again, that's what he said, and here it is in this bill. I know there may be a bit of give and take in the House at times and a sense of political gamesmanship, but I know the honourable members opposite to be good people and I know they will not vote against recommendations that were in the O'Connor report. I know that.

I know this bill is not new to the members of this Legislature; it was first introduced in 2001 by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. So with great respect, you've had a long time to digest the bill, you've had great opportunity to review it and I think you're fairly well read on this issue.

Mr Bradley: Why didn't you proceed with it in the fall?

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's the same question your friend Mr Caplan just asked. When you got your way and they separated environment and energy, and energy went to Baird, water was put into environment. Look, the Premier listened very carefully to you and said, "OK, Bradley has a good point." So we separated them and I got all the water management asset decisions. So I'm looking to you knowing that you won't want to disagree with your decision to separate the ministries and you don't want to argue with Justice O'Connor. It's a fait accompli. I'm not even worried. You'll vote in favour. Even if your own caucus is opposed, I know you're in favour.

The Ministry of Environment is now bringing the bill forward, in keeping with the Premier's announcement in August that I would have responsibility for leading Ontario's comprehensive water strategy, which Mr Bradley was calling for for a number of months.

There is good reason for tabling this act at this time as well. In the months since the previous bill was tabled, the Walkerton inquiry concluded, Commissioner O'Connor made far-reaching recommendations, as members of this House know. We're implementing all of them. I say to the member for Toronto-Danforth: that's something, isn't it? Have you ever seen a government take a recommendation such as the Walkerton report and say categorically, "We are implementing every single recommendation in that report"?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: There you are. You're late. Do you have a late slip?

Commissioner O'Connor made far-reaching recommendations and, as members of this House know, we're implementing all of them.

Consultation is essential. I believe in consultation. I consult as often and in as wide and varied a way as possible. I consult with members opposite; I consult with their constituents. As we have done with the proposed Safe Drinking Water Act and are currently doing with regulations for nutrient management—two other wonderful acts, I might add, that I'd be very, very surprised if the opposition opposed. Frankly, it would be unusual to see them oppose those two bills, which work toward the same goal. Again, Justice O'Connor said we should be doing those two things. I don't even expect a lot of debate on this. Justice O'Connor said, "Let's do this," and we're bringing a bill forward. They've all said they agree with Walkerton. I don't expect a lot of debate. They're probably going to whistle this through.

We encourage public and stakeholder involvement. We will hold extensive meetings with our municipal

partners and others to ensure that decisions made on this bill make sense. I am telling you that I'm prepared to listen. I want to go to committee, and I want to hear the amendments the opposition brings forward. This is a non-partisan approach, and I think it's good if you have good amendments that live up to the spirit and design of the Justice O'Connor Walkerton report—and I think we should bear in mind the spirit and design of Justice O'Connor's report. Those are the kinds of amendments that can make this bill stronger, and we will embrace them.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I would hate to see that we'd ever get to time allocation on a Justice O'Connor bill. It would be a frightful day for the opposition to stand up in this place and suggest they actually expect time allocation on the Justice O'Connor Walkerton report bill. We're hearing potential time allocation? Oh my goodness.

Interjection: It's practically obstruction.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That is obstruction, and we don't want to see that. We do not want to see that on the Walkerton report bill. That would be just unbelievable. I was fully expecting total co-operation. I thought we'd whistle this through in no time flat.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: We will. Let's go down to committee. Let's get this out of here and on to committee and public hearings as soon as we can—bada-bing, bada-boom, as they say they say in that radio commercial. I can't believe Mr Caplan is suggesting he's going to hold this bill up. I don't want to tell the good people of Ontario that Mr Caplan is planning to hold this bill up, forcing the government into time allocation. Surely you can't be serious. Surely your conscious won't allow that; it can't possibly. I'll pretend you didn't say that.

We want to hear from people who will be most directly affected. They have the experience and expertise to come up with the needed solutions.

Dollars and cents—this is kind of cute, because the "cents" is "sense." So it's not just "cents," it's "sense." That's a little play on words.

The Ernie Eves government is investing more than half a billion dollars in the next two years on clean, safe drinking water for the people of Ontario—half a billion dollars alone in the next two years. The government will deliver on its budget commitment to establish a \$50-million clean water legacy trust and a Clean Water Centre of Excellence in Walkerton. The parliamentary assistant for the Ministry of the Environment, Bill Murdoch, the hard-working member for Grey, was in Walkerton just last week announcing to the people of Walkerton that we are moving forward on the centre of excellence. I must tell you how warmly he was received there and how excited they are about the centre of excellence in Walkerton.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: There's a heckle. I'm not quite certain what it means, but we can chit-chat after.

I want to tell you how well received he was and well received was this idea of the report. I've met with the people of Walkerton, the committee in Walkerton who want to talk about the centre of excellence. Their concept for the centre of excellence in Walkerton dovetails nicely with what the Conservative government believes the centre should be as well. So there's going to be \$50 million set aside—it has been set aside. We're starting to march down that path to get the centre of excellence up and running with the full support of the people of Walkerton, the full support of the parliamentary assistant member from Grey—Walkerton is in his riding—full support from the Premier's office and, no doubt, and I may be speaking out of turn here, with full support from my good friends the honourable members across the floor. I know the member for Toronto-Danforth would not oppose and will not hold up the centre of excellence in Walkerton. I know she won't. I know it. She is an honourable member.

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It will provide access to the best scientific knowledge, research and technology and training in the management and monitoring of our safe drinking water. It will be a centre of excellence. It's where people will come from around the world to learn the up-to-date technologies of how to assess drinking water and assure you of safe drinking water.

I look forward to seeing this come about. I look forward to stopping spitting on Bob Wood.

Mr Wood: It's happened before. Don't worry about it.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I look forward to seeing this centre of excellence open and I'm excited about it. I'm excited for the people of Walkerton, I'm excited for the people of Ontario and I'm equally excited for the opposition members, because now I know they will have an opportunity to come together and vote as one for the good people of Walkerton and the province of Ontario.

To date, our government has provided municipalities and conservation authorities with over \$14 million to conduct groundwater studies. I think that's \$21 million now, actually. I say to the member for Toronto-Danforth, she brought source protection to my attention, and we've acted quickly on that with these studies requested from the conservation authorities. We've spent the money. We're doing our own. But, again, I can't bring the bill forward until those studies are completed. They tell me they will be completed within the next six months.

I am looking forward to working together with the two environment critics—

Mr Bradley: What was that?

Hon Mr Stockwell: The source water protection. I'm looking forward to working together with my two environment critics, Mr Bradley and Ms Churley, who I know would support any legislation that protects the groundwater, the source, to ensure that this bill will get quick passage through this House so we can get that source protection act put into place, as well as Bill 175 and nutrient management and the safe water act. I know we're all on the same page.

I don't think it's a question of taking credit any more. I know there have been some on the other side who are quick to take credit for things that maybe they had nothing to do with, but I know on these bills it's not going to be a question of falling all over each other to take the credit when these bills pass. They will all agree that it was the government and the environment minister who thought this up and brought this forward and they will give us all the credit in the world.

This is the largest investment in groundwater source protection in the province's history. A further \$5 million will be provided this year to municipal stakeholders to undertake further work on source protection. I think that's part of the \$21 million. In addition, the government launched the \$6-million provincial groundwater monitoring network in co-operation with Conservation Ontario, its member authorities and municipalities across the province.

I know there was some talk in the Environmental Commissioner's report about groundwater monitoring. We embraced the Walkerton report. We embraced Justice O'Connor's report. He has talked about more groundwater and safe water stations being needed. I agree. We will provide those, and we're doing a \$6-million study to determine exactly where and how those would best fit in.

It's time that all of us start considering the true cost of water and sewage services we take for granted. I don't want to put too fine a point on that, but I just want to come back to it very quickly. That's a good way of summing it up and I applaud those folks in my office who came up with that line because it's probably an exceptionally intelligent way of putting it: "It's time that all of us start considering the true cost of water and sewage services we take for granted."

You go to your tap, you turn it on and you just think that water is coming out and you expect it to be clean. We've got to provide that clean water, but to provide that clean water and sewage treatment and those things we do costs money—huge infrastructure capital costs. It's time that we figured out what those costs are so that every Ontarian has the same level of expectation when they turn on the tap that their water is safe, clean and acceptable to drink.

It's the only way we can ensure that these services will be there to support the health and prosperity of future generations.

I encourage all members of this Legislature—I know there are only four across the floor on the opposition benches and I know they are paying attention intensively, all four of them, really hanging on each word—to support the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act, as well as any amendments that come forward during the consultations. I want to say once again, I mean that. I will very seriously consider any of the amendments that come forward during committee. If we can't accept them, I'll explain why we can't. But they should—and I want to let you use this as a template—live within the spirit and the guidelines of Justice O'Connor's report and the Walkerton report.

I thank the members for listening attentively. I thank the members of my own caucus who have supported me on this on a number of occasions, who have talked about it with me, explained the pitfalls in this and what we need to do about capital infrastructure. But most importantly, I must offer one special level of thank-yous to my hard-working parliamentary assistant, Bill Murdoch, who is an endless and tireless worker when it comes to water protection, who stands in for me on a number of occasions and takes a lot of good information. He's not here right now, but I know he's heading on his way back. He's got a special meeting tonight in his riding and he told me he couldn't be here for the speech. I just wanted to let you know that Bill has done yeoman service in this field.

You know what? He's brought a perspective—I want to make this clear to a lot of the members in this House, because a lot of us come from larger urban centres. I look across the floor at the four members here and you all come from large urban centres. St Catharines will be the smallest, but it would still be considered a mid-sized to large urban centre.

What he has brought to the table is the rural point of view, the cost of full cost recovery for water and sewage in small-town Ontario. It's a very expensive and difficult program, a very expensive and difficult project. I must say categorically that with him bringing him forward their views on this bill, I think we'll have an act that not only my good friends on this side of the House will support, but I fully expect, once read, understood and debated, the honourable members on the opposite side of this House will have no choice but to do the unthinkable and support the good works of this government when it comes to clean water in Ontario.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I'm delighted to have this opportunity today to discuss this strong piece of legislation that was introduced on September 23 by the Honourable Chris Stockwell, Ontario's Minister of the Environment.

As Minister Stockwell said, we are sparing no effort to protect public health and the environment in this province. We are making sure that we can afford to pay for water and sewage services, to provide this protection. Its importance is self-evident. The Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act will be an important foundation for keeping our communities prosperous and healthy.

A key component of the proposed act revolves around the need for water and sewage systems to be sustainable. Full cost recovery is an integral part of Operation Clean Water. In fact, as my colleagues will recall, this bill received first reading in December 2001. We elected to reintroduce this bill to bring our work in line with the O'Connor recommendations.

In keeping with the Premier's announcement in August that the Minister of the Environment will have responsibility for leading Ontario's comprehensive water strategy, the Honourable Chris Stockwell has brought forward this new bill for debate in the House and for consultation with municipal and other stakeholders.

Members of this House will know that Commissioner O'Connor's report stated that the Sustainable Water and

Sewage Systems Act addressed many key financing concerns. In the report he said, "In any opinion, if passed into law, the act will address many of the important issues concerning the financing of water systems.... The requirements for a full cost report and cost recovery plan, as generally expressed in the proposed act, are in my view appropriate."

Simply put, Commissioner O'Connor has indicated that sustainable municipal water and sewer financing is essential. This government agrees with him. It makes for good planning, it promotes water conservation and it is part of this government's commitment to providing clean, safe water for everyone in Ontario. It's a commitment backed by a solid record of action and honoured promises.

This government pledged to implement all of Commissioner O'Connor's 121 recommendations from the Walkerton inquiry. This bill will further illustrate our commitment to that goal.

I'd like to take a look at this record to give context to the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act.

On August 8, 2000, we launched Operation Clean Water, an ambitious action plan aimed at placing Ontario at the forefront of drinking water protection. Our swift action was a signal to the people of Ontario that we will do everything in our power to protect their drinking water. We are making good on our promises. Since Operation Clean Water was announced, we have significantly strengthened the safeguards for Ontario's drinking water.

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The members of this Legislature will recall that in August 2000 we put in place the drinking water protection regulation. This regulation was a milestone because it gave Ontario its first ever legally enforceable standards for drinking water quality, as well as strict requirements for testing, treatment and reporting. We continue to hold these standards in the highest regard as something we should all be proud of.

To ensure compliance with the regulation, we have increased both the number of inspectors and inspections. The Ministry of the Environment now annually inspects all municipal water systems, and it orders corrective action whenever a problem that may lead to adverse health effects is found.

We also put in place the new drinking water protection regulation for smaller waterworks serving designated facilities. This regulation applies to waterworks in schools, day nurseries, nursing and retirement homes, and social and health facilities in the broader public and private sectors that do not fall under the existing drinking water protection regulation.

The smaller facilities regulation is particularly important, because it protects the most sensitive people in our society, including infants, children, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems.

Now, our clean water strategy builds on significant actions undertaken through Operation Clean Water. For example, this past June we put in place the Nutrient

Management Act, 2002. The act is aimed at providing the best possible protection for the environment while ensuring the continued viability of farming in Ontario. It is in keeping with Commissioner O'Connor's recommendations and will help manage the use of all the different types of nutrients, including livestock manure, pulp and paper sludge and municipal biosolids to prevent environmental and health impacts.

The land application of materials containing nutrients is governed by an array of legislative and regulatory provisions: some are guidelines, others are voluntary best management practices, and there is a patchwork of municipal bylaws. Regulations developed and implemented under the Nutrient Management Act, 2002, will address this.

Our commitment to address this situation was made clear in the May 2002 throne speech. In that speech it was stated, "Like Ontario's farmers, your government understands that protecting the environment is vital to the future of the family farm. It remains committed to the nutrient management bill, which would protect the environment by setting and enforcing clear, consistent standards for nutrient management on farms."

We put in place the Nutrient Management Act because the time has come for clear, consistent standards that apply province-wide: standards that will relieve the current burden upon municipalities to enter areas where they often lack the property expertise; standards that will protect the environment and be of benefit to all of us in this province.

The Nutrient Management Act responds to the needs that were identified by farmers, municipalities, environmental groups and others during the many consultations over the past two years.

The act also addresses the issues and risks identified by the Environmental Commissioner's special report of July 2000. The report, called *The Protection of Ontario's Groundwater and Intensive Farming*, aligns with the O'Connor report and builds on the government's Smart Growth strategy. Smart Growth, of course, means well planned and environmentally sensitive development.

The Nutrient Management Act sets out the framework for setting regulations that are specific to different types of nutrients. We continue to consult with all stakeholders to develop clear, consistent and stringent standards. These standards will enhance protection of the natural environment while providing a sustainable future for agricultural operations and rural development.

The standards being developed under the act will be consistent with Commissioner O'Connor's recommendations. The government's nutrient management strategy will form a significant part of the water protection system envisioned by Commissioner O'Connor.

The Ministry of the Environment will enforce all new standards developed under the act. Dedicated provincial officers will be specially trained in both environmental and agricultural compliance issues.

Most farmers are already good stewards and neighbours. The Nutrient Management Act provides the frame-

work for making their best practices mandatory and enforceable across Ontario. Nutrient management is an important part of our comprehensive strategy to protect groundwater resources. This strategy also includes investments to ensure that municipalities have the information they need to make sound decisions regarding the protection of their groundwater resources.

The government introduced the first conservation-based water-taking regulation in the country on April 30, 1999. This prevents transfer of water from Ontario's major water basins and ensures conservation issues are thoroughly addressed when reviewing applications for water taking.

These actions are an indication of our determination to protect drinking water in Ontario. As members of this Legislature are aware, we are also determined to meet each and every one of the 121 recommendations put forward by Commissioner O'Connor in his reports.

I'd now like to turn to the details of the new bill. If passed, the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act would require all owners of water and sewer systems to undertake a full cost accounting of their water and sewer systems. As the minister said, detailed analyses would include all operating and capital costs, all sources of revenue and the investment required to maintain and expand their systems.

This bill would also require system owners to develop comprehensive asset management reports and then provide a plan for implementing full cost recovery.

If passed, the government's approach to implementing this bill would consist of two stages. The first would be aimed at assessing the full cost of water and sewage services in each municipality in Ontario. The second would involve bringing full cost recovery forward in a way that makes sense for municipalities.

I am proud to join Minister Stockwell in encouraging the members of this Legislature to support the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act, as well as any amendments that come forward during consultations. By supporting this act, you are helping to ensure that a well-protected environment is our legacy to future generations.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 175, An Act respecting the cost of water and waste water services. Safe drinking water is non-negotiable for this government. It's also something the people of Ontario expect will not be compromised. If passed into law, the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act will set yet another benchmark and provide an even stronger foundation for safe drinking water. It makes for good planning, promotes water conservation and is an integral part of this government's clean water strategy.

This government is committed to implementing all 121 recommendations from Commissioner O'Connor's report of the Walkerton inquiry. Our clean water strategy will help us meet this commitment. As a government, we believe that one of the critical steps toward implementing the recommendation is the government's proposed

Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act. The driving force behind this proposed act is the concept of full cost accounting and recovery. Our government believes that legislating full cost accounting and recovery for a municipal water and sewage service is one of the best ways to protect health and our environment.

The principles of full cost accounting and recovery are fundamental to sustainability and are a key aspect of Commissioner O'Connor's recommendations and report of the Walkerton inquiry, part two. Incidentally, I want to point out that I did personally read both part one and part two of the report so, when asked, I would be able to say, "Yes, I did read it." Full cost recovery accounting reports will provide us with an accurate picture and transparent method of identifying all the costs, both operational and capital, to ensure human health is protected when it comes to delivering water and sewage services.

The full cost recovery plans will provide a guide to ensure sustainable systems are developed and supported.

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In his report, Commissioner O'Connor made several references to the need for municipalities to ensure their water systems were adequately financed. To quote Commissioner O'Connor, "Over the long term, safety depends on stable and adequate financing to maintain the water system's infrastructure and its operational capacity to supply high-quality water consistently."

Commissioner O'Connor also stated support for the proposed act after it was first introduced in the Legislature as Bill 155. He said, "In my opinion, if passed into law, the act will address many of the important issues concerning the financing of water systems.... The requirements for a full cost report and cost recovery plan, as generally expressed in the proposed act, are in my view appropriate."

Through our clean water strategy, of which the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act is a significant part, the Ernie Eves government has pledged to invest more than half a billion dollars over the next two years on clean, safe drinking water for the people of Ontario. This year alone, the government will provide \$245 million, including investments to help municipalities upgrade their water system to meet our tough new standards. While there is still work to be done, this government continues to make significant progress on several other components of the clean water strategy.

We will deliver on our budget commitments to establish the \$50-million clean water legacy trust and the Clean Water Centre of Excellence in Walkerton. The centre of excellence will provide access to the best scientific knowledge, research and technology, and training in the management and monitoring of our water systems. I think it's important to note that the training requirements came out very loud and clear in the Walkerton report, that there was more of that needed.

In addition, the government plans to consult with key stakeholders on watershed-based source protection planning issues this fall. Again, when we did the consultation on the Nutrient Management Act, watershed protection

and wellhead protection were two of the most important items that came forward as the people made their presentations. Several groundwater studies are already underway to support this planning. I'm happy to say that one of those not only is in progress, but has been completed in the county of Oxford.

So far, action has been taken on many fronts to help ensure clean, safe drinking water is delivered to all the people of Ontario. Our accomplishments include drinking water protection regulations, the drinking water protection regulations for smaller waterworks serving designated facilities, and, as I mentioned, the Nutrient Management Act, 2002, and work toward the Safe Drinking Water Act. These examples demonstrate that our commitment is unwavering to the momentum, and the momentum is strong. We fully support Commissioner O'Connor's recommendations and are moving forward to complete their full implementation.

I'd now like to highlight some of the details of the proposed bill.

If passed into law, the new Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act will make it mandatory for all municipalities to assess and cost recover the full amount of water and sewer services. The proposed act will ensure that water and sewer systems generate sufficient revenue to fully recover all their long-term operating and capital costs.

As members are aware, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing first introduced this legislation as Bill 155 in December 2001. In his report, Commissioner O'Connor has stated that the previous bill addressed a number of major financing concerns. The act has been reintroduced to give legal authority to the Ministry of the Environment, as announced by the Premier in August 2002. It's also the government's next step in fulfilling Commissioner O'Connor's recommendations.

The proposed act would be implemented in two stages. The first would be aimed at assessing the full cost of water and sewage services in each and every municipality. The second would involve bringing full cost accounting forward in a way that makes sense to municipalities.

The concept of full cost recovery is not new. Municipalities are already able to apply full cost recovery if they wish. In fact, some municipalities have implemented this to varying degrees. But as the saying goes, the devil is in the details. Although some municipalities claim they have reached full cost recovery, the province doesn't know the extent to which they are recovering all their long-term investment needs.

The proposed act will give us the full picture of what it costs municipalities to provide water and waste water services and will require the municipalities to do cost accounting according to regulated standards. Specific reporting requirements and detailed analysis would include all operating and capital costs; financing costs; renewal, replacement and improvement costs; infrastructure and investments required to maintain and expand the systems; and all sources of revenue to cover those costs.

The proposed act will also require system owners to develop comprehensive asset management reports. In order for the proposed Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act to be effective, it is critical that the government understand and appreciate the direction and specific activities municipalities are undertaking.

The act therefore proposes that municipalities be required to provide an implementation schedule outlining their project plan for full cost recovery.

At present municipalities use different methods of determining water rates. In general, few of these methods include investment needs or what will be needed for repair, rehabilitation and expansion of related infrastructure. As a result, it is difficult to get an accurate estimate of the shortfall.

The reality is that most municipalities do not have a handle on the long-term cost of maintaining their water and sewer systems. This leads to underinvestment in water systems, because much of the infrastructure is buried, literally. The old adage "Out of sight, out of mind" is an unfortunate fact in many cases.

Underpricing of water can lead to deferred maintenance and overconsumption by water users. Deferred maintenance ultimately leads to deteriorating infrastructure and potential risks to public health. The bill includes provisions to ease the transition to full cost recovery. Through section 10(5) the government can set limits ensuring cost recovery rates.

Legislating full cost accounting and recovery ensures that safe drinking water is a priority municipal service that cannot be traded off for other services. The standard of service is mandatory.

Make no mistake. This is an environmental and public health issue. But while the proposed Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act addresses the issue of infrastructure financing and cost recovery, it also covers another major issue of municipal accountability. That issue relates to the overriding principle of accountability. In the new Municipal Act, which was passed by this Legislature one year ago, municipalities were given increased flexibility. A strong accountability framework, however, has also been put into place to balance that increased flexibility.

Our goal, on behalf of the taxpayers, should always be the best service and clear accountability. One way to help ensure this is through the use of performance measures.

One of the primary areas in which municipalities are being measured and made accountable is the way they deliver services, including such fundamental services as water and sewage systems.

The municipal performance measurement program requires all municipalities to collect data and ensure their performance of 35 specific measures that fall within nine core municipal service areas. The data is then included in the municipality's financial information return. As of September 2001, they have been required to report to the public on 16 of those measurements.

The Municipal Act requires the municipality to provide the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing with

designated information related to the efficiency and effectiveness of the municipality's operations. The minister can require municipalities to report these results to the taxpayers.

A new provision in the proposed Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act would require municipalities to report to taxpayers annually on any service delivery improvements and on any identifiable barriers to improving service delivery. The concept of full cost accounting and recovery as put forward in the proposed Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act is also consistent with municipal accountability for budget processes.

Specifically: municipalities are required to prepare a balanced budget each year and to provide for any surplus or deficit of the previous year; municipal budgets set out major activities, service levels, related costs and how best to deliver those services; municipalities are required to discuss and approve their annual budgets in public meetings—budget documents and staff reports are routinely made public before the political decision-making process begins; municipalities are required to submit an annual financial information return to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the return also includes all local boards within the municipality's jurisdiction.

The new Municipal Act also requires municipalities to publish their annual audited financial statement 90 days after the audit is completed.

Through better communications, increased knowledge and a more consistent financial and full cost accounting processes, municipalities will be in a stronger position to know exactly where things stand and the true cost of their water and sewer services. This will enable them to take a more proactive view and adopt a more integrated and holistic approach to environmental protection. Environmental improvement is a continuous journey, and it is a journey that we must travel together.

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The answers to our environmental challenges cannot come from any one source. Our government recognizes that it must involve consultations and partnerships with municipalities, industries, community organizations and individual Ontarians. As a government, we have a responsibility to examine all points of view. As we continue the debate on the proposed Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act, we will seek input beyond this Legislature. We will seek the views of our municipal partners and other stakeholders. We value their expertise and input, and our ability to work together.

We are open to hearing amendments that make sustainable water and sewer financing work for our partners. But as I said in my opening remarks, our government's commitment to safe drinking water is a non-negotiable priority. We all need to know the true cost of the water and sewer services we take so much for granted. It is the only way we can ensure that these services will be there to support the health and prosperity of future generations. By working toward common environmental goals, we are able to look, explore opportunities, take appropriate action and, together, be at the environmental forefront as we solve our environmental challenges.

I believe that, if passed, this bill will become an important legacy of our government. I encourage members of this Legislature to support the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for providing me this opportunity to speak to this act. Again, I encourage all members in the Legislature to support it for speedy passage.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I just wanted to make a couple of comments on the bill that has been introduced by the Minister of the Environment.

I was listening very attentively to what he had to say, because this is an extremely important piece of legislation. He made a number of references with respect to the opposition, that he hopes we will support it and, "Who would not support it in the face of Justice O'Connor's report?"

Let me say to the minister and the members of the House, to the Premier himself, that indeed we are taking this legislation very seriously, especially when it comes to addressing the remarks of Justice O'Connor. Mr Minister, speaking directly to you, let me say that unless the concerns of Justice O'Connor are dealt with in this House and made part of the bill itself, unless our amendments are accepted, we will not be able to support this bill, because it does not reflect the full intent of Justice O'Connor's report.

When the minister says he expects, on behalf of the people of Ontario, our support, let me tell the minister that he must include everything in the bill in this House openly and not by regulations afterwards. We want to know who is going to pay and how. This is a concern that Justice O'Connor is expressing at page 299 and which the minister did not address in this House. I think he will find the members of this House very responsible when it comes to dealing with this important legislation.

Mr Bisson: I was quite interested in listening to what the minister had to say. He was saying that certainly none of us could be partisan in our comments toward this legislation because, after all, this was not a partisan issue. I just want to remind the government that it was extremely partisan in its own way in how it dealt with this issue right from the beginning. We ended up in a crisis having to do with water in this province because of the government's actions when it came to the reductions in the budget by almost 50% at the Ministry of the Environment, the privatization of the labs etc. We ended up in this mess quite frankly because this government decided to follow its ideological bent when it came to all bureaucrats are bad, regulation is bad; let's un-red-tape everything and everything will be wonderful. But it wasn't for the people of Walkerton, and I would argue it wasn't for the rest of Ontario.

Now the interesting part: this government is part of Mike Harris's government, which always prided itself in saying, "There's only one taxpayer." Well, there's only one consumer. All I know is, at the end of the day, as a consumer in Ontario, not only will I have to pay taxes, as

I always will, but I'm going to have to pay a user fee in order to open the tap to drink the water in my community or in any other community in Ontario. That means to say the net effect is we're going to be paying more.

So I say to the people of Ontario, you got that tax cut, and you did whatever you did with it. Great. But now we're paying for it. We're seeing the full effect of that tax cut over a period of years. We're paying user fees on increasingly more things, and now we're going to pay user fees when we open the tap and drink our water. So I say to this government, don't hide behind the pretence of this being conservation. This is just trying to figure out how you're going to pay for the mess you've created. Let's be clear about that.

The other point I want to make on this particular thing—and I'll get an opportunity to do that in more detail when we get into debate—is a number of issues in regard to what was contained in the report by Justice O'Connor that I feel have not been met in here. I listened intently to the debate, and I wish to work with the government to make this better legislation. But don't hide and tell me this is non-partisan.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): It's interesting to hear the Minister of the Environment, the member from Cambridge and the member from Oxford, who spoke to the bill. All of them said the government has an unwavering commitment to providing safe, clean drinking water. I think all members share that goal, although I don't think the actions of the government demonstrate any commitment to providing safe, clean drinking water, especially in light of the recent Environmental Commissioner's report, which said we're probably worse off today than we were last year, the year before and even before that.

Words ring hollow; it's actions that speak much louder. I look forward to seeing the government clean up their act, or at least replacing the government, given the chance of an election, and having a new government with a true commitment to providing safe, clean drinking water for all the people of Ontario.

I'd like to make a couple of other comments. During this debate Justice O'Connor's report is going to be quoted many times from many different pages. They were weighty volumes. I noticed that the minister quoted a part of page 299, but he left out something as well: Justice O'Connor criticized the government for having a considerable amount of regulation in then-Bill 155. He said the regulations would be "critical," and he criticized the government for laying out regulations at a later date and not having them as part of the bill itself. In fact, Justice O'Connor had several criticisms of the government and of the bill. We will be bringing forward those criticisms in this debate.

One last comment: the minister, in a very joking, jovial fashion, talked about time allocation. I expect all members of this House will want to speak to Bill 175. It is an important bill. I hope the House leader and Minister of the Environment does not invoke closure or time allocation to shut down debate on this very important bill.

Mr Bradley: It's interesting, first of all, to hear the Minister of the Environment, who now has had his responsibilities separated. You witnessed as I did, Madam Chair, the fact that the Minister of the Environment had an inherent conflict of interest with the Ministry of Energy and therefore had to have this responsibility separated. He's also the House leader. He had too much on his plate and didn't have the answers at the appropriate time for members of the news media and members of the public. I implored the Premier of this province to separate the two, perhaps more because of the conflict of interest than because of the workload, because the workload was onerous as well.

The member is trying to paint a picture as though the government has, *holus-bolus*, taken absolutely everything Justice O'Connor has said and placed it in this bill when indeed that is not the case. He has tried to suggest, as I knew he would—we always anticipate these things; he's a clever politician. I watched him divert the attention of the public from very important issues by going after the people living on the Toronto Islands, for instance. He's good at diversionary tactics.

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What we'll want to do, and you'd want to do as an individual member, is examine each and every part of the bill and try to anticipate the regulatory framework that will go with the bill before saying it is one that is completely supportable. But I did admire his efforts to try to suggest that everybody in the House would be absolutely unanimous on every aspect of the bill. You've been here long enough and I've been here long enough to know that is seldom the case.

The Acting Speaker: Response from the member for Oxford.

Mr Hardeman: I just want to say we want to thank the members for York West, Timmins-James Bay, Don Valley East and St Catharines for their kind remarks about the bill.

I suppose we could say the member for York West has supported the bill, with some reservations as to what may come out of the debate. Obviously that's what the process in this place is supposed to generate: the debate. After the debate is when the decision should be made as to whether it is totally supportable or not. I take some exception to the comment that, when the bill is introduced, we already have the position taken that "I can support it" or "I cannot support it," when in fairness I would think maybe some have not read the whole bill yet to see whether it contains what it needs to contain.

In going to the member for St Catharines, I just want to say that it would have been, I suppose, more helpful to talk about what they liked or disliked about the bill than what they disliked about the makeup of the ministry, whether the minister had too much of a workload, not enough of a workload or whether he was spending enough time involved in this. But we do want to thank him, because it is the debate that generates the ability to bring out the best possible legislation.

Again, it was mentioned from across the way that they have amendments already prepared, I presume. I suppose

we very much appreciate that. If we had those to debate here, maybe we could debate them and tell you why I think your amendments are wrong as well as your telling me what you think is wrong with the bill. But we thank you very much for your participation and your involvement in the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to say how nice it is to see you in the chair as one of the senior members—only in terms of your length of service, of course—in the Legislature, and looking very appropriate, I must say, in the chair. You have been an environment critic and were very assiduous in the way you carried out your responsibilities in those days. I want to compliment you for the work you did and the assistance you provided to me through your very good critique of what the government of the day was doing.

I now want to move to the legislation itself and say that many of us have wondered where this legislation has been for so long. I think the Minister of Municipal Affairs himself is wondering that, because we anticipate it as a major problem. This has been out there for a number of years, the need to find ways of financing the system of providing water and sewer services for the people of the province.

People who are cynical, and I'm not one of them, would say to me—and they have; I've tried to dismiss their cynicism—"You know, this is just an excuse for the Harris-Eves government to withdraw from any financial responsibility for waterworks in this province." I've tried to assure them that the government would be open-minded to amendments which would ensure the government would, for many years to come, continue to provide funding for water and sewer projects.

I well recall, as the Minister of the Environment, being asked by many municipalities to assist in projects which were designed to improve the environment through perhaps sewage treatment plant improvements, or perhaps the construction of a new sewage treatment plant, water treatment plant or new lines. In addition to that, there was a program I remember we initiated called LifeLines, which took a look at the older pipes that were under the ground in each one of our municipalities, and said, "There's a need for renewal at all times. They cannot last forever." So we provided funding; if my recollection is accurate, one third from the province and two thirds from the municipality. If the federal government wanted to come in, they could provide some. Or it may have been 50% from the province, I don't have the exact recollection, but it was a significant provincial role in the renewal of our water services.

I'm glad the Minister of Health is with us today because later on in my speech—not in this particular speech—I'll be talking about the ambulance dispatch service that is in critical condition in Niagara. I'll save that for yet another day, though I want to mention that to him at this time.

What I want to mention to him is the critical situation in areas that do not have a full-time medical officer of

health. Certainly that recommendation was made. To my knowledge—and he will correct me later if he has an opportunity—that obligation has not been fulfilled to this point in time. I will support him in his efforts to secure the funding and clout necessary to get from his colleagues in the cabinet the permission to proceed with the appointment of those medical officers of health, because that was a very important issue that arose out of that situation.

Let's go to the beginning of this. I'll ask the member for Toronto-Danforth, because she is in the House and I think I'll get the answer I want to hear as well: does anyone in Ontario, outside of the people sitting in those benches perhaps, believe for one moment that this government ever had any intention of bringing this bill forward?

Ms Churley: No.

Mr Bradley: Absolutely not. I would agree with her.

So many of the measures the government is taking now—and you take them where you can get them; I admit that—that are in the general purview of the environment in their wildest dreams they had no intention of taking and to this very day don't want to undertake.

In fact, the government members were going around to those who dislike the Ministry of the Environment, saying to them, "We'll get the Ministry of the Environment out of your face; don't worry." There were many people who had complaints. The Ministry of the Environment was working very hard to carry out its responsibilities. Certainly its obligations on industry, on some municipalities and on those who had the opportunity, should they choose to do so, to follow the air, the water or the soil—they were very tough on them and there was annoyance with the Ministry of the Environment. So there were a number of Conservative candidates out there who were saying, "We will look after you. We'll get the Ministry of the Environment out of your face." Well, promise made, promise kept, and one of the results was the unfortunate circumstance, the tragedy of Walkerton.

Members of this House will remember that this government cut one third of the staff and about 50% of the operating budget of the Ministry of the Environment and announced it was withdrawing from the area of providing funding for water and sewers. They were going to download that to the municipalities and leave them on their own.

They closed the regional laboratories of the Ministry of the Environment that used to do much of the testing of water for municipalities and other entities in this province—a very unwise move, but particularly unwise when they did not put into place the protocol for reporting. In other words, in about a six-week period of time they closed down these laboratories. The purpose of this was so they could give a tax cut to the richest people in the province and make them happy, and indeed they may have made some of them happy with that tax cut, but that's why the cuts were so deep.

The government and my friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who is a fair-minded person from time

to time, would say to me, "We had to deal with the deficit," and indeed that was the case. But the depth of the cuts and the extent of the cuts that took place were because this government was obsessed with what it felt was its need to cut taxes before it had balanced the budget.

I remember four key members of the opposition then: the Speaker of the day, not the one in the chair this afternoon but the member for Oakville, Mr Gary Carr; the Honourable Chris Stockwell, the Minister of the Environment today; and a third person was my friend Ted Arnott from Wellington county. Waterloo-Wellington, I believe, is the riding now. The Speaker would know that better than I; he's got them all memorized. They were at least three of the people who said, "Look, a tax cut may be fine somewhere along the line, but you don't do it till you balance the budget." This obsession with tax cuts made the government make the kinds of cuts that not even some of its right-wing ideologues had contemplated. As a result, we had circumstances where there was a lot of disarray in the water system in Ontario and certainly a lack of confidence in it after what happened in Walkerton.

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You can't cut 50% of the budget and one third of the staff of the Ministry of the Environment and expect that you're going to have those responsibilities carried out. But there's another aspect to it. It was not only the cutting of staff and resources; it was the removal of clout from the ministry. It was saying to ministry officials, "You should be business-friendly." They know how to define that. That means, "Don't get in the face of business." Good businesses don't worry about the Ministry of the Environment getting in their faces, because they're going to conduct their businesses above-board; they're going to be good corporate citizens. But those who want to cut corners are going to be the kinds of people who will want the Ministry of the Environment out of their faces.

When we see this legislation this afternoon, we have to go back to Walkerton to see why we even have this bill before us. I think most members of this House recognize the need for a huge infusion of funds for water and sewer works. We have companies in this province that have highly talented individuals working for them who have the reputation, who have the wherewithal, to carry out these works. It's not as though somehow we're going to have to import people. It's not as though we're going to have to create new companies in the private sector for the construction of these waterworks. We have them. They have the expertise. They've been waiting for a number of years to proceed with the projects they know are important.

Municipalities in some cases have been reluctant to undertake work that is related to water and sewer. Many in this House sat on municipal councils. We know it's not glamorous to open a sewage treatment plant. We know that to allocate expenditures for pipes underground that nobody can see is not always attractive, especially when

you can have a monument above-ground that everyone can enjoy on a daily basis. I recall, when I was on municipal council, saying at the time how important these waterworks were, not only the construction of sewage treatment plants, but then making them secondary and tertiary treatment plants and making sure their operations were effective so that we did not have contaminated water leaving sewage treatment plants and going back into waterways.

I've always felt there was an obligation on senior levels of government and on municipalities, and indeed on municipalities through water users themselves, to finance these kinds of works. Only the tragedy of Walkerton, where seven people died from drinking the water and over 2,000 people became seriously ill, some of them with effects that will be with them for a lifetime, prompted a commitment to a Safe Drinking Water Act and a commitment to this piece of legislation, which deals specifically with putting the waterworks in place.

We want to ensure a couple of things. I have a personal bias I'll share with members of the Legislature. I happen to think municipalities should own and operate their sewer and water systems. That's my personal bias. Not everybody in this House shares that. Not every municipality shares that. The very least I think a consensus would develop around is that the municipality should own the system. I worry that the agenda this government has is privatizing as much of that as possible. Indeed, I know there were people who have come from various municipalities to meetings in Toronto—I don't know if I'd call them secret meetings; let's call them non-advertised—with the former deputy mayor of Indianapolis. I can't remember the gentleman's name, perhaps somebody over there knows—Skip, Crik or something like that.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I read his book, but I don't know.

Mr Bradley: I'm not surprised the Minister of Energy has read his book.

He talks about getting your own employees out of the waterworks system and other municipal systems and bringing in the private sector. That's what he calls for. That's a slippery road to dangerous situations. I see the effects of that now in Hydro, where there's a massive move to privatization. Have there been over the years, in Hydro, people who have been part of the system that was not Ontario Hydro? Yes, in the early 1990s there were many operations that came on that were cogeneration, that were private-public and private. Still, the system itself was a public system. There have been places in Ontario that have had electricity provided by others, but today we are moving massively into privatization in hydro-electric power, in all generation of electric power, and prices have skyrocketed.

That gets me to another point I'm concerned about with this legislation. A lot of people on fixed incomes, people of modest means, are seeing some dramatic increases in basic costs to themselves. If the cost of

Cadillacs goes up, those people are not concerned about that. The cost of luxuries or trips to France or something like this are going up, but they're not overly concerned about that. Let's examine some of these costs that are rising now. I mention the electricity bill. People are astounded and angry when they get their electricity bill, and with justification. Now they're starting to see their insurance bills come in, and those premiums are being hiked almost universally and substantially.

They're looking at the cost of gasoline at the pump, despite what Bob Clapp says, the vice-president of the petroleum association, who always tells me about all the competition out there. I really can't identify that competition well because all the gas prices go up at the same time and by the same amount. I always wonder how there isn't some kind of collusion as a result. So that's going up. The cost of natural gas and oil for people who heat their own homes is going up. The Ontario Energy Board apparently doesn't have the staff or the resources or the power to roll back a lot of these increases. I'm concerned about that. There are so many basic costs going up for people, and we're going to ask them once again to have a basic cost increase. I think that's going to have to be reflected in the social services part of the government, in pensions that are paid to people; in other words, to assist people in the lower-income area to meet those costs.

I think as well that that's where the provincial and federal governments have a role to play, the provincial government primarily because it has the responsibility in dealing with municipalities. When can the federal government be of assistance? On infrastructure programs. I know there are some people who don't like infrastructure programs. I like them. I think that when you have the federal, provincial and municipal governments working together as funding partners, we see a lot more get done and done quickly. That's why, I believe, when legislation of this kind is before the House, there has to be a commitment on the part of the provincial government to continue to provide funding to municipalities to assist them with these onerous costs. I think it was the Super-Build agency head who said it could be up to \$9 billion that would be needed, over a number of years, to fix up our water and sewer systems in the province.

I've no reason to doubt that. We're not just talking about new sewers, new water treatment plants, new sewage treatment plants, new lines under the ground and new testing centres. We're also talking about renewing what is there.

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Each one of us who was a municipal politician remembers the calls coming in—and they still come in to municipal politicians—about brown water, when the water would be rusty coming through the pipes, or water mains breaking, particularly in the winter. That's because on a progressive basis we have to replace them. We can't wait until they're all in trouble and then decide some massive program is going to take place. We should be financing that on an ongoing basis. Part of that certainly

can be handled by the provisions of this bill. But a significant role must also be played by the federal and the provincial governments, and I say particularly the provincial government in this regard.

Let me go back to see why we have this bill before us: the Walkerton tragedy which existed and what the situation was. In May 2000, Walkerton's municipal water system became contaminated with E coli 0157, and seven people died and about 2,300 people became seriously ill. Some children suffered damage to their kidneys. As a result of the infection, these children will have to rely on dialysis for years, perhaps for the rest of their lives. A study undertaken by the inquiry showed that the tragedy cost at least \$65 million; \$155 million if human suffering is included.

Part of this was, again, this obsession with this government wanting to cut the Ministry of the Environment. There's an organization called the Red Tape Commission. I don't think, Mr Speaker in the chair today, you were part of the Red Tape Commission, but I'll tell you, they put the most vengeful—and I say that not in as nasty a sense as people think—economically vengeful people on that commission. If I were to ask any one of these ministers individually, "What do you think of the Red Tape Commission?" and they were able to tell me without it being recorded or repeated, I think they would agree that the Red Tape Commission is not positive for the government; it's negative for the government.

They had created such an atmosphere that the Ministry of the Environment was even afraid to ask for additional resources or to put into effect new regulations to deal with the private laboratories that in 1996 were replacing the government laboratories. Even that atmosphere had been created by the right-wingers, the YPCs and the former YPCs who are part of this government, those who would be more inclined to be side by side with Ralph Klein than perhaps Joe Clark.

That reminds me: maybe he'll be coming to your town—we don't know that. If he likes theatre, he'll be going to Stratford certainly. But Ralph Klein and some of his ministers are going to show up in Ontario to fight the Kyoto accord. I want to see whether standing side by side will be the Premier of Ontario. Because, as I have noted on numerous occasions in this House, I see our Premier in the House speaking but I hear the words of Ralph Klein.

I should share with you the fact that I was Minister of the Environment of Ontario when Ralph Klein was the Minister of the Environment of Alberta. That was something to behold: Ralph Klein at an environment ministers' meeting. He would make my good friend Chris Stockwell look progressive when you listened to what he had to say about the environment. He's an individual who thinks that Swan Hill's toxic waste site is a tourist site. He's even mentioned that as a tourist site. He has dismissed virtually everything any environmentalist has had to say about the environment.

Years ago, Ontario used to be the leader. We would be prodding the federal government. We would be dragging

along Alberta, making them ashamed of their neanderthal statements about the environment. Today, shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm, we have the Premier of Ontario and Ralph Klein, the most anti-environment Premier in this country, speaking the same about the Kyoto accord.

You're going to say, "How would the Kyoto accord or indeed air quality affect this legislation or water quality?" One of the reasons is that some of the contaminants that reach our waterways are what we would define as "airborne deposition." That is, they're coming out of the smokestacks in this province, they're coming out of vehicles. They're what we find in our atmosphere that makes its way down to the waterways of the province, whether it's the lakes, streams, creeks, rivers, ponds or whatever it happens to be. It's important that we clean up our air for the purpose of breathing and for all the damage that it does, but also because it plays a significant role in contaminating our waterways.

Is this bill the only solution? No, it isn't, but the provisions of this bill can go a significant way to improving water quality in the province. First of all, you have to have a mindset that it is important, that people want to know when they turn on the tap, when they pick up a glass of water to drink, that indeed it is safe water.

Therefore we have to have a government that's committed to safe water. I believe this government was dragged, kicking and screaming, into legislation of this kind, and that if it got past an election we would see all of those obligations contained in the Justice O'Connor report watered down and that there would be a wink and a nod at many of them and very few of them would be implemented entirely, even though the government today will say that it wants to implement them entirely.

So it will take a massive amount of money to fix our water system. Should we invest that? We sure should. We have to begin doing it immediately; some of it's going on now, but we have to see even an accelerated pace at improving our sewage treatment plants, building new sewage treatment plants, improving our water treatment plants, building new water treatment plants, replacing those pipes underground and setting up laboratory services that are reliable. The regional municipality of Niagara where I reside has some lab services; it also has to contract out some of its lab work. It's going to be important to do that testing.

My personal recommendation would be that the provincial government re-establish the Ministry of the Environment laboratories which were unwisely and, unfortunately, tragically closed as a result of the budget cutting and slashing that took place in 1996, when Premier Eves was then the Minister of Finance responsible for making those cuts.

When the Conservative government came to power—in other words, before they were in power—the Ministry of the Environment had a combined operating and capital budget of \$529 million and a staff of 2,500 people. After they were elected, by the year 2000-01, the MOE was to have a combined operating and capital budget of only \$233 million, what amounted to a 56% cut. Of course, as

I've mentioned, more than one third of the staff of the Ministry of the Environment was eliminated, fired out the door. Some 42% of the MOE staff dedicated to water and drinking water have been laid off. That's according to figures that have been provided to us.

Let's look at testing before this government was in power. The majority of municipalities, especially smaller municipalities, such as Walkerton, used Ministry of the Environment laboratories to test their drinking water quality. We had some top-notch people working in those Ministry of the Environment labs. They had a protocol to follow that was very stringent, they had a public obligation. Their obligation wasn't to make money; their obligation was to provide a good service at a reasonable cost to people.

The Ministry of the Environment conducted regular water tests that were analyzed in a Ministry of the Environment lab. The average was about 400,000 tests a year. If the MOE discovered a problem with the water, they could take immediate coordinated action.

Let's contrast that after the government cuts, which presumably everybody in the cabinet and the caucus agreed to. In September 1996, all Ministry of the Environment labs were closed and responsibility for testing drinking water was delegated to municipalities—only eight weeks' notice, no significant consultation with the municipalities, no independent review of the availability or cost of private testing.

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Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member interjects—not from his seat—“Wrong.” I think the people of Walkerton would disagree with him. I think independent observers would disagree. As I pick up the report of Justice O'Connor, he would disagree. As I pick up the report of the Provincial Auditor, on several occasions, and the report of the Environmental Commissioner—all of these non-partisan people, all of these independent voices—they say exactly the opposite of what the member contends. If he wants to defend the protocol that was in place when they closed the laboratories, he can certainly defend that. He can defend that protocol if he wants to; I will not. If he wants to attack the NDP, I'll let the member for Toronto-Danforth speak to that.

I well remember when the Walkerton tragedy came to light, the first thing the Premier did was blame the municipality, then he blamed the NDP and he didn't know who to blame after that. He was pointing the finger anywhere and everywhere.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: My friend Marcel Beaubien will know that the Premier wanted to have nothing to do with a public inquiry in this regard. Day after day, members of the opposition, members of the news media and Leader of the Opposition Dalton McGuinty dragged him kicking and screaming into finally acquiescing to a public inquiry.

Let me say something positive about that public inquiry. As the Minister of the Environment said, I tend

to be a relatively non-partisan person in this House who's prepared to give credit where credit is due. I want to give credit to Justice O'Connor. When he was appointed, not being in the legal field, I didn't know too much about Justice O'Connor. I had heard nothing negative. I think his brother is Terry O'Connor, who a number of years ago was a Tory member of this House from Oakville, a gentleman I knew and respected. I asked some of our own members who knew the legal field. They said, “Justice O'Connor is a good person. He'll do a good job.”

I happen to like the way he conducted his inquiry. I thought he was thorough. I thought he was fair. I was there to watch him in action, particularly on the day when Premier Harris—for the first time in the history of Ontario, a Premier had to appear at an inquiry of this kind. I was there when he was there. I thought he conducted the inquiry very well. He cut to the chase, he focused on significant issues and I thought the report he came forward with was a thorough report.

This government claims it's going to implement all the provisions. I think I can safely say that will not be case. They may give a wink and a nod to them.

It reminds me, by the way, of the alternative fuels committee report. I was astounded to see the Minister of Energy and the Minister of the Environment get up and say nothing. Their lips were moving, but there was really no substance. I expected they would—

Mr Beaubien: Did you say their lids were moving?

Mr Bradley: Their lips were moving.

Mr Beaubien: Oh, their lips.

Mr Bradley: Their lips were moving, but I couldn't hear anything.

I know that the Minister of Health was looking for big things from that report. He expected, as I did, that there would be a sweeping reform of the government's attitude toward the environment, pointed to by the select committee and its recommendations.

I should say, and I think most of the members of the committee would agree, that if the government were to implement all the recommendations of the select committee on alternative fuels, I'll bet you they would meet the Kyoto accord.

I'm not supposed to say the minister is leaving, because he has pressing business.

I see my good friend Dan Miles. I remember when he was in the news media and said one week that he couldn't find the minister, or words to that effect. The minister couldn't be found for a comment—maybe the minister will correct me; I hope he does—but Dan Miles said words to the effect that the minister was nowhere to be found.

Hon Mr Baird: He was in Timmins.

Mr Bradley: He was in Timmins, he said. He obviously didn't get his telephone number. Because at the time he was disagreeing with the Minister of Health. He said, “Well, I don't know”—

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member for Haldimand was saying, “I’ve got the Minister of Energy on my side. Don’t worry about the coal-fired plant at Nanticoke”—the largest polluter in all of North America—“don’t worry about it, because I’ve talked to the Minister of Energy and he says everything will be fine,” and the member seemed to be pleased with that.

When the media went looking for the minister, they went to my good friend Dan Miles who did a wonderful job, at least when he was in public affairs, when he was in the news media, said the minister was nowhere to be found. He was in Timmins, and I’m sure that—

Hon Mr Baird: With Gilles Bisson.

Mr Bradley: Here’s the Chair of that committee coming forth now. He would agree with me—I’m going to say this—

Mr Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): On rare occasions.

Mr Bradley: On rare occasions he would. I just said, Doug, that if this government implemented all of the provisions of our committee report—chaired by Doug Galt, I’ve got to say, because I saw it was somebody else a while ago—I would think they would meet the provisions of the Kyoto accord as they relate to Ontario. I hope, as he does—

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: We will help you out. We have to be more ambitious. We’ll help you out with that, try to move that date up somewhat. You know you have to compromise with these things so that the Conservative members will sign on, and they had to compromise so we would sign on to some things, to be fair.

Anyway, I digress and the Speaker has been only too kind in permitting me to digress.

I want to deal with the financial help for municipalities. I have the Minister of Municipal Affairs in the House—by the way, I agree with the Minister of Municipal Affairs that he was making some progress when he was minister responsible for gambling. I only wish, out of all the members on the government side, he had stayed in that portfolio or had that responsibility, because gambling is totally out of control now. He received an award from citizens for responsible gambling, and I thought he deserved it, because I thought he listened to what we in the opposition had to say about all these video lottery terminals in every bar and restaurant of every village, town and corner store and so on, the crack cocaine of gambling, and I thought he was moving in that direction. As soon as he left the portfolio, through the backdoor came all these slot machines in what used to be racetracks.

But that’s not what I want to address. For the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I hope he can secure the funding needed—because he meets with municipalities—to help those municipalities not just for one or two years but well into the future. I’ll support him in his efforts to secure the funding from the Treasurer and from the Premier because the onerous obligations on those municipalities will cost them a lot of money. He and I would agree that those

things have to be done because clean, safe water is absolutely necessary, but to do so—and that’s what Ontario’s about; I always thought that’s what our country is about—some parts of Ontario have to assist other parts of Ontario. That’s why we have a province. I used to say that nationally when there was the argument over energy. I used to say that Alberta’s oil is Canada’s oil. Ontario’s forests are Canada’s forests. The fish off Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia are Canada’s fish, not just fish belonging to those provinces.

The same thing is true in Ontario. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs will be worried when he hears now about hydro rates and what could happen to rural Ontario and more remote areas. I know he’s worried about that. He will be speaking up in cabinet for those municipalities which are going to be hit with yet—I’ll call it—a quadruple whammy when it comes to electrical rates.

The point I want to make is, municipalities, to carry out their obligations under this bill, are going to have to have some financial help from the province. The people who live there alone, the water users alone are not going to be able to sustain that, so they’re going to need that kind of assistance. I hope we see clear evidence of that. If we can put it in the form of an amendment, in this legislation, good for us. I may even consult with the minister on that, although I can’t say that because then he might get in trouble with his colleagues, as to what we might see that would be helpful in that legislation. I think he recognizes that lower-income people are having a tough time of it with all these increases in costs that we’re seeing now, some of them unavoidable and some of them avoidable in my view. Nevertheless, they have to face them.

1700

Another ministry I was concerned about—I think the Minister of Municipal Affairs was the Minister of Natural Resources at one time—was the annihilation of the Ministry of Natural Resources in terms of cuts—huge cuts to the staff, huge cuts to the resources. I think what a lot of people didn’t recognize, and he would recognize this, was the very significant role the Ministry of Natural Resources played in water quality, particularly in assisting the conservation authorities. Again, Finance Minister Eves made huge cuts to those conservation authorities. We’re seeing some of the money coming back now and I’m happy to see that. The road to Damascus is full of Tories now trying to repent for their past sins of neglect and of commission and omission in the field of the environment. But we’re happy to welcome the sinners to the conversion to good in the environment, let’s put it that way.

I look at the minister and say that natural resources and the conservation authorities have to have their staffing and resources restored. We will all recall that last week the Environmental Commissioner noted the following with regard to this government. He said: “The provincial water quality monitoring network ... has provided the main overview on water quality data for rivers and

streams. Unfortunately, the MOEE—the Ministry of the Environment and Energy—“severely cut back on its monitoring network, from 730 stations in 1995 to 240 by the year 2000.” That’s 500 monitoring stations. That’s a huge cut.

One wonders whether the provincial government has learned its lesson of Walkerton. I hope they’re being restored. As a former Minister of Natural Resources who had some interest in water quality, I’m sure the present Minister of Municipal Affairs will be imploring his colleagues to restore that funding. He wisely capitulated to my friend Mike Colle, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, after he raised the issue—because he asked me this. I wasn’t going to say this but he said, “Read the section on the Oak Ridges moraine.” I was glad he capitulated to the pressure of the opposition in that regard.

Let me talk about those conservation authorities and the good work they used to do in the field of water quality. You see, they are going to identify a lot of the problems. They may not be there to put in the pipes, the sewage treatment and water treatment plants, but they are going to be there to do some significant monitoring and assessment of an entire watershed. We must recognize that it’s not only the treated water that’s important, but the raw water coming into the treatment system should be as clean as possible.

The bill the government brought forward on what they call nutrient management—and we’re the only people in the world who call that “nutrients” I’m sure; I would say “sewage sludge management” and “manure management”—was not a very strong bill. Again, farmers have to have help financially with the implementation of that and you have to have the staff of the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of Natural Resources supervising, intervening and policing this. And what we don’t see in this government is having that staff available, largely because they don’t like what they call big government.

I want to say as well that in terms of the airborne pollutants that make their way into the waterways, we have come forward with a pretty ambitious program, I believe, and a sensible program in Ontario to improve air quality. One is a very significant increase, far more than this government has contemplated, in the field of public transit. I think everybody knows that the Eves government, because he was the Minister of Finance at the time, when it came into office decided to get itself out of public transit. Great pressure, again, has brought it back into the game, but we obviously need a strong investment in public transit to give people an alternative to having to use their own vehicles every day to get into and out of places such as Metropolitan Toronto. That would help improve air quality.

Second is a clean air program which would look at every stack in the province, private and public sector, as we had with the MISA program—the municipal-industrial strategy for abatement brought in by the Peterson government for water—that we would have to ratchet down the amount of—

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Was that funded by Clean Sweep?

Mr Bradley: It was funded by government funding. We were prepared to invest in those days in the improvement of the environment. This government wishes to withdraw from those areas. I think that’s important.

Conservation measures: you would recall this, Mr Speaker, and I would. There have been efforts over the years to drastically reduce power consumption through making our appliances in the house more efficient. The fridges produced in the year 2002 are far, far superior to the fridges produced 20 years ago in terms of energy efficiency. People putting in a new air conditioning system would find now that, first of all, they have to use a much more benign coolant and, second, something that’s much more energy efficient. In other words, we have a long way to go on conservation. We in the Liberal Party believe that conservation can be brought about in a sensible way with an investment by the government and investment by individuals, with the private sector doing most of the work. We can make our homes, our industries, our businesses and our buildings much more energy efficient.

We believe there should be a significant investment, whether it’s through tax incentives or direct assistance, to help with alternative fuels, bringing on-stream fuels which are much more benign environmentally or perhaps totally benign environmentally as far as air quality is concerned. That relates again to the deposition that we would see.

I remember during the leadership campaign the now Minister of Health, the Honourable Tony Clement, talking about closing the coal-fired plants. I can’t help but believe he would think the government is being very cautious in using the year 2015 to finally close the largest polluter. The reason I say that is that he’s Minister of Health. He has a special obligation to the people of Ontario in the field of health. He’s heard the Ontario Medical Association say that 1,900 people die prematurely each year because of bad air quality, that 13,000 people have to go to the hospital, that health costs alone are \$1 billion a year and the total cost to health and the economy is \$9.9 billion a year. This isn’t some radical environmental group; this is the Ontario Medical Association. They must be flabbergasted when they hear this government wanting to take so long to close those coal-fired plants and replace them with forms of electrical power that are derived from much more environmentally benign ways of producing them.

You would know as well, because you’ve been to Niagara Falls, that there’s a huge power operation there. It used to be Ontario Hydro. We have Beck 1 and Beck 2, as we call it. We now would like to see—and the Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty, went to Niagara Falls to reiterate the commitment, with the mayor of Niagara Falls right there cheering him on—the expansion of the operation in Niagara Falls to what we call Beck 3: new generation coming on-line that is, in terms of air quality, totally benign, and even its disruption of the

water system is minimal. It has already had its environmental assessment. All of this would help water quality in the province if this government would indeed proceed with that.

1710

I want to indicate as well that I like the idea of a centre for clean water in Walkerton. Where else but Walkerton, which had to suffer because of this government's negligence, this government's abandonment of the Ministry of the Environment? I think it's a good idea to have a water centre there. I think we should get the best experts back—we used to have them, by the way, in the Ministry of the Environment before they were fired out the door—to do that work appropriately and to look at even better ways of cleansing our water, although I must repeat, and the member for Ottawa West-Nepean—it used to be Ottawa-Rideau—would know this, that protecting the source of the water is most important. If you protect the source of the water, you have a much easier time with your catchment systems and your purification systems. So I know he would support everything I would be saying this afternoon. I just have the feeling that he would.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): I always did before.

Mr Bradley: And he did before. I agree with him, and I like to hear that.

There are problems with the private laboratories out there, and they may be cleaned up. Fine Analysis Laboratories in Hamilton has been charged, in fact, for violations because of inconsistencies in their operations, real problems: tests not being done, perhaps the falsification of the results of tests and so on. I see on a second occasion, on Boblo Island, there's a problem with this company again. We've had exposed in this Legislature the fact that the government had not been supervising private laboratories as well as they should, so we had testing being done that was inconsistent with what the government said were its requirements in that testing. So I think the government has to go out to each of these laboratories to do an inspection on an ongoing basis to ensure that everything that is required of them is being carried out—not just hope that they are doing it or that some third body is supervising, but that they themselves are supervising it. Then we could have at least some confidence in the water supply in the province.

I am concerned that this government has an agenda to privatize—I mentioned that early on in my remarks—and that many in this government would like nothing better than to see international companies come in to run water systems. I have heard of some bizarre schemes from outside this country. My own regional municipality of Niagara was looking at a scheme where a company in the US was going to come in and was going to give them all kinds of money, and they could use it as a tax write-off in the US. It sounded fishy to me. It reminds me of—is it MFP that's having the problem? MFP, which had financial services in Toronto and other places, has encountered some problems. I think municipalities should look long

and hard before turning over their services to the private sector.

I don't mind—there's a public body out there, a quasi-government body, called OCWA. We used to call it the Clean Water Agency in Ontario. It was an outgrowth of the Ministry of the Environment. It became an independent kind of crown corporation. I know the government wants to privatize that. I hope they do not. I can see them operating certain of these facilities because they are in the public domain, but I think municipalities should be operating their own systems, or in combination with other municipalities, or another government body operating them. Listen, the government shouldn't make cars, steel; it shouldn't make a lot of products out there. It shouldn't be in a lot of fields. One field I think it should be in is that of the producing of water and the delivery of water.

They don't build these systems. We have a construction industry out there that's expert in the field to build these systems, so we're not asking that the government build them. We're asking simply that the government operate them and certainly at least, at the very bare minimum, have ownership of these systems.

All I looked at is Highway 407. That was given to some conglomerate, and today people are being gouged left and right with huge increases almost yearly, perhaps twice a year, in the costs of using Highway 407. This was something that should be a public highway, in my view, and it is in private hands. People are being gouged every time they use it. Certainly I get calls from many of my constituents about that.

I'd like to see the government get back into what I refer to as the LifeLines program, a progressive program that allows municipalities, with the help of the province, perhaps with the help of the federal government in infrastructure programs, to improve their pipes, to replace the pipes that are there or to replace the systems.

What would this do? First of all and foremost, what we're concerned about in this House for the people of Ontario is that it would improve the quality of water and give us a much better chance to have clean and safe water in the province. Second, it would create thousands upon thousands of good paying jobs. It would help our communities in which those individuals live and the businesses that are involved in that. That's secondary, but it's still extremely important that we have that, because we don't want to see another Walkerton.

I urge this government, if not through this legislation then through other legislation, to ensure that we restore the staff of the Ministry of the Environment with all of their expertise, enthusiasm and knowledge, and their knowledge of the history of the province and the players within the water system, that we restore that ministry to where it was many years ago when it was a prime ministry, an important ministry within the government of Ontario. I urge him to give the financial resources, because it's not an expenditure; it's an investment in public health and safety. I implore them to give clout back to the ministry. Instead of telling them to be "busi-

ness-friendly," I would simply ask them to be fair and equitable in the way they deal with everybody and to do their job appropriately. We need a good investigations and enforcement branch. We need a strong abatement branch. We need the scientists, technicians, policy analysts, financial people and legal people within the ministry to be able to do the job appropriately.

Walkerton should have been a wake-up call. Perhaps the critic for the NDP would have the same concern I have: that if the government were to win re-election, then much of the concern we hear about the environment would evaporate mighty quickly; that we wouldn't see the restoration of the Ministry of the Environment or of the Ministry of Natural Resources; that we would see massive privatization—

Mr Beaubien: What year were you the Minister of the Environment?

Mr Bradley: From 1985 to 1990.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I don't think I'm supposed to reply. The Speaker wants me to speak to the bill. I'll try not to respond, because I should speak to the bill.

How about this bill? What do we think of this bill? I think the concept is good. I agree with Justice O'Connor, I agree with the environmentalists, I agree with some municipal people that we want to see an appropriate investment, a strong investment, of funds into water-works in this province. I use that in the broadest sense.

Should we want to reflect the capital cost, the operating costs and so on to a large extent in the cost of water? I think so. But with capital cost in particular I think it's important for the province to play a helping role, a helping hand. Instead of proceeding with more tax cuts—we have huge tax cuts coming to the corporations. We have a private school tax credit out there which is causing to a certain extent a large exodus from the public school system or contributing to it. We have a government that has spent a quarter of a billion dollars on self-serving advertising that any objective observer would say is clearly of a partisan nature. If only we could use those funds for the public good, that would be advantageous to our municipalities and the people they serve.

1720

I think the government of Ontario, whichever government it is, has an obligation to remind municipalities of their obligations when it comes to the delivery and treatment of water in the province. As the population increases, we'll need more treatment facilities for the water itself and for the sewage.

The provisions of the one bill we have seen to deal with nutrient management have to be strengthened considerably. The regulatory framework has to be tough, because right now raw sewage from what as kids we used to call outhouses can be taken and spread on public land for a full five years. I don't think the farmers are very happy about that. I know the farming neighbours are not happy with that. If anything is going to be spread on the fields, they would prefer to see that it has been treated and approved by the Ministry of the Environment,

because it has been done over the years. There are some who want to end that completely, but most people are saying, "At the very least let's have strong supervision of that. Let's follow the rules. Don't be putting it on when it has rained for 18 straight days. Don't be putting it on in the wintertime when the frost is in the ground and it's going to go into our waterways." Some of the stuff they're going to allow to go on the fields is simply unacceptable.

So there are many areas in which the government can become involved, but what we've seen in this legislation and in other bills that are coming forward is what I would call a deathbed repentance.

I want to repeat what I said at the beginning. There are no people in Ontario, outside of very ardent supporters of this government, who believe they ever had any intention of passing this bill or any other bill that was going to substantially improve the environment. To this day—I don't want to paint everybody with the same brush—there is a large contingent in the government, cabinet and benches, that thinks this is nuts, that we shouldn't be spending all this time on environmental issues and that they should have carried on in the mode of Mike Harris.

I find this a bill that will be interesting to debate. I'll look forward to providing some amendments and listening to what others have to say in this House.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Ms Martel: I wasn't here for all the debate from the member, but I'm sure that in the time he spoke he talked about his concern regarding the ability of small communities in particular to have to pay.

I want to reinforce that by using an example from my own riding. This has to do with the clean water guidelines, which this small community is trying to cope with right now, even before we get to the issue of paying for the cost of water. This is the small community of Foleyet. It's the most northern community in my riding. It's an unorganized municipality. It's run by a local services board that is volunteer. It has virtually no commercial or industrial base. Essentially, the residents pay for everything.

As a result of their engineering report, the engineer has told them they need about \$233,000 worth of repairs to their water plant in their community. That application has gone to the Ministry of the Environment. Their engineer has also told them that in all likelihood about \$100,000 of that cost will not be covered through the OSTAR program, and that is going to be a cost they will have to deal with themselves. After they find out what that share OSTAR is not going to cover is actually going to be, the community will then go to the northern Ontario heritage fund and hopefully be able to apply to a program there that may provide them with some costs. Right now the cost-sharing is to be 50-50 on \$100,000, but it says that in exceptional circumstances perhaps the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp will do more. We don't know what they're going to do with this application when they finally receive it.

The point is that even if the community has to deal with \$50,000, they can't find that money. There is

absolutely no way they're going to be able to find that local share. If you then force a community like this to deal with the actual cost of water, I can tell you that you might as well turn off the taps, because people in that community can't afford it.

I don't think I'm alone. I think there are a lot of other northern communities in the same boat. We really need to think about that implication as we deal with this bill.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I listened to my esteemed colleague from across the floor. We are talking about Bill 175. I noted that sometimes he went on the odd tangent, that we were into other areas.

Ms Churley: What did you say? What bill are you talking about?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Bill 175, the sustainability of full-cost pricing for water and sewage. I think everyone agrees with the concept: that we should have the dollars go back into the system to replace our aging water and sewage systems and that price should reflect that. It's how we get to that point to pay for it that's the big question.

That's why I was so pleased to introduce substantially the same bill as Minister of Municipal Affairs about a year ago. I'm glad it's over in Environment now, because it should be one-stop shopping. You need to coordinate the policies with the pricing. For example, the Ministry of the Environment, which the Liberal Party seems to like, I think should be more about laws and regulations—clear, clear rules—not so much of these murky policies and procedures. You need to have clear standards so then you know what the cost is to build modern water and sewage systems throughout Ontario and to operate them on a sustainable basis.

There are two components to how we cost-share that; one is the capital, building the infrastructure required. O'Connor talks about a levy for users that's shared across the province. Then going forward with the operating costs, how do we get that on an economy of scale so it's affordable for the small towns that I represent?

I can give you a small example of a solution that you may want to start looking toward, and that's how we pool the cost of that. In the small town of Kinmount, if they were to comply with the new water regs, it would cost users about \$1,700 a year. It's clearly not affordable for our seniors. By pooling with a larger entity, they can get that down to a manageable cost. We need to look for solutions, as a Legislature, to make this bill work.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I couldn't agree more with the minister that we should look together as a Legislature for solutions to these problems. That's why I'll be interested to see, when we bring some amendments to this legislation, how well they're accepted by the government, because they will be given truly in the light of trying to improve the legislation.

I don't think there's anybody in this Legislature who is any more concerned with the environment, with water quality and with safety of water in the province of Ontario than is the member for St Catharines. I want to support him in a couple of areas where he spoke out; one is with publicly owned and operated systems.

When it comes to water in this province, I am one who stands steadfastly by the rule that the municipality should own the system because there is accountability in it. We've seen too many examples where the private sector has come in and is not accountable. Water shouldn't be one of those where we lose any kind of accountability.

When it comes to operation, I think the member for St Catharines gave a very good example: OCWA. I was chair of the Union Water System when I was mayor in Leamington. It was a co-operative venture between industry, the H.J. Heinz Co, and a number of municipalities in the area. It worked very well: publicly owned, operated by OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency. So I support my colleague to the limit in that issue.

When it comes to full cost recovery, I think we have to look at small municipalities that can't afford some of the big bills they will face. I hope we're able to assist them in that matter.

Mr Bisson: This is like much of the same. This is in keeping with what this government has been doing trying to deal with the crisis of water across the province. The government brought a number of regulations in about a year and a half ago, somewhere around there, to deal with the Walkerton situation, which, I would argue, the government created. As a result, a number of communities are unable to meet the commitments they have to meet under the regulations this government has already put forward.

I've got communities like Mattice and Moosonee—I just heard about Foleyet, and there are others across the province—that are having a hard time as it is now meeting the requirements you're forcing them to meet under your new water regulations.

1730

The government's response to all this is, "Don't worry, we're not going to tell you how to pay for it, because we're not going to put any money forward. We're going to move the deadline for you to meet the regulations from December 31, 2002, to the beginning of July." Hopefully, the government figures, by that time there will be a general election and they won't have to worry about dealing with this little hot potato before they get into that election. Rather than the government saying to these communities, "Here is the money you're going to get to build your infrastructure to meet the current regulations," the government is saying, "We'll deal with it by pushing forward the date for implementation."

This bill just sort of compounds the problem. If communities like Mattice, Foleyet, Moosonee and others are having a hard time trying to meet their requirements under current guidelines, how are those municipalities and the residents in those municipalities expected to catch the full cost? It's just not doable in any of those communities.

Our argument from the New Democratic Party is that philosophically we can agree with much of what you're trying to do here, but the point is, you've got to put the money forward. The province has to be serious. If you believe you have the responsibility, which I believe you

do, to make sure there's safe drinking water in Ontario, the provincial government has to pony up to the table and put the money there so that municipalities are able to meet those regulations, and that's something you've failed to do up to now.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines has 120 seconds to respond.

Mr Bradley: I like this provision that allows members to respond. I think the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Timmins-James Bay, both being from the north, recognize the great difficulty some of the smaller communities are going to face in meeting their obligations. The answer isn't simply to lessen the obligation; it is to provide financial assistance to them.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs was helpful in his comments. I will simply look to see how much of an investment we're going to see from the provincial government in the capital end of improving and expanding the water system in Ontario.

The Minister of the Environment will also have a role to play in securing the funds—I wish him well—along with the Minister of Natural Resources. Particularly when he noted the 730 monitoring stations down to 240, he must have been shocked and disappointed. Now that he's minister, he'll have a chance to make changes to that.

My friend from Essex, who himself was a municipal councillor at one time, recognizes the importance of not turning this over to the private sector. Of course we expect the private sector will build our infrastructure, but we do not believe you should take out of public ownership the situation that exists with water systems in this province.

In the case of Walkerton, of course, if this government had not cut its staff, if this government had not abandoned its public labs, if this government had put in place a protocol for reporting, then Walkerton would not have happened. So they need not point their fingers at the mayor. When the government wants to know why this happened, they can look in the mirror.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Churley: I'm very pleased to see the Minister of the Environment is back to hear my comments this evening. I guess I'll be wrapping up tomorrow.

I'm going to start by clearing up some things and discussing the issue that seems to be dominating the debate so far today, and that is the whole issue around cost recovery. It's a very dangerous thing—and the Tories accuse the opposition of doing this all the time and we accuse the Tories of doing it and it's done frequently—to cherry-pick from reports items that reflect your own philosophies. That's was done today by the minister and some of the other Tory speakers.

I want to advise everybody to read these books. I've got them both here, part one and part two of the Walkerton inquiry. Here's part one. There's a lot of reading here. I would also advise everybody to read the latest Environmental Commissioner's annual report. When you read the entire books and the recommenda-

tions, you will get a bigger picture of what we're talking about here. We seem to be talking about this bill today in isolation from the multi-barrier approach that Justice O'Connor talked about, one of which, the key, was source protection, groundwater protection. We have a nutrient management bill that didn't deal with that. We have a safe drinking water bill that's coming forward that's not going to be dealing with that. We have this bill before us today which isn't dealing with groundwater protection, source protection. I did hear the minister say that he would be giving and has given the conservation authorities \$8 million, I think he said, to go out and do those studies and to come back, and maybe in six months or so they will be ready to start working on a source protection bill.

Well, I'm just counting the months here. Here we are in October—November, December, January, February, March, April. Everybody's talking about an election, Mr Speaker. You would know better than me, being part of the Tory caucus. I just hear all the rumours and little hints. We're not sure, but there's a pretty good likelihood, if hydro rates have not soared totally through the ceiling, that before the summer comes and the rates go through the roof again they may try to squeeze this election in in the spring and we're not going to see a source protection bill before this House. So my recommendation is that in fact this bill be amended, and I will be bringing forward such amendments.

We heard from the conservation authorities and the Canadian Environmental Law Association about this, that when we talk about cost recovery, in fact what's identified in this bill is too narrow and that municipalities and regions need to also be able to recover those costs for the work they do on groundwater and source protection and studies. That's not included in there.

I want to point out to people to turn to pages 312 and 313 in part two of the Walkerton inquiry, because Justice O'Connor spends a fair amount of time discussing user-pay or cost recovery. He addresses some of the issues that are raised by my colleagues here today and indeed are very serious concerns. I want to in particular read this to you. The government members should listen and the Minister of the Environment should take a look at this.

He says, after he says some other interesting things about different kinds of financial models that could be looked at:

“...the financing of water systems does not occur in isolation of other pressures on municipal budgets. In light of recent restructuring in the municipal sector, especially the transfer of additional open-ended social service costs (eg, welfare) to municipalities in 1998, there is currently some uncertainty about the ability of municipalities to finance all of the programs that they are responsible for, including water services. Municipalities may be reducing spending (including borrowing) to plan for potential increases in social service costs. Although I consider it beyond my mandate to make a recommendation in this area, I encourage the province to publicly review the program responsibilities and fiscal capability of municipali-

ties in light of recent restructuring to ensure that the financial pressures on municipalities do not crowd out the adequate financing of water systems.”

There it is in Justice O'Connor's report, pointing out, I would say very carefully and gently—we don't call it restructuring here. We call it downloading, blatant downloading of services to the municipalities without giving them the resources to cover it. Justice O'Connor acknowledges that problem in his part two report and highly recommends that the government take a look at that.

So while the Minister of the Environment and other government members get up today and start talking about cost recovery of our water services, they better take heed that most municipalities will not be able to afford it.

1740

I know—and you should get the book out and take a look at it—that Justice O'Connor does not recommend a particular financing model, and neither does this bill. If you go to the Web site, the Walkerton inquiry heard from a lot of different people and organizations and a lot of deputations on different financial models, some of which tried to take the issues raised by my colleagues today into account.

Certainly what we don't want to see, of course, is any municipality not being able to afford to keep their drinking water safe, and we don't want differential standards according to the ability to pay to upgrade a system or to follow the regulations. My colleague mentioned that the government brought in new regulations and didn't give the municipalities the money to enforce them. What did they do instead of giving them those resources, either under OSTAR or SuperBuild? They just postponed for six months.

Ms Martel: That's one way of doing it.

Ms Churley: That's one way to do it. They said, “You don't have to follow through with those regulations,” instead of giving them the money. That's unsafe. They brought in new regulations to make water safe after Walkerton and then said, “OK, if you don't have the money to pay for it, you don't have to do it right now.”

We want to make sure, as we bring in new laws and new regulations, that all municipalities across the province can afford to keep their drinking water as safe as possible.

Also, I want to point out that when we talk about user fees or paying for the water, we should not just be talking about those of us who turn on the taps. This is a dangerous area to get into, I suppose, but it shouldn't be just residents paying for the water they're using. Think about all the industries—and I suppose the calls will be coming soon. If we're talking about user-pay, we have to be talking about everybody who uses our water for free. There are all kinds of industries—and I'm not going to name any of them, but you can think about it—that use an enormous amount of water for whatever the charge is for a water-taking permit—\$50 or \$100; I don't know what it is. It would just take a minuscule amount of money—we're not talking about a lot of money—if we went to everybody in this province and said, “You have to start helping to build up our infrastructure.”

We need to be looking at all of the different kinds of financing models so that there is no municipality, under any circumstances, that can't afford to pay for capital investment. In fact, I would argue that the government should continue to work with all municipalities, as the NDP government did when we created OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency, to get grants for infrastructure upgrades, upgrading their sewage treatment systems and water systems, as long as they agreed to water conservation. We have good examples of the municipalities that did that. They got the money, they built new plants with conservation built in, and they're saving money. So it all makes sense. There are models out there that we can look at as well in other jurisdictions around the world that brought in different forms of user-pay.

I would say to everybody, we are focusing on this particular aspect today. This is something we have to work at in consultation with the municipalities, with environmental groups, with all of the interested people—municipal, sewer and water workers, conservation authorities—and come up with a model that works for everybody. A huge component will have to be conservation, because if we look at what's happening to our precious water sources, more and more calls for bulk water exports and the implications of that, and water being drained from the Great Lakes, we have to take a very good look at how we're using our water. It's not just a matter of keeping our water as clean and pristine as possible, and that means when it comes out of the pipe, but it also means ground source protection.

I would say it absolutely needs to be included in this bill that municipalities, whatever financial structure we come up with ultimately—a fair one for everybody—will be able to afford to keep their systems up to date, and the provincial government will do its part and, as Justice O'Connor is suggesting, look at the kinds of services that have been downloaded and are just breaking the banks of our municipalities and take back some of those services, particularly if they go ahead with this user-pay and just completely pull out of infrastructure repairs and upgrades, which of course they can't do.

I thought it was very important to talk about that. I would urge everybody to look at these several pages that deal specifically with the costs and different ways of financing it and to go to the Web site.

Justice O'Connor also talks about future capital costs. On the same page, 313, he talks about: “The greatest future costs facing some municipalities ... appear to be for infrastructure. In light of my recommendation that municipalities, barring exceptional circumstances, pay for those costs from local revenue sources, I discuss here the financing options that are available.” He does come up with a number of possible ways to get this huge amount of money for infrastructure costs. But he doesn't give a particular recommendation on how it should be done.

On page 315, he does talk about the role of provincial subsidies. He says—and I'm paraphrasing here; I'm not reading the whole thing—that from a safety standpoint, if

municipal water systems are operated on a sound and sustainable financial basis, there are some that need subsidies from the province. "Experience indicates that relying on subsidies from senior levels of government can be unpredictable," as they certainly have been under this government, "and, in some cases, can lead to delays in decision making about necessary capital expenditures." He says he did not "consider it appropriate to make a definitive recommendation in this area," but he does acknowledge there is a huge amount of money involved in this.

That's the issue around user-pay. We have an opportunity over the course of the hearings to study the different funding models and then try to decide on the best one, so that no municipality, no single person, ever has to worry about turning on their taps and having no water come out—having the water turned off—which happened in England after privatization, by the way, because people couldn't afford it; and, secondly, that somebody's water in a smaller municipality is not as safe because they don't have the money to do the upgrades. Nobody wants to see that, and I'm sure the minister doesn't as well. So we have to take a very cautious and careful approach as to how we end up financing the system through user-pay.

I want to continue my discussion on this bill today with the backdrop of why we're here discussing this bill. We'll be discussing the government's own Safe Drinking Water Act soon. I'm not going to go into that a great deal today, because I'll have an opportunity in the near future to explain to people what happened and why my Bill 3, as promised by the Premier, didn't get off the ground and the government is now introducing its own Safe Drinking Water Act. It doesn't have all the components of mine, and I want to explain why that's a problem. But I think I'm going to leave that for another day, except to say now that because I don't believe source protection is ever going to see the light of day of—I should explain that what Justice O'Connor recommended is that the government bring in a safe drinking water bill. Granted, it would be different from mine, because he took a different approach, but he made a very fundamental case that, as I mentioned before, a multi-barrier approach had to be taken. In fact, the first 17 of his recommendations in part two are about groundwater and source protection. I'm going to argue strenuously that the groundwater, the source protection piece, be put back into my Safe Drinking Water Act because it won't work, and none of these bills will work and protect us from another Walkerton, until we go forward with source protection. Justice O'Connor makes that very clear. What he recommended was that the EPA, the Environmental Protection Act, be amended to deal with groundwater and source protection.

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If I believed that was coming—and I like to see all of these things coming together so we don't have it all piecemeal. But it's not here, it's not going to come and we need to use this opportunity to get the source protec-

tion in and include it in this bill in the context of the financing, that municipalities and conservation authorities can also raise money to do that kind of work. As I said, the conservation authorities have written a letter to the minister expressing those concerns, as has CELA, Canadian Environmental Law Association.

I wanted to do a backdrop here, and Mr Bradley went into more detail than I'm going to because I want to talk, as I have been, more substantively about the bill, but I think this is important. Back in 1995 there was, I think, about \$529 million in the Ministry of the Environment budget, and in 2000-01 it was down to \$250 million. That's an outrageous, astounding cut. We know about a third of staff was laid off and 42% of water-related staff were just gone. This was all before Walkerton happened, and then the labs were closed down.

I do want to clear up something else. I've got part one from the Walkerton inquiry. When Mr Bradley, the member for St Catharines, was speaking, I didn't quite hear the comments from over there about what the NDP did. However, a member from the Tory caucus came over to me—he's not here now, which is too bad, but I want everybody to hear this—and said, "Basically it was your fault. Didn't you know that Walkerton started using a private lab in 1994 when you guys were in power?" And I said, "No, I don't think so." "Oh, yes, they did. They did. It's all your fault," bringing it back to the NDP again. Just for his benefit and anybody else—and we do want to get away from the blame game in terms of that now; I'm sure the people of Walkerton do, way back to who privatized labs and when—but to hear a government member after all this time, when it's been made very clear, after Mike Harris went to Walkerton and tried to blame the NDP for what happened, to have a member in this House walk over to me today and say that is outrageous.

So I will ask everybody to go to part one of the Walkerton report and turn to page 370 and 371 where Justice O'Connor goes through, in great detail, what happened in Walkerton and the history that led up to the tragedy.

And you know what? I don't think most people are aware of this because we don't talk about it very much. The government didn't just close down the four big labs across the province, the water-testing labs that came under the Minister of the Environment—you may not even know this, Mr Speaker—but did you know that before September 1996 there were 13 public health laboratories operated by the Ministry of Health in this province? And did you know those labs were also closed down? So on top of the four Ministry of the Environment labs, these 13 public health labs were closed down in 1996. I want to point out to the member who—how shall I say this?—gave me incorrect information that he should read this page, and here's what it said:

"Before September 1996, there were 13 public health laboratories operated by the Ministry of Health that also provided microbiological testing of drinking water for municipalities. These municipalities were advised that all

of these laboratories would stop providing this testing in September 1996. Before then, drinking water tests had been provided to the Walkerton PUC by the Ministry of Health laboratory in Palmerston.”

Can we just clear that one up and get it out of the way? In fact, they were getting that testing done for free, because another thing the Tories like to bring up—and I see a former Minister of the Environment agreeing with me on that, or maybe he’s nodding to his colleagues over there. I’ll give him the benefit of the doubt that he was agreeing with me.

They point out, “The NDP started privatizing labs in 1993.” We did, and you talk about user-pay—we were in a recession and that was one of the things: we did not close any labs. Some municipalities were coming to us, saying, “We’d like to use the private labs, to give them the business in our communities,” and a few started using those labs and paying for it. The majority—in fact, Justice O’Connor talked about it on the same page, that according to the director of MOE’s laboratory services branch, business only fell by 6%. So it’s very clear that not a lot of labs—those who didn’t feel they could afford it were still getting free tests by the Ministry of Health

labs. They had to pay a certain amount of money, but just user-pay for the testing they had from the Ministry of the Environment. I just wanted to, hopefully, set the record straight on that once and for all.

Time does fly, doesn’t it? I should wrap up here now. What I’m going to do, and I’ll just give you a preview of where I’m going to go tomorrow when we pick up the debate on this—

Mr Bisson: Stay tuned.

Ms Churley: Stay tuned. I’m going to go through my specific concerns about this bill before us today.

Number one, it’s a bill that is essentially about privatization. I’m going to talk about the problems with that.

Number two, it’s a bill that doesn’t include all of the things that needed to be included, as recommended by Justice O’Connor. I’m going to outline some of the things I’d like to see in it and certainly will be presenting amendments to the government.

The Acting Speaker: It now being 6 o’clock, the House stands adjourned until 6:45 tonight.

The House adjourned at 1758.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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