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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 15 November 2004

Lundi 15 novembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 November 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 novembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PROPANE EXPLOSION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House to pay tribute to the emergency services personnel of Clarington and to all those who responded to the explosion near Port Darlington in Bowmanville on November 9. This was the largest propane explosion in Ontario in over 40 years.

Naturally, our thoughts are with all those affected by this incident, including the nearby homes, businesses and employees. However, our community was indeed fortunate that despite the magnitude of the explosion and fire, there was no loss of life and no injuries. This is a tribute to the skills and professionalism of Clarington's emergency and fire services, along with the emergency responders. They include Durham Regional Police, Durham EMS members, and members of the RCMP and the Ontario Provincial Police. The Salvation Army was also on hand to support those fighting the fire and those who had to evacuate their homes.

I would like to commend the mayor of Clarington, John Mutton, and all the municipal staff for their quick response in putting the municipality's emergency plan into action within minutes. I'd also like to pay respect to Clarington Fire Chief Michael Creighton and all of his staff, including Division Chief Bill Hesson, who directed the emergency response from the Durham Regional Police helicopter. I'd also like to recognize Inspector Bill Temple of the Durham Regional Police, and Chief Kevin McAlpine.

There were 50 firefighters and some 15 vehicles on the scene, as well as 60 police, including 10 RCMP officers and 10 members of the OPP.

I'm pleased to say that the residents evacuated during the incident were safely home the following day at the latest. The cause remains under investigation. I'm confident that what we learn from this incident will further protect all Ontario communities in the future.

EID-UL-FITR

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It is a great privilege for me to rise today and recognize one of the

great Islamic celebrations, the festival of Eid. Today, Muslims around the world observe the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting, which actually happened over the weekend. The Eid festival begins on the sighting of the first new moon after Ramadan. It is a celebration of charity, forgiveness and family. It is also a time to give thanks for being granted the strength and discipline to have endured the previous month's fasting.

It's a privilege to recognize this glorious occasion, because by doing so, we celebrate the Canadian traditions of multiculturalism, mutual respect and harmony. The fact that I am able to stand before you today and share my culture is a testament to the tenor of a liberal society.

Our country leads the world in our commitment to multiculturalism. I'm proud to be a member of a government that enshrines values of understanding, respect and harmony. Every day we take steps. For example, we are giving Canadian workers easy access to their rights by making employment standards available in 21 languages, we are helping foreign-trained health professionals contribute to the health of Ontarians, and just last week we announced new programs to create employment opportunities for internationally trained medical graduates. These programs are substantive evidence of this government's commitment to the ideals of multiculturalism.

I salute this House, this assembly and this government on this occasion of Eid-Ul-Fitr. Eid Mubarak.

ROYAL AGRICULTURAL WINTER FAIR

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise today to recognize the grandest of all the fall fairs, the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, which closed for the 2004 season yesterday. The Royal is the largest indoor combined agricultural, horticultural, canine and equestrian event in the world and provides an excellent opportunity for the city to meet the country. As the organizers say, "It's the show that puts November on the calendar, Toronto on the map and Canada on the world stage."

At the Royal, non-rural residents can learn about agriculture in Ontario and the challenges that farmers in this province face on a daily basis.

While I've been fortunate to attend the Royal for a number of years, this year I had the opportunity to visit the fair with John Tory, the leader of the PC Party of Ontario, and CEO Bill Duron, who gave us a personal, guided tour. I was happy to attend the exhibits with Mr Tory, who wanted to get to know the real people who work the farm and hear about their needs and concerns. He didn't want to rub shoulders with the elite at the

opening ceremonies; he wanted to meet the people who are responsible for bringing Ontario products from farm to fork. We met with a variety of different commodity groups and became informed about each one's farming experience, and we talked extensively with cattle farmers, who are presently facing the greatest challenges of all.

On behalf of myself and our leader, John Tory, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the organizers and participants of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair for once again putting on an impressive display, for taking the time to tell us their personal stories and for showing the world why Ontario continues to produce some of the highest-quality foods in the country.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Salam Alaykum. Namaste. Sat Sri Akal.

This weekend marks celebrations in three religious communities: The Muslim community celebrated Eid; the Hindu community celebrated Diwali; and the Sikh community celebrated Bandi Chhor Divas.

I'm honoured to stand in the Ontario Legislature today on behalf of the New Democratic Party to wish the Muslim community Eid Mubarak, the Hindu community Shubh Diwali and the Sikh community Bandi Chhor Divas Mubarak.

Eid marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan, a time of worship and contemplation. The month also teaches social consciousness and solidarity.

Diwali commemorates Lord Rama's return after 14 years in exile and the victory over darkness.

The Sikh community commemorates Guru Hargobind Sahib's return from being jailed as a political prisoner. When the Guru was released, he insisted on taking other political prisoners with him.

All three of these communities have played and continue to play significant roles in my riding of Toronto-Danforth, and indeed throughout all of Ontario, both economically and socially. I am asking the House to wish all three communities Eid Mubarak, Shubh Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas Mubarak.

DIWALI

Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): I rise today to offer my best wishes to the East Indian community on the occasion of Diwali. Diwali signifies victory of light over darkness, victory of knowledge over ignorance, victory of goodness over evil and victory of life over death. It is a celebration of eternal light which also marks the new year for the East Indian community.

There are over 800 million East Indians in the world and over half a million in Canada. The first settled in Canada more than a century ago, and they have contributed to the growth and development of this country and continue to play a vital role in communities across the country.

I am sure every member of this House will join me in extending congratulations to this community on this occasion.

AWARDS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I rise today to recognize a number of businesses and individuals in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. Recently two significant awards ceremonies took place in Bracebridge and Huntsville.

The first awards ceremony was the Bracebridge Chamber of Commerce Outstanding Business Achievement Awards. This year, these awards focused on the retail sector. The chamber voted to recognize George MacNaughtan of MacNaughtan's Home Hardware, Michelle Hallam of the Silver Bridge Gallery and Todd Jones of Muskoka Furniture.

The chamber's businessperson of the year was awarded to Don MacKay of Muskoka Highlands golf course. Muskoka Party Rentals, owned by Kim Rixon, was named the new business of the year. Gord Smith accepted the award for the Rocky Island Tire Co as established business of the year. The 2004 award for outstanding contribution to Bracebridge went to Gord Durnan for his work with the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital Foundation.

1340

This year, 19 women were recognized for their accomplishments by the YWCA Muskoka Women of Distinction Awards. Jennifer Peake and Robin Stewart were the young women of distinction. Both of these women are active volunteers in their communities. Gwendolyn Boyes-Sitler was honoured for her career as a nationally recognized artist and author. Barbara Dawson was recognized for her commitment to the Muskoka Pioneer Power Association. Anne Cool of Huntsville was nominated for her commitment to promoting education for adults and children. Judith Moore of Muskoka Ambulance Service was honoured for her commitment to emergency services.

I hope that you will all join me in congratulating these successful businesses and community leaders.

REPORT ON YOUTH VIOLENCE

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I rise today in recognition of an amazing group of youth who have been working on the issue of violence. This group, brought together by the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy and Voices for Children, released the report entitled Just Listen to Me: Youth Voices On Violence at 11 am on the steps of the Legislature.

Just Listen to Me is the first report of its kind and it presents a picture of violence in the lives of Ontario's young people as told through their own voices and experiences. Just Listen to Me is the result of round table discussions on violence that included input from 80 young people from six regions across the province. I am

pleased to have had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy and Voices for Children, along with the Minister of Children and Youth Services, in preparation for today's release.

I'm delighted to acknowledge today's speakers—Stephanie, Jessie and Brad—who introduced the report earlier today and spoke on behalf of all the young people involved in the outcome of the report. I'm also happy to acknowledge Audrey, Kathy, Mark, Patrice and Andrew, who are also at Queen's Park today and in the Legislature this afternoon. I thank them for their dedication and hard work.

The goal of the report is to explore the nature of violence in the lives of young people through firsthand experiences and to make recommendations for a starting point to ongoing dialogue in order that we may collectively find solutions to the problems identified by youth in this groundbreaking report.

CONSUMER FRAUD

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I'm pleased to rise today during Consumer Awareness Week to speak about an anti-fraud initiative based in my riding of Nipissing. PhoneBusters is a national anti-fraud call centre jointly operated by the OPP and RCMP and based in North Bay. Established in 1993, this fully bilingual service handles complaints about telemarketing, mail fraud, ID theft, Internet fraud and consumer scams with a Canadian connection. Over the past 10 years, PhoneBusters has contributed to the public's awareness that it is often our most vulnerable citizens—our seniors—who are the targets and victims of telephone, mail and Internet fraud. Thankfully, there is SeniorBusters.

Operating in conjunction with PhoneBusters, SeniorBusters consists of over 60 volunteers from North Bay and area over the age of 50 who call back seniors who have been victims of consumer fraud. SeniorBusters work with seniors, family members, local police agencies and elder abuse committees to alert the public to potential scams and frauds. Through education, they equip seniors with the necessary tools to effectively fight this crime. By providing emotional and moral support to victims, they ensure that all seniors have a place to turn if they need assistance.

I recently had the privilege of celebrating the various volunteers and coordinators. I was thrilled to acknowledge Detective Staff Sergeant Barry Elliott; Carole Gilmour, the SeniorBusters coordinator; and all of the SeniorBusters volunteers. I am proud of this important work being done in my riding, and I salute them all.

EDUCATION

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about education. Across this province, schools are benefiting from this government's commitment to education.

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is a prime example of that commitment. Since we've taken office, the Toronto Catholic District School Board has been able to hire 60 new full-time-equivalent teachers. The funding provided will ensure smaller class sizes for our youngest learners in junior kindergarten to grade 3. This will ensure that our children get the attention they deserve.

This government understands the importance of a good start for all our children across Ontario, and that is why we're committed to these smaller class sizes.

This is a welcome change from the previous government's lack of attention to our schools. Where once our children went to schools in crowded classrooms with limited supplies and crumbling facilities, we're ushering in a new era in education where our children go to schools with smaller class sizes, funding for resources, and structural upgrades.

We're tackling the rising dropout rate to ensure that our young people have greater access to the educational opportunities they will need to compete in an ever-increasingly-competitive global economy. Test scores are already improving. I'm very proud to be part of this Liberal renaissance in education in Ontario.

VISITORS

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the east gallery today I'm pleased to introduce two prominent members of my riding—a Stanley Cup winner and the new coach of the Atlanta Thrashers, Bob Hartley, and also a very prominent developer from Embrun, Robert Bourdeau. Please welcome them.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It's not a point of order, but welcome.

We must caution members that rising on a point of order of that nature is not appropriate.

We have today in the members' gallery Mr Nino Aquilino, mayor from the province of Agrigento on the island of Sicily, in Italy. I would invite all members to welcome him.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm until 9:30 pm on Monday, November 15, 2004, Tuesday, November 16, 2004, Wednesday, November 17, 2004, and Thursday, November 18, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All opposed, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Hardeman, Ernie	Peters, Steve
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Jackson, Cameron	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Klees, Frank	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Tascona, Joseph N.
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Norm	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mitchell, Carol	Yakabuski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	O'Toole, John	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Oraziotti, David	
Gravelle, Michael	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Martel, Shelley
Horwath, Andrea	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CANADA-ONTARIO MUNICIPAL RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Today I have the honour and the great pleasure to inform the Legislature and all the people of Ontario that our government has signed the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund. Ontario is the first province in Canada to enter into this agreement, and we are extremely proud to do so.

Small urban and rural communities will be able to apply for COMRIF funding immediately. COMRIF is a key component of our strategy to upgrade Ontario's infrastructure. You see, our province has fallen behind, and we have much work to do if we're going to remain competitive with the dynamic regional economies of our greatest competitors in the United States.

This program targets the infrastructure needs of small urban centres and rural communities with a population of less than 250,000. Our federal partner has agreed that we must work closely with small municipalities for whom COMRIF was designed. Through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, known as AMO, municipal leaders have been involved in the design of COMRIF from the beginning. Since announcing this program here in the Legislature last May, we have consulted extensively with municipalities through AMO.

These are the priorities that municipal leaders told us they wanted to see addressed: Municipalities wanted safe, clean drinking water for their residents, they wanted sewage and waste disposal that didn't endanger the environment, and they wanted something done about the lamentable conditions of local roads and bridges.

Well, these are the key COMRIF priorities. Each of the three levels of government will contribute up to \$298 million to COMRIF. We have programs to help municipalities raise their share of the money.

To administer the program, we and our partners in Ottawa have set up a joint secretariat. This secretariat, the first of its kind in Canada, will consider all applications as rapidly as possible. We will decide in a timely manner and fashion which applications will be approved.

We believe that COMRIF sets a new benchmark for co-operation amongst the three levels of government. It will help restore our public confidence in the fairness and efficiency of public administration. It will bring real, tangible change to communities right across this great province.

We care about COMRIF, because in a healthy, strong Ontario, small communities must be as dynamic as larger ones. They need to retain their young people, offer modern amenities to new businesses and welcome new citizens. COMRIF will let them identify their own priorities and give them the tools to get the job done.

It's a great pleasure to be here to announce this historic agreement.

1400

WATER EXTRACTION

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): It's my pleasure to stand in the House to advise the members on the steps this government is taking to achieve the strongest possible protections for the waters of the Great Lakes basin.

This past July, the government released to the public drafts of agreements it had negotiated with Quebec and the eight American states bordering the Great Lakes. The Ontario government has concerns about the level of protection provided in the draft agreements to the waters of the Great Lakes basin. This September, we held public open houses in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste Marie, Windsor, London and Kingston, and the Council of Great Lakes Governors hosted meetings here in Toronto. We listened to the feedback from stakeholders, First Nations and the general public, and they have spoken.

Ontario remains committed to its provincial law, which bans diversions. For the purposes of the annex agreements, Ontarians and the McGuinty government clearly want a no-diversions agreement or the position of no net loss, as proposed by the International Joint Commission. In addition, we regard conservation measures as significant for the protection of the Great Lakes waters. This precious resource should not be wasted. For these reasons, Ontario is not prepared to ratify the agreement in its current form.

Let me provide a bit of context for members on these agreements.

It was in the early 1980s that Ontario, Quebec and the eight Great Lakes states became concerned about the threats to the Great Lakes from proposals to divert large quantities of water out of the basin. So in 1985, they signed the Great Lakes Charter, which was a good-faith agreement that aims to protect and conserve the waters of the Great Lakes basin.

In 1998, the Harris government issued a permit to an Ontario company for the export of up to 600 million litres of water a year from Lake Superior for sale in Asian markets. Public outrage on both sides of the border led to the signing of the Great Lakes Charter Annex in 2001. The charter annex committed the 10 jurisdictions to strengthen protection of Great Lakes basin waters through binding agreements. Over the next three years, the parties negotiated the draft agreements that were released in July. Ontario took part in those negotiations because it was an opportunity for the province to have a voice in promoting stronger regulation of water uses on the US side of the border.

The Great Lakes are vital for the well-being of Ontarians, but these lakes are also a resource that we share with other Ontarians and among 40 million other people on both sides of the border who use these waters for drinking, for food production, for work and for recreation. While Ontario bans water transfers out of its three major water basins, the same is not the case in the United States. Clearly, water is a public resource that should not be traded as a commodity. Through the negotiations, Ontario was able to raise the bar on protections for the Great Lakes basin waters, up to a point. The draft agreements strengthen regulation of water uses in many states, but they are not as strong as Ontario's laws, which prohibit water transfers out of the province's three major water basins.

When Ontario released the draft agreements last July, I said Ontario would be seeking further dialogue with other jurisdictions on the diversion issue and on other issues that might be raised by the public. We asked the public, stakeholders and First Nations to give us feedback on these agreements.

I'm pleased to inform this House that I have instructed my officials who are meeting today in Chicago with representatives of Quebec and the Great Lakes states to discuss the results of the public consultation. The McGuinty government will not sign the current drafts of the Great Lakes Charter Annex agreements unless

changes to enhance the level of protection for the waters of the Great Lakes basin are made.

I will also be discussing the feedback from our consultation with my federal colleagues and Ontario's negotiating partners from Quebec. We will be considering our position carefully before resuming negotiations in January. I want to assure Ontarians that we will continue to seek input on the charter annex agreements from stakeholders and First Nations, and I would also like to address today a related issue concerning these negotiations.

Some stakeholders have raised the legitimate question of who should be leading these negotiations on behalf of our citizens. If the federal government were to direct the negotiations, it would have to deal directly with the US federal government, which would have to represent the interests of water users across the continental United States and not just the Great Lakes states. Ontario believes the US Great Lakes states share with us many common interests on the use and protection of this valued resource. We are concerned that other US states may have an interest in accessing Great Lakes waters that will conflict with our desire to prevent diversions from the basin. This is a highly complex issue, and we will continue discussions with Quebec and the Canadian federal government before we make any final decisions.

I want to assure Ontarians that, above all, the Ontario government is seeking the strongest possible protections for the waters of the Great Lakes basin to ensure future generations can enjoy the Great Lakes.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): It's good to see the continuation of the discussions in regard to the 1985 annex agreement, with the express concerns as stated by the minister regarding the diversions.

Since the original agreement in 1985, many jurisdictions have changed governments, and we know that there were many grey areas in the original agreement. But the agreement had to start somewhere, and as the governments changed, so did the grey areas, especially as the world's thirst for fresh water has grown.

As in 2001, Minister Snobelen expressed his concern regarding the cumulative effect of small-scale diversions of water, the 2001 agreement did not allow for the removal of any water that would endanger the integrity of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem. As I mentioned, the grey area is, what is the integrity of the Great Lakes and what is a diversion? That is one of the grey areas we need to address.

Also, we see this as an opportunity for the minister to direct his staff to discuss and review with the other jurisdictions the impact of ballast water discharge. You see, there are about 2,000 ships that come into Ontario every year throughout the Great Lakes. They can take up to 11,000 tonnes of water annually in ballast. These ships go to various jurisdictions, with little or no consideration for the impact of moving species throughout the Great Lakes and certainly affecting the ecosystems within the Great Lakes. Not only that, but we need to address the

invading species that come along with the ballast water that comes in with the ships.

Certainly, when you talk about the number of litres of water removed from the province, when you equate 2,000 ships and up to 11,000 tonnes of ballast water, that equates to a significant amount of water. Personally, I know that when I met with the US Senate committee, they were more than willing to discuss the impact on the ecosystems found within the Great Lakes as a result of ballast water discharge. I know that Michigan and other jurisdictions wanted to sit down, and hopefully the minister will move forward in directing his staff to address this issue as well. As the minister stated, all are concerned about the ecosystems and the water quality found in the Great Lakes.

CANADA-ONTARIO MUNICIPAL RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond to the minister's address with respect to the COMRIF program. I congratulate him for getting the news out and an application date forward now. The speech does seem a bit like *déjà vu* all over again, very much like the one from May. But I know it does take time to get things through the Dalton McGuinty cabinet because they have that big test: There's no promise that can't be broken. I'm sure that for many, many months they have been trying to figure out a way to break this promise, but the minister struggled on and brought it forward.

But I want to address the minister's arguments, and those of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, that somehow COMRIF is an adequate substitute for the 340 municipalities whose citizens pay the full gas tax but will not receive a single penny of gas tax money from the McGuinty government. When you compare the two programs, the gas tax is overwhelmingly a larger program than COMRIF, which actually amounts to \$60 million of provincial funding on an annual basis. It's not exclusive as a substitute to those 340 municipalities. It's open to all municipalities up to a quarter million population. So you have those that apply to both programs; it's not exclusive to those 340.

It's application-based, whereas the gas tax is automatic, flowing to municipalities annually. Here, they go through an application process, so there's no guarantee of funding, or a limit. This is short-term, whereas the gas tax program, if I understand, is to be permanent. So the smaller municipalities are getting a short-term, application-based program where they are asked to put forward one third of the funding.

I think the Dalton McGuinty government has to realize that real, hard-working taxpayers live in rural Ontario—they are not simply the flyover counties as Dalton McGuinty makes his way in a jet from Toronto to Ottawa—with real concerns and real infrastructure needs for bridges and roads, real needs for agriculture, job creation and education. Sadly, the COMRIF program,

while welcome and very much like the old OSTAR program with a red ribbon tied upon it, is a poor cousin to the gas tax program, and sadly, that's the approach of the Dalton McGuinty government to rural Ontario: sad, poor cousins to the rest of the province. We are going to fight against that and we're going to continue to call on the Dalton McGuinty government for a real infrastructure program.

No doubt transit municipalities welcome that gas tax funding; it's going to go a long way to help transit in some municipalities. But 340 municipalities are out of the loop. We're going to continue to call for a substitute program to help those municipalities with their infrastructure needs.

1410

WATER EXTRACTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): In response to the Minister of Natural Resources, he will recall that I raised this issue in the Legislature in the form of a question a few weeks ago. At that time, he wasn't sure whether or not he was going to go ahead and sign the agreement. I'm pleased that he has announced today that they're going to review it further before signing it.

The minister referred to some of the problems today, but I want to clarify to the Legislature once again why this is so important, because there's some concern that the whole compact, as it now stands, undermines the integrity of the Great Lakes and our water. For instance, there are no set limits to how much water can be diverted; there is no time limit on these diversions. As the minister stated, there are experts like the Council of Canadians, legal experts like Steven Shrybman, the Sierra legal fund, First Nations and others expressing grave concern about the agreement as it now stands.

One of the things that most alarmed me, and still does about this agreement, is the fact that Ontario and Quebec would not have the same veto powers over those diversions as the American states would. That just seemed insane to me, that we would sign such a document, because Ontario just can't allow itself to be a doormat for the Americans. They may try to divert water from the Great Lakes to service sprawl across the border, and that is a very big concern that has been expressed. As it stands now, we have no veto over that, and it's very important that we take a look at it and take a look at the whole problem of osmosis, you might say, because some say, "Well, what we're talking about here only affects water from those Great Lakes bordering the US," but if the water only comes from one place, the water will flow via the principle of osmosis. It doesn't matter where you take it from; it's going to be reduced inside our borders as well.

I'm very, very pleased that the minister is going to review that. I'm glad that he's listening. I hope that he'll take all of those concerns that I and others raised into consideration before signing off on any agreement this vital. I would add, while I have this opportunity, that he

should be talking to the Minister of the Environment about the huge water-taking diversion that's happening as a result of the government allowing the big pipe to go ahead. Because of this interest in water-taking and diversions, that would certainly undermine our position in those negotiations while we have a proposal that has been approved by the Minister of the Environment to allow that huge diversion to go ahead in that area.

CANADA-ONTARIO MUNICIPAL RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I will be responding to the statement made by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Although one can say that some of what you are doing is welcome, one can also have some very serious questions. The first is that you have isolated communities of 250,000 or less to get this money. That's virtually every community in Ontario, which may be your plan. There are only eight that have 250,000 people or more. So that means a whole body of communities out there are not going to get this money—the very, very large ones—and some of them do have farms and agricultural pursuits around them. I think that maybe you should look at this number, and maybe the number is not exactly right.

The one third of the cost: I also have to bear this in mind for some of the smaller communities—the really, really tiny ones. Where are they going to come up with the money they need in order to make the necessary repairs? The federal government has huge pockets. The provincial government has huge pockets. But when you get into some of the very small towns—and I'm thinking about where my own parents live, in Cardiff, Ontario—where are they going to come up with the one third to match all of the provincial and federal monies in order to protect their water supply? I just don't see that they are going to have the wherewithal or the ability to do that.

There's no discussion here about you having gotten rid of the municipal outlet draining program, which you disbanded—the ministers and the people on that side of the House—on July 28. Is this supposed to replace that? If so, this is not such a great announcement after all, because all you're doing is replacing something that you disbanded in July with a new program that ostensibly is going to do exactly the same thing.

You have decided, or the Treasurer has decided, to reduce the Ministry of Agriculture's budget by 15% in this fiscal year. Is this money to replace that? I have to ask that question.

Last but not least, I'm very worried that some of these municipalities are going to be pushed toward P3s; I think that's the hidden agenda.

ELLEN FAIRCLOUGH

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes to

pay tribute to an historic trailblazer, the Right Honourable Ellen Fairclough.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent for five minutes for comments. Agreed? The member from Hamilton West.

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I am absolutely honoured to be able to rise today to pay tribute to a great Hamiltonian, a great lady and a great parliamentarian—a local icon in our community, after whom a Hamilton government office is named as a permanent memorial to this great woman.

Long before I personally became involved with politics, I had occasion to visit Ellen Fairclough's home. As I walked through, admiring the framed memorabilia, I was struck by the enormity of the accomplishments of this amazing woman. Row on row of historical figures, giants of history, meeting with Ellen, honouring Ellen at a time in history when women were not so honoured: one woman fighting for the principles she believed in. One of those principles was equal pay for women. Her principles, as some of her colleagues found out, were not to be compromised.

"She was an accountant by education. She was reputed to be tough in business and tough in politics, but always compassionate and caring with people." This is a quote that I took from the *Spectator*, which ran a wonderful tribute to Ellen today. That image of toughness and caring was a universally held description of the Right Honourable Ellen Fairclough, who made Canadian political history by becoming the country's first female cabinet minister.

Ellen passed away on Saturday, two months shy of her 100th birthday. Her niece, Dr Joan Heels, described her as "a great lady full of wit and charm."

Ellen Fairclough was born on January 28, 1905, at her parents' home on Hunter Street West in Hamilton, just a couple of blocks away from where her home was on Stanley Avenue. Her determined nature became evident very early in her life. In a 1995 autobiographical account of her life entitled *Saturday's Child: Memoirs of Canada's First Female Cabinet Minister*, Ellen Fairclough wrote that she got her first job during the Christmas season of 1917 at Robinson's department store, opposite Gore Park in downtown Hamilton. How did she get it? By misrepresenting her age. We still do that today.

She served on Hamilton city council for five years, and was a member of the board of control and deputy mayor under Lloyd D. Jackson. In 1950, she won a federal by-election in Hamilton West as a Conservative, and was re-elected in 1953 and again in 1957 when John Diefenbaker won a minority government. She was named Canada's first ever female cabinet minister in June 1957, when Diefenbaker made her Secretary of State.

In her memoirs, Ellen noted that she became a Canadian political pioneer more by accident than by design: "Although I never started out to be the 'first' of anything, it turned out that I was the first woman in many areas of political life. There were not many others to follow, so I followed my own instincts.

“And when all is said and done, it has been a pretty satisfying life.”

Mr Speaker, it has also been a very satisfying experience for anyone associated with Ellen Fairclough over the years. This is one political pioneer who will never be forgotten. She will be sorely missed, but her legend will live on to guide other women to follow her lead, to go forward with confidence in their endeavours, whether they be politics or business or their life's mission, to go forward with dignity, to go forward to follow their dreams. Her legacy is that other women will use their leadership and their talents to build a better world through active involvement.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Liberal caucus and of all Hamiltonians and Ontarians, I would like to extend my sincerest condolences to the family of the Right Honourable Ellen Fairclough. We also would like to extend our gratitude for the life and times and the wonderful leadership demonstrated by this truly great Hamiltonian.

1420

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm certainly pleased to rise on behalf of the Conservative caucus to pay tribute to the Right Honourable Ellen Fairclough. Born in Hamilton on January 28, 1905, she passed away this weekend at the age of 99, just two months shy of her centennial birthday.

Ellen Fairclough will always be fondly remembered as a trailblazer who broke the gender barrier in government and cleared the path for many female politicians to follow. She served on Hamilton city council for five years before she was elected to Parliament as the Conservative MP for Hamilton West in a 1950 by-election. She was the only female MP in the House of Commons until she was joined by three more in the 1953 election.

While an MP, Ellen Fairclough introduced a private member's bill for equal pay for work of equal value. She was way ahead of her time. She also averaged 150 speeches a year in the House of Commons, focusing on housing, income tax, unemployment insurance, the post office and, of course, the status of women.

On June 21, 1957, Ellen Fairclough made political history by becoming Canada's first female cabinet minister when she was sworn in as Secretary of State by Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. When the Diefenbaker government was re-elected a year later with a majority, she was appointed Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. In fact, it was in that position that I feel I have a little bit of a link with Ellen Fairclough. When I became a Canadian citizen, I'm honoured and pleased to say, my citizenship paper was signed by Ellen Fairclough during her time as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

As Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, she made significant contributions to eliminating racial discrimination from Canada's immigration policy, and she changed Canada's policy of not accepting refugees afflicted with tuberculosis. In 1962, she was appointed Postmaster General. Her career ended in 1963. However, in 1995 her autobiography, entitled *Saturday's Child*:

Memoirs of Canada's First Female Cabinet Minister, was published.

An accountant for 22 years, Ellen Fairclough served on the boards of many foundations and charities, including the Girl Guides and the Consumers' Association of Canada. She received numerous honours over the years, including being named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1978 and a Companion of that order, the highest level, in 1995.

Today Ellen Fairclough is being remembered, and I quote, “in her professional, voluntary and political life, as a pioneer, trailblazer and role model,” according to Stephen Harper; as a cabinet minister who, according to Joe Clark, “tried and succeeded in bringing a sense of compassion to those offices”; and, according to her niece, Dr Joan Heels, as “a great lady full of wit and charm.”

Yes, Ellen Fairclough was a woman who advanced the role of women in public life. She certainly, to this day, has inspired many other female politicians to follow in her footsteps. On behalf of our caucus, I would like to express our sincere condolences to her family.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It is an honour to speak today to give witness to the great parliamentary career of the Honourable Ellen Fairclough.

Ms Fairclough was born in Hamilton in 1905 and was first elected to the House of Commons in a by-election on May 15, 1950, as the member for Hamilton West. Coincidentally—or perhaps there were higher forces at work—54 years later to the day, on May 15, 2004, another woman, also born and raised in Hamilton, was elected in a by-election, this time in Hamilton East, and that woman was me. It's because of the breakthrough work that was done by women like Ellen Fairclough that women like me have had the courage and the opportunity to enter political life and to succeed. Quite frankly, to even consider a career in politics is as a result of trailblazing women like Ellen Fairclough.

In the House of Commons, Ellen Fairclough averaged 150 speeches a year, especially on her favourite topics, such as housing, income tax, unemployment insurance, the post office and, of course, the status of women. She introduced private member's bills for equal pay for work of equal value. She was a member of Parliament for 13 years, winning one by-election and four general elections. She served in such high-profile cabinet posts as Secretary of State, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and Postmaster General.

Every day, Hamiltonians are reminded of Ellen Fairclough, as our community has a government building that bears her name and celebrates her considerable contributions. In Hamilton, Ellen Fairclough has been, and will continue to be, a household name.

During her time in office, and for a decade or two thereafter, women made considerable gains in the Canadian and Ontario Houses of Parliament. But today, the number of women representatives is stalling and, in some cases, even falling. Canada ranks 36th in the world, far behind most other democracies, in the number of women members of Parliament.

We know that gains are possible. Wales has over 50% women; Quebec is up to 30% women. Gains in Canada and other jurisdictions are, however, correlated to reforms in campaign financing, nomination processes and electoral systems. The NDP will continue to fight for these kinds of changes. Women and men across Ontario and in the rest of Canada need to keep fighting and working to make sure that the representation of women becomes a reality and stays that way. As I look around the chamber today, I see the pages we have among us, and I see there are many bright women in their ranks.

Every March, we celebrate International Women's Day. I know that young women across our province and across our nation are aspiring to participate to their fullest in every profession, every trade, every type of business, every workplace and every position of electoral office.

We're grateful to Ellen Fairclough, Canada's first female cabinet minister and a strong Hamiltonian, for setting such a strong example for us all to follow. In marking her passing, we should all commit to bringing about the changes that will lead to the equal representation of women in all professions, as well as in this and our federal House.

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I would like to extend my sincere condolences to her family and to all Canadians and Hamiltonians whose lives she touched.

The Speaker: All tributes paid today will be forwarded to members of the family. We all salute this great Canadian.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Premier. In election campaign promise number 226, you said, "We will hold the line on taxes," and in promise 227, "We will not raise the debt." Then there was the whopper, super-sized promise, the taxpayer protection promise, where you said, "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise that if my party is elected as the next government, I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters; and not run deficits." You signed that last September in Toronto.

1430

Today, we have the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the people with whom you signed this pledge, in court trying to get you to honour your promise to the people of Ontario. The bargain was clear: You would not raise taxes, the people of Ontario would vote for you, and you would be the Premier and the government.

Well, you got what you wanted. The taxpayers of Ontario fulfilled their part of the bargain for you. Now it's your turn to fulfill your side of the bargain, but you didn't do it. You raised taxes.

What instructions have you given government lawyers going to court today in Toronto? Have you told them to say that you kept your promise?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak with the member opposite on this issue.

It's really hard to figure out, from one day to the next, where the Tories are going to land on a host of issues. I want to remind the member opposite that today, apparently, he champions the Taxpayer Protection Act, but on June 27, 2002, he and so many of his colleagues voted in favour of breaking that very same law. So it's perhaps a little bit surprising over on this side that on one day they are champions of the Taxpayer Protection Act, but, apparently, on other days they are not.

Mr Flaherty: It is the now Premier's promise, with his signature on it, signed at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto. Not only did he do that, he had his Liberal Party have a series of ads on television and on radio. What did they say? They quoted today's Premier as saying, "I won't raise your taxes, but I won't cut them either." That was the pledge made by the now Premier of Ontario when he was running for office. It was in his platform. He had his party pay for the ads. Now he has not Liberal Party lawyers in court, not his own lawyers in court; no, he has a fleet of government lawyers in court.

Assure the people of Ontario, Premier, that you will not spend one penny of taxpayers' dollars, one dollar paid in taxes by the working families of Ontario, to defend your broken promise in court.

Hon Mr McGuinty: The assurance that I will provide to the people of Ontario is that because of our new legislation, the first of its kind in Canada, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, no government in this Legislature will ever again be able to hide a deficit from the people of Ontario, especially a \$5.6-billion deficit.

Mr Flaherty: I'm asking you about today. I'm asking you about using government lawyers, paid for by taxpayers, to defend what you said when you were running for public office.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It's pretty early in oral questions for us to be shouting like this. Final supplementary?

Mr Flaherty: Your Liberal Party has got lots of money, Premier. They've got enough money to buy you a house in Rosedale. You've got the president of the Liberal Party sitting right here. Why don't you tell the president of the Liberal Party today, why don't you tell the corporate people paying for your house in Rosedale? Let them pay for the lawyers who are defending your broken promise that helped get you elected as Premier of Ontario. Tell us why the taxpayers of Ontario should pick up your tab for your broken promise. Tell us why the taxpayers of Ontario should foot the bill for you putting your foot in your mouth at their peril.

Support the working families of Ontario. Stand up and say that their tax money will not be used to foot the bill for your broken promise.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Well, it's always a lot of fun, I can tell you, perhaps just a little bit too delicious, getting a lecture from one of the champions of the Magna budget, the first of its kind in the country to deliver a budget outside this Legislature.

I also understand why they don't want a reminder of their own particular record. The Conservatives want us to forget that they actually promised to outspend us on both health care and education. They also promised, at the time of the last election, to cut another \$5 billion in taxes and make \$5 billion in debt repayments. The only thing that they have been consistent at, since the time of the election and in fact prior to the election, is hiding the fact from the people of Ontario that they hid a \$5.6-billion deficit. We had some choices to make, we made those choices, and those choices are in the interests of the people of Ontario.

STUDENT DROPOUT RATE

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier, in the absence of the Minister of Education. The Minister of Education has made himself the official parent of Ontario. He started off by telling us that he is going to tell kids what they're going to eat. Now, his latest announcement: He's making himself the Big Brother of Ontario. He is, under your blessing, now going to ensure that our youth, to 17 and 18 years old, are going to be forced to stay in school. Premier, can you tell me—

Applause.

Mr Klees: The applause that you just got from your colleagues tells me that either you or they have never had a discussion with a 16-, 17- or 18-year-old about their struggles in school. Premier, can you tell me what steps you will take to enforce the fact that these young people will be forced to stay in school?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Let me take the opportunity, first of all, to say that I'm very proud of the work our Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy, is doing on behalf of all Ontario students.

Secondly, I am surprised by the position being adopted by Mr Klees and his party. Close to 30% of Ontario high school students are not completing their certification. They're not getting a high school diploma—30%. We think that is unacceptable. He may be prepared to write off 30% of the younger generation and allow them, at the beginning of the 21st century in a knowledge-based economy, to somehow seek out some kind of meagre existence on the basis of a grade 10 or 11 education. We are saying that this may not be an easy challenge to overcome, but we are prepared to take it on. We feel we owe it to those young people in particular.

Mr Klees: There isn't a parent in this province who would disagree that it's not appropriate and helpful for students to complete their education. But let's deal with what is practically and realistically possible in this province.

I want to know from the Premier what specific apprenticeship programs he will commit to implement in this province to ensure that those 30% who are not academically inclined and cannot in fact deal with the current academic requirements will have a meaningful curriculum to pursue. Will you today commit to funding for specific apprenticeship programs for those young people in this province? Let us hear the specific commitment.

Hon Mr McGuinty: One of the things we have made perfectly clear is that these students do not necessarily have to complete their learning inside the traditional classroom setting. I think we've all had colleagues in high school with whom we made friends along the way who found it very difficult to learn in that particular kind of setting. One of the things we've committed to is to create 7,000 new apprenticeship spaces. Beyond that, we have, through our first budget, a proposal to create a tax credit: We're going to pick up 25% of the cost for a business to take on apprenticeship. There is a fundamental, practical, pragmatic way, just one of many ways that we are putting forward, to ensure that young people in Ontario continue to learn until the age of 18.

1440

Mr Klees: In this province, children can leave home at the age of 16 and avoid parental control. This Premier is now saying that he and his government and his Minister of Education will go after those young people in our province today who are not under parental control—who, for their own reasons, have taken upon themselves a role of independence—force them into school and, if they don't stay there, he'll throw them in jail. I want to know—

Interjections

Mr Klees: That's exactly, precisely what you have said.

Premier, I want to know, first of all, what you are going to do to ensure that those young people comply with the new McGuinty Ontario, where kids up to 18 are forced to be in school. You are going to punish them—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr McGuinty: This is just plain silliness on the part of the opposition. We understand, and I can tell you as the father of four kids, now between the ages of 19 and 23, that I have some basic understanding of some of the challenges connected with motivating young people and getting them into places where they might not naturally be inclined to go.

To repeat again, we're not insisting that young people remain in the traditional classroom setting. We want to create more apprenticeship opportunities; we want to create more job placement opportunities where young people can, in a real and meaningful way, learn on the job; we want to create more co-op programs. The idea here is not to come in with a typical Tory approach and threaten jail; it's to find ways to engage young people, to help them understand that it is in their enlightened self-interest that they continue learning until the age of 18.

Our mothers have been telling us for centuries that generally those things that are worth doing aren't easy to get done. We understand that with respect to this matter in particular. We are determined to move ahead and ensure that young people in Ontario continue to learn until they reach the age of 18.

PICKERING NUCLEAR
GENERATING STATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Under the former Conservative government, we saw cost overrun after cost overrun at the Pickering nuclear generating station unit 4. You were very critical of the former Conservative government's hydroelectricity policy. During the election, you said to the people of Ontario, "Choose change." Well, today we learned that under the McGuinty government, unit 1 of the Pickering nuclear station is now \$175 million over budget. My question is, can you tell all the people of Ontario who believed you when you said, "Choose change," can you tell all the people of Ontario who are worried about being able to pay their hydro bill, where the change is?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): First of all, the project is not \$175 million over budget. Today the board reported that there's a projected overrun of between 7.5% and 10%, which is due to the time to get the plant started up. The project is 54% complete and is ongoing. It needs to be noted that the current forecast is just that; it's a projection. The board still believes there's an opportunity to come in under that projected cost and time frame.

Mr Hampton: It was the Premier who said, "Choose change," and I would hope that the Premier would answer this, because the project is in fact \$175 million over what you said. This is the report by your good friend John Manley, a long-time Liberal—not some Conservative insider—who said that Pickering unit 1 would cost \$825 million. He gave you this report on March 15. Here we are now, on November 15, eight months later, and the chair at OPG, Jake Epp, says that it's going to cost \$1 billion. That's a \$175-million cost overrun; 20% in eight months.

You said, "Choose change." Can you tell me where the change is when the cost overrun is 20%, \$175 million in eight months, under the McGuinty government?

Hon Mr Duncan: When we announced the Pickering A1 refurbishment, we announced the projected cost at the time as \$900 million. That was in June. Mr Epp did not say that the project would come in at \$1 billion today; what he said is that there is a 7.5% to 10% variance projected, based on results today.

The change is that, for the first time, a government is making that information public, unlike the Tories, unlike the previous government. When faced with similar circumstances, they chose not to reveal it. They had 13 project delays and 11 cost overruns.

This project is 54% done right now and there's a potential variance of 7.5% on \$900 million, which was the figure this government put out in June.

The real change is a government that's committed to fixing the mess in the energy sector. We're doing it, we're doing it prudently, and we're going to ensure that the lights stay on in Ontario for years to come.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member from Nepean-Carleton, could you just come to order, please.

Mr Hampton: I just want to quote someone who said on July 7 of this year, "Rest assured, we will not allow a repeat of these mistakes. This government will not write blank cheques."

"We will be vigilant in observing the progress of this project. Rigorous public scrutiny will ensure that the project stays on track and on budget."

Who said that? Dwight Duncan. Now we're \$175 million over budget.

It doesn't end there. The Conservatives were going to privatize any of our river sites that have the potential to generate hydroelectricity. What did the McGuinty government announce last week? They're going to privatize any of our remaining river sites that have the potential to generate electricity. This is exactly the same agenda that the people of Ontario had under the Conservatives.

Dalton McGuinty said, "Choose change." What the people of Ontario are getting are sky-high hydro bills and the same electricity policy that failed under the Conservatives. Where's the change, Premier? Where's the change?

Hon Mr Duncan: At Pickering A unit 1, there is a projected overrun of 7.5% at this point. On Pickering A unit 4, it was 400%.

We have kept our commitments in June and July. We've brought full accountability. We've appointed a new board with people who understand the industry. That's number one.

Number two, the project is now 54% complete. It was at this point in the last example that the cost overruns were considerably higher.

I said at the time—and the member conveniently left it out—that this is a high-risk project, but it's one that had to be undertaken to ensure that the province's electricity supply in the short term remained full.

There are no easy solutions to this problem. What this government has done to change the past is, number one, we're addressing the problems; number two, we've provided openness and accountability; and number three, we have a plan that's working to ensure that the people of Ontario have continued access to reasonably priced electricity.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. Premier, the Provincial Auditor has recently released a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Let us see if we can get some control here today. The member from Nickel Belt.

Ms Martel: I have a question for the Premier. Premier, the Provincial Auditor has recently released a scathing report of the government's intensive early intervention program for autistic kids. He reported at the end of March 2004 that some 1,200 children were languishing on a waiting list hoping to get IBI treatment. At the same time, by the end of March 2004, a total of \$16.7 million had not been spent, even though it had been budgeted for the program, and some of the money wasn't spent under your government, Premier. As a result, there are hundreds of autistic children who waited on a list, turned six and never got a day's worth of IBI treatment because this program is so grossly mismanaged, first by the Conservatives and now by your government.

Tell me, Premier, for all of those parents to whom you said, "Choose change," where is the change when their children are languishing on a waiting list just like they did under the Conservatives?

1450

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I want to begin by thanking the auditor for his work. You may know that we fully supported this audit. We welcome the recommendations. I can tell you that the minister made me aware that there were a number of challenges connected with her portfolio, including these.

I'm delighted to tell the member opposite about some of the things that we have done to address—we did not wait for the auditor's report. We have improved reporting requirements of our service agencies so that programs are now managed more efficiently. We're improving the clarity and consistency of information we receive from service providers so data is comparable and able to track the progress of programs. They tell me that before we got this responsibility of forming the government here, if you can believe this, there were no regular meetings between the ministry's regional staff and the service providers. We have now insisted that those take place on a weekly basis. So we are in a much better position now to know exactly what is happening.

Ms Martel: Premier, you haven't read the report. You don't understand how serious it is. You don't even understand that the report was just recently finished and that it's a condemnation of what's happening now in your government with respect to this program. The auditor reported that those children who were lucky enough to get IBI are regularly shortchanged of the hours of treatment they are promised. Many therapists are providing, on average, 15 hours a week of treatment, when the average for that agency is supposed to be 23. In one agency alone, every child lost, on average, over four hours of IBI treatment every single week. And the worst part is that each agency got paid fully for the treatment that they promised to provide but didn't deliver. You were the government that said to people, "Choose

change." What do you say to these parents whose children are regularly being shortchanged of the treatment that they need?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, to make it perfectly clear, all the government money that was committed to this did in fact flow. It ended up in the hands of our service agencies and there was a disconnect between ministry oversight and those service providers. I've just detailed some of the things that we have done to ensure that we are paying much closer attention to what our service providers are doing. We look forward to doing more. And again, I welcome the auditor's report.

Ms Martel: That's a strange answer, because do you know what your minister said in response to the release of the report? She said that she was going to do another review to get to the bottom of what is happening in the program. Here's the review that the Ombudsman did of this program, which was released in June. He was very critical of the program. Here's the review that was released last week by the Provincial Auditor, who is very critical of this program. We don't need any more reviews. We need your government to live up to the recommendations that were put forward both by the Ombudsman and the Provincial Auditor.

Look, Premier, no more reviews, no more stalling, no more delays, because it will mean that children will go without treatment and it will mean that the children who do get some treatment will never get the hours of treatment that they have been promised. I ask you again: You told parents of autistic children to choose change. Where's the change for autistic children in Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I just don't think the member wants to take yes for an answer. Again, we supported the audit. We supported making the audit public. We've taken specific steps, even before the release of the report. I've just detailed some of those, and I'm pleased to list them again if that's what the member seeks. But I can tell you that in addition to that change, which provides for a much closer oversight mechanism between ministry staff and our service providers, I'm also pleased to report—the member asks what we have done by way of change and what we're doing to help children. We have hired 40 new therapists and psychologists to provide IBI treatment to 20% more preschool-aged children. We've hired 80 new autism consultants to help teachers support children with autism in the classroom. We've been doing a great deal. We know there's more to be done and we look forward to doing it.

PHOTO RADAR

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, we learned this weekend that your office was working with an agency called the National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running, which in this case was promoting photo radar, what we call the tax grab. Your office was aware that this group is a front for photo radar camera manufacturers, who stand to make outrageous amounts of

money if photo radar is brought back to our province. Do you support this action and do you believe that big photo radar companies should be using your office as a promotional tool to promote photo radar and make outrageous amounts of money off of the citizens of our province?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Let me tell you, I am always interested in any initiative that will improve safety on the roads.

The other thing is, I want to point out for the record that—the red light cameras were in fact initiated by the previous government. What we did was make them permanent at the request of the municipalities, and we will consider any initiatives that will improve safety on our roads.

Mr Dunlop: I want to let you know that we cancelled photo radar on this side of the House.

Minister, this e-mail originating from your office refers directly to someone who works for Affiliated Computer Services, Inc as the person organizing the event in question. The person is not a registered lobbyist, contrary to the Lobbyist Registration Act. This is clearly more than stakeholder relations and relations around public safety. This is allowing your office to be used by a company that stands to make outrageous amounts of money. When we opened the properties on the electronic version of the press release being issued, we learned that the author was a staffer in your office. Minister, why and for how much longer will your government continue to act as an agent for this company?

Hon Mr Takhar: Maybe this will come as a surprise to this member, but I want to tell you that we are always interested in working with all of our partners to improve safety on the roads, and we will continue to do so.

STUDENT DROPOUT RATE

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Premier. Premier, last week you announced you will force students to stay in school until the age of 18 and that you would promise \$70 million to school boards to implement your law. Last October your ministry estimated that to keep 75% of the students from dropping out, it would cost approximately \$200 million. Your funding covers a mere third of that. Parents and teachers suspect that this is little more than a public relations exercise, and I have to tell you, I agree. If you believe in your plan, why are you funding only a quarter of students to stay in school?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Now we've learned that both the Conservatives and the NDP are opposed to requiring that young people continue to learn until the age of 18 in the province of Ontario. They are wed to a very, very old law—I think it's 50 or 60 years old—that requires that young people stay in school only until the age of 16.

We are going to require that young people continue to learn until the age of 18. They do not have to do so within the confines of a traditional classroom setting.

One of the things that we've already done is begin to unfold our plan to create 7,000 new apprenticeships. This budget specifically provides for a new apprenticeship training tax credit that enlists employers of every kind in the province of Ontario to take on an apprentice, and we'll pick up 25% of the cost of those apprenticeship wages. That's the kind of practical, pragmatic thing that we are doing as we begin to do something that should have been done, frankly, a long time ago: take a real interest in young people and make sure they continue to learn.

Mr Marchese: Now we learn that the Premier can't, or is unwilling to, answer the question.

According to your funding formula, boards get \$4,771 to provide each student a place in school. Simple math dictates that the cost of providing classroom space for 25,000 students is \$119 million, \$49 million less than your commitment. If they have special education or ESL needs, as indeed most of them do, the cost increases by a potential 57 million bucks more. You've only allocated a fraction of that amount.

Can you explain how you plan to have 25,000 drop-outs when your plan won't even cover the cost of keeping them in class, much less providing the new programs and improved support that will help them to graduate?

1500

Hon Mr McGuinty: To adopt the approach promoted by my good friend opposite would be to say that you can't improve student achievement, so just give up on that. You can't shorten wait times when it comes to health care, MRIs, CTs, cataracts, so throw up your hands and just give up on that. Apparently, we cannot and should not even bother trying to require that young people continue to learn until the age of 18.

Well, we are going to do that. We are determined to do that. It may not be an easy thing to do. We may encounter a few bumps along the road, but that does not relieve us of the responsibility to ensure that young people are equipped to succeed in this new knowledge-based economy. We are determined to ensure that they realize their potential, and we will do what it takes to get it done.

CANADA-ONTARIO MUNICIPAL RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. The Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund is a big step forward in enabling small communities to improve their infrastructure. As you know, my riding was devastated this summer by flooding and there's a lot of infrastructure in need of repair and enhancement. Minister, can you tell me how my constituents can best make use of this fund and what this means to the city of Peterborough?

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I want to thank the member for the question, and I want the member to understand that we understand the unique challenges that exist in the city of Peter-

borough. In fact, our government was on the job, quick to respond with relief funding when it was needed to address those needs. In fact, the Premier was in Peterborough within 48 hours of that tragic circumstance.

COMRIF is yet another way that our government is able to help with the specific needs of small urban and rural Ontario. COMRIF is an investment in small urban and rural municipalities to support capital projects to help build safe and clean, livable communities in this province.

I was in Peterborough this morning and I handed Mayor Sylvia Sutherland the very first application for COMRIF. I would encourage all of the members and all the municipalities to go to www.COMRIF.ca for an on-line application. In fact, it is a fabulous program and it's creating a great deal of excitement in Ontario today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): It's very good to hear that COMRIF will benefit small cities such as Peterborough. But what about small communities in very rural areas? Small communities in my riding, such as Blyth, Bayfield and Kincardine, are also very much in need of sound infrastructure. Agriculture, which is the mainstay of the communities in my riding and many other ridings in Ontario, requires good roads and bridges to be efficient. These small communities, and many others across Ontario, are also in need of good waste water treatment. Mr Minister, can you tell me and the people of Ontario what COMRIF will do to enhance waste water treatment for small communities across the province?

Hon Mr Caplan: In fact, COMRIF was designed by municipalities for municipalities. AMO was a big part in the program design for the very first time in the province of Ontario's history.

Our government recognizes the unique challenges of small communities in dealing with some of the large infrastructure deficits left behind by the previous two governments, particularly in the areas of water and waste water and roads and bridges. That's why COMRIF, in association, by the way, with the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority or OSIFA—the combination is a powerful tool to be able to meet some of those infrastructure needs. By ensuring the strength of our small and rural municipalities here in Ontario, we ensure a strong province. It's a very proud day for all of us here in this Legislature.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): My question is for the Premier. You have been giving inadequate increases to local hospitals in Ottawa. Your answer to that charge is that you're going to provide health care in a different way: through means such as community health centres. That's why local residents were stunned recently when you ignored the city once again, refusing to include it in the announcement of new community health centres. The consequences will be

longer wait times at our hospitals and reduced access to care in our Ottawa communities.

Premier, your Minister of Health knows of the merits of the excellent proposal put forward by the Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre. We have demonstrated that with its rapidly growing population, west-end Ottawa should top the priority list when it comes to expanded health care services. Can you inform the citizens of Ottawa why you have denied them any access to new community health centres?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I suspect that the people of Ottawa would want to know why for eight years your government deprived all communities in Ontario of an expansion of community health centres. We are a government, one year in office, that has moved forward with a \$21-million expansion of community health centres.

It's particularly interesting that on the very same day that a colleague of the honourable member, who represents the riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, came across the way and said, "Thank you very much for the expansion in the form of a satellite community health centre," that this member, for eight years in cabinet, did not deliver for his community, nor for any community in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I want to ask the supplementary to the Premier. He is the senior member opposite representing, at least last I heard, a constituency in Ottawa. The association representing community health centres across Ontario a number of years ago developed a list of 10 priorities, among which was the western Ottawa community health centre proposal and the proposal that was advocated by the Nepean Community Resource Centre. South Nepean is bursting at the seams, and the Premier owes it to explain to people in Ottawa-Carleton why their proposal, an excellent proposal, was so rejected by him and his government. Could he do that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I wish I had more time, because I could ask the honourable member about his record as a member of the government: what they did in Ottawa to Montfort, what they threatened, what they did to CHEO and the like. All the community health centres in Ottawa, like all other community health centres in Ontario, got a substantial increase to their budgets. But way more than that, what we're in the midst of, as a government, is bringing forward family health teams, which find their roots in the interdisciplinary way that community health centres operate.

In Ontario, before the end of this fiscal year, 45 additional communities will receive family health teams, and those that will have the first shot at these are the very same communities that have made application for community health centres. That's our commitment to meaningful primary care.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member from Hamilton East, let me just wait until discussion between some members here quiety down.

New question, the member from Hamilton East.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Your colourful calendar, marking Consumer Awareness Week, offers tips on how to avoid being defrauded by shady companies. But in the meantime, you're not doing your share to protect people from fraud in the fitness club industry, particularly.

Consumer complaints about fitness clubs in Ontario now number in the thousands. The number grew by almost 400 during your first year in office. More than 700 complaints and inquiries were lodged with your ministry against one single company alone between 1999 and 2003.

1510

Minister, if you've known for years about the hundreds of consumer complaints against Premier Fitness, why is it still taking money from consumers' bank accounts without authorization? Why aren't the banks being told to keep a closer eye on withdrawals by Premier Fitness and other companies with poor track records? When are you going to start really protecting consumers by holding these companies to account?

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Of all the members to ask that question, the member from Hamilton East wasted more time calling recorded votes and adjourning the House when I had Bill 70 before this Legislature. Bill 70 would have given greater protection to those people she talks about in the Hamilton Spectator series on fitness clubs.

I would ask the honourable member to apologize to this House and to the people who have been ripped off by fitness clubs for stalling Bill 70. I ask her to pass it speedily at committee and then back here at third reading so we can help protect consumers in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. We get fewer questions if we continue like this. Final supplementary?

Ms Horwath: Notwithstanding the government's inability to get any legislation passed, I guess I'm doing a very good job here, as a matter of fact.

But, Minister, you're the one who told the Hamilton Spectator that the only thing you could think of to deter disreputable firms is a fine. That's just a slap on the wrist. That is not consumer awareness. You're hiding behind a law that puts the so-called privacy rights of these shady businesses above the right of consumers to know what they're getting into. Don't you think a better deterrent would be to post these corporate bad apples in some type of public forum? Consumers shouldn't be the

vulnerable ones in these situations. The companies and banks need to be held accountable.

In the spirit of Consumer Awareness Week, will you publicly post the charges and convictions against these fitness clubs so consumers can decide for themselves?

Hon Mr Watson: Let me set the record straight. We've laid over 40 charges against some of the bad apples in the fitness industry. I'm proud of the three convictions my ministry has helped to secure to protect Ontario's consumers.

The fact of the matter is, the honourable member clearly did not even read the bill. If you look back at Hansard on June 22, 2004, she said, "This bill is scratching the surface of a lot of different things without really making significant changes in any one area." She clearly hadn't even read the bill. I would encourage the honourable member to read the bill and participate in the debate. I would urge the member, as I would urge the Conservatives, who are great fans of negative-option billing, to pass Bill 70 unanimously.

Mr Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent that Bill 70—a bill that is going to help protect consumers, which the McGuinty government has considered a priority—pass right away.

Interjections.

The Speaker: We seem to have many speakers here. They're running the show here. I don't even know what I'm asking unanimous consent for, because I could hardly hear what was being said.

Interjection.

The Speaker: You're asking for unanimous consent to move third reading of the bill. Do I have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We can't get a point of order if we don't have any order.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order: I seek unanimous consent to put a motion to call Bill 70 for third reading today, with a vote on third reading at 6 o'clock this evening.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I understand that Bill 70 is now in committee and you'd have to have a discharge order from the committee before—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I would have to have a discharge order from the committee.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order: I seek unanimous consent for a discharge from the committee and third reading this afternoon, with a final vote on third reading at 6 this evening.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The government House leader has asked that Bill 70 be discharged from the committee, bringing it back to the House, and that we have third reading of the bill here, to be finalized at 6 o'clock. Do I have unanimous consent?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I've heard your point.

Mr Hampton: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Since this is in committee, and since we would be doing away with committee, I ask for unanimous consent to bring the bill forward for third reading debate this afternoon and this evening and vote on it at the end of this evening.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. There's a point of order that I'm trying to deal with. If you were concerned about the time in question period, you'd have all listened to the point of order, voted and moved on it. It was before the House and, as has been stated, everyone has a different view. I want to deal with that matter now.

Does the government House leader have a point of order?

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to discharge Bill 70 from committee and bring it back to the House for third reading debate at this afternoon's session, for third reading vote at 6 pm. I remind the leader of the opposition that he voted against sitting tonight.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Let me just say this again. The government House leader has moved that Bill 70 be returned from the committee and be voted on on third reading by 6 o'clock this afternoon.

I heard a no.

New question.

1520

FOREIGN-TRAINED DOCTORS

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, last week you announced two new funding programs for internationally trained medical graduates. Ontario is the fortunate recipient of talented immigrants from all over the world. Minister, up until now, many of these graduates have been unable to practise their profession because of communication and cultural barriers. They do not have a full understanding of how best to communicate with patients in their new home of Ontario, and they also require greater knowledge on legal and ethical issues surrounding health care in our province. How will last week's announcement help to change that?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I appreciate the question from the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

I was very pleased last Friday to join with my colleague the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to announce two new initiatives for internationally trained physicians. I'm happy to say that the first initiative is, indeed, a communications and cultural competence project, which we are working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons to deliver. This will enable inter-

nationally trained physicians to prepare for the licensing examinations, and this will complement the IMG Ontario program that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care announced earlier this year. We, in fact, more than doubled the number of residency spots for internationally trained physicians, and this will help those physicians to qualify for those placements.

Mr Mauro: Minister, I know that as part of your announcement you also announced a new program that takes a further step toward addressing the unemployment and underemployment of internationally trained medical graduates. As you know, Thunder Bay and many other communities like it have been underserved for many years when it comes to health-related professions, not just family doctors. We know that a variety of health professionals will have an important role to play in a successful, integrated health care system.

Minister, could you provide further details on this new project, and explain how such a program will help to address shortages we have in health-related professions in cities like Thunder Bay?

Hon Mrs Chambers: This is another example of our government working in consultation with the people of Ontario. This is an initiative that we are funding to the tune of \$1.5 million, with the Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. They will help to address shortages that we're experiencing throughout health care and provide informed options, if you like, for individuals who could practise in a variety of health care professions throughout the province of Ontario. We anticipate that this will serve something in the order of 1,000 internationally trained physicians and ensure that their skills are brought to bear for the benefit of the people of Ontario, and also for their successful integration into the province.

PIT BULLS

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Premier. Premier, I'm sure you have an issue note dealing with your government's decision to ban pit bulls. I just hope it wasn't written by your Attorney General, given his inability or unwillingness to provide accurate information on this issue. In fact, the Attorney General has made a string of comments that don't bear up to investigation. Virtually every organization that the Attorney General claims supports the legislation is opposed. These include the Humane Society of Canada, the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, Canadian Kennel Club, Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, Toronto Humane Society, Winnipeg Humane Society, Canadian Safety Council, the Dog Legislation Council of Canada, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, the Animal Alliance of Canada, and the list goes on.

Premier, it appears that your Attorney General, in the interest of grabbing headlines and not public safety, has introduced legislation that does not adequately address the issue of dangerous dogs and has done so with claims

of support that were either misunderstood or worse. Will you withdraw this flawed legislation and initiate real and meaningful consultations to address the problem of dangerous dog attacks?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Attorney General, Speaker.

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): We have an interesting debate underway, there's no doubt about it, in the province of Ontario on this subject. We've heard from many sides. The member lists some people who have many questions about the bill. He may also, in his supplementary, want to list the many mayors and chiefs of police who support the bill and also the victims of pit bull attacks. It was just a couple of weeks ago that, sadly, a pit bull killed a small dog here in Toronto. It was just the latest in the litany of attacks that we've had. This government is intent on ensuring that we have safe communities. We're doing that through this bill that addresses not only pit bulls but all dangerous dogs. We certainly are on the side of making our communities safer and protecting victims of pit bull attacks. I'd like to know whether the official opposition supports the bill or not.

Mr Tascona: What you're suggesting with respect to this pit bull issue—you have put out to the public that you are going to be changing the Dog Owners' Liability Act when, in fact, you're not. All you're doing is increasing fines. People out there think you're actually doing something new.

The reality is that the Attorney General cited a US study that said one third of fatal dog attacks between 1979 and 1998 were caused by pit bulls. In other words, we're going to deal with one third of the problem and ignore the other two thirds. Premier, your Attorney General, in his rush to get his mug on TV, failed to consult the experts in the field and used false claims of support to justify his actions. In short, he has botched this badly. Once again, will you stop this public relations game and deal with a serious issue in a serious and meaningful way? Pull this legislation and bring in comprehensive and effective dangerous dog legislation.

Hon Mr Bryant: Again, this is an interesting debate. I'm still not clear where the Progressive Conservatives are on this issue. Are they in favour of the bill? Are they in favour of protecting Ontarians from pit bull attacks, or are they against that? I get the impression that they're opposed to this bill, so we're having a debate in this Legislature on that very subject.

It is absolutely the case that we have spoken with every expert that we can try and speak to, that we've heard from all sides on this. But let's be clear: We are going to proceed and we are going to advocate for this because we feel it is in the interests of protecting victims, not only victims of pit bull attacks—human beings—but their pets as well. We're on the side of the victims; they're on the side of pit bull rights. Let the debate begin.

ASSISTANCE TO DISABLED

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last month I asked you about a family in eastern Ontario that was looking for the rebate, and you know all the mess that was there. I want to ask you, have you done anything to help that family yet?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I very much appreciate this question today. Each time that this particular MPP brings forward a question in the House, we go back to this individual's office to look for the details on those specific cases. We have a hard time getting that kind of information from his office to do the follow-up.

What we committed to do in the area of the home and vehicle modification program is to take all of these requests that we have, to see if we can still manage it, because there are people out in our communities who did miss a deadline, who didn't know about information that was out there. We are trying to be very reasonable about this so that we can help as many people as possible. So we'd appreciate, with each question, if you would follow up with us when we call you, give us the information we need so that we can help people in your community.

Mr Prue: My office informed your office of everything. Mr Chenier has written a complete letter and your officials have sent him to the March of Dimes, back to the same agency that refused him in the first place.

Madam Minister, with the greatest of respect, what you have just said in this House is not correct. It is absolutely not correct. Our office has contributed, Mr Chenier has contributed, and what I want to know from you now is, why are you sending him back to the same agency where the answer will be identical to what it was before, when you yourself promised that you were going to help him? You yourself promised you were going to intervene, and you have done nothing.

1530

Hon Ms Pupatello: I find that astounding, to this MPP. I think that most MPPs in this House have realized by now that this is a McGuinty government that is intent to help people actually in need. When we have made policy changes, we have done it to benefit people, not to make life more difficult. When this particular member asks a question in the House, I would just ask you politely to please follow up with our office with the detail, because we try to do that. We try to fix things. We actually try to help people. When we talked about this revamping of the HVMP, we said, "Please get us information if there are people who we know have missed deadlines." We'd appreciate that. We're actually trying to help people on this side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. That brings us to the end of oral questions.

I'll just wait a few seconds until members who are leaving depart from the House.

It's time for petitions.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services;

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

“To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and restore funding for these important and necessary services.”

It was signed from all over my riding, many signatures, and they keep coming in.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment. It reads as follows:

“Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks and children’s playgrounds;

“Whereas it is, therefore, unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

“Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

“Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminum cans worth \$27 million into landfill” sites “every year instead of recycling them;

“Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

“Whereas the province of Quebec already has legislation obligating the vendors to accept the refund on all pop drinks, whether bottles or cans;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institutes a collection program that will include all pop drinks, bottles of beer, wine, Tetra Pak juices and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment.”

Since I agree wholeheartedly with this, I am inclined to sign it as well.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Before I begin, I wish to wish a certain someone a happy birthday, and I know the Speaker knows exactly whom I’m speaking about.

I have a petition to the Legislature:

“Whereas

“Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on this decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I affix my name in support.

PIT BULLS

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from a group of residents of Mississauga and Toronto. It reads as follows:

“Whereas pit bulls are dangerous dogs, showing as a breed a tendency for vicious attacks on adults, children and other animals out of all proportion to their numbers; and

“Whereas jurisdictions where bans on pit bulls have been enacted have seen dramatic reductions in pit bull attacks on people and other animals; and

“Whereas residents of Mississauga and community leaders and law enforcement officials all across Ontario have supported a ban on pit bull ownership;

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

“That the government of Ontario enact legislation banning ownership of pit bulls in the province of Ontario, enact specific measures to require existing pit bulls to be muzzled while in public, and require existing pit bulls to be spayed or neutered.”

This petition reflects the feelings of those writing in to my constituency office, and I’m pleased to affix my signature.

CHILDREN’S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): “To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

“Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

“Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children’s treatment centres in their area; and

“Whereas there is no children’s treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

“Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children’s treatment centre services in their own area; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children’s rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

“Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

“Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003, and in August the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children’s treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region.”

I’d like to add that there is a rally at my office next Monday morning at 10:30 to help this, and I support this as well and will give it to Katharine.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

“Whereas,

“Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province of Ontario.”

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a petition about adoption disclosure once again.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Let’s pass that bill today.

Ms Churley: Let’s pass that bill. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas four bills regarding the Adoption Disclosure Statute Law Amendment Act have been introduced between 1998 and 2003;

“Whereas one of the aforementioned bills received committee hearings in November 2001;

“Whereas Bill 14 addresses privacy concerns for those who wish to avoid or delay contact;

“Whereas adoptees are dying from genetic diseases in the absence of their family medical history;

“Whereas birth mothers were never promised confidentiality,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: Immediately call Bill 14, the Adoption Disclosure Statute Law Amendment Act, for second reading, third reading and final vote.”

I will sign this petition because I fully support it.

1540

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Re: Support for chiropractic services in Ontario health:

“Whereas,

“Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I want to point out that this petition is in Cantonese, Mandarin and English. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

“Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

“Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government’s new regressive health tax;

“Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

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

“We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care.”

I’ll affix my signature, because I support this petition.

TTC RIGHT-OF-WAY

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I still receive petitions from very irate residents who are dead set against the dedicated TTC right-of-way on St Clair Avenue West.

The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas an environmental assessment is underway on St Clair Avenue West to study potential ‘transit improvements,’ including the possibility of installing a dedicated TTC right-of-way;

“Whereas the consultation process so far has been in bad faith, top-down and rushed, which has disappointed and angered the local community almost entirely, and not been up to any acceptable public standards;

“Whereas comments by the chair and the members of the Toronto Transit Commission have made it clear that there is a predetermined outcome to the EA process, regardless of the objections of the local community;

“Whereas a dedicated right-of-way would force significantly more traffic on to local streets;

“Whereas the right-of-way would lead to a reduction or elimination of on-street parking;

“Whereas traffic bottlenecks at certain intersections and underpasses are already terrible;

“Whereas the underpass and the right-of-way will have substantial negative economic impacts on the local business community;

“Whereas there is no guarantee that a dedicated right-of-way will improve transit service substantially;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge the Minister of the Environment to order a full environmental assessment on St Clair Avenue West, one that genuinely consults and takes into consideration the views and opinions of the local community.”

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign it as well.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This petition reads:

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

“Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

“Whereas,

“Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I will affix my signature to this petition, because I support it.

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition from a number of residents in northwestern Mississauga and Milton, including our local member of Parliament. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and farming communities into Canada’s sixth-largest city, and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

“Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak period road commuting impractical, and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

“Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to commute to commute, driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of

land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion, and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga.”

As one of those residents, I'm pleased to affix my signature and to ask Ellen to bring it down for me.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): It's my lucky day. I want to read another petition about adoption records. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas four bills regarding the Adoption Disclosure Statute Law Amendment Act have been introduced between 1998 and 2003;

“Whereas one of the aforementioned bills received committee hearings in November 2001;

“Whereas Bill 14 addresses privacy concerns for those who wish to avoid or delay contact;

“Whereas adoptees are dying from genetic diseases in the absence of their family medical history;

“Whereas birth mothers were never promised confidentiality;

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

“Immediately call Bill 14, the Adoption Disclosure Statute Law Amendment Act, for second reading, third reading, and final vote.”

I will sign this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREENBELT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR

LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Mr Gerretsen moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to establish a greenbelt area and to make consequential amendments to the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 and the Ontario Planning and Development Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 135, Loi établissant la zone de la ceinture de verdure et apportant des modifications corrélatives à la Loi sur la planification et l'aménagement de l'escarpement du Niagara, à la Loi de 2001 sur la conservation de la moraine d'Oak Ridges et à la Loi de 1994 sur la planification et l'aménagement du territoire de l'Ontario.

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Mr Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant for rural affairs, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, who earlier today became a grandmother once again when her daughter gave birth to her

seventh grandchild. I don't know whether it's a boy or a girl—

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): A girl.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: It's a girl.

Interjection: What's her name?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: What's her name?

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Grace.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Grace. So congratulations to the parliamentary assistant.

I would like to begin by asking my colleagues a very simple question. There are three questions, as a matter of fact. What do you want the Golden Horseshoe to look like in the future? That's a good question for the member from Toronto-Davenport and the member from Erie-Lincoln. What do you think our province is going to look like 30 years down the road, particularly in the GTA? Do you want to see strong communities, thriving centres, vibrant rural towns and villages and idyllic hamlets? Do you want a healthy natural environment, where our wetlands, streams, waters and forests and the wildlife that depends on them can thrive? Do you want to see safe streets, clean air, safe water, congestion-free roads, plenty of parks, trails and farmlands?

1550

We all envision the very best for our future and for the future of our children and grandchildren. We also all know that it takes more than just wishing to get there. To quote the poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The future belongs to those who prepare for it,” and that's what we're doing here today. We are preparing for the future. The McGuinty government is preparing for the future for the people of Ontario, especially those who live in the GTA. For the first time ever, an Ontario government has set out a vision that is needed to accommodate future growth in the Golden Horseshoe. We are pulling together environmental protection and growth planning and are dealing with them as one whole entity. We are building the strong, healthy and prosperous Ontario that we all foresee in the future and, with this legislation, can now rightfully expect.

Today I'd like to tell you about one of the key elements of our government's plan to balance Ontario's growth with the protection of our environment. As you know, the area from Niagara Falls in the southwest to Rice Lake near Cobourg in the east is home to some of the most important environmental features, the best agricultural lands and most lovely countryside in the province. As you also know, these same lands are under some of the most intense development pressure in Canada. As Ontario grows, the public is becoming more and more concerned that urban sprawl will consume these lands and that they will simply disappear with development.

Our government will not allow this to happen. We are committed to putting in place permanent greenbelt protection to curb sprawl and protect environmentally sensitive and agricultural lands in this significant area of our

province. We're well on our way to meeting that goal. With Bill 135, our Greenbelt Act, 2004, and with our draft greenbelt plan, which is an integral part of the legislation, we want to know that, 30 years from now, the ecosystem will be preserved, water resources protected, and wildlife will exist in its natural habitat.

We think we're on the right track, and we're not the only ones who think so. I'd like to quote some experts in the environmental field who also clearly think that this government is on the right track with our proposed greenbelt legislation and plan.

Dr Rick Smith, the executive director of Environmental Defence Canada, calls the greenbelt "a breath of fresh air." He adds, "After years of poorly planned growth and unfettered urban sprawl, declining air quality and disappearing farmland and forests, we're finally seeing a green vision for southern Ontario that makes sense."

Jim Faught, the executive director of Ontario Nature, said that Premier McGuinty's greenbelt announcement is "a great day for nature." Mr Faught also called the proposed greenbelt "an important measure toward protecting vital green space in the Golden Horseshoe and ensuring the health of the province's citizens."

Dr Riina Bray, chair of the Ontario College of Family Physicians' environmental health committee, said, "We congratulate the McGuinty government for containing urban sprawl and creating a permanent greenbelt. The creation of the greenbelt will improve air quality, curtail the obesity epidemic, decrease traffic accidents and fatalities and alleviate mental health problems related to sprawl."

I could go on, but I think these three quotes tell the story of how experts in the area of environmental protection and health feel about our plans for permanent greenbelt protection.

Environmental protection, while vitally important, isn't the only thing that our proposed greenbelt will do, if approved by this Legislature. It will also permanently protect some of the most important farmlands in Canada and ensure that they remain productive farmlands. Ontarians want to know that the fertile agricultural lands of the Golden Horseshoe will still be producing the food that our growing population needs, and that decades from now, parents will still be able to take their children to a local farm to pick apples from an orchard, to learn how farmers raise the cows that give us milk, or to know how good fresh, home-grown produce can taste. Children need to know that food doesn't grow in the grocery stores, and that's why we're proposing agricultural protection as a cornerstone of Bill 135 and the greenbelt plan.

Once again, I think the experts can say better than I can what our proposed greenbelt legislation and plan have the potential to deliver. To quote Elbert van Donkersgoed of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, "We believe the plan is the beginning of a legacy of stewardship of our best farmland."

His colleague Henry Stevens clearly agrees, saying, "I'm pleased to see this government moving forward on

its commitment to create a greenbelt. This is definitely a step in the right direction. Preserving farmland is an integral part of ensuring the long-term sustainability of the agricultural industry."

David Hahn of the National Farmers Union says, "I produce maple syrup and horticultural produce. For many decades, I've watched with concern as much of Ontario's valuable farmland is paved over by 'development.' I strongly believe that the Ontario government's current initiative to preserve green space and farmland in the greenbelt around the Golden Horseshoe may be one of this government's most important accomplishments. We must preserve our own farmland so our growing population does not become even more dependent on imported food, with all the vulnerability to trade disruptions that that entails."

Just one more. Norman Beal, president of the Peninsula Ridge Estates winery and owner of 80 acres of vineyards and woodlots in Beamsville, said, "The fact that the urbanization of our unique agricultural lands will be prevented is great news."

The proposed Greenbelt Act, 2004, will, if passed, allow us to protect these unique agricultural lands for generations to come. But let's be clear about what our government intends to do, and not do, through our proposed greenbelt legislation and plan. We intend to protect unique agricultural and specialty croplands. We will preserve essential natural features and sensitive environmental areas. We will set strict limits on where urban boundaries can and cannot expand. We want to put a stop to subdivisions paving over valuable farmland, or shopping malls being carved out of forests.

Some members of the development community have been saying that we're basically putting a stop to all development in the Golden Horseshoe, and that is simply not correct. If our greenbelt legislation and plan are approved, what we are going to do is have more predictability and certainty for developers. They will have more certainty about where development can go and where it cannot go.

Clear direction for development means less time and money wasted at the Ontario Municipal Board. Mark Parsons, president of the Toronto Home Builders' Association, in his Toronto Star column of July 31, said, "The need to manage future growth is so obvious and widely supported that land developers are beginning to sound like environmentalists."

Concerns have also been raised that there's not enough developable land left in the Golden Horseshoe area, and that greenbelt protection will lead to ballooning house prices. Preliminary results of the 2003 GTA residential land inventory conducted by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing showed that, in the short term, municipalities in the GTA have at least a three-year supply of serviced lands for residential units approved for development. This level of supply of serviced lands is customary in most municipalities in Ontario. Over the medium term, most GTA municipalities would have a 10-to-15-year supply of urban land available for residen-

tial development. Bill 135 is about supporting responsible growth, and responsible growth is good economic policy.

1600

Sprawl is bad economic policy. It creates gridlock and makes it difficult to move goods from place to place, which is critical to economic growth in Ontario. And that's not to mention what it does to families, to parents who would rather be spending time with their families instead of being stuck in traffic.

Focusing growth in existing built-up areas will help municipalities control the escalating public costs for roads, garbage pickup, policing, transit and other services. Clear limits on development will protect the greenbelt for the long term and ensure that development is directed to areas where services are planned. This can reduce pressures on the municipal tax base and the taxpayer.

As the proposed act works its way through the legislative process, we are welcoming the public's comments on our draft greenbelt plan. Ontarians know that this is perhaps our last chance to effectively preserve our natural heritage in the most rapidly expanding region in Canada, and our government greatly values both the input and the partnership. I'm very excited about what greenbelt protection would mean to the future of Ontario. The permanent protection of hundreds and thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive land and farmland will be a true legacy for the people of this province.

Our government is planning now to preserve our natural heritage, while we simultaneously plan to accommodate the four million more people expected to move to Ontario by 2031. The majority of these new residents will settle in the greater Golden Horseshoe area, bringing along their individual skills and abilities and attracting another two million jobs. We welcome this growth.

Currently, central Ontario generates nearly two thirds of this province's GDP and nearly one third of all of Canada's. Solid growth will help this economic strength continue for the benefit of all. But there's another side: Without proper planning, this significant growth could overwhelm our province, eat up our land and diminish our quality of life. Our government knows that right now we have a unique opportunity to plan thoughtfully for the future, to provide clarity and certainty in what we build and where we build it, to determine the critical infrastructure we need to support that growth, to decide how the natural environment can best be protected for our benefit and for the benefit of future generations.

This government knows that to do all these things takes much more than a greenbelt. Greenbelt protection can only work in tandem with growth management and growth planning. That's why this government introduced Bill 136, the proposed Places To Grow Act, 2004, on the same day as this bill that we're discussing today, the Greenbelt Act, 2004. Bill 136, if passed, will enable the provincial government, for the first time in the history of this province, to plan for population growth in a strategic way that is integrated across natural and municipal

boundaries. It will put into place the legal framework needed to allow the province to designate geographic areas as growth plan areas. That will enable municipalities, businesses, agricultural, environmental and community groups, the province and the public to work together to develop a long-term plan setting out where and how this region should grow over the next 30 years, targeting growth so it makes best use of existing infrastructure, curbing sprawl through urban intensification and brownfields development, ensuring seamless transportation systems, encouraging business growth and investment, and preserving the farmlands and green space that contribute so much to healthy communities and mean so much to our quality of life.

Our goal with these two complementary pieces of legislation is to ensure that the four million more people who are expected to arrive in Ontario will be well-accommodated, and we'll all have plenty of places to live, work and play. We continue to move forward on planning reform and providing new financial tools and increased authority for municipalities to make sure Ontario communities can grow in the way that is best for our citizens.

Our government will make these goals a reality and has a vision to make sure Ontario is strong, healthy and prosperous. We have set this plan in motion, and we are committed to an Ontario where everyone enjoys a quality of life that is second to none.

As I indicated before, an integral part of the legislation that's before us is the actual draft plan, the greenbelt plan. It's available on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Web site, and I just wanted to read some significant sections of this plan so that the people of Ontario and the members of the Legislature will have a better understanding as to what this plan is all about.

I should say that this plan also contains a number of maps that actually delineate the proposed greenbelt area. As you may well realize, Speaker, this is subject to discussion at about eight different meetings that we're holding across the Golden Horseshoe area over the next three to four weeks. We certainly invite the input of the general public and of those groups and individuals who are interested in it.

Let me start off by just reading some of the sections that I think speak to the actual details of the plan.

First of all, in terms of the context, the greenbelt plan identifies where urbanization is not to occur, in order to provide permanent agricultural and environmental protection. The greenbelt plan builds on lands within the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan.

The additional protected countryside lands, which are about a million acres, are identified in this plan, and it links and enhances the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine to create the greenbelt. They've been identified through a combination of best science available, a consideration of existing and future patterns of urbanization, and local knowledge and advice.

The greenbelt also supports a wide range of recreation and tourist opportunities, and a vibrant and evolving

agricultural and rural economy. It speaks to primarily four areas of land within the greenbelt. It talks about an agricultural system that is made up of two specialty crop areas located in the Niagara Peninsula tender fruit and grape area and the Holland Marsh. It talks about the prime agricultural areas that are located within the designated area being classed as one, two and three soils, and it talks about rural areas, which are areas outside of the settlement areas identified on the map, which are generally designated as rural or open space that are without municipal official plans.

Just dealing with the settlement areas that are located within the green plan—and I'm quoting here from page 16 of the proposed plan—it talks about town and village priorities and policies. This has been the subject of some discussion within the media over the last couple of weeks. It states, "Municipalities are encouraged to continue their efforts to support the long-term vitality of these settlements through appropriate planning and economic development approaches which seek to maintain, intensify and/or revitalize these communities. This includes modest growth that is compatible with the long-term role of these settlements as part of the protected countryside and the capacity to provide locally based sewage and water services."

It also talks about an annual 10-year review within the plan. It states,

"At the 10-year plan review, modest growth may be possible for towns and villages, provided the proposed growth:

"Would not exceed the assimilative and water production capacities of the local environment;

"Is consistent with any applicable watershed plan;

"Does not extend into the natural heritage system;

"Does not extend into the specialty crop area; and

"Appropriately implements the requirements of any other provincial policies, plans, strategies or regulations...."

1610

Let me just talk a little bit about existing uses. There has been a fair amount of discussion about existing uses, as to whether or not people can carry on the existing uses they're currently carrying on, whether they're agricultural or otherwise, within the greenbelt area. I'm quoting from page 24 of the plan. I would advise those individuals who are interested in these specific policies to take a close look at them through either obtaining a copy of the plan or through the Web site.

"Existing uses: All existing uses lawfully in existence the day before the greenbelt plan comes into effect are permitted" within "the protected countryside."

It goes on further than that. It states, "Expansions to existing buildings and structures and accessory uses are permitted in the protected countryside, outside of settlement areas, provided that the expansion:

"Does not require new urban servicing;

"Does not expand into key natural heritage and key hydrologic features" areas."

It further goes on to say, "Expansions to existing agricultural buildings and structures, residential dwellings and accessory uses to both, can be considered within key natural heritage and key hydrologic features if:

"There is no alternative and the expansion, alteration or establishment is directed away from the feature to the extent possible...." In other words, expansions are possible as long as they do not affect the sensitive environmental lands located within the greenbelt area.

Lot creation: I know lot creation is of particular concern in the agricultural area and some of the other rural areas. It specifically states, in section 4.6, "Lot creation is permitted in the protected countryside for the range of uses permitted by the policies of this plan." It is also permitted for the following:

"Land acquisition for infrastructure purposes....

"Facilitating conveyances to public bodies or non-profit entities for natural heritage conservation....

"Minor lot adjustments, provided it does not create a separate lot for a residential dwelling in the specialty crop or prime agricultural areas....

"More specifically, within the specialty crop area and prime agriculture area, lot creation is permitted for:

"Agricultural uses where the severed and retained parcels are intended for agricultural uses and provided the minimum lot size is 50 acres within" the "specialty crop area and 100 acres within" the "prime agricultural areas;

"Existing agriculture-related uses, provided that any new lot will be limited to a minimum size needed to accommodate the use, including a sewage and water system appropriate for such a use."

And finally, the question of surplus farm dwellings is discussed within the plan. It states, "Surplus farm dwellings where an existing farm residence is rendered surplus to the farm as a result of farm consolidation, and provided no residential development is permitted in perpetuity on the retained parcel of farmland created by this severance." So surplus farm dwellings may be sold, provided it meets a number of other standards, within the greenbelt area, and I know this was a concern of a fair number of people.

With that, I will simply encourage individuals who have an interest in this issue to attend the various public meetings—we've already held three public meetings; there are five more in the balance of this month—and make their views known. We're always open to good suggestions as to how we can make a proposed law a better law. With that, I will now turn the floor over to my parliamentary assistant, Maria Van Bommel.

Mrs Van Bommel: I want to thank the minister and the assembly for the good wishes they've extended to the newest member of my family, my granddaughter Grace Shelley.

I am very happy to be able to take this opportunity to speak to the important issue of Bill 135, the Greenbelt Act, 2004. Our green spaces make all the difference in the quality of our lives. Green spaces help keep our air clean and filter our water. They provide natural beauty

that complements our urban environments. Every year, our citizens look forward to produce from our green spaces because it's the best food in the world and everyone enjoys the freshness of local fruit and vegetables. The natural resources derived from our green spaces help drive an economy that is unrivalled in Canada. That is what the proposed Greenbelt Act, 2004, is all about: protecting green spaces in the Golden Horseshoe to curb unplanned urban sprawl. We want to improve the quality of life today and preserve Ontario's natural heritage for future generations.

Here are the facts about the government's proposed greenbelt. It would contain about one million acres of newly protected land. It would extend about 325 kilometres from the eastern end of the Oak Ridges moraine near Rice Lake in the east to the Niagara River in the west. It would be about 80 kilometres across at its widest point, from the mouth of the Rouge River to the northern tip of Durham region. The proposed greenbelt natural heritage system, included in the draft greenbelt plan, would provide full protection for about three quarters of the lakes, wetlands and forests within the greenbelt. It would stop urbanization in the remaining undeveloped portions of all the major river valleys south of the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment.

The proposed greenbelt area would include the headlands of the major watersheds in the western greater Toronto area—such as Bronte Creek, Sixteen Mile Creek and the Credit River—not currently protected by the Niagara Escarpment or Oak Ridges moraine plans. It would permanently protect more than 100,000 acres of Niagara Peninsula tender fruit and grape specialty crop areas.

The proposed greenbelt, as the minister has said, would also protect the entire Holland Marsh, which is a specialty area in itself of about 15,000 acres located in the York region and Simcoe county areas.

The proposed greenbelt would protect about one million additional acres in the Golden Horseshoe, more than doubling the total area now protected by the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan and the Niagara Escarpment plan.

The current draft of the greenbelt plan also has provisions that would ensure that our agricultural land will continue to produce a steady source of food. Protecting foodland is one of the key goals of the proposed Greenbelt Act, 2004. Some of Ontario's most productive agricultural lands lie within the Golden Horseshoe. Prime agricultural areas are, therefore, located where development pressures are also the greatest. That's why we are focused on protecting thousands of acres of farmland and environmentally sensitive areas within the Golden Horseshoe. But there are many who would have us leave this land open to development.

Some developers have raised concerns about these plans. The shrinking supply of land available for development will contribute to ballooning prices, they tell us. But we can look to a number of experts who tell us otherwise. Building at higher densities and promoting infill

and brownfield redevelopment will help the supply of land that is now designated for future urban development and make it last longer. It is important to note that what the land developers are talking about are areas of prime agricultural land. These lands are flat, relatively free of obstruction and close to existing urban areas, which makes them very attractive for development.

This government sees this land as more than a reserve for future subdivisions. This government recognizes the importance of farmland to agriculture. The government appointed the agricultural advisory team of Lyle Vanclief and Bob Bedgood to look at the protection of farmland in the Golden Horseshoe, as well as the larger issue of the viability of farm operations. The team has consulted with farmers, agricultural stakeholders, rural community leaders and others across the province and drafted a report.

1620

One of the team's recommendations is for the government to move quickly to implement the recommendations in the report that deal with investment, support and the recognition the Ontario agricultural community requires to plan for future prosperity. They also advised against providing direct compensation for loss of perceived future opportunities. Henry Stevens, vice-president of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, agrees with the team's advice. He said, "Preserving farmland is an integral part of ensuring the long-term sustainability of the agricultural industry."

We are moving forward on that advice. This is some of the best farmland in the country. The greenbelt plan we are proposing would protect one million additional acres of environmentally sensitive and agricultural land in the greater Golden Horseshoe.

Agricultural land is for farmers to grow fresh fruit and vegetables and a host of other commodities, including livestock, grains and oilseeds. It is not for farming cement or growing subdivisions. This government is proposing to preserve agricultural land for agriculture and preserve all the rights of agricultural landowners that they now have. Landowners' rights do not now, and have never, included the right to turn valuable farmland into pavement.

Purchasing land designated for one purpose in the hope that it can be used for another is defined as land speculation, and that goes whether you bought the land yesterday or 50 years ago. With greenbelt protection, speculators may lose, but I feel that farmers will win. Farmers are only protected if they have somewhere to farm. This government chooses to protect farmers.

Culture, tourism and recreation would also get a boost from the proposed greenbelt. The planned trails, parklands and open spaces will help support sports, tourism and recreation.

The province, municipalities, conservation authorities and other organizations would be encouraged to develop a compatible parkland and open space system and trail strategy. Municipalities would be encouraged to identify, protect and incorporate cultural heritage resources such

as historical buildings and neighbourhoods into their planning processes.

The government's rural plan announced last week outlines a vision that applies to rural communities across the province, and that includes communities within the proposed greenbelt.

The rural plan sets out goals for building strong rural communities and the strategies for achieving those goals, and it provides a course of action for developing and delivering programs and services that reflect the diversity and uniqueness of our rural communities.

Programs such as the rural economic development program, which will help rural communities build community capacity to address a number of priorities, also include health care services, community revitalization and economic development, and skills enhancement.

We have just today announced infrastructure financing programs, such as our Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund, or COMRIF, and the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority, or OSIFA.

Other proposals in the draft greenbelt plan to encourage tourism include a network of public open spaces where people can enjoy recreational and leisurely pursuits in parks, conservation areas, navigable waterways and forests. Other opportunities to make selected greenbelt lands accessible to the public are also proposed in our plan.

The draft plan recognizes the need to balance the goals of the greenbelt and the long-term infrastructure needs for growth. The draft greenbelt plan has specific policies that will guide its implementation. This includes the requirement in the proposed act for a 10-year review of the proposed greenbelt plan to determine whether the plan is meeting its proposed purposes and objectives. The review would allow, for example, the consideration of any new information on policies that may need to be reflected in the plan to improve its effectiveness. I want to say, however, that the total area of the proposed greenbelt plan could not be reduced under such a review.

This government is committed to preserving our green spaces to help build stronger communities, improve our health and protect our air and water. We made a commitment to Ontarians to end the years of unplanned urban sprawl that has happened in the past. The proposed greenbelt is being developed to protect a natural system and agricultural land for our children, our children's children and all who come after them, including my granddaughter, Grace.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise today to make a few comments to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and his parliamentary assistant on this very important bill. I don't think there's anybody in this House who would agree more that we have to watch out for our farmland and take care of the future of our province.

However, what's important about this bill is what it doesn't include. It doesn't include the fact that in the

province of Ontario, development will now leapfrog over the greenbelt area. With that, it will go into other parts of rural Ontario, and with that, there's no money to attach to it. We even went as far, more recently, as allocating part of the gas tax to urban centres with transit systems, and nothing to our townships and our villages—the small parts of the province of Ontario—nothing at all. They pay into the gas tax and get nothing back, yet I don't see anything allocated here in this bill or any possible suggestion on where the municipalities will get money for increased infrastructure costs.

That will happen. It's going to happen in Simcoe county; it's going to happen in the north part of York region; it will happen through parts of Dufferin county. Nothing is there for them at all, not a penny, and you haven't made any indication in any of your comments, either from the parliamentary assistant or from the minister, that there would be any money.

I want to hear that. I want to hear back from the minister that he's going provide lots of funding to those rural parts of the province of Ontario where growth will occur. That is, of course, unless your government drives this province into a state of recession, which could easily happen with some of the moves you've been making lately.

Thank you very much for an opportunity to comment.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I really look forward to my opportunity to spend about an hour or so later—if not today, I guess tomorrow—to explain in detail the problems with the existing greenbelt legislation and the amendments that I will be making when this comes before committee. I've spoken to the minister, and of course it makes sense that, since he has public consultations going on out there, we're going to have an opportunity to actually go before that committee and make amendments, and I'll be doing so.

As I said when this was first announced, it's a good start. I congratulated all of the environmental groups and conservation groups and others—the Greenbelt Alliance—who worked, I know, very, very closely with the government to get to this point. But it is not good enough. It doesn't go far enough.

1630

I'll tell you who must be really excited: the finance minister—or maybe he's depressed about it. I noticed that a big swath of the agricultural land in his riding got an exemption. I don't know how that happened, but maybe that's something we'll want to take a look at.

I'll be coming forward with some areas that need to be included, because I said earlier and I'll say again: This thing that we talk about that we now call leapfrog development—when I went and saw the map, there's the bright green, and there's brown, urban, and then there's this sort of pale, fleshy tone in the middle. That's the stuff that's hanging out over the belt. It's out there, exposed. And do you know what's going to happen? I'm not just talking about Simcoe; I'm talking about that huge swath of prime agricultural land that has been left out. Guess what's going to happen there. If it's not all already

bought up by the developers, it will be. We're talking about an area that's about 75% of all the currently developed GTA lands. This is, as has been pointed out by the Neptis Foundation—I'm sure you read the story over the weekend—far, far too much land left out.

I'll be giving more details to the minister so that he can be prepared for the amendments that I will be making to vastly improve this piece of legislation.

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I want to begin by congratulating the minister and his parliamentary assistant, our colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

What strikes me about this bill is that it fits a pattern that we've seen in this government, and that's doing things differently. It was interesting; my friends over to the right used to like to talk about a Common Sense Revolution and doing things differently, but I didn't see a lot of things done differently under their government.

We came to power, and I had so many people who said to me, "Hey, you're a new government. You come in"—and the Minister of Finance is here—"and you say the finances of the government were left in a bad way by the previous government. Why don't you have the auditor come in and take a look before the next election?" Do you know what? I could never come up with an answer for that, because it made sense. It made good, logical sense. So what did we do? We enacted legislation, which is before this Legislature, to do that.

We looked at things like fixed elections. Why do we have to play peekaboo for the final year of every government? Why don't we set the election date right away? Again, I never had a good answer to that question. We have legislation before this Legislature that's going to do it.

The greenbelt legislation that's before us right now is about a government which is no longer going to engage in this sort of hodgepodge planning. It's about taking a look at the long term of this province. It's about taking a look at how we want Ontario to develop, not just over the next few years but over the next decade and decades to come. It's about a minister who has made a responsible choice in terms of figuring out where we want agricultural development, where we want to have urban development and how we want to have our urban development continue to evolve. It's work that's complemented by that being undertaken by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. It shows the type of vision and doing government differently which I think is going to become the real trademark of this government over the next three years.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): The Kool-Aid is certainly running strong with the Liberal backbenchers tonight. They certainly are doing things a lot differently than they campaigned on—a lot of different bills and decisions and announcements that run completely at odds with their campaign promises.

I'll ask my colleague who's not a member of our party but another: How many broken promises have they made to date?

Interjection: Zero.

Mr Hudak: See, the Kool-Aid is running strong, because they're saying "zero." You don't even believe that. I think you guys have 40—

Ms Churley: How many? About 100?

Mr Hudak: They say "about 100" broken promises. That may be the case.

To my colleague's other point about this not being a hodgepodge, it's very much a hodgepodge approach. You have one approach by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and then you have another approach by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. I'm hearing over and over again from those who care about this initiative and are interested in this initiative, wanting to know why they're working at different paces and different goals. You'd think that they would have brought it forward under one minister. You wonder if the Minister of Municipal Affairs or the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal knows the Minister of Transportation. I don't know if you guys know each other, because you are certainly not seeing work from transportation to support the greenbelt initiative or public infrastructure renewal.

Maybe we will get all three in a room and they can bring forward one comprehensive plan and bring it through committee simultaneously so they can consult on a holistic approach to this issue. I say to my colleague from Kitchener, this is nothing but a hodgepodge approach done by various ministers, all at different paces. Surely you have been hearing that from concerned stakeholders.

To the part about the debate with respect to the gas tax versus COMRIF—I think I made the points earlier today—certainly that program is a very poor cousin to the gas tax program, which shows the very low regard this government has for rural and small-town Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has two minutes to reply.

Mrs Van Bommel: I want to thank the members from Simcoe North and Toronto-Danforth, Kitchener Centre and Erie-Lincoln for their comments on our proposed bill for the greenbelt.

First, I want to address the issue that the member for Simcoe North brought about when he talked about what we were doing for rural communities. We have brought forward the COMRIF program, which was announced today, and that is \$298 million that the province is putting into infrastructure costs in rural communities. That would include things such as water lines and waste management; it includes bridges and roads, and it is applicable to all rural communities. I think that's how we want to deal with our communities. We want to help them to grow and develop the kind of infrastructure that they need. I agree with the member from Kitchener Centre when he says that this makes sense. The greenbelt plan makes sense. It makes good sense.

I have not heard any negative comments in my community, in my riding, about it. They see the purpose of doing this. They are very happy with this. They feel that we are moving in the right direction. In Lambton-Kent-Middlesex they feel very strongly about keeping agri-

cultural land in agricultural use. It's very important to a farmer. If you're going to make a living at it, you need to have the land to work with. You cannot start farming—if you pave it over, it's gone. We will never see those kinds of lands again.

We recognize the uniqueness of the Niagara area. We recognize the need for the tender fruit and the grape. We have such areas in the rest of the province, but they do not produce the same kind of product that we see in the Niagara area. Those are the kinds of things that the greenbelt plan will preserve.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hudak: I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the official opposition to the parliamentary assistant of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs on Bill 135. Maybe the minister will be watching on television.

The minister did ask a question at the beginning of his address, about 45 minutes ago: What do we want to see in the Golden Horseshoe in, I think, 30 years' time? We want to see a Golden Horseshoe that continues to be an engine of growth, not only for the province of Ontario but for the country as a whole; a magnet for Canadians to come to, to live in, to work in; a magnet for the talented immigrants from across the world, as has been the history of this area, to continue to make Canada strong. We want the green space preserved for generations to come, some of the natural beauty that we've talked about in this Legislature, including the Niagara Escarpment, the tender fruit lands, the Holland Marsh, to name some, and many others.

As part of that Golden Horseshoe in 30 years, we want to see strong and vibrant municipalities that people love to live in. We'll see maybe future generations of Hudaks or—who else is in the Golden Horseshoe area? Well, I don't know, maybe some Bissons in southern Ontario who will enjoy these communities like Brock, like Lincoln; strong communities with strong tax bases, with good services, good quality roads and sewers. We want to see municipalities that are able to keep their taxes low. We want to see farmland that continues to lead the world in the quality of its products, in research, in development. We want to see agricultural products grown in the GTA, in the Golden Horseshoe area, that are purchased first and foremost by Ontarians and also, where available, exported to the world. We want to see a prosperous grape and wine industry continuing to build on the successes of today. We want to see tender fruit—peaches, plums and pears—continuing to be grown in the south. We want to see the Holland Marsh as the envy of the world.

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The problem the government doesn't seem to understand is that if you want to save that farmland, you need to support the farmer. We want to see prosperous farmers and prosperous agricultural communities in the Golden Horseshoe in 30 years' time, stronger than today. We want to see strong agricultural and rural communities throughout Ontario. We want to see strong cities with effective and efficient transportation plans so that people and goods and tourists can move from place to place

quickly and safely, whether it is on highways or through transit.

The big missing element of this greenbelt plan, and why I said to my colleague earlier that very much of this can be described as hodgepodge, is that this strictly addresses land use only. I believe the minister knows, and I believe the parliamentary assistant knows, and the members of the assembly in all three parties know full well that if you want to preserve the land, you cannot just do so by decree. The minister cannot stand in this House, bring forth a bill, veritably wave a magic wand and say the farmland is going to stay in production as farmland for generations to come. That's not the way it's going to work. We heard great prose from across the way, very romantic descriptions of the land we want to see today, tomorrow, in 30 years' time. But I think we need to be realistic that if you want to preserve this farmland, make it viable, you need a plan to support the farmer.

There are some significant, serious flaws to the greenbelt legislation because it concentrates only on land use. There are other ministries doing other work that hopefully will come together and support the greenbelt, to make sure it's a responsible plan for economic growth and preservation of green space, but they seem to be working at cross purposes, at different times, at different rates, and we're not seeing one solid—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: I disagree. I ask the member opposite, where is the agricultural support plan? When the Minister of Municipal Affairs stood to introduce Bill 135 for first reading a week-plus ago, why didn't he mention what the plan was to support our farmers? Why didn't he or the Minister of Transportation stand up and say, "Here are our future highways. Here are the major investments we're going to make in transit so people can get from place to place safely and efficiently in support of the Golden Horseshoe and parts around it"?

The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal stood up, but talked about initiatives in other parts of the province. I think a good question we have is, why is there not one solid, comprehensive plan, where the ministers will work together, that will do the following: repair the flaws of the greenbelt by making sure that farmland stays viable for generations to come. In order to support the farmland, we need a comprehensive plan to support our farmers. I'll address that in more detail later in my remarks.

To deal with what my colleague from Simcoe brought up, the leapfrog that I know will be part of my comments and those of my colleagues in the third party, I believe that people will move and live farther away. I believe that without a solid transportation plan there is great jeopardy. That long snake of traffic down the QEW, down the 401 and up Highway 400 is going to get longer because we do not have a supporting transportation plan hand in hand with this greenbelt legislation. Agriculture, one flaw: the lack of an agricultural plan hand in hand. The lack of a real transportation plan: highways and transit hand in hand.

The third area I will address is municipalities caught in the greenbelt area, some large, some small. Municipalities will be effectively bound into the current urban boundaries, a couple in my riding. One is Lincoln, a beautiful community of about 20,000 or 21,000 people, which will basically have its future growth frozen into its current footprint. The usual response from the government is, "They can redevelop their brownfields." I don't have an exact measure of that but I don't think that the amount, the quantity of brownfields currently available in towns like Lincoln or Pelham, even Brock, is adequate to ensure future growth in that municipality, a further increase in their tax base so they can continue to afford to put funds into good roads, good sewers.

In Lincoln, the constituents are looking for a new recreation centre. They currently don't have one up to the standards that the community demands. If that town is frozen into the greenbelt municipalities, its future growth limited, how could it handle, how could it afford this service that many other municipalities of similar size and similar wealth have—these types of communication centres?

Flaw number one: support for farmers—missing. Flaw number two: a comprehensive transportation plan to support the greenbelt—absent. Third: a plan to ensure that municipalities can be strong in the greenbelt area and continue to grow and prosper, particularly smaller municipalities that we've boxed in, without a great scope for developing in brownfields in the municipalities.

It is a good question, and I will look forward to debate in this Legislature. The greenbelt, if implemented correctly, could be a jewel for the entire province, the country and for visitors from abroad to enjoy.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): You're right, and that's what's going to happen.

Mr Hudak: I ask the finance minister, though, why the entire tax burden should fall upon the municipalities in the greenbelt area. If this is a provincial jewel, should there not be support from the province of Ontario to the taxpayers in those municipalities?

Hon Mr Sorbara: That's exactly what's happened. They've never been happier.

Mr Hudak: I'm reassured by the finance minister's comments that that's exactly what's happening. Maybe in cabinet, that is what's happening. I am certainly encouraged the finance minister seems to indicate that, behind the scenes, plans to do just so are moving forward. I hope that's the case.

I would suggest, simply, that those plans that may be at cabinet right now being discussed in the Liberal caucus should be moved forward hand-in-hand with this legislation because, in the public hearings, farmers, municipal representatives and taxpayers have been rightly saying, "How are we going to ensure the future viability of our farms? How are we going to ensure that our community continues to grow and prosper if land use is restricted in this way?"

Certainly, if those plans that are happening—perhaps; we don't know—behind closed doors came out at the

same time, taxpayers would be much more relieved, farmers would be much more relieved that there is a plan in place, but I think they have ample cause to be doubtful about that.

Truth be told, it's been almost a year since the original greenbelt legislation was brought forward. These points that I raise in the Legislature and that my colleagues on this side of the House have brought forward have been on the floor for debate for some time, but we fail to see, really, any modicum of progress on these issues whatsoever. I think it would be responsible for the government to bring forward that agricultural plan, the transportation plan, the plan for municipalities at the same time they bring forward this legislation.

Fourth, I look forward to debate in this Legislature on the future supply of housing. I do believe it is a component of the Canadian dream to own your own home.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Housing for Attawapiskat, right?

Mr Hudak: While I don't think Attawapiskat, being somewhat further north, is part of the greenbelt legislation, I think it's an important issue. I enjoyed a trip down to Attawapiskat a few years ago. I appreciate the member from Timmins-James Bay's points about housing in Attawapiskat, an important issue that maybe he will discuss in the Legislature.

For today's debate on Bill 135, I want to know: Does the government have a plan to ensure that owning one's own home will still be achievable for average working families in the province of Ontario? I do believe that's part of the Canadian dream, to own your own home, to have that backyard which your daughter can play in, that garden, that space. I know that part of a shift the government is trying to promote is to get more people to live in apartments, in more highrises and more dense-living spaces. You talk about that quite a bit.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: The member from Peterborough disagrees. I've heard that, maybe not from Peterborough, but from other members opposite. I think it's important to provide housing choices for individuals, depending on their current economic circumstances, the size of their families, but I do tell you that I don't think they can bring about that cultural shift that will see more and more Ontarians, a larger proportion, living in apartments, condos and high-rises. I expect that many Canadians will continue to want to live in their own homes with their own yards. If this legislation is not brought forward responsibly with that housing supply, that Canadian dream is increasingly unattainable for working families in the province of Ontario.

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I mentioned earlier, and I'll talk a bit later on, about the leapfrog effect, as my colleague from Simcoe had mentioned a short time ago. What underlies the leapfrog effect is that families are choosing to live in their own homes, to have some space, to have a yard and, as such, even if land is restricted significantly in the GTA, in the greenbelt, they will probably move outside of that area in

order to afford and live in that type of housing. Without that housing supply, without a transportation plan, that long, long commute from Barrie, from Orillia, from Kitchener-Waterloo, from Beamsville, just got a lot longer.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: I'm glad my friend from Peterborough is here. We often have some good conversations during debate and rebuttal, and hopefully he'll have a chance to offer his thoughts from Peterborough's perspective.

But if there's one thing that I hope this debate will rise above, that is the notion that my colleague said a bit earlier, that either you are in favour of this greenbelt legislation or you want to pave over all of the green space. Maybe you were just teasing members of the assembly—you'll talk about that, I'm sure—but it's regrettable, because that is not what the opposition is saying.

It's an old political trick to say, "You're either with the legislation or you want to pave over all the green space." Far from it. In fact, what I'm bringing to the floor in debate today is to ensure that the preservation of green space is done responsibly, that we have a strong Golden Horseshoe area, one with green space that's preserved for generations to come, but one that has a plan to support our farmers, one that has a transportation plan, one that has a plan to ensure that our municipalities remain strong and vibrant, that taxes don't go through the roof, as is feared, and one to ensure that housing opportunities for young families in the province of Ontario continue to be affordable. So I hope this debate will rise above this notion that if you vote against 135, you prefer blacktop to green space. Quite the opposite. We want to ensure that green space and farmland stay green because it's in the farmer's interest, his or her economic interest, to do so.

I'm certainly very proud to have been part of a Progressive Conservative government under Mike Harris that had the largest expansion in green space and protected areas in the history of the province of Ontario through the Living Legacy and Lands for Life process. It's true. I'm very proud to have been part of the government that did that. I'm very proud to be part of the Progressive Conservative Party. That was the party under Bill Davis that brought in the Niagara Escarpment plan. Norm Sterling, as minister, I believe, in the 1980s did the update to that plan. I'm very proud to continue to be a part of the Progressive Conservative Party that brought in the Bruce Trail, which I believe may have started under Frost and was finished by Robarts, a trail that my constituents in the beautiful area of Lincoln, in the riding of Erie-Lincoln, continue to enjoy.

Let me tell you a bit about Lands for Life and Living Legacy. We addressed crown land that covered some 45% of the province of Ontario, the most comprehensive natural heritage program in provincial history. In November 2000, then-Premier Mike Harris announced funding of more than \$100 million to expand Living Legacy into a province-wide initiative. Some of the results: More than \$14 million has been spent to acquire

and protect more than 2,000 hectares of ecological lands, 129 additional parks and protected areas out of 378 now regulated and more on the way—signature sites, including the Great Lakes Heritage Coast. My colleague from Halton, a big proponent and a leader on that Great Lakes Heritage Coast, brought forward a private member's motion to ensure that good work continues at Kawartha Highlands.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: There you go. The member for Peterborough likes the Kawartha Highlands—a smile on his face. I've never had the chance to visit. I'm sure it's a beautiful area. I know our minister at the time—I believe it was Chris Hodgson—was very much supportive of that: part of Ontario's Living Legacy, part of Mike Harris's initiative, part of the Progressive Conservative government that had the largest increase in protected spaces in the history of Ontario.

In January 2001, Premier Mike Harris announced the need for a made-in-Ontario Smart Growth strategy. My colleague Chris Hodgson—now retired from politics, but maybe making a comeback some day—moved forward the Smart Growth Initiative. It was a long-term strategy to ensure promotion and management of growth in communities to sustain strong economies, build strong communities and promote a healthy and long-lasting green space environment.

Let me tell you about some of the goals that were part of the Smart Growth Initiative: the movement of people and goods more efficiently, using existing infrastructure and resources to increase the capacity for economic growth, investing wisely in new infrastructure, managing growth and making tough choices about where development should go, expanding transportation choices within and between communities, protecting natural areas and farmland for future generations, encouraging growth in areas where it will have the least impact on the environment, and making sure all government practices foster smart growth. That was the Smart Growth Initiative. In many cases, to give credit to my friend the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, many of these initiatives are part of his plan. In many cases—we'll discuss his bill probably later this week or next—it tied a red ribbon around the work of Minister Hodgson and his consultation, and Minister Young after him.

But the note that I want to present here in the Legislature is that that was a comprehensive plan. It talked about support for farmers; it talked about transportation; it talked about strong municipalities, hand in hand with protecting green space. And that is what is absent from Bill 135. Those are the fatal flaws of Bill 135. You don't have those plans in place.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Talk about Al Leach.

Mr Hudak: I'll talk about Al Leach in a bit, I think.

The problem is that their plan doesn't incorporate that sort of comprehensive approach. It seems to be merely a land use exercise. I would say, too, at the end of the debate, and I'll say it now and hopefully it will have some resonance, that they should not call this bill for

second reading vote until that agriculture plan is made public and farmers are satisfied with it. I think it's the least they could do. After all, it has been about a year of consultation on that. They have a panel that has reported back, although there's no commitment from the government to take on any of those initiatives.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act—award-winning. In March 2003, Environment Commissioner Gord Miller presented the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing with his annual recognition award, the ECO Recognition Award, for their efforts in protecting the Oak Ridges moraine. Gord Miller said at the time that it “should be a model for land use planning throughout southern Ontario.” So I'm certainly proud to be part of a government that brought forward bold, brave, visionary initiatives like the Lands for Life, like the Living Legacy, like the Oak Ridges moraine protection plan, like the other expansions and protections of green space that I mentioned. So we don't need the criticism that if you talk against Bill 135 you want to pave it all over. Let's leave that debate in the past—it holds no water—and talk about how we can make sure that any protection of green space is done in a responsible manner.

Probably at the top of my list, and what I hear from people in the riding of Erie-Lincoln, throughout Niagara and other areas and from my colleagues here in the Legislature, is an agricultural support plan. That old line holds true: If you want to protect farmland, you need to protect the farmer. We've heard this time and time again, I think at every public consultation meeting that's been held and probably every day at the committee hearings when we hear from deputations. I can list countless examples of when the government has heard this directly from industry, but today, almost a year later, there is still no agricultural support plan.

1700

As I said, you can't just wave a magic wand and decree that this land is going to stay in agricultural production forever. In order to have any kind of responsible greenbelt plan, you need a responsible plan to encourage economic viability on the farm. Austin Kirkby, a councillor in the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, a third-generation farmer, farming in her family for over 40 years, said this at the hearings in Niagara on May 14, 2004: “Saving the land is easy: Just put all the restrictions you want in place and the land will be preserved. Imagine the frustration we feel as farmers when we read about the importance of saving the land because it is in the best interests of the economy, tourism or society in general, but there is no mention of ensuring the economic viability of the farmer. The farmer is the one who invests his money with the purchase of the farm, the rehabilitation of the land by removing unmarketable crops, underdraining, replanting new crop varieties and the wait for four years” or even more for that investment to pay off. The farmer is the one who” ensures “the preservation of the agricultural land.”

York Region Federation of Agriculture's Terry O'Connor and Don Fieldhouse, the president and

secretary-treasurer respectively, to the standing committee on May 21, 2004: “The preservation of the economic viability of food producers is a prerequisite to the success of the protection of the greenbelt. The overall plan must include programs that will encourage farmers within the greenbelt to continue farming.”

The Niagara North Federation of Agriculture to the standing committee on May 14: “You can freeze the land but you cannot force people to farm it. It has to be mutually beneficial or the whole industry will die.” And Art Smith of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, in *Grower* magazine, May 2004: “Save the farmer, and the farmer will save the land.”

The Grape Growers of Ontario: very strong. I spoke during question period a week or so ago about what the Grape King herself had to say about this plan—very strong language, and I can't understand for the life of me at this point, almost a year after this process began, the continuing and ongoing absence of any support plan for the agricultural sector, particularly for those in the greenbelt area. I certainly hear it. I hear it from the grape growers, I hear it from the peach growers and I hear it from farmers in my riding. I fail to understand why the government has not heard this. Surely they've heard it. They have just chosen not to act.

I was very disappointed at the estimates committee of a month or so ago when I asked Minister Gerretsen a number of questions about the greenbelt strategy. Here is a quote from Hansard. I said to him, “Can we expect some sort of agricultural support plan to come forward hand in hand with your permanent greenbelt legislation this fall?” The Honourable Mr Gerretsen said, “I think you'll have to wait until the bill gets introduced, and find out the details at that time.” But when Bill 135 came forward for first reading in this House, all farmers got was one big, empty bushel of broken promises—no support plan for farmers; none whatsoever.

The Vanclief report, some consultations done by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, was posted with very little fanfare—no fanfare—and with very little notice on the OMAF Web site. They did go around, they did listen to farmers and they did put some ideas forward for the government's consideration. The problem was that there was no announcement that the government was going to follow through on these initiatives. They are reviewing them, but it seems to me eminently reasonable that the government support plan for farmers, that agricultural viability plan, should have come forward hand-in-hand with the greenbelt, with the announcement of the government's funding for these initiatives.

I will give you a few examples of some things that the farmers have suggested at committee hearings, and publicly, through the press, for example, or in their own letters.

They want to ensure that they can continue and there will be support for profitable, value-added businesses on their farm land. One way to do so is to ensure that the property tax class, through MPAC or through decisions of the government, makes sure it's an agricultural

facility; that they don't get taxed and taxed and taxed so that value-added would not be profitable on their farms. It seems a simple approach. I hope that still will come forward.

Increased promotion of agri-tourism, one of the recommendations of the Vanclief report, if I recall, and one we would hope the government would have attached dollars to—maybe they still will. I just hoped it would have been in concert so we could be talking about it in the House today.

More “buy Ontario” initiatives, making sure that those crops that grow in the Holland Marsh or in the fruit belt in Niagara are purchased by Ontarians.

A suggestion I had before the assembly today, Bill 7, VQA wine stores, which will give a new outlet particularly to small and medium-sized wineries, the craft wineries, award-winning wineries—an ability for a greater retail presence. I like the bill, and if the government brings forward a similar bill, I'm going to be all for it. I will applaud that kind of initiative which will give greater market access to our VQA—let me be clear: VQA, 100% Ontario-grown product—VQA wine stores.

Substantial steps forward in this area under the previous government: a great, prosperous partnership between the grape growers, the wine council, the province of Ontario and the LCBO. They saw an additional 1.3 kilometres of shelf space added for Ontario wines, the equivalent, I think, of about six additional LCBO stores full of wine as part of these initiatives. The greatest increase in sales for VQA wines, I think, in the history of the province through direct promotion and marketing.

Support for agricultural infrastructure, the ability to draw raw water to support the farms.

Ontario Federation of Agriculture president Ron Bonnett said, with respect to the viability issues, there are a number of things with respect to taxation; take a look at the tax levels. One of the issues that is becoming a real problem for a number of farmers in the GTA is the fact that the assessment values have risen so high that all of a sudden they have a tax burden that is quite a bit higher than that of farmers in other parts of the province. They've actually made some suggestions on taking a look at some new mechanism to figuring out how to assess farmland property.

All very good suggestions, not one of which has yet to be acted upon by the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government.

Kalvin Reid, a reporter and columnist for the *St Catharines Standard*, recently wrote, “In a nutshell, the group,” and he meant the Niagara region's agricultural task force, “claims that, done incorrectly, the greenbelt will mean the death of the family farm, and will kill small towns in Niagara, driving up taxes while reducing services.” His words, not mine. His words that he got from the local task force, not mine. Strong language, and I've got to think that if groups are using this kind of strong language, that reflects a significant, major concern that this legislation has fatal flaws, particularly when it comes to supporting agriculture. I do hope, and I call on

the government to immediately bring forward their agricultural support plan, and not to call this bill for a vote until a plan satisfactory to farmers in the greenbelt area is brought forward.

1710

I'll talk a bit about municipalities as well. Actually, before I leave agriculture, there are some additional concerns that have come up with the new mapping of the greenbelt. The greenbelt map shifted significantly in its second rendition from the first. I think there's some upset about that, because people who felt they were outside of the greenbelt and did not go to the greenbelt hearings woke up the next day and found that they had been enveloped in the greenbelt area. I don't believe that was consulted upon, for example, with the farmers or municipal leaders or the business community in areas like Pelham, where the boundary shifted significantly to the south and gobbled up a great new area.

I know this has happened in other parts of the province as well. The region of Niagara continues to express concerns about the mapping: why municipal boundaries in settlement areas aren't properly reflected on the map. They question why the greenbelt line went farther and farther to the south, when Niagara region's own plan had the boundary farther to the north. It fits in, to an extent, with the way this legislation, in its first form—the first bill, Bill 27—was brought forward, where the Holland Marsh, the farm jewel in the province of Ontario, was effectively cut in half. Half the Holland Marsh was in, half the Holland Marsh was out.

You know why that came about? Because that legislation was rushed into the assembly on the heels of Dalton McGuinty's flip-flop on houses on the Oak Ridges moraine. I think the vast majority of the public, particularly those in the Golden Horseshoe area, recall that solemn pledge that not one additional house would be allowed on the Oak Ridges moraine, that the 6,600 homes, I believe, would all be stopped. This was one of the first and most significant promises broken by Dalton McGuinty. It started setting that trend, that treadmill he found himself on about more and more broken promises and his public image suffering significantly because he had broken his pledges to the people in the province of Ontario so quickly, so frequently and so dramatically.

We discovered as well during the estimates committee that the Liberals under Dalton McGuinty didn't use David Crombie. They didn't use Ron Vrancart. They didn't use respected outside advisers. They did not even use Ministry of Municipal Affairs staff when they broke their promise with respect to stopping homes on the Oak Ridges moraine. In fact, there is great speculation that the 900 or so homes that they did stop, of the 6,600 they had committed to, was actually dense housing. That was a dense area up along Yonge in Richmond Hill. In exchange for giving up housing rights on the area zoned for greater density, single-family dwellings will now be going up in Seaton.

If this speculation is correct, you have a government that says one thing on one hand, that it's against urban

sprawl and wants intensification, but its actions on the other behind closed doors, negotiations carried out by the Premier's chief of staff as opposed to a Vrancart or a Crombie or such, had exactly the opposite effect, will have the opposite impact of what this government purports to be about. I suppose it's not surprising. It certainly has that reputation of saying one thing and doing something completely different.

I think what is highly regrettable as well is that the Minister of Municipal Affairs at that time, during the estimates committee, indicated that these negotiations began some time between election day and the swearing in of cabinet, before he was even a Minister of Municipal Affairs, that the Premier's chief of staff entered into direct, secret negotiations with the developers.

The problem is—

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): How does he know that?

Mr Hudak: The member asked how I know that. The Minister of Municipal Affairs said that. He did. Mr Prue was there with me at the estimates committee. I appreciate his honesty. It's certainly a rare commodity sometimes in this cabinet. But that's what he said, which means that Dalton McGuinty was out in the public saying he was going to stop every single house on the Oak Ridges moraine, up until October 20 or something like that, and all the while his chief of staff was negotiating to break that very promise.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: I don't believe for a second that the chief of staff acted on his own, that he was out there negotiating as a maverick without the Premier's knowledge. I believe the Premier knew what was going on, knew negotiations were underway for him to break his promise and yet publicly kept saying he was going to keep his promise, which goes to character, a point I brought up time and time again: Premier McGuinty directly telling the people of Ontario one thing while actively, behind closed doors, with his full knowledge, doing quite the opposite. Highly regrettable. I'll leave it at that.

If you want to ensure the preservation of farmland, you need to ensure the preservation of the farmer. Hand in hand with this legislation, you need an agricultural support plan. I brought up some things, and other ideas are out there—I am pleased the Minister of Agriculture is here for the debate tonight—but it should be hand in hand with this legislation, so that when you go to public hearings and the farmers say, "How will I keep farming if commodity prices go down, if the government continues to cut agricultural programs?" they should have the answer right there on the table: "Here is the economic support plan for our farmers." But it continues to go missing.

Municipalities are increasingly making the point that towns like Brock, Stouffville and Lincoln are going to see their tax bases effectively frozen. There may be some room—likely limited—to expand within urban boundaries. But they will argue, I think quite rightly, that their tax base will be effectively frozen into the future. All

these municipalities face the same challenges of supporting their infrastructure, and I'll bet that municipal politicians will continue to improve programs or attempt to improve the services they have in those municipalities, whether it's roads or recreation centres that I mentioned earlier. They will face a very difficult choice between supporting services or dramatically increasing property taxes in their municipalities.

Those municipal politicians, I think, make a very valid point that I hope this government will choose to implement: that the province should directly support municipalities that are caught up in the greenbelt area, municipalities that will be seeing their future tax revenue and future growth plans significantly limited by this initiative.

Again, this isn't new. We've heard this from day one. This time in the year 2003, municipal politicians came forward and said this, but this very Minister of Municipal Affairs has not brought this forward, nor was there any funding within their estimates program to support these municipalities. Whether that is for the consolidated revenue fund—whether it will be directly flowed to municipalities through such—or whether it will be a special infrastructure program, municipal politicians have various good ideas. But the essential point is valid and should be adopted: If the greenbelt is to be a jewel for the entire province of Ontario to enjoy, the burden, the cost, should not be borne by the local taxpayer. The province of Ontario should directly support these municipalities.

Some examples have already come forward: A new grocery store and a Tim Hortons in one municipality, the township of Brock. The mayor of Brock estimates that almost 130 jobs would be created in this town if these projects could go forward. But if I understand correctly from what the mayor has said, it's stopped. You wonder if it's practically un-Canadian to stop a Tim Hortons. It's a good question for debate. But a Tim Hortons in a major shopping centre, and a grocery store, 130 jobs—it would be very valuable to a community of Brock's size—lost.

1720

Pickering Mayor Dave Ryan—Pickering is upset. The Duffins Rouge agricultural preserve, which the city designated for development, is included in the greenbelt, whereas the Greenwood area, which the city had wanted to withhold from development, is not.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Oh, if you've got a good point, it's helpful to us. My colleague from—Pickering-Ajax?

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

Mr Hudak: Thank you—from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge will have a chance to address this issue. But Mayor Ryan says, "It doesn't make sense to us."

Ian Urquhart summarized the argument quite well in the Toronto Star column of November 8. He says, "Other municipalities find themselves completely engulfed by the greenbelt. That means they can't rely on new revenues from development to pay for replacement of crumbling infrastructure."

Mayor Bill Hodgson of the town of Lincoln said the following: “We already have among the highest property taxes, and we don’t have the kinds of facilities that other communities have. When I say ‘other,’ I mean more urban communities and certainly communities where there is significant rapid growth going on.”

He goes on to say, “What we need to recognize, however, is that people live here”—in his town of Lincoln. “The majority of people are not farmers, they are not employed in the agricultural sector, and there is no justifiable reason that people whose towns will now be encompassed within the greenbelt area should be denied access to reasonable recreational and cultural facilities. These things are increasingly out of touch. I won’t even go to the areas of buried infrastructure and roads.”

Mayor Hodgson, I think, made a very good point and continues to do so, that direct support from the province for municipalities in the greenbelt area is absolutely essential for any kind of greenbelt strategy to be successful.

Whitchurch-Stouffville: “Because municipalities are so reliant on the property tax base to raise our revenues to fund local programs and services, we could be faced with spiralling tax increases.”

Mr Leal: Who said that?

Mr Hudak: Whitchurch-Stouffville, at the hearings.

Debbie Zimmerman, the former regional chair of Niagara, and now a councillor for Grimsby, tends to be friendly toward Liberal causes. In the Niagara Falls Review on Monday, November 8, it said, “Taxes could go through the roof, and people won’t want to live here,” meaning greenbelt municipalities. “Or, we will have a bunch of corporate farms owned by two people,” as opposed to the current family farm.

We’ve heard that case quite strongly, that the family farms will be very hard-pressed to make ends meet without an economic viability plan, and the only remaining farming in the greenbelt area, if it exists, could very well be large corporate farms. The family way of life on the farm, the family farm, may be a thing of the past in the greenbelt area if there is not a supportive agricultural plan to make sure it continues to pay to farm.

Albert Witteveen, president of the Niagara North Federation of Agriculture, is worried about development restrictions that will reduce farming’s profitability.

In Uxbridge, “about 80% of Uxbridge’s tax income is residential,” said Mayor O’Connor. There you go. Mayor O’Connor went on to say, “More industry helps spread the tax burden and lifts some pressure off of homeowners. You’ve taken away our ability for commercial and industrial growth,” she continued. “In the last year, we saw some significant new industry come to town, and that seemed healthy, but now the whole three northern municipalities are certainly looked at as places where there will not be future growth.”

The approach seems straightforward. I think the Minister of Municipal Affairs should estimate what the growth rate of these communities should be, all else

constant, in the greenbelt area. They should examine the underlying reasons for that growth and see how they’re impacted by the greenbelt legislation. Calculate that growth rate without the greenbelt and that growth rate with the greenbelt, and then compensate those municipalities, those local taxpayers, for that loss of growth. Help them afford that necessary infrastructure, those roads, that recreation complex for a town like Lincoln. Unfortunately, we’re missing an agricultural plan and we’re missing a plan to support greenbelt municipalities.

I know my colleagues behind me are concerned about leapfrogging. As families leave the GTA, they’ll move outside of the greenbelt area. Kitchener-Waterloo, for one, will see its already strong growth rate become even greater. It will increase the commute from these homes outside of the greenbelt area into the GTA. More people on the road travelling to these leapfrog communities will cause congestion on our highways, cause environmental concerns and will increase the demand for public transit. However, sadly but unfortunately unsurprisingly, the transportation plan to support the greenbelt remains absent.

After a year—I’ll say again, after a year—these concerns are not new. The concerns of the farmers, the concerns of taxpayers in greenbelt municipalities, the concerns of commuters are not new, but even after a year, those plans are missing.

One such important piece of this would be the mid-peninsula corridor. I think now it’s sort of renamed the Niagara-GTA corridor, a new highway route coming from probably the Stevensville area and the Fort Erie area just after the international crossing at the Peace Bridge, probably up the QEW a bit, which would go west and northwest. It would take some pressure off the QEW, would help to develop the southern and southwestern part of the Niagara Peninsula, of Haldimand county. It would help get goods and services and tourists to market, get people home to their families more quickly and more efficiently, whether that’s in the GTA east or, even more so, to the west in linking up that sort of Niagara-to-Windsor corridor.

But after about 13 months of this government and all kinds of lip service—

Hon Mr Sorbara: Lip service?

Mr Hudak: I think I’m being kind with that term. There has not been one step of progress on the mid-peninsula corridor; in fact, they’ve slammed the brakes and put it into reverse.

Now we’re hearing again the Minister of Transportation further delaying the release of terms of reference for the environmental assessment for that highway—further delays. He’s scrapping the original terms of reference. Who knows how many studies he will be reissuing and redoing, how many years of delay this is going to cause, but that delay is made even worse because of the inaction of the Minister of Transportation for more than a year now. A highway would support the greenbelt plan, would support that strategy, would take those growth pressures off the QEW and move them to the south, open

up greater growth for Port Colborne, Welland, Wainfleet and Dunnville, but there's no sign of that highway, which should have been part of this initiative.

Of course, a strong transit plan—increasing GO. Despite promises in the budget about a strong GTTA, I'm not aware of funding going through that. Certainly the gas tax money did not. So we've yet to see any comprehensive plan to support transit to the municipalities impacted by the greenbelt legislation and those municipalities that will be the new leapfrog municipalities.

Mr Leal: They just got the gas tax.

Mr Hudak: He says they got the gas tax for urban transit, but the gas tax, though, didn't go to GO. It didn't go for linking up transit systems. The GTTA, as far as I know or have seen to date, has no teeth, no funding, no ability to create a streamlined transit system. Maybe one day we will see that. It was certainly something that was promised, so I won't hold my breath.

1730

You've got to think that with the impact of the leapfrog communities caused by this legislation, it would have been sensible to have a transportation plan to ensure that people get to market, get to their jobs, get to visit their relatives, safely and efficiently. But unfortunately, there's no plan for the new highways and no plan for that streamlined public transit system.

Highway 406 is another one that I know leaders in Niagara will be pushing for: the extension of the four-laning of Highway 406 south, then to Welland, and then to Port Colborne. The argument will be that if you encourage growth to the south, Niagara, that will take some pressures off the tender fruit lands and off the government to expand the QEW and move that pressure to the south, which would be a major artery for investment, for job creation, for trade and for tourism in Niagara and in the GTA.

Unfortunately, highways like that—the 404 past Lake Simcoe, the Bradford bypass, completing Highway 407 through Durham to Highway 35/115—

Mr Leal: A great project; it's moving forward.

Mr Hudak: But we haven't seen it move forward.

Mr Leal: Ask my friend from Oshawa. He knows it's moving forward.

Mr Hudak: Well, I haven't seen the evidence of that. It should be part of a comprehensive transportation plan in support of the greenbelt initiative.

Extending Highway 427, as well; extending the 410—good examples of initiatives that would be part of a real transportation strategy that would address communities impacted by the greenbelt legislation and address those communities that have been impacted by the leapfrogging effect.

I know that colleagues on this side of the House and in the third party will be raising some serious questions about how the exact greenbelt map was determined. Ideally, you'd think that it would be based on science—some physiographic features, for example, that would determine greenbelt boundaries; existing plans, for example.

On TVO on Friday night, Susanna Kelley raised some very important concerns for debate in this Legislature. I expect her questions in the House about how these boundaries were determined. By the tone of her discussion on Backroom 411, I think she was concerned that a lot of these decisions were made based on politics, as opposed to the best interest of science and the best interest of preserving the highest-quality farmland.

The argument we're continuing to hear is that some good farmland is now scheduled to be developed and some less productive farmland is to be kept in farming—an important question as to why a large swath of land from the 400 to Barrie is wide open for developments but other similar areas to the east, in Simcoe, are not. How were these particular decisions made? Who made those decisions?

I think there's good cause for scepticism or for efforts into inquiring because of what we've learned about those 900 houses on the Oak Ridges moraine: that it was the Premier's chief of staff who entered into those direct negotiations with developers, as opposed to a third party, as opposed to using the resources or the science from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

I think we need some credible assurances in this Legislature that there is adequate land supply, so that young working families, new immigrants to this country and children leaving home and trying to buy their first home will have that opportunity to achieve that Canadian dream of owning their own home, of owning their own space. We've heard some reassurances, but we have not seen proof that the government has a plan to ensure that housing opportunities remain for working families in Ontario to afford their own home, their own yard, their own garden. It may not be the case for everybody, but I do believe that a significant number of Canadians want to own their own home as opposed to living in an apartment building for their entire lives.

I believe that Dalton McGuinty wants this legislation to be successful. If you were to ask ordinary folks on the street to name a major accomplishment of the Dalton McGuinty government in its first year, I think they would be very hard pressed to do so. "Broken promises" would be a comment, but I think they would be very hard pressed to name an example of a major success of the Dalton McGuinty government. That's why I think the greenbelt becomes increasingly important politically to Dalton McGuinty, so he has something he can talk about.

Certainly the premise of preserving green space—who would be against the notion of preserving additional green space for generations to come? Marcy's Woods in my riding of Erie-Lincoln is an example, and I appreciate the minister's support on Marcy's Woods. But the problem is, this legislation has fatal flaws because it has no agricultural support plan, it has no plan to support municipalities to ensure they continue to be strong and grow and can afford reasonable and needed services into the future. It's entirely missing a transportation strategy to address leapfrogging, to make sure people get to market, to their work, to visit their families quickly and

efficiently. It's missing an element to ensure that housing—individual homes—remains affordable to taxpayers in the province.

So I ask the members opposite to address these flaws. They've existed since day one. There has been plenty of input, plenty of suggestions, plenty of folks before the committee. I read some in Hansard: farmers of all stripes, municipal leaders of all persuasions. Transportation plans exist. Why has the government not brought forward these support initiatives and addressed these flaws in over a year? Because this is not simply an issue of zoning, you need to address the underlying economics to have a responsible greenbelt plan. I say to my colleagues across the floor—I ask them kindly—do not bring this legislation forward for a vote until you have that agricultural support plan in place satisfactory to greenbelt farmers, a simple thing to ask for. I also ask you to bring forward that municipal plan as well as a transportation plan.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Churley: I have just a couple minutes to respond to the member for Erie-Lincoln. I heard some people say that the Tories want to pave more and the NDP wants to save more when it comes to the greenbelt. I have to admit that I don't mind the accusation that I, representing my caucus, and indeed all my caucus, want to see more land preserved and saved within this greenbelt.

I was interested to hear the Conservative member talk about some of the issues that we all have to debate and grapple with and make changes to for this bill to work. Whatever their motivation is—and I'm not sure from that speech, to tell the truth—I can tell you that some of the issues raised are issues we're going to have to fix if this is to work.

I mentioned previously, and the member mentioned as well, the sprawl, the huge piece of land that is left out, the leapfrog development in Simcoe, and the bulge, I call it, just hanging over the belt, exposed, which of course will be developed. That is a huge problem.

He also talked about the fact that there is no transportation plan. That is a major issue that hasn't been addressed. He talked about protecting the farmers.

I'm not talking about developer-driven speculative compensation, but there are programs that need to be put in place. I'm talking about the smaller municipalities that—for instance, the Tories made municipalities dependent on property taxes and development charges to pay the bills. What are they going to get in return for that? That was the wrong direction to go, and we need to plug these holes or this legislation is not going to work. That's my goal: to make sure those holes are plugged so we have greenbelt legislation that actually does what it purports to do.

1740

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I'd like to add my two minutes to the discussion on this debate. I believe I hear comments that the minister has divine rights once this legislation is passed. The minister is prepared to implement an advisory council made up of citizens with interest in the greenbelt and keeping such a vibrant

resource. So it's fairly clear that we want to work with the advisory council made up of local citizens from the areas affected so we can best manage the greenbelt legislation.

Some of the key goals we talked about are that we want to sustain the environment. Who could argue against sustaining the environment? We're not destroying farmland; we are protecting farmland.

I remember, wearing my municipal hat in a rural setting, where I had farmers come to the local municipalities to tell us, "No more severances, because we need land to grow crops. We cannot afford to have sprawl or strip development along a countryside." I have heard that loud and clear. I believe that this legislation will put the farming industry back on the right foot. Sure, there are difficult issues. Nobody is denying the fact that farmers are striving, through certain sectors, with some difficulties. I believe this is certainly something that will add to their sustainability in the future.

The decision about the greenbelt is not a stand-alone decision. Bill 136, I believe, was just introduced for places to grow in the greater Golden Horseshoe. The two go hand in hand. So I think we need to support this and get rolling as soon as we can.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's always a pleasure to respond to the member from Erie-Lincoln, because, as our critic for municipal affairs, he does follow this. I should say, people who are interested in more detail on this should refer to the Hansard of the estimates committee when he cross-examined the Minister of Municipal Affairs on the issue of the land exchange and the interference from the Premier's office. He did briefly touch on it.

What I'm hearing from my constituents in the riding of Durham, and it would include—not at this time, of course, but in the future—Uxbridge. He mentioned Mayor Gerri Lynn O'Connor and their concern about—it's expropriation, really. At the end of the day, this is a piece of legislation that exempts property rights and it is sort of like a motherhood issue, because when one looks at property and the land that we have the privilege to occupy and to take care of as stewards—I think of agriculture in my area, as an example, farms with as little as 100 acres and probably as much as a couple of thousand acres. They are excellent stewards of the land, and, all of a sudden, by the stroke of a pen by Minister Gerretsen and Dalton McGuinty, their land has been rendered virtually frozen for any future appropriate uses, which could be, if you look at technology and agriculture, quite complex. Appropriate uses on agricultural land might include food processing, making corn into other products on the land, which would be prohibited uses of the land.

I am concerned primarily from the point of view of individuals' rights, without any form of compensation or even being addressed in this legislation. I can assure you that municipalities under compressed growth, the smart growth which is part of this—people's lives are going to be far more intense. The minister offers no proposals and no hope for the future. I think the member from Erie-

Lincoln has addressed many of the issues. I'll be speaking on the topic later.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed a privilege and an honour to comment on the member from Erie-Lincoln's comments. Although I do not agree with everything he has to say, he does always say it so eloquently, he does his research and he has a very definite point of view.

I was especially interested in his talk about what transpired in the meeting that we held in the estimates committee dealing with financial matters, when we were talking about the transfer of the land, because his questions were articulate, they were pointed and they got right to the nub of the issue, and that is, that the Premier's chief of staff was there doing the negotiations even prior to the Premier being sworn into office, even prior to his having a cabinet. There was somebody there, an unelected official, doing precisely the negotiation to make sure that the Oak Ridges moraine would continue in spite of the promises he had made during the election.

In the minute that's left, I'd also like to talk briefly about what the member from Northumberland commented on in terms of the member from Erie-Lincoln, and that is, not to worry, there's going to be a Greenbelt Advisory Council. I would caution all members to read the legislation, because it is prescriptive. It says, "The minister may establish ... a Greenbelt Advisory Council." It doesn't say "he shall" or "she shall." It says he "may" establish that Greenbelt Advisory Council, whose membership and terms of reference are determined by that selfsame minister, so that the minister can say, "Well, I don't know if I'm going to have one, but if I have one, I'm going to put all the people in who go along with my point of view or the point of view of the government." It's going to be a rubber stamp.

This is some of the difficulty that we in the NDP have with this legislation, that it is prescriptive. We would ask, if and when this goes to committee hearings, if and when it goes to third reading, that a very serious look be taken at the "may" provision.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Erie-Lincoln has two minutes to reply.

Mr Hudak: I appreciate the comments of my colleagues. The member for Durham rightly brings up an important issue with respect to property rights and the major, dramatic impact on many taxpayers' property rights as a result of this bill.

I certainly appreciate the kind comments from the members for Beaches-East York and Toronto-Danforth. That's why I look forward to working with them here and in committee to ensure that any plan to preserve green space is done responsibly, with respect for taxpayers, farmers and municipal leaders, which is unfortunately totally absent.

The member for Northumberland made a few comments about the minister not taking divine rights, that he could appoint an advisory committee. The member for Beaches-East York replied to that very well.

The reality is, under this bill and under Bill 26 and Bill 27, the Minister of Municipal Affairs has assumed absolutely extraordinary powers to overrule local zoning plans, official plans and boundaries. The minister could change the boundaries of the greenbelt. He could declare a provincial interest at hearings before the OMB. Despite promises to the contrary, the McGuinty government has taken a startling amount of decision-making away from municipal leaders and brought it up to the office of the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

To my friend the Minister of Agriculture: One thing I didn't have a chance to mention is that in the report from Vanclief, I do have some concerns about permitted on-farm uses. I think it's far too restrictive. For example, it limits the number of hours for people working on value-added, on-farm sites to 4,500 annually, which, if I did my calculations correctly, is a limit of two employees, and 1,600 square feet in size, a 40-by-40 building, will be very limiting.

Surely if you want to make sure the economic viability of farming continues, you need a support plan. The Vanclief plan, unfortunately, falls short in this regard.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Churley: First of all, I want to refer to my colleague Michael Prue from Beaches-East York, who is actually our municipal affairs critic. He is kindly ceding the floor to me on this issue because—

Hon Mr Sorbara: The front row takes over.

Ms Churley: That's right. But I should say that he has been doing a tremendous job in all of these issues that have been coming forward.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: He should be.

The New Democrats see this issue as primarily an environmental issue, but of course there are a lot of other issues involved as well. I will be going into some of those, and my colleague Michael Prue, when he has an opportunity to speak to this bill, will be going into some of those issues in more detail, as will my leader, who is the agricultural critic, and others who will be looking at different pieces of this bill and making suggestions to the government.

1750

I do want to say that my colleague for Beaches-East York pointed out that he sat on the estimates committee and heard first-hand—I was flabbergasted when he told me about this. The minister admitted—was it before the election was actually called?

Interjection: Before swearing in.

Ms Churley: Before he was actually sworn in, the new Premier actually had a chief of staff in the backroom, behind closed doors—I'm talking about what happened on the Oak Ridges moraine—secretly negotiating a trade-off, a deal, while still telling people, "We're going to keep our promise and not allow one stick of new housing to be built there." As it turned out, that promise was about to be broken.

It makes me think of the coal-fired plants and what's happening there. What's going on, what's being negotia-

ted behind the scenes when you have on an agenda for a Liberal conference on energy: “Under what circumstances could we, the Liberals, consider not keeping our promise to close the coal plants?” Not only that, but just to set the table here, we know that the Liberals, when in opposition, before they won the government, knew there was a huge deficit of over \$5 billion and didn’t admit it.

Mr Leal: No, a risk.

Ms Churley: A risk. They’re playing with language here. If you knew there was a risk—I’ve got even better quotes than that. Having set the table with that, I do want to thank Mr Prue for his contribution, support and help in this issue.

I find it interesting to listen to Liberal members talk about this bill, and I’m going to find it interesting, as we continue this debate, to see if any of the Liberals are actually listening to the concerns expressed by the opposition and by other independent groups out there. You may have seen a very interesting article in the *Sunday Star*:

“Will Greenbelt Halt Sprawl or Make it Much Worse?

“Plan would boost growth, critics warn. Prime farmland still open for building.”

It’s a story that talks about Neptis, a very well respected independent body that has been doing a number of studies since, I think, 1998 on land use in Ontario. They have expressed some very grave concerns about what’s been left out of this greenbelt and have said that if it’s not fixed there is going to be massive amounts of sprawl allowed to go ahead despite this greenbelt bill before us: the issues that are being raised about leapfrog development within the Simcoe area, which I’ve raised time and time again; the big pipe in King City. In fact, I have here the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance hot spots. You might remember that I raised these issues on many occasions in the Legislature.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Oh, this speech is a year old.

Ms Churley: The Finance Minister says this speech is a year old. Isn’t it too bad that I have to continue raising these issues because they’ve done very little about them, even now, having brought in the greenbelt. I am going to tell you why I’m raising these hot spots again, and I’ll go into detail about a few of them.

After the final legislation came out—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: I know there are hearings going on right now, and we’ll have an opportunity once again to make amendments, which I will do. I made them when the first piece of greenbelt legislation came forward. None of them were accepted. I’ll be making them again.

When you look at the 10 hot spots—I counted them—we’ve got the Trafalgar moraine, Oakville, big plans for sprawl, nothing for air quality. I’ve got a check mark by that one.

I’ll start with a positive one that’s been included in the greenbelt. We have to go down to the Rockfort quarry, Caledon, which has been described as a watery grave for wildlife. Sorry, but even after the greenbelt has been brought forward, that’s still—

Hon Mr Sorbara: A watery grave?

Ms Churley: Yes, a watery grave for wildlife. The reason is because the Liberal members don’t know that this is excluded from the greenbelt. I’m going to tell them, since they seem so interested, why that’s a problem. It is an application by a construction company to develop a quarry on the Rockfort farm. It’s located in an environmentally sensitive headwater area on the Niagara Escarpment, north of Brampton. That is where it’s located. The proposal is to extract and transport 1.5 million tonnes to 2.5 million tonnes of gravel, resulting in upwards of 1,000 trips a day. The Rockfort farm is located within an important and well-known wildlife area that lies between the hamlets of Terra Cotta and Belfountain. The nationally threatened Jefferson salamander—previously your colleague Mr Colle, when he was sitting in opposition, was quite concerned about this threatened Jefferson salamander. We’re not hearing much from him on this today. Anyway, it has been identified in the area. Those salamanders are limited to forest and pocket wetland complexes within the GTA, and that is why it would be a watery grave for wildlife in that area.

Simcoe county is another one, leapfrogging over the greenbelt. Unfortunately, I thought the government was going to fix this one, because it’s such a glaring error. On August 20, 2004, the Greenbelt Task Force’s final advice and recommendations to the Ontario government flagged the fact that one of the big problems in the Liberal plan is insufficient protection against leapfrogging. They specifically talked about the developers planning to skip over the currently proposed greenbelt lands to build on lands further north, and that would mean the destruction of more prime farmland and natural heritage systems in the Golden Horseshoe. I called on the government back then and I’m calling on the government again today: If they really want us to believe they are going to prevent sprawl and protect prime agricultural land, they will do something about this leapfrog problem. It’s very important.

Just so people understand the implications of leapfrogging over the greenbelt, here is what’s going on. The effort to limit the sprawl overall in the GTA is being undermined by a whole flood of new development applications in areas not targeted for protection that continue not to be targeted for protection under the Greenbelt Act. The area is sprouting an incredible number of new development applications, and has been for some time now, in the absence of any protective legislation. So I say again that the Simcoe county area needs to be included in this greenbelt legislation. The area contains major forest blocks and rivers flowing north off the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment. It is prime food-growing land for southern Ontario, of course, not to mention that it’s going to not only gobble up more farmland there, but in terms of leapfrogging, there is going to be even more. There will have to be highways built to accommodate that. There will be more sprawl, there will be more smog and there will be more traffic jams. That is the situation with this.

I’m going to very quickly, in my couple of minutes left for today before I continue tomorrow, talk about a

couple more. North Leslie, in Richmond Hill, one of the most threatened sites in Ontario, has been half protected. So we need to get the government to take that a step further and protect it all.

These are some of the areas—I think there were four or five—out of the 10 that the government did step in and protect under this greenbelt legislation, but the rest have been left off. I will be fighting to make sure that those are included when I bring in my amendments.

At that, I'll close for today. I have a lot more to say on this bill, and I'm sure the Liberals are very much looking forward to it and will be taking notes so that they can put forward those amendments when we take this to committee. Thank you for this opportunity today.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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