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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 16 November 2004

Mardi 16 novembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 November 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 novembre 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREENBELT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR
LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 15, 2004, on the motion for second reading of 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.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): When we last dealt with this matter, the member for Toronto-Danforth had the floor. I'm pleased to recognize the member for Toronto-Danforth.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I want to pick up where I left off yesterday afternoon and talk about some of the problems with the greenbelt and how I'm hoping that the Liberals will see the consultations that they're holding right now and the committee that will take place after those consultations to make amendments. I certainly will be making amendments to back up those particular problems that I'm going to talk about tonight, and how we must, indeed, amend the Greenbelt Act in order for it to do what it says it's going to do. I'm going to talk about some of those issues and problems tonight.

For instance, and this is an issue that I've talked a great deal about, the big pipe. I can't tell you how much I object to the big pipe vis-à-vis this act before us tonight. I can't use the "h" word, I know, Mr Speaker, so I won't use it, but the greenbelt, the big pipe and the Liberal government equals the "h" word. You know what I mean. That is a serious problem. Now, a lot of people aren't paying a whole lot of attention to it, except for the people in the area. I just want to point out again what the big

pipe is and why I have to use the "h" word in the context of this discussion tonight.

You see, two stated objectives in the greenbelt plan are—that's section 5, if anybody has the act in front of them—one, "to control urbanization of the lands to which the Greenbelt Plan applies," and two, "to provide protection to the land base needed to maintain, restore and improve the ecological and hydrological functions of the greenbelt area."

Despite those stated objectives, just very recently, much to my chagrin—and I certainly raised it many times in the House—the government quietly on Friday afternoon before a long weekend approved the building of a massive sewer pipe to move 740 million litres—just try imagine how much water that is—of sewage from communities within the greenbelt to a Pickering treatment facility.

This massive sewer pipe requires the removal of 66 billion litres of water from an aquifer at the edge of the Oak Ridges moraine in 2004. This is one of the largest water-takings in Canadian history.

And now, after approving this massive and environmentally destructive project designed to fuel—leaving aside the water-taking and the environmental problems here, this pipe is actually designed to fuel, not reduce, sprawl on to greenbelt lands. In fact, in this case, it's the Oak Ridges moraine we're talking about here.

1850

The government wants Ontarians to believe it is seriously, with this bill, concerned about curbing sprawl and protecting the environment. I've got to say, there's a big problem with optics here when the big pipe is being allowed to go ahead at the same time as this bill is going forward. I think this is something that needs to be fixed.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I know the member for Toronto-Danforth likes a quorum to be present.

Ms Churley: I do.

The Acting Speaker: Interesting thoughts to impart upon the House, and I would ask the staff if quorum is present in the House?

The Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): Quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk: Quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker: I once again recognize the member for Toronto-Danforth.

Ms Churley: If the Liberals were legitimately interested in maintaining the integrity of the greenbelt and protecting the environment, dealing with urban sprawl and our scarce water resources, they would never have allowed the pipe extension to go ahead. I believe, despite the lack of attention to this issue these days, that it is going to eventually come back to haunt this government well after this bill passes, should it indeed pass. So I just want to point out once again that even though nobody else is talking about the big pipe, I will continue to do so, because it is going to invite and increase urban sprawl, the very thing that this bill is supposedly trying to stop.

I'm going to talk about some of my major concerns with the Greenbelt Act, and indeed they are not just my concerns. I know that the government expects this. The Liberals have been in opposition, and they know what happens with the parties that are in opposition: We oppose, we point out the problem and try to score points. That's the job.

I know Mike Colle is here tonight, and he was one of the best at it, I've got to tell you. I know that if Mr Colle were on this side of the House now, he'd be working with me, going after whoever's in power, making sure that the government of the day understood the holes and problems with this legislation. I also know enough about Mr Colle, who did, by the way, a very fine job of bringing the previous government's feet to the fire on the Oak Ridges moraine. I am not going to take that away from him. I believe he devoted his life to it, and I hitched on from time to time—because I had a lot more critic areas—and did my bit as well. We were very determined to save the Oak Ridges moraine. Of course, he's not going to be surprised to hear me say now that I was extremely disappointed that after the Liberals got into power, they're breaking their promise on the—

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

Ms Churley: Mid-sentence he got me.

Mr Chudleigh: —I don't believe there's a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk: Quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: We find that a quorum is present, and I once again recognize the member for Toronto-Danforth.

Ms Churley: I think it's going to be one of those nights.

I did ask earlier, as an aside, for unanimous consent that we adjourn the House tonight, because, as you know, the New Democrats don't support sitting in the evening, debating these important bills anyway. There's no question period. It's two in one, a session where there's no accountability from the government. We always vote against it. Nonetheless, we're here. I did ask for unanimous consent. For instance, I'm one of the female members, and the women's issues critic of the NDP. The Speaker—and I applaud the Speaker for doing this tonight—is holding a reception for women members. I asked for unanimous consent to not sit tonight so I could go, because this is my bill and I had no choice but to be

here. That was turned down by the Liberals. So I'm disappointed. I say to the Speaker, who may be watching—I'm sure they're all watching this on TV—that I regret not being able to make it tonight, but it's not my fault. However, I am here discussing very important public policy.

Interjection: It's part of your job.

Ms Churley: It's part of my job; that's right.

I'm going to talk about—I was mentioning the broken promises on the 6,600, I believe, new houses that the Liberals promised in the election they were going to stop, no matter what. But we found out—it was admitted by the minister in estimates committee—that while that promise was still being made, before being sworn in, the new Premier's chief of staff was working, negotiating to try to find a way out of that promise so those houses could be built. I find that—duplicitous is the word we're allowed to use here—not fair to the voters, with all kinds of other broken promises. But that one they knew they were going to break, and were in the process behind the scenes, breaking it without telling the people. Anyway, that was very disappointing.

I do believe that to some extent, however, one of the positive things as a result of that was that the government knew it was not looking very good on the green side of things. I think to some extent that led to them trying to work really hard on a greenbelt. I know it's improved greatly. The Tories are into—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: That's right. They want to pave more and we want to save more. The NDP wants to save more. And as I said, I'm proud of that. They want to pave more; we want to save more. And the NDP wants the Liberals to save more.

I will tell you what is wrong with this bill and what you can do to actually save more. And may I say, now that the finance minister is in, I mentioned last night that one of the things that not only I noticed, but Susanna Kelley from TVO noticed when she and Robert Fisher talked about the greenbelt—she looked at the map and pointed out that in the Vaughan area—the area that, by coincidence I'm sure, the finance minister is the member for—well, there's been this huge exemption on prime farmland in that minister's riding. I'm going to be looking into that a little further. I just want to warn the minister that there's something a little weird.

Now, he may be really disappointed in that, and may be right now behind the scenes, trying to get that land included in the greenbelt, because it definitely should be included. I'd like to know what happened there. I'll be looking into that a little further, but I want to congratulate Susanna Kelley who, I must say, has been one of the few reporters—and this is no knock on all of the other reporters here, because everybody's really busy, but she has been paying a great deal of attention to the whole land use policies and new legislation from this government and has really been exposing some of the problems and holes in the legislation that has been introduced to date. I applaud her and I applaud TVO for that. Of

course, it was Ms Kelley who pointed out—I hadn't noticed that at first—that there's a certain swath of land in the finance minister's riding that has been exempted. I don't know why, but we'll be looking into it.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): How about King?

Ms Churley: Oh, King. Let me tell you about King. Talk about problems there.

Anyway, I'm going to start telling you about some of the problems, besides that, that I believe we have to fix if this greenbelt is actually going to work.

We've got 143,000—now listen to this, folks, especially to all the Liberal members. If you think the greenbelt is actually going to stop urban sprawl, I want you to listen carefully to this. Because if this goes ahead, we're going to see—well, I'll tell you in a minute what we're going to see. Let me explain this to you. Some "143,000 hectares have been left open for (future) development within the greenbelt plan." That's an area about 75% the size of all currently developed GTA lands. There's too much room for continuing sprawl within the greenbelt area. It's enough for 60 to 70 years, and that's according to the Neptis Foundation—and you all know I mentioned them previously; a very respected foundation that's been doing credible research on land use policy for a number of years now.

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The amount of land designated for future development in the greenbelt area has absolutely got to be significantly reduced. I am telling you, if it is not reduced, you are going to have this question which is being raised now by the Neptis Foundation: "Will greenbelt halt sprawl or make it much worse?" That's a good question, because if you read that article and find out what's going to happen—and I described it last night as, you know, you've got the greenbelt; it's all very green. Mr Speaker, I don't know if you were here yesterday to hear this description, so let me explain it to you.

You've got a greenbelt, which is very nice and green, cinched nicely around the waist. It's looking good. And then you've got the nice brown urban areas that have already been nicely developed up above that. But then underneath this nice greenbelt you've got this pale, exposed bulge hanging out around that belt. It doesn't sound very attractive, does it? But that is, I think, a pretty good description of what you've got here because, you see, that bulge hanging out, exposed—it's exposed in the sense that it's outside the greenbelt. A lot of it is prime agricultural land. It's exposed out there and it's going to be allowed to be developed, and that needs to be brought in as well, nicely cinched in under the belt so it's all part of that nice green area. Right now, it's just hanging out there. It's quite the bulge hanging out there, and it's a real problem.

I know it's not a very attractive analogy, but that's the way I actually see it. We've got to deal with that huge bulge. Let me tell you something about what Neptis has just said about this. This, by the way, was in the Sunday Star, courtesy of Laurie Monsebraaten, who wrote this

story in great detail. She shows this bulge on the map that I'm talking about. What they say is that they've, "just completed a detailed analysis of areas already zoned or designated for development within the GTA ... and plotted this area on a map.

"It shows vast green fields open for development in northeast Brampton and northwest Vaughan, as well as significant tracts around Milton, in north Oakville and Pickering."

I will probably read more from this, if I have time, as I go on.

Leaving the present amount of future development lands within the greenbelt plan reveals the Liberals' stated planning objectives under the Places to Grow strategy: "Increased urban density, reduced infrastructure costs, decreased sprawl, less transportation-based"—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: But listen. It sounds good. "Less transportation-based pollution and increased protection for environmentally significant lands and prime agricultural farmland." It leaves all these nice words as thoroughly hollow, I say to the minister who's here, because we're talking about 143,000 hectares of prime agricultural land out there that is going to be developed.

At present, the greenbelt area excludes south Simcoe. That's the region—and I've brought this up before in the Legislature; I've brought it up time and time again. When the government introduced its greenbelt legislation, with great fanfare, I congratulated the stakeholders. They worked hard with the government and I think they got further than they ever thought they were going to get. Now I know that they're supporting the government, but they're also working hard to get these amendments made.

Let's talk again about south Simcoe, because when you hear us talk about leapfrog development, that's one of the prime areas we're talking about. Let me tell you again what that's all about. That's a region already under significant pressures from urban sprawl. Proposed developments for south Simcoe include a proposal for the construction of an entire city. Did you know that? We're talking about up to 100,000 people. That's massive by any scale. Furthermore, these developments are being proposed on lands—are you ready for this?—not designated as urban residential in the county of Simcoe's official plan.

What in the world is going on here? Without action, south Simcoe will be a principal site where development leapfrogs over the greenbelt—that's what we're talking about here—and south Simcoe absolutely, without a doubt, needs to be included in the greenbelt.

I'm sure the Minister of Public Infrastructure—I believe he's winking at me over there, but in the sense that he agrees. Let me clarify that. I think he's trying to tell me that he agrees with me on this, and he's going to be working on it.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I am going to save it for questions and comments.

Ms Churley: I'm pleased to hear that, because if this leapfrog issue is not dealt with, it really will make a farce of this piece of legislation. That's got to be done.

I have heard through the grapevine that they're looking at it, and I hope the pressure that we keep up—the environmental organizations, myself, and anybody else who wants to; and other opposition members raised this. Let's keep the pressure up. I say to people out there, let's keep the pressure up on the Liberal government on this development in the Simcoe area and leapfrog development. I believe, with the pressure being kept up on this one, we can win it, because it is so bad. It is so incredibly bad that this has been excluded from the greenbelt that I don't think they're going to have any choice. But the pressure needs to be kept up.

So the greenbelt area needs to be amended to begin at the edge of the urban boundaries for the GTA and Hamilton and extend outward to include Simcoe south, Wellington—Mr Speaker, I'm sure you would agree with that—and Waterloo counties. If you really want meaningful urban intensification goals to be achieved and sprawl thwarted, you have to do this. Otherwise, no matter how much you talk about it, it's not going to be effective in preventing urban sprawl.

I've spent a great deal of time studying this bill, perhaps more than most; I'm sure more than most, because it's one of my passions, environmental issues. I've been following this issue from day one. When we were in government, we started the process. We set up certain bodies to start looking at how to stop all of the urban sprawl that was going on in the GTA. I've been following it very closely. I was very interested when the government said that they were going through with greenbelt. I sat on the committee. I made some amendments, in fact, that dealt with these kinds of issues that I'm talking about, and the government members turned each and every one of them down. But I will be attempting that once again when we—

Hon Mr Caplan: We're shocked.

Ms Churley: We're shocked, yes, that the government majority on the committee turned each and every one down. But I thought these guys were going to be different, because, you see, the Liberals ran on "Choose change," and they talked a lot about what happened when the Tories were in power and the majority on committees ruling the day and not understanding most of the issues before them, but being told by the minister how to vote. And that's exactly what happened in this committee, on every single amendment I put forward. I have to say that I think the parliamentary assistant worked very hard to try to give answers as to why they were not supporting my amendments.

Hon Mr Caplan: They were not good amendments.

Ms Churley: They were excellent amendments, believe me. And the justification, as hard as she tried—there were times I thought she was a little embarrassed—

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): No.

Ms Churley: "No," she says—by the minister's statements that she had to read out as to why the Liberals were not supporting these good amendments.

Let me tell you a little bit about the legislation itself and some of the issues that the government members—and you will hear them talk about some of the good things about the bill. For instance, yesterday afternoon when we were debating this, I believe it was the minister himself who talked about the advisory council that's been set up: "Don't worry. Everything's going to be OK, because we're going to have an advisory council."

1910

I want to point out—and I'll be making an amendment on this as well—what the advisory council actually says, and you can look this up. Have you got the bill in front of you? Look this up. The Greenbelt Act states—

Hon Mr Caplan: It's all up here.

Ms Churley: It's all up here. Sure. You repeat with me. It states, "The minister may"—m-a-y; not "will"—"establish the Greenbelt Advisory Council. Keep listening. I think we could change that to "shall." You'd agree with that. Its membership and terms of reference are then determined by the minister. That's not very strong. We want to see "shall," and we want to see exactly what it is the minister has in mind, when it comes to "membership and terms of reference are then determined by the minister."

I would advise you, if you've got your act in front of you, to pull it out and see section 15 and subsections 15(2) and 15(3). Start cribbing in the areas—I'm sure Liberal members would agree with me—for what that amendment might look like.

Some of the other issues: The Greenbelt Act needs an arm's-length institutional anchor, a mechanism for accountability to Ontarians. This act does not have that. Perhaps, if the Liberals are on the ball, they'll beat me to this and make these kinds of amendments. But that is not in this act.

The implementation and the integrity of the greenbelt plan has been left, believe it or not—I don't think the Liberals really meant to do this. That's why I think that maybe they'll bring their own amendment on this. The legislation just isn't good legislation in many ways. That's no slam on the staff, who I know worked very hard on this. But I believe that their instructions were given in such a way that some of these things weren't dealt with properly.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: No, I would never do that.

These are real, serious holes that need to be fixed. So the implementation and integrity of the greenbelt plan has been left without a body beyond direct political control which can serve as a guardian for the greenbelt. We need to see that.

Hon Mr Caplan: What does David Donnelly say?

Ms Churley: I can tell you what David Donnelly will say about the legislation. Let me tell you this. They are so excited. They worked with the government to get as far as we are now, and they are supportive of the greenbelt,

as am I. But believe me, if you want to talk about David Donnelly, Rick Smith, Linda Pim and all of the others who worked hard with the government to bring this legislation to where it is today—of course they want it to pass. But they want to improve it, too. They absolutely want to improve it. We expect that we're all going to work together to make this legislation work. That's the point of why we're debating this.

We have to make sure that there has to be a body beyond direct political control, like the Niagara Escarpment, which can serve as a guardian for the greenbelt. That is absolutely critical. We've learned those kinds of thing the hard way.

The Niagara Escarpment plan, as I just mentioned, has the Niagara Escarpment Commission to monitor its enforcement and maintain the plan's integrity. We've learned that without that and even now—I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this today, but it's another one of the hot spots that has been ignored in this bill, and that's the Castle Glen town that's going to be built on the Niagara Escarpment, which the Liberal government is allowing to go ahead. This is the first live-year-round town that's going to be built in the Niagara Escarpment protected area since the Conservative government brought in the protection in the 1970s. Under a Liberal government, in 2004, they give the go-ahead for a year-round town on the Niagara Escarpment. There are a number of reasons why that was allowed to go ahead.

I throw that in because that happened even with a Niagara Escarpment Commission to monitor its enforcement and maintain the plan's integrity. Even with that in place, things like Castle Glen can happen. Taking that as an example, I've seen, over the years, all kinds of proposals, people pushing to have all kinds of development on the Niagara Escarpment. It was this commission, to its credit, for most of the time, that was able to continue to protect that area.

So at a minimum, the act must clearly state that the minister—and there's this word again, "shall," not "may,"—"shall establish the Greenbelt Advisory Council, which must be mandated to develop and submit annual reports to the House regarding the progress and problems of implementing the greenbelt plan, and whether the Greenbelt Act is meeting the objectives as laid out in section 5 of the act. Otherwise, how are we going to know? You can't just leave that hanging out there; you need to have these bodies in place.

I want to talk a bit about settlement areas: "Settlement areas within the protected countryside designation of the greenbelt are required to bring their official plans into compliance with the greenbelt plan no later"—and this is really important, so listen carefully—"than the date respective councils are required to undertake their next official plan review." That's in section 9.

Let me read that again to you: "Settlement areas within the protected countryside designation of the greenbelt are required to bring their official plans into compliance with the greenbelt plan no later than the date respective councils are required to undertake their next

official plan review." Now, let's talk about that for a minute. As official plans are to be reviewed under the Planning Act every five years, these settlement areas which have recently reviewed their official plans, and let's take, for example, the town of Halton Hills—

Mr Chudleigh: Where?

Ms Churley: Halton Hills, which just recently reviewed their official plans. They will not have to comply with the greenbelt plan for another five years. That is a big problem that needs to be dealt with.

I want to talk to you about municipal compliance. Five years is too long for municipal compliance. I would say that it should be reduced to at least two years. It is really critical if this is going to work—I can't tell you how critical—that the Greenbelt Act contain enforcement mechanisms. It's absolutely critical. We know we can put the best laws in the world on paper. We've seen it happen, time and time again. If there are no enforcement mechanisms, then it all falls away. So the fact that it contains no enforcement mechanisms or penalties if municipalities fail to comply within the stated five years is a major problem. I'm hoping that government members, who I know are listening carefully to my concerns about this, are taking notes and will look into that.

Furthermore, unlike the complementary legislation, Bill 136, the Places To Grow Act 2004—I've got a lot of problems with what's going on with the Places To Grow Act. But let me say this: The Greenbelt Act contains no provisions for the minister to amend municipalities' official plans to bring them into compliance with the Greenbelt Act. The complementary legislation does do that.

In summary about this piece, there is a very serious lack of public accountability in this act. It needs teeth to work, so not only do we have to expand it and say more, but the lack of accountability is critical to be fixed, and I hope that the government will do that.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: You know, there's a little gentle heckle over there saying it's groundbreaking legislation. What I'm saying, in all seriousness, is it could be groundbreaking legislation. It isn't now, it really isn't.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Oh my heavens, you know, I find it incredible that political parties when they get stuck and decide to support their government, no matter what the issue is, do not listen when things are pointed out that show them that they're going to be a failure. This is going to be a failure if you don't include these things. Mark my words: it's going to be a failure. We want to see these—

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Why would you worry about that? You don't like them.

Ms Churley: Well, he says, why would I worry about that, that I don't like them. That's beside the point. I like the environment. I believe in protecting prime agricultural land. I believe in stopping sprawl. I believe in stopping gridlock. I believe in trying to do something about the poor air quality.

1920

Environmental issues are what got me into politics. I still passionately care about environmental issues in this province. I don't care which government is bringing it in: I will support legislation and I will praise it to the high heavens if I believe a government is doing the right thing. In this case, they're not going far enough, and there are huge holes in the legislation that have to be fixed or it won't work. That's what I'm trying to say here tonight.

There's a serious lack of public accountability in this act and it needs teeth. It needs real teeth. It has no teeth. It's toothless at the moment. The minister absolutely must have the powers, if necessary, to bring the official plans of municipalities into compliance with the Greenbelt Act.

Then there's the fact that the government needs to announce how they will offset infrastructure costs in smaller settlement areas within the greenbelt, seeing as their ability to grow will be curtailed. You know, some people just want to say, "OK, let's just do the greenbelt and let's not worry. Let's whisper about this. Let's not worry about all these problems. It'll work out." But we can't do that, because whenever you talk about land use policy, when you start making changes to how you're going to use land, these things—how you deal with the farmers, how you deal with the small towns—are absolutely critical or, again, it won't work out. We know that the Tories made municipalities even more dependent than they ever were before on property taxes and development charges to pay the bills for education and all the other community services.

I'm going to say to the Liberals, I understand. We sat here in opposition together and watched the Tories download like crazy to the municipalities, and as a result we saw more and more that these towns were brought to their knees and still are, and they are now entirely dependent on property taxes and development charges to pay their bills. So what's happening now, without really fixing that—and I know it's a challenge. I understand that. When a government was in power for eight years and did a lot of destruction and a lot of bad things happened, it's hard to turn some of these things around. But you can't ignore this problem in this context. The Liberals are now telling these small settlement areas in the greenbelt that their growth will be frozen for the next decade, but without a corresponding increase in new financial measures to offset past revenues achieved through growth.

I understand that very recently the Liberals joined with the feds and announced new funding for municipal and rural infrastructure projects. I believe that was some \$298 million each over the next five years, leaving the municipality to fund one third. The program applies to centres under 250,000 in population. The funding mechanism applies to the entire province. I don't want to hear about that tonight, because that's going to be your answer. But let me make this clear: It does not address the specific situation of small settlement areas under the green plan. We need a plan to be able to deal with that.

I don't believe it's what these small municipalities and towns desire. It's not by design that they became so dependent on development fees. That's wrong. There's something really topsy-turvy about that. The only way we're going to be able to wean these small communities and rural areas off the need for development fees is to make sure that the proper infrastructure funding and social services funding is there to sustain them.

So without increased revenues to fix infrastructure and maintain services in smaller settlement areas, property taxes are inevitable, and that's always the concern to people. I'm hoping that's something we will see the government address, because I think you will find much less opposition, and the less opposition we have on greenbelt, the better off we all are in terms of moving forward.

I'm not going to spend a lot of time on agriculture tonight, because I know that our critic, our leader in fact, Howard Hampton, and our member for the Niagara area have some things to say on this, but I'm going to go into it a little bit. Again, when we're talking about land use changes like this, we can't ignore those who are going to be impacted. It shouldn't stop us from moving forward. In fact, I am saying we should be going even further and saving more. But certainly, we need to hear the concerns and address them.

Protecting farmland does not protect farmers or safeguard Ontario's important agricultural industry. Farmers do want to farm, but with the global crash in agricultural commodity prices, combined with the lingering effects of BSE in the North American cattle market, we know many farmers are on the brink of disaster. So protecting farmland is simply the first step.

We talk about this within the context of the greenbelt and without. Perhaps the greenbelt coming forward makes it even more urgent that the government address those issues. If we want the guardians—and we do, and most farmers want to act as the guardians of our prime agricultural farmland—we have to safeguard important environmental benefits for present and future generations and not have them need to sell to developers. They want to be able to make a living on their farms. Certainly, I believe for most farmers who got into the speculative market, it wasn't by design; it was by necessity, and that's really bad and it's been going on for a number of years. So I want the government to address this issue seriously.

I am going to support moving forward with the greenbelt, no question about it, with amendments that will improve it, but also, we are going to be calling on the government to do something to deal with the serious issues facing especially our smaller family farms, but all farmers in this province.

I want to give you one example. In the early 1990s, even in a recession, the NDP government introduced what we called the Niagara tender fruits program. What that did was protect specialty croplands in the Niagara region through providing funds in exchange for agricultural covenants that run with the land. The budget was really modest. It didn't actually cost a whole lot of

money. It was about \$50 million. I remember our deciding to do this. It really did help protect the tender fruit lands from urban development. The Harris government killed this program on July 13, 1995. We need to see that program brought back, especially now. Those are the kinds of things that are really critical to do as we move forward. We can look at conservation easements, working with the federal government to amend the tax laws to allow agricultural land trusts. There are all kinds of things that we can and should be looking at.

I want to talk briefly about aggregates. It's something that I raised at committee. I made amendments, which were all turned down. It's a really important piece here that, again, we need to fix. The amendment was turned down, but I'm going to try again when we take this to committee.

The greenbelt area is a major source of aggregates for the GTA market and this, unfortunately, will continue under the greenbelt plan. The greenbelt plan does impose a few new conditions on them, especially pertaining to development of aggregate operations in significant wetlands—and that's defined in the provincial policy statement—and in the habitat of significant threatened or endangered species. But effectively, except for those few areas, aggregate extraction will continue unabated.

So the proposed provincial policy statement draft policies which municipal planning decisions shall be consistent with—and I applaud the Liberal government for changing that back. You'll recall when the NDP was in government, we brought in the green Planning Act. One of the first things the Tories did was get rid of that and change wording. They made it even weaker than the previous Planning Act. They changed it from "shall be consistent with" to "have regard for." That was a huge problem and the Liberals did change that back, which is good. But "shall be consistent with," following the passage of Bill 26 provides an even stronger assertion of the importance of aggregate development close to market than under the Harris-Eves government.

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The draft provincial policy statement adds the following: "... demonstration of need for mineral aggregate resources, including any type of supply/demand analysis, will not be required, notwithstanding the availability, designation or licensing for extraction, of mineral aggregate resources locally or elsewhere."

The government's flawed approach of attempting to maximize access to new aggregate supplies while taking virtually no action on conservation of aggregate resources is environmentally uninformed and is in stark contrast to other jurisdictions facing similar conflicts between demand for aggregate and the need to limit the impact on groundwater supplies, prime farmland and the environment. All you have to do is turn to the United Kingdom, Sweden and Denmark, which have adopted policies to reduce the demand for aggregates and increase recycling and substitution. Environmental taxes or charges have been imposed to reduce.

In fact, the Environmental Commissioner has pointed out more than once that this is a big problem in Ontario. There needs to be far more recycling, and this Greenbelt Act doesn't deal with it except in very small ways. We need to have that changed. It's just not acceptable, absolutely not acceptable. If this greenbelt is going to be viable and if people are going to believe you, this is going to have to be dealt with.

I want to talk about the future interregional transit links or transportation corridors, ie, major roads—let's call them what they are—highways through the greenbelt. The Greenbelt Act explicitly states that no municipality or planning authority shall undertake a public work or undertaking that conflicts with the greenbelt plan. That's in clauses 7(3)(a) and (b)—look it up. But there is nothing in the Greenbelt Act that states that provincial public works or undertakings must conform to the greenbelt plan. Is this because the province, based on mapping in the Places to Grow discussion documents, intends to develop future interregional transit links, ie, highways, through the greenbelt? I think so.

Hon Mr Caplan: Yes.

Ms Churley: He says yes. Well, let me say this to the minister: To protect the integrity of the greenbelt and to achieve the objective of intensifying development within existing urban boundaries, the act needs to include provisions to ensure that all provincial public works and undertakings conform to the greenbelt. That's a no-brainer. That's another amendment that I made at committee, which was turned down. You're building the infrastructure. If you build it, they will come. You can't be building these huge infrastructure projects through the middle of the greenbelt. It's going to cause development. That's what happened.

Hon Mr Caplan: No transit through—

Ms Churley: Talk about transit. I wish I had more time, Mr Speaker. I'm going to run out of time.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Unanimous consent.

Ms Churley: Unanimous consent—give me more time, because I want to talk about transportation. That's another piece, a huge piece. I'm glad the minister responsible for infrastructure, and he's very responsible—he's responsible for infrastructure, and that's what's going on here.

That's not good enough: no transportation plan. One of the first things I noticed when the greenbelt was announced is that—

Hon Mr Caplan: It's coming.

Ms Churley: Oh, it's coming. So we're being asked to pass this bill without the transportation plan in place. All we know for sure is that there are more huge highways coming. So we've got the big pipe up in King City. Oh, yeah, let's see some trains, and let's see far more public transportation. We want to see that plan in place.

Hon Mr Caplan: You don't want transit?

Ms Churley: Absolutely, I want to see transit expansion. I'm just waiting. I want to see it. We need to see that plan.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd be willing to move that we allow the member from Toronto-Danforth an extra 45 minutes in her leadoff speech. I'd ask for unanimous consent to do that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe North is asking for unanimous consent to allow the member—

I hear a no.

The member for Toronto-Danforth.

Ms Churley: I want to thank the member for trying to give me that opportunity, because I actually could go on for another couple of hours on this bill. No kidding; I have a lot to say about it. But I think I did cover some of the most urgent aspects of this bill that I want to see the government deal with in committee.

I want to say very clearly to the government that I want to support the greenbelt legislation. I want to support the greenbelt legislation. I want to see the government at committee—they're out consulting now, and I've heard from people who have been there that it is not just me saying this. In fact, some of the major supporters from the environmental community are saying the same things—that this is good but it needs to go further—and they're pointing out the same problems I am pointing out tonight, and more. The good news is that this can be dealt with. There are ways to bring in amendments to plug the holes and make this truly world-class legislation.

I want to be in a position to stand up and congratulate the Liberal government for bringing in world-class greenbelt legislation, but I have to say that if the amendments I'm suggesting tonight, and some more, aren't passed, it will be a mediocre attempt at bringing in greenbelt legislation.

Furthermore, as this article that I was hoping to get back earlier states, "Will Greenbelt Halt Sprawl or Make it Worse?" That is a very serious question being asked. If these holes aren't filled and if the leapfrog piece of it in the Simcoe area is not dealt with and all this land is developed—I'm trying to find the number here, but I don't have much time—then we will not have an effective greenbelt and we'll continue to see sprawl.

The Acting Speaker: We have some time for questions and comments.

Mr Racco: The comments made by the member from Toronto-Danforth are encouraging. I hope the Minister of Municipal Affairs will take her comments, and I trust he will, so that we have the NDP supporting such important legislation when it comes to a vote.

I must say, though, that I am a little concerned with the comments made by the member from Toronto-Danforth. After all, she was a member of the NDP government in 1985 to 1990 that decided to have landfill sites instead of the area we are going to turn into greenbelt. The NDP wanted to dump garbage on those lands that, today, the Liberal government wishes to turn into a greenbelt of 1.8 million acres.

I should remind this House that in those days, my municipality, the city of Vaughan, which at the time had one of the largest dumps in North America, had to have a

number of protests, in fact at the office of the then leader and Premier of this province, Bob Rae. The people were significantly offended by the NDP position in regard to landfill garbage. Of course, the member should remember those things and not question that this government is going to turn the lands they wanted to save for landfill into a greenbelt, which you and I and many generations to come will be able to enjoy. No other government in this province has ever done what the McGuinty government is doing in Bill 135, the Greenbelt Act.

Mr Miller: I'm pleased to rise today to comment on the speech by the member from Toronto-Danforth about Bill 135, the greenbelt legislation.

I don't think there are too many people who would disagree with the idea of protecting farmland and making a greenbelt in Ontario. Certainly I'm in favour of saving farmland. Driving into places like Oshawa, I note new subdivisions being built on prime farmland. I think that is a huge mistake in the long run. I'm in favour of more intensive development in cities, but maintaining pockets of green area. I'm in favour of relying more on walking and less on the automobile. However, we also have to be concerned about property rights and about the rights of the farmers who are going to be drastically affected by this bill, which basically brings expropriation without compensation.

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I know I've seen comments from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. They are very concerned about farmers who may not be able to finance the crops after this legislation comes into effect because the value of their property has been cut drastically. What about the farmer who has part of his property that he couldn't grow something on anyway but wants to sever a lot off? How is he going to be affected? How are property rights going to be affected in that situation?

What about the leapfrog effect for cities like Barrie, and the effect on the transportation links between Toronto, Barrie and other areas beyond the greenbelt? I think that's something that needs to be taken into consideration.

What about an economic plan to go along with the greenbelt as well? I think that's missing. It was part of our Smart Growth plan, but seems to be missing in this greenbelt plan. I think this bill has some serious flaws. It does need a major overhaul. At the very least, it should be going to committee to get many amendments.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bisson: Listen to those sirens out there. I don't know what's going on out there. They probably heard that I was speaking. That's probably what it was.

Ms Churley: They're coming to take you away.

Mr Bisson: There used to be a song about that in the 1970s, "They're coming to take me away," but I'm not doing it. I'll talk about the greenbelt.

Two things to the members of the government: I just want to be clear that we generally support what the government is doing in this particular bill. We believe, as we always have, that we need to be able to protect those

areas that are sensitive in this part of the province in order to make sure that those areas are protected for future years, in regard to making sure that we don't pave over everything that can be paved or develop everything that can be developed. We need to make sure that we protect in some way those sensitive areas. I just want to put that out front.

However, I think there are a couple of things that need to be dealt with. I don't think at this point we're prepared to oppose the legislation, but there are a couple of questions that we need to ask once we get into committee. For example, the member for Toronto-Danforth raised the issue of transportation or transit, or intercity transportation in the greenbelt, and asked the question, where are the plans that the government is putting forward to deal with how we move from having people on highways to having them on GO trains or other forms of transportation, to diminish the use of the highway infrastructure, the need to build it bigger and bigger? The minister said, "Don't worry, it's coming." Well, we've heard that before. I guess the reality is that we're tired of hearing it.

We need the government to get very serious about some of these issues. What is the plan when it comes to mass transportation? If you're going to protect the areas of the greenbelt, you need to make sure that we don't build a bigger reliance on having to build bigger and bigger freeways from one end of the greenbelt to the other. And one of the ways to diminish a need for freeways is to develop a good infrastructure when it comes to mass transportation. We look forward to committee and hope that the government is actually going to come through on that particular portion of the bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs Van Bommel: I'm certainly pleased to hear that the members for Timmins-James Bay and Toronto-Danforth want to support this bill. I think it's a very important bill. I know we want to see this proceed in a way that we are saving and not paving the countryside.

The member for Toronto-Danforth spoke about her concerns around section 15, which talks about the minister may establish a council, referred to as the greenbelt advisory. And you also mentioned section 9, which talks about the review of official plans. You were saying that you would like to see it done in two years instead of five years. As parliamentary assistant to municipal affairs, I certainly would like to assure the member that I will be taking those matters back for discussion.

You also mentioned things such as the issue in Vaughan and exemptions. I'm not aware that there are exemptions. I haven't seen that. We are consulting. We have consultations ongoing right now. As a matter of fact, we have one this evening. We are certainly hearing from people, and all of those kinds of comments will also be taken into consideration. If there are other concerns and other people are expressing the same kinds of concerns, I'll certainly take those back.

We talk about leapfrogging. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal has a proposed growth plan in

which they're trying to address the issue of leapfrogging. The matter at this point is that the greatest pressures are within the greenbelt, and we need to deal with those immediately. That's why the greenbelt legislation is so important and it is so critical that we get this passed.

We are listening to the communities, and we heard from the greenbelt task force in their recommendation that we include the Holland Marsh, and we did that. We are continuing with our consultations, and all of those things will be taken in. This is still a draft plan, and we will have a final plan with all of those things brought together.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Toronto-Danforth has two minutes to reply.

Ms Churley: I'd like to start by saying that I have high regard for the parliamentary assistant. I know she has been working very hard. She's a very well liked member in this place. I've worked with her on committee, and I know she works very hard and is doing her best to make sure this is the best legislation possible. I commit to work as hard as I can with her, so together we can make sure that all those amendments I'll be putting forward will be passed.

Hon Mr Caplan: I want to see how you'll vote on it.

Ms Churley: Listen, I make no bones about it. We are supporting this legislation.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: I'm telling you that we are supporting this legislation. It is necessary legislation. There's no question about that, I can assure you. But we have some real problems with it and we want to improve it.

Hon Mr Caplan: You're the opposition.

Ms Churley: It's not just because—and I say thank you to all those who responded to my speech. Yes, it's my job in opposition to oppose, but it's also the job of all of us in this place, when we bring in legislation, to make it the very best legislation we can. It's the job of all members to look at it, not just in a partisan way, and I know that's almost a silly thing to say in this place, because we are so partisan.

But I mean it sincerely when I say that the Liberals have an opportunity to bring in truly landmark legislation here. They really do have that opportunity and they're on the cusp of doing it, but you're not going to be able to do it without these problems being fixed. You're really not. You may get all kinds of laurels at the beginning from some people, but the holes are so incredibly problematic. You've got all kinds of folks, Ontario Nature and others, calling on the government to make the same changes I've been calling for, and I hope the government will see fit to do it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Mr Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with my colleague the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to get a few words on the record regarding Bill 135, the Greenbelt Act. I certainly view this bill as a piece of landmark

legislation. In my view, it will sustain a lot of activity in the province of Ontario for many, many years to come.

I just want to refer to section 5 of the bill, which lays out the objective of this bill. It says:

“(a) to establish a network of countryside and open space areas which supports the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment;

“(b) to sustain the countryside and rural communities;

“(c) to preserve agricultural land as a continuing commercial source of food and employment;

“(d) to recognize the critical importance of the agriculture sector to the regional economy;

“(e) to provide protection to the land base needed to maintain, restore and improve the ecological and hydrological functions of the greenbelt area;

“(f) to promote connections between lakes and the Oak Ridges moraine and Niagara Escarpment;

“(g) to provide open space and recreational, tourism and cultural heritage opportunities to support the social needs of a rapidly expanding and increasingly urbanized population;

“(h) to promote linkages between ecosystems and provincial parks or public lands;

“(i) to control urbanization of the lands to which the greenbelt plan applies;

“(j) to ensure that the development of transportation and infrastructure proceeds in an environmentally sensitive manner;

“(k) to promote sustainable resource use;

“(l) any other prescribed objectives.”

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I can't think of a better way than these objectives to provide the foundation, for what is perhaps going to be one of the most important pieces of legislation this government will be involved in during our four-year mandate. As I've indicated previously, I had 18 years in municipal politics before I came here a year ago, and during that time, one of things I was always somewhat concerned about was that while individual municipalities do develop their official plans and take a lot of time to develop them, I always thought there was a significant role for the province to play in protecting a lot of environmentally sensitive areas and preserving areas for future generations, that my children will be able to enjoy down the road.

There are a lot of important greenbelt facts. We should make sure that the people watching at home this evening understand what this legislation is all about.

The proposed greenbelt contains about one million acres of newly protected land. That's hugely significant. The proposed greenbelt extends about 325 kilometres, from the eastern end of the Oak Ridges moraine, near Rice Lake, just below Peterborough, to the Niagara River in the west. It is about 80 kilometres wide at its widest point, from the mouth of the Rouge River to the northern tip of Durham region. The proposed greenbelt natural heritage system will provide full protection for about three quarters of the lakes, wetlands and forests within that greenbelt.

The proposed greenbelt would stop urbanization in the remaining undeveloped portions of all major river valleys south of the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment. The proposed greenbelt would include the headwaters of major watersheds in the western greater Toronto area not currently protected by the Niagara Escarpment or the Oak Ridges moraine plans, such as Bronte Creek, 16-Mile Creek and the Credit River.

For the life of me, I don't understand why all members of this Legislature wouldn't be joining the government at this particular time to see that Bill 135 moves forward. I know it'll be going to committee after second reading, an opportunity for the public to respond to some of the important initiatives that have been clearly articulated in this piece of legislation. It looks forward to future generations in Ontario: that they'll be able to enjoy some of these areas that have the significant wetlands in this province.

I think this government deserves a lot of credit for having taken this bold initiative to protect this greenbelt area that will provide for sustainable economic development in many sectors as we proceed down the road. I'm happy to be part of this government that brought this forward. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the lead minister in this, and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal will have an important role as this gets rolled out in the next little while. The Minister of Transportation will have an integral role as part of this greenbelt legislation. It's a key example of three ministries coming together to roll out a long-term plan for the people of the province of Ontario. I think we have to look at it from that perspective: what it's going to do today and tomorrow for future generations to take advantage of.

I'm pleased to put forth some of my thoughts on this bill, and I look forward to my colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan sharing his views on this legislation.

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I thank the member from Peterborough for allowing me to share his time with him tonight as we add our comments on this piece of legislation. It also provides me an opportunity to acknowledge my brother, who is here from Thunder Bay, a member of Thunder Bay's finest, here with the Police Association of Ontario: Jim Mauro. I'm sure many of you in the Legislature this evening have had an opportunity to meet with the PAO today and listen to their concerns.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Is he younger or older than you?

Mr Mauro: He is—well, I'll let him answer the question of whether he's younger or older than me.

It is my pleasure to add my comments as well to 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.

It would probably be appropriate for me to begin by reinforcing some of the comments made previously in this Legislature around this piece of legislation about

what is missing from the debate, not just at the GTA level or the provincial level, but what is missing from this debate when it comes to national discussions and in fact international discussions, and that is that we do not hear people in a global nature discussing and asking for fewer green spaces.

This legislation is very progressive in nature. This is less of an issue in Canada now, but we know on the local stage that this is a very large issue and is becoming more so. For our government to be taking this approach now I think is very progressive. It will only become more important as the years go on, and it's important for us to get it right before we continue. For example, we have heard people talk about Stanley Park. I've had personal experiences with being able to walk that seawall and run around that seawall. It's a great place, and anybody who visits Vancouver is probably thankful that their city fathers and their provincial governments many years ago had an opportunity to set that piece of parkland aside for them, whether it's Central Park in New York or Hyde Park in London.

Recently, a personal experience of mine was to be able to run a road race in Minneapolis, Minnesota, which is a community about 600 miles south of Thunder Bay. I can tell you that that community of four million people markets itself as hosting the most beautiful marathon in North America. After being down there, I can tell you, to run through the series of lakes and parkland that exists within the municipal boundaries of Minneapolis and St Paul—you can understand why they market it that way. The people who live in those communities value that as much as they would value a great economy, because they in fact know that it adds to a great economy.

We've heard some of the other speakers from the other parties discuss the fact that perhaps they would prefer the legislation to have more teeth. I would refer them to subsection 6(2) and just pay some attention to some of those policies, where it lists policies—

Interjection.

Mr Mauro: No, not objectives but policies:

“(a) policies prohibiting any use of land or the erection, location and use of buildings or structures for, or except for, such purposes as may be set out;

“(b) policies restricting or regulating the use of land or the erection, location and use of buildings or structures;

“(c) policies relating to land and resource protection and land development; and

“(d) policies for the economic and physical development of the land including,

“(i) the management of land and water resources,

“(ii) the development of major servicing, communication and transportation systems,

“(iii) the identification of major land use areas and the provision of major parks and open space, and

“(iv) the development of cultural, recreational and tourism facilities....”

In fact, there are several teeth and good policies contained in the legislation that will go a long way to

ensure the plan is implemented as we all know and hope that it should be.

We have also heard, in fact, not as much pushback as we thought we might have from the developers on this issue and I think that's because we all know there is a nice balance being achieved here. Even though there is some pushback, it's probably important that we acknowledge what would have happened if we didn't act, and we all know what that would have been. It would have been urban sprawl as it exists and is happening already today in the GTA. It would have happened because, as we know, the developers, as with water, would have taken the path of least resistance and we would have seen a continuation of what has happened around here and in fact what we are trying to address: the demands on infrastructure, sewer, water, schools, roads, more traffic gridlock, environment damage, loss of farmland and a host of other issues that would have accompanied this should it not have been abated as this legislation we hope will do.

So I'm happy to add my comments and look forward to a quick passage and support from the opposition parties on this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I think it's fair to say that many of the members here are in favour of something like this and that this is really an addition to the legislation that was brought by the former government on the Oak Ridges moraine. The part that I think we should be talking about and considering is the process by which we are going to go forward with this plan. If you look at the document produced for everyone, there are some things in it which perhaps should be considered and I guess are reflected in the legislation. One of the things I note is that amendments to the plan can only be put forward by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and are subject to cabinet approval, and that amendments to the plan shall not have “the effect of reducing the total land area within the greenbelt plan.”

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We're talking about a massive, massive area, and there are going to be individual circumstances where it might be better to alter those particular boundaries and make the area overall slightly smaller. I do say that I had considerable experience with the Niagara Escarpment plan, was in fact in charge of that plan for the three years prior to and during the time when the first plan was brought forward to this Legislature. It took 14 years to bring it from the inception stage to the final stage, because we did a lot of consultation, a lot of process, to be sure that we had it right.

My concern with this particular plan is that there does not seem to be the plan by this government to be careful how they are in fact putting this forward and instituting it, because it does affect property rights.

Ms Churley: I was fascinated to hear one of the members—I can't remember where you're from—

Mr Leal: Peterborough.

Ms Churley: Peterborough; I'm sorry. It's late.

The member for Peterborough talked about the fact that they're very pleased and surprised to hear that there hasn't been as much pushback from developers on this as they thought. He's saying it's because it's just so good that they support it.

Let me remind the member that developers are pretty happy, overall, with this legislation because of what I pointed out earlier: 143,000 hectares have been left open for future development within the greenbelt plan. That's an area about 75% the size of all currently developed GTA lands. That's why the developers aren't screaming: It's been left open for them.

It's the first thing I thought when I went to the minister's announcement and saw the map and what I talk about as the bulge out over the belt, that pale area that's left open for development. What do you think is going to happen there? What do you think the developers are already doing and thinking? They're buying up that land, if they haven't already. That's why they're not screaming.

It's mostly the farmers who have been impacted by this land. As I mentioned earlier, we are not in support and not calling for development-driven speculative compensation, as the Tories are. But what we are saying is that these folks, these small farmers, need the support and programs which I mentioned to be brought in to help them. But that's why the developers aren't screaming. Don't kid yourself here. I'll agree that they'll start screaming if you do what you should do and plug the hole on this and make this part of the greenbelt, as Neptis and others will be calling for you to do. But that's the reality around the developers.

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to share some comments on the riding of Niagara Falls, particularly the area of Niagara-on-the-Lake, which is part of my riding.

I have spent an enormous number of hours—and it's been a pleasure—meeting with the farmers, the grape growers, the tender fruit growers, regarding Bill 135.

I will tell you a couple of things. Last Monday, I made a presentation to the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake city council, updated them on a number of the positive things we have done as a government. I talked about the greenbelt. At the conclusion of the council meeting, I was pleasantly surprised and pleased that literally every member of town council stood up and commended the government for the greenbelt. Lord Mayor Gary Burroughs as well commended the government. Their message was, "We're pleased with what you're doing. We don't want you to leave this town council thinking that we're not in support of this."

Last night, I had the pleasure of making a presentation to Niagara Falls city council, again sharing the good message of what we are doing as a government. I touched on the greenbelt, although it doesn't affect Niagara Falls directly. But they are geographically close to the area that's going to be covered by the bill. Again, a number of the councillors echoed the same sentiments, saying,

"We're glad that this government has taken the initiative. It's the right thing to do."

I will say that I expect that on November 23, when we have our public meeting in St Catharines—I know the grape growers and the tender fruit growers are putting together a brief and will have some suggestions on changing the bill. I look forward to hearing those suggestions. I've indicated to them that I'll be sitting down with them before that and listening to it and then showing my support at that time.

The bottom line is, we're doing the right thing. I'm hearing from everyone that it's long overdue and they're proud that this government has had the courage to take that initiative.

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise this evening and make a few comments on the members from Peterborough and Thunder Bay-Atikokan. First of all, I want to compliment you for spending more than 10 minutes of your 20-minute rotation. That's really good, because recently it's been five or six. So that's important.

I think I'm going to have an opportunity later tonight or on another date to speak to this in more detail.

My question, without a doubt, is the leapfrogging effect of this legislation. I'm glad the member from Peterborough spoke to this, because I know it must be a major concern in his area as well. I'm thinking of Barrie and Peterborough as the two prime areas of future development as a result of this legislation.

We're not afraid of development—let's make that very clear—and we're not afraid of this legislation. We think it's a positive step, in a lot of ways, on the Oak Ridges Moraine Act—you've expanded upon that. Obviously there are a lot of questions, and I don't know how much time we really have to debate them here. I think we understand the pros and cons of it, but I do think there should be quite a bit of opportunity for public hearings, because that's where you're going to get a lot of outside thoughts coming in: people concerned with property rights, the agricultural community, all kinds of environmental groups, people in favour and people opposed to it etc.

What's important is that most people would be in favour of seeing this legislation passed in some form, but I think they'll also want to have the opportunity to comment and make amendments to what we see here today.

The Acting Speaker: One of the Liberal members has two minutes to reply.

Mr Leal: I certainly appreciate the comments from my colleagues from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Toronto-Danforth, Niagara Falls and Simcoe North, and particularly from the member from Lanark-Carleton, because I know he was here during the 1970s when former Premier Bill Davis started the whole issue of regional government in Ontario, which was sort of the initial phase of looking at significant planning in broad-based areas of the province. So I have great respect for what he can bring to this debate.

For me, one of the key issues in this legislation, Bill 135, is the simple fact that they don't make land any

more, and that's why this legislation is so significant for the province of Ontario. What it does is protect a broad swath of land for future generations to enjoy, for future farming operations and future operations for other economic activities.

The member from Simcoe North mentioned Peterborough. Well, Peterborough looks at this legislation from a very advantageous position, because we have the capacity to support new growth. We have a college and a university, and we're on the—

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): What have you got coming soon?

Mr Leal: We've got a new hospital coming soon. The minister was in Peterborough last Friday night to address that issue.

We have all the infrastructure in Peterborough today to support the kind of growth that this plan is going channel to those areas of Ontario that can support new growth and new economic opportunities, and that's why I support this legislation. There are a lot of other small communities in the Peterborough area, such as Havelock, Norwood and Lakefield, which are great places to live, work and play, that will be supported by this legislative initiative.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Well, here we go again. We have in front of us another bill, Bill 135, that infringes on the property rights of private landowners. I guess I should give the member a bit of credit: At least this legislation is more constructive than some of the recent bills we've been debating here, like bringing your own wine, pit bull bans and banning junk food in schools. At least this bill deals with planning. I have nothing against governments being proactive in the land planning process. However, as anybody who has sat with me here in the House since 1990 knows, I am a staunch defender of rights for private landowners.

Private ownership of property is a fundamental part of Ontario's social contract. The rights associated with property ownership form one of the basic foundations of democracy. Therefore we, as political leaders, must take the lead and maintain the balance between the protection of important natural assets and the rights of property owners.

After reading the bill we are debating here tonight, an act to establish a greenbelt area, I am forced to believe that this government is a supporter of expropriation without compensation for landowners; there's no doubt about it. If I've said it once, I've said it a hundred times: Expropriation without fair compensation is not acceptable.

I'd like to take the opportunity to read a commentary that was released by Mr Ron Bonnett, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. The comments made by Mr Bonnett on behalf of the OFA include a reference to this greenbelt bill and describe why he thinks governments at all levels need to take more steps to research the economic costs and potential impacts that legislation and regulations have on people in this province.

Mr Bonnett's commentary is entitled *The Basic Principle of Equity*: "In recent years, a trend has been developing that is causing concern for Ontario's farming community. The trend is the disconnect between legislation and policy development, and the economic realities of farming.

"Governments at all levels are now being pressured by special interest groups to implement policy changes designed to address real or perceived shortfalls in areas of land use designation, environmental sustainability, food safety initiatives and food production techniques.

"There are a number of examples where legislation and/or regulations have been introduced with little regard for practical implications and economic costs that impact the farming community. Recent examples include the Ontario government's greenbelt legislation, the proposed ban on natural harvest of farmed deer and elk, and the proliferation of municipal bylaws trying to regulate everything from nutrient management to pesticide use.

"In many cases, these rules are being implemented with good intentions. Legislators believe they are doing 'the right thing.' Legislation and regulation driven by good intentions often fail to ask the key questions: Will there be a cost if we move ahead? Who will absorb this cost? Are these rules practical, realistic, affordable and implementable? It has been said, 'You cannot regulate what you do not understand.' Governments at all levels need to understand this.

"There must be a basic principle of equity followed when governments proceed with legislation and regulation. If it is in the interest of the public to legislate, then it must also be in the public interest to ensure that the farm community does not end up paying the total cost.

"If the principle was applied, there would be an understanding that viability and equity issues would have to be part of the greenbelt discussions. Deer and elk farmers who find their incomes devastated by regulatory change would be eligible for some form of transition funding.

"The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is now facing new issues the public wants addressed. The O'Connor inquiry report was the starting point for source water protection legislation, and the Haines report on Ontario's meat industry will drive changes to address issues of food safety.

"These changes need to consider the principle of equity and the basic concept of public benefit being paid for from the public purse. Ontario farmers want to continue doing what's right for the environment and for public safety surrounding food issues, but the OFA doesn't support governments' approach that calls on farmers to pay all the associated costs.

"Ontario's farmers have watched their equity disappear this year, caused by everything from BSE to commodity price collapses. The OFA is concerned that further erosion of equity, whether it's caused by market difficulties or government legislation, will pose an extreme threat to the industry's future.

"Farmers rely heavily on borrowed money to finance their operations. When equity erosion proceeds too far,

banks and suppliers will not be able to support farmers. Eventually, the rural economy will be forced into recession, a prospect the OFA is not prepared to accept.”

As I said, that is a letter from Mr Bonnett to everyone here, to all the members of this Legislature, to look at and make sure you listen to this and not enforce a lot of new legislation upon farmers and people who own property.

I want to use a good portion of my time here tonight to warn people who own property within the proposed greenbelt area of what they should be prepared for if this legislation is approved. You see, I have quite a bit of experience in dealing with governments imposing rules and regulations of what can and can't be done on privately owned land. The reason for this is that some 30%, or 100,000 acres, of the Niagara Escarpment lies in my riding. This land is protected by the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

Before I go on, let me first get on the record that I believe the Niagara Escarpment to be one of Ontario's most important natural features. I feel very strongly that we should preserve its beauty for future generations. However, I have long believed that while we must preserve the escarpment land, we must achieve a balance between conservation and development. For this reason, I introduced private member's bills in 1991, 1992, 1993 and even in 2000 that would have allowed the Minister of Natural Resources to designate the Niagara Escarpment and surrounding wetlands as a natural area of each municipality. When the minister made such a designation, the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act would have to be repealed.

Development of the natural areas would have been prohibited, unless the municipality where the land is situated approved. Then this development would have had to have been approved by this House. Basically, this act would have abolished the Niagara Escarpment Commission, which we should have done a long time ago. The commission has been a thorn in many people's sides ever since it was introduced.

Hon Mr Caplan: I'm telling Jim Bradley on you.

Mr Murdoch: It's unfortunate that Mr Bradley is not here tonight. He is here pretty well every night, and I'm sure if he had known that we were discussing the Niagara Escarpment, he would have been here.

Just think: Abolishing the Niagara Escarpment Commission would save the taxpayers of the province up to \$5 million annually. This money, in turn, could have been used to buy land that is sensitive, which we could have saved forever.

Having been involved in politics at the municipal and provincial levels for over 25 years, I've had direct contact with the commission and have witnessed first-hand its haphazard, inconsistent decision-making process.

I am bringing this up because of what's going to happen to people in this greenbelt protection area. The same thing is going to happen: We're going to have a government impose regulations upon people. They have no idea what they're doing, and we're going to have the same kinds of things the Niagara Escarpment has done.

The NEC costs the taxpayers of Ontario between \$2 million and \$3 million annually in direct operating and administrative costs. This says nothing of the secondary or spillover costs to local planning and development requirements imposed by the commission, which have been estimated to increase the annual costs, as I said before, by about \$5 million a year. We must ask ourselves, in light of the financial reality facing the province and with your initiatives to review all government operations in an effort to weed out inefficiency, if imposing another NEC is a wise expenditure of Ontario taxpayers' dollars.

This is what's going to happen: More money is going to be spent taking away the rights of the individual and the property owner. I'd like to give you some examples of the ridiculous decisions the NEC has made in the past. People of the greenbelt should be prepared to deal with similar circumstances.

Originally, no red roofs or yellow roofs along the Bruce Trail. People from the city felt that was intrusive upon their eyesight. They may see something out there that wasn't natural. So originally, when they started out, they used to disapprove people who wanted to reshingle their roofs and maybe use red or yellow shingles. They had to use brown or green.

From 1992 to 1994, the Owen Sound Minor Soccer Association investigated ways to develop more playing fields for its sport. Soccer was the second-largest sport organization in the city at the time, with over 800 children actively involved. In 1992, the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority suggested the Pottawatomi Conservation Area as a possible site for a new soccer complex.

The area was unused farmland purchased as part of a parcel by the authority in order to obtain the upper level of the Niagara Escarpment. The land is flat and would have been a perfect site for 11 new grass soccer fields. Soccer would not have been the only use of the lands, as picnic areas and bicycle and walking trails would be incorporated in the overall design by the authority. In addition, with an on-site gravel parking lot, more residents and visitors would have had access to beauty of the escarpment and the Bruce Trail.

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After countless hours developing a plan and making application, approval in principle was obtained from the city of Owen Sound, Derby township and the conservation authority but was denied by the Niagara Escarpment Commission. This is the same kind of thing that's going to happen in this greenbelt area. The soccer association followed with an appeal, but it was again denied by the ministry on the grounds that they could see no relationship between soccer and the escarpment environment. Apparently, open fields are not compatible with the escarpment plan.

In November 1990, John Deboer, a resident of Sydenham township, applied for a permit to establish the use of a stair manufacturing operation in an existing building in the Niagara Escarpment land—the building

was already there. The permit was issued. Over the few years, business more than tripled, warranting a move to a larger location. In October 1992, Mr Deboer moved his business into a building located only 350 feet from the original location. Since it was the exact, same commercial operation taking place in the same rural area of the escarpment, Mr Deboer reasoned that it should continue to be regarded as an existing use, as previously determined by the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

Mr Deboer was mistaken. A second development permit was rejected by the NEC, despite its former approval. Even after receiving development approval from the Ministry of Transportation, the Bruce-Grey health unit and the township, the commission continued to deny Deboer's application and appeal on grounds that the proposal did not comply with the permitted uses in the Niagara Escarpment plan.

I can only share in Deboer's extreme dissatisfaction with the treatment he received from the commission. How can a body of supposedly educated and logical individuals issue a permit for a specific use and then turn around and deny a permit for the exact, same development less than 350 feet away? It is unanswerable questions such as this that plague groups in my riding and will continue to do so until this undemocratic body is abolished.

The township of Holland wanted to upgrade three existing open roads in 1993: a street in Walters Falls, the Holland-Euphrasia town line and the concession road leading to the Holland-Sydenham town line. They wished to do this because repairs such as cleaning and re-ditching were necessary to ensure safety for those using the roads. However, they were told they could not do this work without first getting permission from the Niagara Escarpment Commission. Neither I nor the townships of Holland or Sydenham, who were asked for comment, could understand why upgrading existing roads for public safety is any business of the NEC. The maintenance and upkeep of the roads are a municipal responsibility. I thought it was common sense that the development permits should not be fixed to municipal road allowances that have fallen into disrepair. The NEC thought differently and wouldn't issue a permit.

What this is all about is that this government hasn't learned from the mistakes of the past government. We hear this day after day in this House. You keep blaming either us or the former NDP government for all your mistakes. You continually do that in this House, and you haven't figured it out from the mistakes we made with the NEC. It should have been abolished years ago, and it's still there. Now you're going to make it bigger. You should have been looking at the problems I just told you about, and many, many more—tons more problems that happen when you do these kinds of things.

Now you make another protective belt, this greenbelt around Toronto. We should be looking at Toronto and saying maybe you're going to be paid back for what happened to us. But this doesn't work for Ontario. Ontario is going to lose out on this whole thing. It's the

people of Ontario who lose out when development is stymied.

Farmers in this area are going lose the equity they have in their land, just like I read in the letter from Mr Bonnett. He told you this is not acceptable; that you can't take away the rights of farmers, take away the equity in their land. That's what you're doing with this greenbelt legislation. No talking with people; you just bring this in. Now you say you may have some discussions; we'll wait to see whether that happens. If you don't, you're going to end up in a lot of trouble over there.

You can see there are problems with this legislation. There's no agricultural plan in it. They just drew a line on a map. That's how they did it with the Niagara Escarpment. Yes, some people looked at the natural area, which maybe we should have protected. But then they had to have a protected area and after that a rural area. This is what you're going to start seeing happen with this greenbelt legislation. And they've tied it into the Niagara Escarpment legislation, so it makes it even worse. They would not look at the problems we've had in the past with creating areas such as this.

One of the other things they never took into consideration when they drew this new line is the municipalities that are in there. Their tax base is frozen. What are they going to? There are municipalities out there that are going to be stymied. They won't be able to go beyond their borders, and they won't be able to develop any more. Their tax base will be eroded, and they won't be able to do anything. There's no doubt that this government will pay the price, the same as a lot of people who supported the NEC have, especially if you have to live in that area—and a lot of people live in the greenbelt area.

I know the member from Peterborough mentioned that part of reason he sort of likes it is that he's going to get development in his area, because they are going to force it away from here. They're going to force it away from the greenbelt area, they're going to force development out of that area and you're going to get some of that. You may be OK, but as soon as that happens, some bureaucrat or some politician here at Queen's Park is going to decide, "We're going stop them from developing down there." Then they'll be putting a greenbelt, or whatever they want to call it, around your area. We can't be doing that. We're taking away the rights of property owners in this place, and we don't seem to care. No one seems to care whether property rights are looked at or not; just go ahead and do it.

As I said at the start, at least tonight we're talking about something that's important: planning in the province. There's no doubt that we need planning. It's a lot better than what I complained about: last night we were sitting here talking about pit bulls, and the night before, I think, we were talking about bringing your own wine, silly little bills this government brought in for some reason—I think to defuse the problem we have in the health care system.

Mr Leal: No way.

Mr Murdoch: Sure. You brought that in because you don't want us talking about the health care system and what's happening in our hospitals. You bring in some little bills, hopefully—and the press is falling for it too. The press have done stories on pit bulls and bring-your-own wine. They've fallen for your little trick, but it won't work. At least tonight we're debating something that's important. But if you don't listen to the landowners, you're going to be in trouble.

Mr Leal: They support us in the Owen Sound newspaper.

Mr Murdoch: Somebody said the Owen Sound newspaper supports them. I can tell you that our Owen Sound paper probably would. It's so Liberal it bleeds red all the time; they wouldn't have blue ink in that place. I can understand that the Owen Sound Sun-Times would support you. I could see that, and you probably have read that paper. I'm glad you're reading it, though, and that's one good thing: The member from Peterborough says he reads it.

Mr Sterling: Do you read it?

Mr Murdoch: I try not to, Norm. That's why I have people in my office; they read it to me. Norm asked me if I read it. That's why I hire people, Norman, to do that.

The other thing about the greenbelt is, there's no transportation. They don't even worry about that. Again, we're taking away the rights of people. We're going to make them try to live up in the world and not have their own area so they can build their houses.

When the construction trade gets hold of all this and starts finding out what you're doing to them, they're going to be upset. We're just getting into another mess, and I warn you: Be careful.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Churley: I think I broke out in a nervous rash listening to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I would agree with one thing that he said; that is, we are debating important legislation tonight. But I don't know how to respond to that, so it's probably better not to. I know the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has been on this track for a long time and he never gets anywhere with it, but I will give him consistency. He stays on it.

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But he has to remember that it was a Tory government under Bill Davis, to his credit, that brought in protection for the Niagara Escarpment and started to bring in protections to conserve our land. We're happy to have Mr Murdoch in the Legislature, but perhaps he's going the way of extinction in his views, as many of the animals and other species will disappear if we don't do things to protect our valuable farmland, our wetlands, our water and all of these things. He may be disappearing as well, but I guess there is a place for him still, for people like him and his views on this earth. I have got to say to him that there is not a whole lot of support for his position. However, I hand it to him that he brings it up time and time again.

I'm just going to come back to, because there's absolutely—

Hon Mr Caplan: Can't you guys just get along?

Ms Churley: We're getting along fine. There's absolutely no agreement here whatsoever. I simply want to point out that the majority of Ontarians, I believe, would support my position, the NDP position, and that is, not to pave more, but to save more, to actually expand and extend the greenbelt area.

I say to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound that if we don't start doing something about stopping sprawl, the very people who own the property he's trying to protect will be in grave danger in terms of smog and all of the other problems we have with the—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr Miller: I'm pleased to comment on the speech from the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who I know is speaking up for farmers this evening. It's certainly a valid voice. I too have received a letter from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture outlining many of their concerns with Bill 135—viability and equity, two points that were raised by the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Farmers are facing many challenges these days, whether it be the new Nutrient Management Act, water source protection, BSE, low commodity prices, other new regulations, and now farmers have this greenbelt legislation that for many farmers effectively will greatly reduce the value of their farm. I think that is a valid consideration. Will farmers be able to finance the planting of their crops when the value of their property is in many cases cut in half?

Just last week we had a wine reception here. It was supposed to be a nice, polite sort of event. The Grape King was here, and she spoke at the reception where we were picking the wines for this year for Queen's Park, the wines that have the official logo of Queen's Park on them and become the wines for the year. She raised many valid concerns that vineyard owners have with this greenbelt legislation. She said that she wanted to be polite; however, these concerns were just too serious and affected small family farms in too great a way and she just couldn't be quiet.

I think this bill has some major flaws. At the very least, it needs to go to committee and get lots of input from farmers and from the many stakeholders. I thank the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for speaking up for farmers this evening.

Mr Craitor: I'm pleased to stand up again and speak on the greenbelt. I want to first read a comment that was in the Hamilton Spectator. It says, "Kudos to the McGuinty government for its visionary greenbelt protection plan! For decades, Ontario dithered that there should be provincial planning covering the GTA." It goes on to say that "the greenbelt will be tomorrow's Ontario treasure. Kudos to those who made it happen."

I want to make a couple of other observations. I have spent many hours with the farmers, with the fruit growers. I will say, and I will recognize the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, that I have heard the same

expressions you have about their concerns for the value of their property, and that the greenbelt may have some adverse effects on it. I've have heard that from the farmers. I've been out there. Farmers only get paid once a year. They're not paid week by week. So it's a very difficult livelihood. I commend the farmers. I had no idea, until I spent time out there with them on a regular basis, of the sacrifices and blood, sweat and tears they put in to produce products for us.

I have said to them on many occasions when I've spent time with them that if they have something extremely concrete they want to put forward to our government as a way of improving the bill, they should do that at our public meetings on November 23. They should be coming out. But I've also said to them that if they have some ideas, they have to be unified. I will tell you that, depending on which farmer I talk to, they have different ideas. Among themselves they don't even agree. If there's a need to improve the bill, then they're going to have to come back with a unified voice. They cannot go off in 15 different directions.

But I do want to commend the farmers for the time and effort they put in to provide us with quality food here in Ontario.

Mr Sterling: First of all, I'd like to compliment Mr Murdoch on his speech. I thought it was well thought out, actually very well put together. Bill has been a strong opponent of the Niagara Escarpment Commission, but that comes from a considerable amount of experience as a municipal and provincial politician.

There is no question that when you go into an exercise like this, you affect property rights, you affect the dreams and expectations of a significant part of your population. In that vein, it took 14 years from start to finish with regard to the Niagara Escarpment plan. There were innumerable processes, hearings etc to establish what the final plan might be. Under this act, as I read it—and it will be interesting to know how it will develop—it gives the minister the right to strike the plan without any meeting, without any hearing, without any process, and therefore the plan shall come down, in terms of the boundaries and in terms of the restrictions on the various classes that are painted on the map.

The other part of the legislation I read that is troubling is a clause in here that says, if there is amendment after the plan is put down, the total area can't reduce in size. When you're painting such a wide swath of land, quite frankly, the loss of a couple of thousand hectares is not that significant.

Interjection.

Mr Sterling: It is not that significant when you're painting millions of hectares, if by removing a couple of thousand hectares or even 10,000 hectares out of the plan, you can alleviate the problems of a municipality, of a farmer or whoever else, if it makes sense. That's what the plan should do. It should make sense in terms of what's in and what's out.

The other matter that's troubling in this particular act is that it puts a lot of burden on the minister and the

cabinet to make some very finite decisions about relatively small matters.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I recognize the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for two minutes of reply.

Mr Murdoch: I want to thank the members from Toronto-Danforth, Parry Sound-Muskoka, Niagara Falls and Lanark-Carleton for speaking about what I had to say.

Let's get it straight here. Right off the bat, I mentioned that there's nothing wrong with doing proper planning. There's nothing wrong with saving parts of the Niagara Escarpment, nothing wrong at all, but it's the way you do it. What I'm speaking to here tonight is to warn you, don't do it the same way that happened with the Niagara Escarpment. The way it's set up now, it is far worse. Why I'm warning you is that I have trouble with Liberals telling me something. Look at the Oak Ridges moraine. You promised one thing in the election, and you turned around and did something different. So I have concerns with the way you're going to handle this whole thing. You haven't had the input from the number of people you are going to directly affect, and we have property rights.

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It is interesting that a member of the NDP says I'm a dinosaur and fading away. If that's right out there, then I'm certainly reading people wrong who want to have property rights. It seems to me there are a lot of people in rural Ontario, especially in northern Ontario, who think property rights should be something, and the NDP is saying that's fading away. Well, it's unfortunate. I don't agree with that. I think you're totally wrong.

The whole thing is, I'm warning you, don't do it wrong or you're going to have a heck of a mess—the same mess that we've had in a lot of places along the NEC. You've got to do this right. How you can do that is through input and listening to some of the people on the other side of the House. That has been lacking since we got into this government. When you start to do that, you will make better bills and maybe you'll have something to live on, but if you want to ignore us and make fun of us and say that we're going to just disappear, then you won't have a good bill, you'll pay the price and you'll be sitting over here the next time.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: I'm glad to have an opportunity to participate in this debate. I want to say up front that I will be voting in favour of this legislation.

Applause.

Mr Bisson: I guess I should give up at this point.

I just want to say, I will be voting in favour of this bill. I believe it is a step in the right direction. There's much in this bill that is positive, but I think there are some issues that we do need to deal with at committee. I think the government has to take that seriously as far as some of the issues we need to look at.

Whenever we deal with these bills—and I've been here now for 15 years and I've had the opportunity to

look at successive governments introducing either a Planning Act amendment or a bill dealing with how municipalities organize themselves or how regulations work within the environment. Often governments are well-intentioned when it comes to what they're trying to accomplish by way of legislation they're putting forward, because governments want to do the right thing, by and large, as they're all governed by honourable members within those parties, but sometimes what happens is that the bureaucracy, in the haste to bring forward the recommendations of how to implement a government's policy, sometimes don't quite get it right.

I think the government should pay heed to some of the comments that have been made by some of our colleagues in the Conservative caucus. I don't agree with all of what they have to say. Property rights and a few other things I have some difficulty with, but the point needs to be made. We've all been down this road before. I sat in government, you're now there and the Tories have had the opportunity to sit in government, and we know how it works.

A government minister goes to his or her ministry and says, "Listen, here's what the cabinet has decided. Caucus has had a discussion and cabinet has decided this is a good idea. We want to move forward on this initiative." The bureaucracy goes out, drafts a bill based on the input they've gotten from the minister and his or her political staff and then they come back and give you a bill. Unfortunately, sometimes what happens, because we're all fairly busy individuals, is that there's not enough time paid to really analyzing the bill in some detail, especially around these issues having to do with development and how we interact with land use issues, so things that we may not be familiar with as members fall through the cracks.

I remember changes our government made to the Planning Act and I then, as a green member and being first elected to a government, thinking, "Oh, this is great stuff. It's the NDP that thought of it—right?—so it's got to be good," sitting there on committee and saying, "Who the hell thought of that particular section of the bill?"—maybe not the entire bill but that particular section of the bill and finding out that the bureaucracy has given us some draft language on legislation that may not be workable. That's what public hearings are there to do: give people an opportunity to comment on things that we as members may not have caught.

I just say to my friends—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: It didn't ring. It's off. It just made a funny noise, and I don't know if it was mine or not. I just want to get rid of it.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: No, my wife doesn't have the number to that one. You had to be here from the previous discussion about cellphones.

Interjection: John, quit e-mailing Gilles.

Mr Bisson: Was that you that sent me an e-mail? That's terrible.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: Exactly. Everybody's got my e-mail address, and they do it when I'm up on my feet.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): How about Howard?

Mr Bisson: No, Howard's not watching my speech right now. I know he's at another meeting.

I'm just saying to members of the government: You should take this bill off to committee and you should try to give it—I don't think we need extensive hearings. I don't argue for a second that we have to take this thing out to committee for numbers of weeks, but I think we need a bit of time at committee to give an opportunity for those who are more learned about the particular details of issues like this to come forward and say, "This is a good idea, but you need to take a look at doing this in maybe a bit different way." That's the first thing I want to say.

The second thing is, I bring a bit of a different perspective. Members may appreciate or not appreciate the comments I'm going to make, but I'm going to look at this from the perspective of somebody who comes from northern Ontario. We're often told by people from the southern part of the province that they have better ideas about how we should manage environmental issues, how we should manage development issues and how we should manage the forest when it comes to issues in northern Ontario when it comes to development. We often say, "Listen, we've been at one with these issues for many, many years," and for somebody from the southern part of the province all of a sudden to come in and tell us, "Here is how you should manage these things," sometimes leaves a little bit to be desired for northerners.

I look at this and say, "Listen. You've got a real problem in southern Ontario, and that is, because of the way immigration patterns have happened and because most of the population that has immigrated into Ontario has come to the south, we've got a real crunch when it comes to the ability for people to use the land." There's a lot of pressure, I guess is the word I'm looking for, that people have when it comes to land utilization. We need to make sure that we do this right. I'm just, as a northerner, looking at this and saying, "I think there are a couple of things that we need to stand back and take a look at."

For example, we all agree that we need to make sure that at the end there is a fair and logical process when it comes to being able to utilize the area that we've got in southern Ontario, and that we don't overdevelop it. But there are a number of the ancillary issues that we need to bring into the debate to make sure that's done properly, and one of those is transportation. If we want to minimize the impact on the greenbelt when it comes to development, one of the things we need to take a look at is the issue of transportation. We know that, for example, there's a lot of pressure from the Sarnia area and the Oshawa area in order to increase the ability of people to use our roads when it comes to being able to communicate from one end of the greenbelt to the other.

The unfortunate reality is, you build a highway—build it and they will come. The more they come, the more you need to build bigger highways. We need to, in this society—and this is not an issue that should be laid at the feet of the current Liberal government; they didn't create this problem. But the reality is that we've not had a very strong policy, in my view, when it comes to the whole issue of how we do intercity travel and how we do urban travel within those cities themselves.

If we look at Europe—and I look at my good friend the Minister of Public Infrastructure, who, like me, has travelled to different parts of the world and understands—

Hon Mr Caplan: I wish I could.

Mr Bisson: You wish you could. I love to take a holiday every year to go and see these things, but that's another story.

If you look at countries in Europe, if you look at Hong Kong, if you look at Australia, if you look at different places, there's a much different attitude on the part of the public, and hence the government, when it comes to the role that public transit should play in moving people from point A to point B.

If you land at an airport in Amsterdam, Paris, Nice, or wherever it might be, in virtually every one of these major capitals you can get off the plane, go through security, get your baggage, jump on a train and go anywhere in Europe. The trains are clean, they move people quite efficiently, they're very inexpensive when it comes to moving from point A to point B, and the frequency with which you can get a train is quite good.

If I want to go to the city of Hamilton outside of peak hours, currently, under the GO system, it's pretty hard to do. Maybe people would choose not to utilize their cars to move from Hamilton to Toronto and vice versa if we had better infrastructure when it comes to rail transportation.

If you take a look at Sarnia—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Well, I'm not saying that the government is not looking at any of these things.

Hon Mr Caplan: We're doing that. It takes time.

Mr Bisson: My point is, it takes time and every government has said that it takes time. In all fairness, my government, the Conservatives and the Liberals have not, in my view, taken a very serious look at how we're able to promote transportation issues when it comes to intercity travel, when it comes to mass transportation. For the government to say, "We're dealing with it and it takes time," doesn't, quite frankly, reflect the reality.

If you look at the experiences of Europe, the experiences of places like Hong Kong and others, there has been a real effort on the part of legislators and community groups to take a look at how they were able to build a mass transportation system that basically negates the necessity of being able to build huge freeways to move people from point A to point B. They have looked at it from a much different point of view.

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Some people on one side of the debate will say, "Listen, you shouldn't do that, because what you're doing is using public dollars in order to subsidize transportation." I say to them, "Jeez, when you build a freeway, who do you think is building it?" The reality is that the province of Ontario spends millions of dollars—in fact, billions of dollars—in order to build freeway infrastructure to get people to move from one end of the greenbelt to the other. Should we divert some of those dollars in the future toward saying we need to diminish the amount of reliance on highways in order to be able to move people with mass transportation?

The same would be true, I would argue, for places outside the greenbelt. I look at, for example, the run from Cochrane down to Toronto with the Ontario Northland commission. Currently, the Ontario Northland, as we all know, is a crown corporation that operates what they call the Ontario Northland Railway and also the Ontario Northland bus system. In the rail system, we've got one train a day. We've basically got a train that leaves late in the evening from the city of Toronto and drops people off in northern Ontario at 4 o'clock and 5 o'clock in the morning in the middle of a snowstorm somewhere in Matheson or Cochrane.

No wonder people don't take the train. And vice versa: Getting up early in the morning to get on a bus or take your car to drive an hour to take the train—even longer than that, probably an hour and a half to take the train in some communities—doesn't encourage people to use that form of transportation. Is it not better for the province of Ontario to say, "Let's look at how we can move people within the province by way of some of those infrastructures that already exist around rail and, in some cases, air, so that we lessen the reliance on highway infrastructure so that we can divert some of those dollars into mass transportation?" My argument is that we don't do a very good job of being able to look at that in a serious way.

I would hope at committee that we can have some discussion, about—I don't plan and I don't think that we can develop a policy at committee about mass transportation, but at least we can get our heads around it so that the government can get some direction in order to refer the issue out to one of our standing committees to look at how we deal with the issue of mass transportation in the GTA and within the greenbelt belt area, and possibly extend it into places outside of the greenbelt area such as the Ontario Northland corridor, and then basically come back with some recommendations about what can be done. I think over the longer term you probably could save some bucks if you did that.

The other issue is, and I think this is one that I'm not too sure has had much in the way of debate in the Legislature, what the greenbelt legislation means to the agricultural community. Now, we all agree, Liberals, New Democrats and Conservatives, that we need to do all we can to help and sustain our farm industry. In one way, this particular bill helps to make that happen. I am not

going to say for a second that greenbelt legislation is going to discourage people from getting out of the farm industry, but let's recognize that we have some really serious issues in the farm industry that we need to deal with, some of which are quite frankly out of the control of the province but which we need to turn our attention to in some ways.

We look at what's happened with BSE. There are farmers across this country, let alone in this province, who are basically wondering how they are going to be able to stay in business past the next fiscal year. You take a look at the price that they get for meat as they bring it to the abattoirs, and you look at the price of meat that we're having to pay when we walk into the grocery store, and it just doesn't stand to reason. The farmer is getting a fraction of what the beef is worth from the abattoirs and those people that buy from the abattoirs. We, the consumers who go out to buy the meat, the end product in the butcher shop or in the grocery store, are paying prime—I was going to say prime cuts; I wish I could get a prime cut, but that's another issue—

Mr Leal: Prime price.

Mr Bisson: Prime price is what I was looking for. You say to yourself that that doesn't make any sense. Why is the farmer basically making less money than he or she did before, yet the price of meat is virtually the same, if not higher? Clearly, there's a problem there.

I think one of the things we need to do in the province of Ontario is to encourage our federal government to deal with that. Why is it that the feds are not taking a more serious role in that? I was talking to my colleague Mr Charlie Angus, the federal member from Timmins-James Bay and also our agricultural critic for the federal—

Hon Mr Smitherman: And a musician.

Mr Bisson: And a musician, a very good one at that. I've actually got his album. If you want it, I'll sell you a copy. We're trying to make some money for Charlie these days—not that he needs it. George, if you want one, I got one for you.

The point is that he has really brought me up to speed on some of the agricultural issues that affect farmers in northern Ontario. I was aware of some of these before, but Charlie has brought a bit of a different perspective in regard to what the issues are. We need to deal with those issues that affect commodity prices in order to be able to assist farmers. Moving forward and protecting the farm by way of greenbelt legislation may be a well-intentioned and laudable thing to do, but if we don't deal with some of the issues around commodity prices and others, I'm not too sure what a greenbelt is going to do to help protect the family farm. I think we in all our parties agree we've got to do all we can to assist that very important industry and that economic sector in our province.

So what do we do about that? How do we make sure we have programs in place that are able to assist farmers? For example, one of the things I'm hearing in northeastern Ontario is the whole issue of tile drainage. There is real concern on the part of the agricultural industry in regard to this current government's policy when it comes

to tile drainage. For farmers in northeastern Ontario it is really a killer. They are at odds with it and at their wit's end, trying to deal with how they are going to cope with this new regulation when it comes to tile drainage. It's going to put a huge cost on farms at a time that the farm is having a hard time trying to make ends meet because of what's happening in the commodity prices around beef and other animals that are being sold on the market.

I'm just saying to the government that we support generally—that's interesting. The time just went—I've got 20 hours and 56 minutes.

The Acting Speaker: No, you do not.

Mr Bisson: That scared me, Todd. For a second I thought we were back under the old rules.

My point is that there's a real concern, and people are saying, "How are we going to be able to deal with that from an economic point of view?" So I just say to the government that it's laudable that you're trying to deal with issues around the greenbelt legislation. We in the New Democratic Party are prepared to support it, but I think we need to give it some time in committee—I'm not arguing for a lot of time, but a reasonable amount of time—to deal with some of the issues that are brought forward.

The other issue I want to touch on very quickly is how this affects municipalities. Under the current legislation, as I understand it, municipalities are going to have five years to live up to what is being proposed in the greenbelt legislation. Then, even after five years, there's really no mechanism to force municipalities to live up to what's in the legislation. I might be wrong, and I'm hoping I am—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I read the legislation last night.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Well, now I'm being told it's in another bill. My point is that I read the legislation last night and I didn't see anything that dealt with the issue of encroachment by municipalities on the greenbelt. It think there needs to be a fair balance there, but is five years too long? I guess that's the first question I'm putting forward. Is that reasonable on our part? Should we be looking at a timeline that's a little bit quicker? Or, second, do we need to make sure there are enforcement mechanisms so that municipalities at the end of the day have initiative, or a certain pressure, to live up to the intent of what is in the greenbelt legislation?

I just wanted to put those particular comments on the record. I again say that we are going to support the legislation at second reading. I look forward to what I think will be, hopefully, some time in committee to deal with some of those issues. I just caution and implore the government to take seriously some of the amendments that are going to be brought forward by the opposition and advocate on the part of those presenting to the committee.

My good friend the Minister of Public Infrastructure knows that often stakeholders will come to opposition members, and you were there, to say, "Listen, there's a pretty serious issue here that I need you to deal with.

Would you please try to deal with this in some form of amendment when it comes to the legislation?" I don't expect that you're going to support all the amendments that come forward from the opposition, but I would hope that this government is able to see its way to dealing with some of those amendments in a positive fashion.

La dernière affaire que je voudrais dire est qu'on a besoin de s'assurer que, à la fin de cette législation, on aura un produit de législation qui a du bon sens pour ce que le gouvernement essaie de créer dans la législation elle-même. On est tous d'accord à la fin de la journée qu'il est important qu'on protège ces endroits dans le sud de la province—Niagara Falls, Whitby, Oshawa—qui ont besoin d'une certaine protection. On sait que le développement était pas mal féroce dans ces endroits dans les années passées, et on a besoin de s'assurer que la législation qui est mise en avant aujourd'hui assure qu'on met en place une législation qui va accomplir le but que le gouvernement eux autres mêmes essaient d'accomplir à travers cette législation.

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Donc, on va voter pour ce projet de loi à la deuxième lecture. On s'attend à ce que le gouvernement prenne du temps en comité pour s'assurer qu'on donne la chance au public de présenter au comité, que les amendements qui sont amenés au comité par l'opposition soient pris au sérieux, et pour retourner à cette Assemblée pour être capable de passer ce projet de loi à la troisième lecture.

The Acting Speaker: I'm pleased to recognize the member for Ottawa-Orléans.

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): Je suis content de savoir que le membre de Timmins-Baie James supporte notre loi. C'est très important. J'ai vu les places que vous avez dans votre circonscription. À Ottawa, Prescott et Moosonee, ce ne sont pas les mêmes problèmes qu'à Toronto, mais vous avez bien exprimé les problèmes de Toronto, et je suis très content que vous allez supporter la loi en avant avec nous autres.

I'm very impressed with this legislation. It sets a high standard for the city of Toronto and the greater Toronto area, and from the Niagara Escarpment right to Peterborough. It's legislation that is needed. I suppose people will say that it's too much land that we're including, but if you make mistakes with too much land, that can be corrected in the future.

Toronto is—what?—four million people. It's five or six times the size of Ottawa. I was on council with Minister Meilleur, and she was the chair of the transportation committee. I think Ottawa showed leadership in this province. Sure, we had the greenbelt and that goes back many years, but in the first council of the new city of Ottawa, with the leadership of Minister Meilleur, we were able to freeze the urban boundaries. That was very important, that was very difficult, and there were a lot of complaints about freezing the urban boundaries.

You're doing that on a scale 10 or 15 times as much as we did in Ottawa, but it's going to be successful. It's going to be a heritage that we will just look back on and say that we protected the farmland. The greatest crop for

farmland, as we all know, is housing. We have to stop that crop.

It gives me pleasure to stand in the House tonight to support Minister Gerretsen in this very impressive legislation.

Mr Sterling: As we go forward in this bill toward committee hearings, which everybody seems to be calling for, I think it only fair for the government to produce the regulations that will specify the uses that will be allowed or not permitted in the various areas.

Hon Mr Caplan: Come on.

Mr Sterling: What do you mean, "Come on"? If you haven't thought about what the permitted uses will be in these areas, then you are not in a position to present this to the public and ask for passage of the bill.

The communiqué that was sent out when this was announced on October 28 talked about some of the restrictions. It talked about the fact that residential subdivisions, any type of store or other commercial activity, will not be allowed. Industrial plants or manufacturing operations won't be used. But down in the Niagara Peninsula, for instance, they will be interested to know whether or not a vintner can construct a building to hold the necessary equipment to make wine. The people down in that same area will be interested to know if they can have a little shop selling their product. They will want to know if they can have a restaurant, as some of those vintners now do have down in that area.

For the government to claim that they have everybody on side without defining exactly how it will hit them—because the devil is in the detail in this kind of legislation—is unfair: unfair to the public, unfair to the discussion as we go forward. I think those decisions have to be made and, quite frankly, I thought they would have been made at this point in time.

I urge the government to put those regulations on the table so that when we get to committee we can have a good and frank discussion with regard to this legislation.

Mr Racco: The first meeting that took place with the community was about eight days ago in the region of York, in Markham, an area I represent partly with the city of Vaughan. I was impressed by how much support there was at that meeting. Certainly, there were some individuals who had some concerns, but I think the process will allow us to make some minor adjustments, as long as the objective of the exercise is not affected.

People were very happy to see the type of leadership provided in the province of Ontario. There were many people who felt it was unfortunate that it took so many years for any provincial government to give leadership on how we should move on and build a better Ontario, an Ontario where traffic gridlock is going to be minimized as much as possible.

My area of Thornhill, which includes Thornhill-Vaughan, Thornhill-Markham and Concord, is one of the areas in Ontario where we have difficulty moving, and the reason is that there is sprawl, homes built all over the place. Therefore, this legislation we are going to pass is a must, because without it we will continue that sprawl and

that will not allow us to be efficient, to be able to move in our communities.

It takes over an hour for me to come to this House every day, and I only live about 22 kilometres away from here. One of the reasons is that we cannot afford the type of public transportation that is needed; we are building all over Ontario. By restricting the area, not only are we going to be building smarter and better, but we are also going to be more efficient from a public transportation point of view. I am waiting to see those changes take place so that we can build a better community.

The Acting Speaker: One last question and comment.

Mr Miller: I'm pleased to lend some comments to the talk from the member for Timmins-James Bay. He was talking about train service as it relates to green space, and I wanted to comment about that.

My riding is just a couple of hours north of here and we have rail service through the riding. We're served by the ONTC, which the member for Timmins-James Bay did mention. I would like nothing better than to see a service that is on time and positive, and has more than one train a day, a service that people could rely on. I think it would be very popular if that were in place. Unfortunately, that is not the case. In fact, my personal experience is of my daughter Abigale, when she was trying to use the train to get to Toronto—the new Bracebridge train station was just opened this year. She went to buy a ticket at the sales office and was told that the train wouldn't be on time and that in fact she should probably take the bus, because you couldn't depend on the train. So she drove to Gravenhurst, where the train and the bus leave at the same time. As it turned out, the train didn't show up on time, so she did take the bus. That's the sort of rail service we have right now, and I have to criticize the ONTC because I don't think they're doing a very good job. I don't know the details of why it's not working, but it ain't working. If we want to have people using the train, we need to have some other solution, whatever that solution might be. But it's not working right now.

I was in Alaska recently and spent a day on the train there. It was a very positive experience. I can't help but think that if we had good train service all the way to Moosonee on a regular basis—there's this great tourism potential there. There is great potential and we need to improve the train system, especially when we build this greenbelt and then will need to have better transit and transportation links to get beyond the greenbelt.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I return now to the member for Timmins-James Bay. You have two minutes to reply.

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Mr Bisson: I want to thank all members for commenting, but I really want to thank my friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka for raising that issue, because it gives me an opportunity to do that within the rules of this assembly. I agree with you that the ONTC can do a much better job. I think it's a travesty in this province—and I

don't argue that we should privatize it; I think we need to strengthen it within the confines of the public sector. But I really think we need to give the ONTC the tools they need to provide better service.

There's the issue my good friend raised, that in the area along Highway 11, south of North Bay and north of Barrie, when you go to buy a train ticket to Toronto, they'll tell you not to buy it because the train will not be on time, and that you're better off taking your car or jumping on the bus. What a ridiculous situation to be in. I think we need to make sure that we give the commission the mandate and the direction to be able to fix those issues so that people living in that corridor can bank on using the train, not just once a day but probably more than once a day. If you increase the frequency, you'll probably increase the amount of traffic on that train.

The other issue is what happens on the train north of North Bay. A lot of people don't take the train because it's not convenient. The argument is that we should be able to deliver a schedule that makes sense so that people living north of North Bay are able to take that train and so we can lessen their reliance on paying the high price for an airline ticket, which most people can't afford to do, or on taking their car.

The last issue: There's a whole gem in northern Ontario called James Bay. The reality is that there is a huge potential for tourism in that particular part of the province, and we need to strengthen the ONTC to give them the resources they need and the mandate they have to get in order to be able to work with the communities of Moosonee, Moose Factory and others and develop what is I think a really good opportunity for tourism in northeastern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Monsieur le Président, je vais partager mon temps avec mon collègue le député de London-Fanshawe.

Tel que mentionné lors de la campagne électorale, le gouvernement McGuinty s'est engagé à protéger un million d'acres de plus dans la région du Golden Horseshoe. C'est une des régions qui connaissent la plus forte croissance en Amérique du Nord. Le plan ajoutera un million d'acres aux 800 000 acres de la moraine Oak Ridges et de l'escarpement de Niagara, qui sont actuellement protégés. D'ici 2031, on prévoit qu'environ quatre millions nouvelles personnes vont s'établir, vont établir domicile, dans la région du Golden Horseshoe, l'équivalent de la population combinée de Vancouver, Calgary et Edmonton. On pourrait aussi dire que ça va rajouter une population équivalente à la population actuelle du grand Toronto.

La croissance va créer d'importantes difficultés si l'on veut garantir qu'elle est planifiée, réfléchi et bien gérée. Elle exige des stratégies à long terme permettant de garantir des collectivités fortes, un environnement sain et une économie vigoureuse.

Les objectifs généraux du plan de la ceinture de verdure du gouvernement McGuinty sont les suivants :

Tout d'abord, l'ébauche du plan de la ceinture de verdure vise à protéger les terres écologiquement fragiles et les terres agricoles, une mesure essentielle de la planification de la croissance.

Le plan vise à faire en sorte que l'environnement, y compris les réseaux hydrographiques, reste sain et en mesure d'assurer maintenant et à l'avenir la subsistance de la population et de la faune qui y vivent. Il vise à encourager la croissance dans les villes situées à l'extérieur de la ceinture, tout en favorisant des collectivités rurales dynamiques à l'intérieur de la ceinture de verdure. Il vise aussi à appuyer l'agriculture comme source de commerce, d'emploi et de production intérieure d'aliments. Il vise à offrir des possibilités de loisirs en plein air pour répondre aux besoins de la population en croissance rapide.

En ce qui concerne la protection de l'environnement, le plan de la ceinture de verdure propose d'interdire les nouveaux aménagements urbains dans les zones humides, les forêts et les cours d'eau de la ceinture de verdure. Plus précisément, il vise à protéger les ressources en eau contre les aménagements, à prévenir la contamination et à préserver les rivages et à renforcer les vallées fluviales reliant la moraine de Oak Ridges, l'escarpement de Niagara et le lac Ontario. Le travail se poursuivra afin de mieux répertorier les écosystèmes naturels de la région du Golden Horseshoe afin d'aider le gouvernement à prendre des décisions en matière d'aménagement du territoire à l'avenir.

Pour le domaine de l'agriculture, l'ébauche du plan de la ceinture de verdure empêchera de nouveaux aménagements urbains sur les terres de cultures spéciales, comme Holland Marsh, et les terres servant à la culture de fruits tendres et du raisin dans la région de Niagara. Elle interdirait aussi l'utilisation des terres agricoles à fort rendement à des fins qui n'appuient pas l'agriculture.

Les terres agricoles à fort rendement pourraient continuer de servir à des fins commerciales ou industrielles, appuyant l'économie agricole : par exemple, des étalages de produits, des magasins d'équipement agricole et des établissements vinicoles.

Pour ce qui est de la collectivité rurale de la ceinture verte, elle va favoriser des collectivités rurales, saines et dynamiques. L'ébauche du plan de la ceinture de verdure envisage une expansion modeste des villes et villages tous les 10 ans, lorsque la révision du plan est proposée, mais uniquement lorsque les réseaux d'eaux et d'égouts en place peuvent répondre à cette croissance. L'ébauche du plan permet également la construction d'infrastructures, sous réserve de critères environnementaux, là où on en a besoin.

Le domaine des loisirs et du tourisme : l'ébauche du plan de la ceinture de verdure appuie toute une gamme de possibilités de tourisme, de sports et de loisirs. Elle établirait également une stratégie relative aux parcs, aux espaces ouverts et aux sentiers visant à répertorier les terres publiques et accessibles.

L'ébauche du plan de la ceinture de verdure propose la protection des trois types différents de zones formant collectivement la « campagne protégée ».

Les terres écologiquement fragiles qui font partie du système du patrimoine naturel de la région du Golden Horseshoe, ainsi que les terres agricoles à fort rendement et les terres de cultures spéciales, constituent la majeure partie de la ceinture de verdure proposée.

Les régions rurales, avec leurs villes, villages et hameaux, complèteraient la structure d'un milieu rural dynamique.

Le système de la ceinture de verdure qui est proposé est formé de divers cours d'eaux, rivières, lacs de kettle et zones humides.

En raison de la fragilité de ces éléments, diverses utilisations du sol ne seraient pas permises dans ces régions, notamment des quartiers résidentiels, tout type de magasin ou autre activité commerciale, et des installations industrielles ou manufacturières.

Certaines utilisations, par exemple des sentiers naturels et des installations pour l'observation ou l'étude de la faune, pourraient être permises.

Je vais maintenant passer la parole à mon collègue le député de London-Fanshawe.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): It's an honour for me to stand up for the second time tonight to speak, this time about a totally different issue. It has given me more pleasure, what I have been listening to, many members from all sides of the House speaking in support of that bill. Hopefully, it won't take long for it to be implemented in order to save our environment and protect our farmland.

This greenbelt legislation, if passed, has proposed to 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. I think it is just amazing. It's a great initiative, a great bill and, hopefully, as I mentioned, from what I heard from all the members of this House, it's going to get great support and we're going to carry on with it. I believe it's a good gift for all the people of this province as a result of the co-operation of all the members of this House.

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It's not just to protect farmland. This bill will also ensure the quality of air, water and health. As Minister Gerretsen mentioned in his introduction of the bill, if we keep going the same way we are right now, in the year 2031, about four million more people are expected to move to the Golden Horseshoe area. That's like everyone in Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton packing up and heading up this way. It raises important questions for us in central Ontario: How do we want our communities to grow and prosper? What do we want our landscape to look like in the years 2030, 2040 or 2050 from now on?

We've been elected to this House, to this place, to plan for the province, to protect our future. That's why our government, for the first time in history, introduced such a bill to ensure a plan for the future, to ensure a good

environment, good air quality and good water protection for our kids in the future.

I was listening to the member from Toronto-Danforth. She spoke for a long time. I believe, in the end, she is going to support it. She has some concerns about some issues and details in the bill or in the regulations. Hopefully, her concerns will be transferred to the minister through his parliamentary assistant, who is a great person, a great member who believes in the farming area, who believes in protecting the environment. Also, when the member from Simcoe spoke about this bill, he spoke with passion. I believe he's going to support it. They come from a rural area and they know the value and the quality of the air and the quality of nature.

For myself, when I want to relax or take some kind of break, I travel toward the Stratford area, toward Barrie and Orillia. I had the privilege three or four weeks ago to go and spent one night with a colleague from that area. I enjoyed the time. I enjoyed the quality of the people and I enjoyed the environment. I think we need that protection, because we cannot allow ourselves, our cities, roads and pavements to grow all over the place. We have to protect the future, which ensures us good agricultural land, good grapes, good apples, good tomatoes and cucumbers, greens and everything. We also have to make a place for us to escape when we have bad times or when we want to relax. I believe that what we're doing right now is a good way to approach the future.

I wonder, after listening to all the people, why would I keep debating this issue, since everybody agrees on this bill? Why don't we send it to committee right away and

deal with it instead of taking more time, because we are in agreement? I think we're in agreement. We can devote our debate time to different issues which are not agreed on and, hopefully, by debating different issues, we can achieve more. Because I think this one is a done deal and everybody agrees. Nobody is disputing the whole thing. Everybody tried to explain their own philosophy and ideology, their own way, but in the end, all of us are aiming for the same goal: to achieve a greenbelt and to ensure protection of farmland and our environment. So I don't see myself talking more about something that I believe everyone is already in agreement with. Nobody has any reservations, except some kind of technicalities that would be resolved by communicating between our leaders on these issues and, hopefully, we can achieve our goal.

Tonight I'm very privileged, as I mentioned, and I've enjoyed listening to many deputies speak in support of this bill. It will give me more pleasure when I hear the opposition party in great support, and it will also give us more hope in this province to keep working together as a result of co-operation. I think this is important. When we are working together, we can achieve more.

Therefore, I am looking forward to supporting this bill. I hope all the members in this House will join me in support in order to protect our future, our environment, our green land and our farming land.

The Acting Speaker: It being reasonably close to 9:30, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 2126.

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