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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 17 November 2004

Mercredi 17 novembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 November 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 novembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PIT BULLS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): This morning, while watching the New VR news, I was saddened to learn that a Rottweiler attacked a postal worker in Fenelon Falls on Friday. I would like to know how the current legislation to ban pit bulls would have prevented this tragic attack. Fortunately, a local man was able to stop the attack, but not before the postal worker suffered serious injuries.

Sadly, the current pit bull legislation would not have prevented this attack at all. Instead of focusing on owners of dangerous dogs, the legislation bans one breed, which isn't even uniquely identifiable. We saw last week that even the Attorney General, when asked to pick a pit bull from a collection of dogs, was unable to do so.

Instead of taking the time to provide a reasonable, practical solution to the issue of dangerous dogs, this government has introduced reactionary legislation to punish responsible owners. I am concerned that the current pit bull ban is designed for newspaper headlines, not actually preventing dangerous dog attacks.

Today, the Super Dogs, a group of Staffordshire bull terriers, performed on the front lawn of Queen's Park. These dogs are capable of some amazing stunts. However, the proposed legislation would ban them in Ontario.

Most dogs are friendly, loved members of their families. Unfortunately, there are some dogs in every breed that are capable of attacking people. It is unreasonable for the government to ban all these dogs, as they are attempting to do with pit bulls. Instead, I strongly encourage Minister Bryant to take the time to develop new legislation that will prevent dangerous dog attacks by focusing on irresponsible owners. Reasonable and effective legislation like that would be a good step for Ontario.

JAMAICAN CANADIAN ASSOCIATION

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the immense support the Ontario Trillium Foundation has bestowed upon my riding of York West of late. More specifically, in late October of this year, the foundation provided a local

community-based organization, the Jamaican Canadian Association, with some \$220,000 in additional funding over a three-year period.

This generous amount of money will play a significant role in strengthening the Jamaican Canadian Association's indispensable role in my riding. Established in 1962 and incorporated in 1971, the JCA is committed to identifying and responding to the needs of the Caribbean/black community in the York West area as well as the GTA.

At present, the JCA provides a variety of essential services: settlement services for new immigrants; youth and family counselling; domestic violence, incest and child abuse programs; and a parenting program, just to name a few. In turn, through the maintenance of its five volunteer-based standing committees, the JCA is continually expanding and building upon its community outreach initiatives, substantially improving the community's education and social needs.

I would like to once again thank the members of the Ontario Trillium Foundation for providing the JCA with the necessary funding, and congratulate them on all the good work they have done for my constituents. This serves as yet another example of the provincial government making a concerted effort in serving the needs of local communities.

RACIAL PROFILING

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is well known that this Liberal government is, should I say, liberal with the truth. Sadly, they can't even get their own story straight.

In November, Community Safety Minister Monte Kwinter said, "On the always controversial subject of racial profiling, let me say that the ... McGuinty government will take an absolute zero tolerance approach." A typical Liberal promise: all spin and no substance.

Just last week, for instance, Education Minister Gerard Kennedy condoned the actions of the Toronto District School Board in keeping race-based statistics. The minister said, "We are not going to prohibit it at this point." So which is it? This really is the question that always comes to mind.

We don't have to look very far to see why we need clear guidelines around racial profiling of any kind. On March 18, 2003, then-school trustee and now-Liberal MPP for Don Valley West, Ms Kathleen Wynne, told the Toronto Star, "I assume when I'm going into an (expulsion) hearing it's only going to be a young male of colour. And if it isn't, I'm surprised."

This government came out firmly against police forces tracking race-based statistics. There is now clearly a double standard, as the Toronto District School Board will be allowed to do just that.

This is a highly charged issue that deserves a debate in this House today. I call on the Premier to have the courage, for once, to take a stand and stick to it. This issue is simply far too important to have positions that change at every event and with every poll result.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Today, November 17, is World COPD Day. COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, is a disease that makes it difficult to move air into and out of your lungs. It is a disease that causes the airways of the lungs to be inflamed and become obstructed or blocked. For people who suffer from COPD, drawing a breath can be a difficult, frightening struggle. It includes two major breathing diseases: chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

COPD is a disease that generally affects people over 60. It affects more women than men, and 15% to 20% of smokers will develop COPD. More than 750,000 Canadians suffer from the disease. Hundreds of thousands more have COPD but have not been diagnosed. That's part of why it's important to continue to raise awareness about this disease, and that's part of why World COPD Day is so important.

As we mark World COPD Day, I'd like to draw your attention to Breathworks, an innovative initiative of the Lung Association that promises to improve life for many of those 750,000 Canadians. Breathworks is a disease management program that focuses on education, information-sharing and building a strong support system around those who suffer from the disease. More information is available on the Lung Association's Web site or via their phone hotline: 1-866-717-COPD.

We believe in the work the Lung Association does and, as a government, we are committed to reducing the number of people who suffer from this disease. The government will help to combat COPD through our comprehensive anti-smoking strategy. We have already increased the cost of cigarettes. We'll make all public spaces and workplaces in Ontario 100% smoke-free in three years. And we will create a peer-to-peer anti-smoking campaign targeted at youth and created by youth to deter kids from lighting up.

In marking World COPD Day, I invite all members of the House to join me in saluting the important work of the Lung Association to combat COPD and in using their voices to raise awareness about this disease.

1340

SECURITY GUARDS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise today in response to an article by Richard Brennan of the Toronto

Star entitled "Security Guards to Get Stricter Rules." Apparently, almost six months after the release of the recommendations of the coroner's jury into the death of Patrick Shand, Minister Kwinter is supposed to introduce legislation sometime soon to amend the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act.

Well, legislation already exists in the form of Bill 88, my private member's bill that would bring numerous much-needed and long-overdue amendments to the private security industry. We consulted with stakeholders in drafting Bill 88. The vast majority of the Shand inquest recommendations are reflected in my legislation, as well as many other changes.

Bill 88 would bring about numerous significant changes to the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act, such as: mandatory multi-level training and standards for the use of force, firearms and making arrests; different classes and portability of licences; restrictions on the equipment licensees are authorized to use or are prohibited from using; prohibitions for licensees on uniforms, and markings and colours of security vehicles, that resemble those of police officers; and prohibitions on licensees on the use of badges or other insignia that resemble those of police officers.

Bill 88 passed second reading in a vote of 48 to 0 and was referred to the standing committee on justice policy. In fact, our Minister of Community Safety voted on it himself and supported it.

The work has already been done. There's no need to waste any more ministry staff time or resources. So I urge Minister Kwinter to put Bill 88 on the justice policy committee agenda now. I would appreciate him doing that, because it is going to save taxpayers money and pass a good bill.

TIME ALLOCATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The Liberals here at Queen's Park are certainly showing their true colours. Not only do they adopt the Tory privatization agenda when it comes to any number of parts of our public sector and public service—hospitals, corrections and, of course, hydroelectricity generation and distribution—but now the Liberals have adopted Tory tactics as well.

The Liberal House leader serves notices of time allocation motions designed to eliminate debate on Bill 100, one of the most contentious pieces of legislation introduced by this government since their election in October of last year. No further second reading debate, denying members of this assembly, both government and opposition members, the right to put their contribution on to the record and denying the people of Ontario the right to participate in public hearings—public hearings, why, but one hour of clause-by-clause debate. And then the Liberals demonstrate their disregard and disdain for parliamentary procedure by restricting third reading debate to but two hours, maybe two hours and 15 minutes, and then forcing the bill to a vote.

Well, it looks like Dalton McGuinty has put on the jackboots, laced them up tight, and he is now stomping over traditional parliamentary process. This is far too important a piece of legislation for this government to be allowed to ram through without consultation and without real debate. They're going to do it regardless.

HAY WEST

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): In 2002, western Canada experienced a major drought and a shortage of hay that threatened the livelihoods of thousands of farmers. It's the kind of thing most of us see on TV and shake our heads and change the channel.

But Wyatt and Willard McWilliams, two prominent members of the farming community in Navan, Ontario, near Ottawa, decided to do something about it. With co-operation from the community, government officials, CN and CP Rail, the McWilliams brothers launched the Hay West initiative.

Through Hay West, farmers from Ontario and the rest of eastern Canada shipped 30,000 tonnes of hay to western Canada. Over 1,400 farmers from Saskatchewan and Alberta received the hay and experienced a renewal of hope for their farming businesses.

Wouldn't it be great if we saw the same kind of national co-operation in support of our beef? "Buy Canadian beef." That's what we should be saying.

Last night in Ottawa, MP Don Boudria hosted the official launch of Hay West: A Story of Canadians Helping Canadians. Written by local author Bob Plamondon, this book tells the story of how people across eastern Canada, from farmers to politicians to business people, came together to help their brothers and sisters in the west.

As a former municipal politician who helped to get Hay West off the ground, I congratulate all members of Hay West on their achievements. I hope that Mr Plamondon's book will be a record of just how compassionate, caring and even heroic Canadians can be when they seize the opportunity to help fellow countrymen in need.

HYDRO ONE WORKERS

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the dedication and hard work shown by the workers of Hydro One during the recent series of hurricanes in Florida.

As we've all seen in the news, Hurricane Frances hit the sunshine state with devastating effects. Two hundred seventy workers, in three convoys of Hydro One trucks, went to the hardest-hit part of Florida: Stuart and Port St Lucie. Between September 10 and 21 they worked 16-hour days, were the last to go home and were recognized by Florida Power and Light to be among the very best crews they've ever seen. But just when the crews returned home, another hurricane hit. Florida Power and Light called with another request for assistance, and 230

staff were sent to the same devastated areas between September 25 and October 6.

I would like to tell the Legislature about an example of amazing citizenship that was demonstrated by some of these workers. The children's football team in Port St Lucie had been admiring the work of the crews, and asked if they could change their team name to include Hydro One. The workers agreed and took up a collection to help this team, which didn't even have its own jerseys. The workers raised over \$1,000, which the team used to buy new jerseys that had "Hydro One" printed on the back.

This is an example not only of leadership and hard work, but also of good citizenship in co-operation with our neighbours when they were in a time of severe distress. On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to say thank you to the Hydro One crews and offer my congratulations on a job well done.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): When we formed the government a little more than a year ago, one of the central planks in our platform was reducing class sizes for our youngest students. Since then, we have been making huge strides to meet that end, and I'm proud of our achievements so far.

More than 7,500 elementary teachers are beginning the year with specialized training in reading and math instruction as part of the government's effort to boost student literacy and numeracy in the all-important early grades. School boards are hiring more than 11,000 new teachers as a first step in reducing class size in the early grades.

What's more, more than 1,300 schools have smaller classes in the primary grades throughout the province, and that is making a real difference. I know the York Region District School Board chairperson, Bill Crothers, thinks so. He was recently quoted in one of our local papers as saying, "Our students are better served today." That's right; straight from the horse's mouth. Students who attend schools in York Region District School Board are better served, and if we can accomplish that much in education in one short year, just think of the improvements that will be made in the next three.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 17, 2004, for the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to

standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CITY OF BRAMPTON ACT, 2004

Mrs Jeffrey moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr10, An Act respecting the City of Brampton.

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

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

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RECALL ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LA RÉVOCATION DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act respecting the recall of members of the Legislative Assembly / Projet de loi 148, Loi concernant la révocation des députés de l'Assemblée législative.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All opposed, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Mr Flaherty?

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): This bill is comprehensive, detailed recall legislation. I'd like to thank my former legislative intern Michael Acedo for his extensive work on the bill.

The purpose of the bill is to provide a process by which members of the Legislative Assembly may be recalled and a by-election held to fill the vacant seat. The first step in the process is the issuing of a recall petition. If the petition is signed by more than 25% of the total number of individuals who are entitled to sign it, and the petition otherwise meets the requirements for a successful recall petition, the Chief Election Officer shall hold a referendum to decide whether the member should be recalled.

Sections 11 to 22 describe the referendum process, in particular with respect to financing and advertising of referendum campaigns. If more than 50% of those entitled to vote on the referendum answer yes to the referendum question, then the member is recalled and his or her seat in the assembly becomes vacant. A by-election is then held to fill the vacancy. The recalled member is free to be a candidate in the by-election.

No doubt this bill will be supported by the Liberal members opposite, given their promise of accountability to the electorate.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Today we learned that trustees at the Toronto District School Board, apparently with the quiet blessing of your Minister of Education, cooked up a way to get around the law and increased their incomes by approximately 200%, this at a time when you are calling on teachers, nurses and other public sector workers to temper their wage demands, except for 2%, the Premier is suggesting. You've talked a good game about transparency, openness and accountability. Do you endorse this backroom deal and your minister's involvement in it?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this. First of all, to be clear, this is not a policy that was in any way approved or endorsed, either before or after, by any representative of this government. Secondly, so that I am perfectly clear on this, I do not approve of this policy. I believe it is unacceptable. I'm asking that the board reconsider this policy. I've also asked that the minister review our options. I'm also proud to say that we're expanding the scope of the Provincial Auditor's mandate so that he can look at, among other of our transfer partners, our school boards.

Mr Runciman: I guess the Premier is indicating quite clearly and unequivocally that the Minister of Education did not, in any way, shape or form, endorse that deal. Certainly that's good news.

We are concerned. According to news reports, the trustees in Toronto are receiving cheques every two weeks, on top of their regular pay, for so-called expenses—no receipts required, no proof needed and no explanation wanted. Some trustees have come forward. Patrick Rutledge is one who has admitted that these changes—he has indicated publicly that these changes were allowed by the Minister of Education. Perhaps he's talking about the Ministry of Education. I'm not sure where the confusion stems from here. Premier, your minister, according to public comments, had some role to play, or his ministry had some role to play in this. That's no way to run a province. Will you tell us today that you will put a stop to this today and make sure that this is rolled back and that the trustees pay back the taxpayers of the province of Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I can sympathize with the Leader of the Opposition. I've been there before—when you ask the first question and you get the answer you weren't expecting to get and then you've got two supplementaries you've got to put. I've been there before. I can sympathize with that.

Let me say, first of all, that we have a tremendous amount of respect for the work that trustees do throughout this province on behalf of our children in advancing the cause of public education.

I'm not sure I can be any more clear to my colleague. We do not endorse this policy. We do not approve of it. I'm asking that the board reconsider this policy. I have also asked the Minister of Education to take a very close look at our options in these circumstances.

Mr Runciman: I assume from that response that the initial approach is a request; that if that fails, there will be additional action forthcoming. We certainly like to hear the Premier speak to his willingness to take it that further step if the Toronto board declines to accept his urgings. That, we believe, is critical. If you take a look at what might happen here across the province, we are talking about millions and millions of dollars in terms of implications if every board determines that this is the kind of approach they want to take—backroom ways around the law—to supplement their incomes.

We would like the Premier to stand up here today in the House and indicate to us and to the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario that if, indeed, the Toronto board does not follow his advice, does not agree to his request, he is prepared to take the necessary action to put a stop to this.

Hon Mr McGuinty: To repeat, my colleague's concern is well-founded, and I share that concern. We have a difference, though, in terms of the approach that we bring to these kinds of things. We are going to work with our trustees throughout the province to ensure that we develop a good working relationship, which is not in my interest and, frankly, not in their interests; it's in the interest of our kids. We will continue to bring that kind of approach.

I am now asking that the trustees of the Toronto District School Board reconsider this policy. It is not one that is approved by this government. I have also asked that the Minister of Education explore our options. But I have every expectation that, now that this has been brought to the light of day, trustees will reconsider the steps they've taken.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Premier as well. On October 21 of this year, you announced during a speech to the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police that your government will add 1,000 new police officers. You also said that your government will contribute \$30 million to this endeavour over the course of the mandate. I shouldn't have to tell you that the \$30 million is actually a pittance given that it costs about \$100,000 a year to put a new police officer on the street. Over the course of the mandate, if you started to phase it in right now, you would be covering about 15% of the cost.

Municipalities will have to pick up most of the tab for a promise that you made during the election. I ask you: Do you expect municipalities to pay for their share of hiring the new police officers with the money they collect from tax increases or from photo radar?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm sure the member is aware of

this. This is, in many ways, an extension of the program brought forward by the previous government. Just so the member has his facts straight, we're talking about funding of \$30 million a year, every year. It's my understanding—and I can refer the supplementary to the minister—that covers half the cost. Now the ball is in the municipalities' courts. It's up to them now to decide to what extent they wish to avail themselves of this program.

Mr Dunlop: I think you should do the math on half the cost, because it's costing a lot more than \$60 million to add 1,000 new police officers on the streets of our province.

Since your government was elected, they have increased fees for municipal police services to train recruits at the Ontario Police College and have added the cost to municipal police services of gun verification, which was previously covered by our government and by the province. What makes matters worse is that we now know that you're just buying time with your announcement on the 1,000 new police officers.

Affected stakeholders received a letter from the Ministry of Community Safety. I believe the letter is code for, "Let's drag this one out as long as we possibly can before we have to put any money into it."

Premier, we believe it has been all talk but no action, so far, on keeping the promise on the 1,000 new police officers. Can you tell us when you're going to allocate money and if you'll let the police services decide how to use that money?

1400

Hon Mr McGuinty: Rather than refer it to the minister, I'm going to hang on to this one so municipalities will better understand where we're coming from.

We're going to make the money available this coming year. It is part of a new and much better relationship we are developing with municipalities. In fact, just recently I received a letter from Roger Anderson, president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, who says in passing, "There is a refreshing new approach to inter-governmental affairs underway in Ontario, and this association welcomes it and will work diligently to enhance it. Our citizens deserve nothing less."

I understand the scepticism brought to this matter by my colleague opposite; he has a partisan responsibility to share that scepticism here in this place. But the reality is that we are working well with our partners, the municipalities across the province.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to get some comments from the Premier on the response he got back from mayors on the 1,000 new police officers. You made a promise to put 1,000 more cops on the street. You should keep this promise before you do anything else.

It has also been brought to our attention that your government is creating a new so-called Ontario centre for safer communities. Apparently, this new centre will reflect what you would consider to be a new approach to crime prevention, crime reduction and promotion of safer communities. To help cover the operating costs of this

project, I understand that several ministries in your government will transfer funds to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. We know that the ministries had until October 15 to indicate whether they would participate. Premier, how much will this new centre cost, and where will it be located?

Hon Mr McGuinty: To the minister.

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): My parliamentary assistant is working on that project. We have announced it, we've invited several ministries that will be impacted by this to participate, and we will be announcing, at the appropriate time, what the program is going to do and where it's going to be located.

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. This fall, we've been asking a lot of questions about your promise gap; that is, the difference between what you promised before and during the election and what you deliver now.

During the election, you promised to keep hydro-electricity public in Ontario. Last night, you introduced a time allocation motion that will choke off debate on Bill 100, your private hydro bill. We know what's at stake here. Private electricity drives up the hydro bill for industry, for business, for consumers. We believe there should be a meaningful public debate about this before it happens, but you want to shut up MPPs and shut down debate. What are you trying to hide, Premier, by shutting down debate on the future of Ontario's hydroelectricity system?

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

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): This bill has had eight hours of second reading debate. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that this bill was sent to committee after first reading. It was travelled to eight communities. We received 100 delegations and 865 written presentations. The bill has had a considerable amount of debate, and we believe it's appropriate to move the bill back into committee for clause-by-clause consideration.

Mr Hampton: I think the people of Ontario would know that besides being a \$10-billion industry, this has a lot to do with whether people can afford to keep the lights on, whether they can afford to pay the hydro bill.

Here's one thing I know you're trying to hide. This is the report of the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario, which represents the largest industries in the province: Ford Motor Company, Stelco, Dofasco, Inco, Bowater Pulp and Paper. This report says that the McGuinty hydro scheme will drive up the price of electricity by at least 30% for industry—possibly by 53% for industry—and will result in the loss of 140,000 manufacturing jobs in this province. That is what you are trying to hide.

Minister, before you try to ram through your bill to turn Ontario's hydroelectricity system into a private

system, don't you think the people who may stand to lose their jobs deserve to hear a full, open, public debate?

Hon Mr Duncan: The same member opposite last year said prices would go up this year by 30%; they've gone down by 19% in the wholesale market.

Let me respond directly. First of all, many of the corporations that are in that have expressed support publicly for Bill 100. Bill 100 will not lead to higher prices for electricity. Bill 100 provides forward planning. It will allow us to bring on new supply and decrease demand. The only way to lower price is to increase supply and decrease demand, and we are doing both those things.

Let me tell the member opposite—you talk about time allocation. Do you remember the Social Contract Act? You time-allocated that. There were no public hearings, no debate at third reading. You time-allocated that. You had no public hearings when you raised the gas tax by 3.4%. The Bob Rae government used time allocation on 25 occasions, and they created it. This government has used it—this will be the second occasion, after public hearings; provides for third reading, and the bill—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I don't think the minister has been reading the association's report. This is what they say on page 15: "We urge the provincial government to fully review the cost impacts of its electricity policy." They're very blunt.

I think I know what else you are trying to hide. Eight months ago, the Premier's good friend John Manley said Pickering unit 1 would only cost \$825 million to refurbish. Three months later, you say it costs \$900 million. Five months after that, it's now \$1 billion.

You want to shut down debate because you don't want the people of Ontario to have a full and frank debate about what nuclear power means in terms of costs, what it means in terms of refurbishing other units at Pickering.

Minister, before you ram this bill through, before you try to go further down the road of nuclear fiascos that cost the Conservatives billions that they weren't ready for, that have already cost you lots of money that you weren't ready for, before that drives up the hydro bill for industry, for business and for consumers, don't you think the people of Ontario who have to pay the bill deserve a full, frank and open debate?

Hon Mr Duncan: We have taken the concerns of AMPCO to heart. In fact, we reviewed the policy on pricing. This bill creates a mechanism to create new supply, supply that you failed to deliver when you were government. It provides a mechanism for conservation. Your government cancelled all conservation programs in Ontario.

I'll predict today that the 43% increase in hydro rates that we witnessed under his government's policy won't be repeated. Why? Because we are moving to undo the bad things you did and the Conservatives did before us in an open and transparent way.

This bill is the right direction for energy. This bill will provide new supply. This bill will help decrease demand

and eventually lead back to competitive prices throughout Ontario, so that our economy can thrive again.

The Speaker: This is a new question.

Mr Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Premier, here is something else you are trying to hide. After telling people during the election that you wanted Ontario's electricity system to be public, you are now giving away to private, profit-driven companies the remaining river sites in Ontario that provide the potential for the cleanest and the most affordable electricity.

You've thumbed your nose at public power, you've thumbed your nose at First Nations, and you've rolled out the carpet for private companies that would simply turn this into a money-making machine.

1410

When the Conservatives sold off the Mississagi River plants to Brascan, Brascan then sold that hydroelectricity for 10 times what it cost to produce and pulled in \$17.6 million in just a few months.

New Democrats want to have a debate about keeping that source of electricity public. Why do you want to shut down debate, shut out the public and give it to your private sector friends?

Hon Mr McGuinty: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): Again the leader of the third party has of course got it all wrong, like the rest of his colleagues. If he had listened to the announcement, he would realize that communities, co-operatives, First Nations, and yes, private companies, if they wish—there are hundreds of very small private companies looking at these opportunities across the province—can put forward proposals.

What we've also said, if the leader of the third party would take a look at the announcement I made last week, is that on the points system we've designed, it will be nearly impossible for us to consider a proposal that does not have a First Nation component to it. That's what we're doing. For the very first time, the Ontario government is moving forward with some resource development in northern Ontario and saying, "We're not going to leave our First Nations behind."

Mr Hampton: When the Minister of Natural Resources tried that speech on the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, they sent him out of Thunder Bay with his tail between his legs.

I suspect the other reason the government wants to shut down this debate is because it is acknowledged that we need more sources of green power, better energy efficiency and more conservation.

This is what Keith Stewart and Jamie Swift, the authors of this recent book, say about the government's initiative: "None of this will come to pass if Ontario instead keeps investing in the money pit nuclear plants. Or if we stake our future on multinational energy companies."

The Society of Professional Engineers, who represent the skilled engineers at our hydro plants who keep our lights on, say, "Bill 100 will significantly undermine

Ontario's publicly owned and operated power system and create a new one based on a model that has failed in many other jurisdictions."

People don't want this to happen, Premier. Why do you want to shut down debate? Why do you want to deny the people of Ontario a public debate about the future of our hydroelectricity system? Why is that your record in government?

Hon Mr Ramsay: We're back to the bill now, and I'll refer the question to the Minister of Energy.

Hon Mr Duncan: This bill has had public hearings right across the province of Ontario. I attended a number of those hearings myself. We had hearings here in Toronto. We had over 100 delegations. We had over 800 written submissions. They've all been responded to.

This bill preserves and protects the hydro and nuclear assets in public hands. We deal with the question of heritage assets. The member conveniently ignores that. One thing we cannot afford is to go back to the old monopoly, the monopoly that failed to produce power in adequate supply, the monopoly that ran up a \$38-billion deficit. That member wants the status quo. That member wants more of the same. This party and this government choose change, in the best interests of electricity consumers in this province.

Mr Hampton: Who wants the status quo? Your electricity policy is the same electricity policy that failed under the Conservatives, the same electricity policy that drove prices through the roof and resulted in a blackout. You're the man of status quo.

I want to quote someone. This is someone who said that time allocation is a "guillotine bill, this attempt to stifle debate, to limit the ability of members to participate in the discussion." This person said, "That's why this institution is in such disrepute, because we don't want to talk about the important things." Who said that? That was Dwight Duncan, two short years ago.

Here's the reality. Hydroelectricity is an absolutely essential service. Everybody needs it. Everybody needs it every day. It's not something that should be put in private hands, in the hands of international corporations, but that's exactly what the McGuinty government is going to do, and now they want to shut down debate to keep that hidden from the people of Ontario. Premier, are you going to shut down debate—

The Speaker: Thank you. The Minister of Energy?

Hon Mr Duncan: The largest privatization of electricity in the history of the province of Ontario happened under the NDP government, of which you were a key member. Do you remember the NUGs agreements? The finance minister certainly remembers the NUGs agreements because we've had to deal with them this year to get rid of the bad deals that you set up way back in 1990 to 1993.

The part of the statement the member forgot to mention with respect to time allocation is that today marks the second time this government has used time allocation. His government used it more than 25 times, on much more controversial bills. This government had this bill

for public hearings across the province. His government, when it used time allocation, didn't provide for that. This time allocation motion provides for third reading debate. When his government used time allocation, they didn't allow third reading debate. This government has used time allocation less than any government. We also said, and I've also said in the past, it's a legitimate tool to be used on occasion—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm going to ask the members to direct your questions to the Speaker, and also your responses to the Speaker. And when I stand up, I would ask the members to sit down. You have extended beyond the time that you should answer or respond to the question.

There will be a new question. The Leader of the Opposition?

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety. I want to talk about a couple of things that should have been done over the past year or so that the Liberal government has been in office.

They found time to close down the highly successful strict discipline camp, Camp Turnaround, for young offenders. They found time to close down a highly effective crime control commission. They found time to do that, yet they haven't found time, despite introducing legislation in June, to deal with the reporting of gunshot wounds and requiring hospitals to report gunshot wound victims. They haven't done one thing about that, other than table it, get the headlines for the day or the week, and not call that legislation.

Here we are, well into the fall. Minister, are you sincere about this? If you are, why isn't this legislation being called?

Interjection.

Mr Runciman: There's a Toronto member interjecting.

Toronto police say the hospitals are virtual safe havens for injured gunmen on the lam. Minister, when are you going to do something about this, rather than simply talk about it?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member for his question. I find it interesting that someone who occupied the position of Solicitor General would ask that question. When he was the Solicitor General, we had ample opportunity to address this issue. During the time that he was there, he totally ignored it. He totally, totally ignored it.

What has happened is that we have gone to the trouble, and to the industry—I'm talking about "the industry" as the hospitals. We talked to doctors. We talked to the Ontario Medical Association. We've got their co-operation. We made the announcement because

this is the right thing to do. The legislation will be coming forward. As you know, we have a very busy—

Mr Runciman: Call it.

Hon Mr Kwinter: Well, we will be calling it, and we will be doing it in the course of time.

Just so you understand, we have issues that we are addressing and we've done—let me give you an example. Yesterday we announced option 4. On October 1, 1998, you condemned it. That was six years ago. You were there for five years and you did nothing—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Supplementary?

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Mr Runciman: That's just a great deal more bull roar from the government benches.

Another issue that the minister and his Liberal colleagues have failed to deal with—and an issue I raised last spring—is the need for an inquest into the murder of 15-year-old René Charlebois in Mississauga. You were noncommittal. You danced around that, as you frequently do on these controversial issues. This is serious. We had a sexual predator in the Mississauga community who was responsible for the deaths of three young men. You are now required to have an inquest into the death of Mr Moore, who died in custody.

Minister, will you ensure that the inquest into Moore's death is expanded to look into the circumstances surrounding Moore's presence in the community, why the public wasn't notified of his presence and why he was able to live near a school and provide babysitting services? Those are important, critical issues that have to be addressed. You have a responsibility to do it. Will you make sure it happens?

Hon Mr Kwinter: This member constantly confounds me. He was the Solicitor General of Ontario. He knows that the Solicitor General does not call inquests. I do not have the authority to call an inquest; the calling of inquests is the responsibility of the coroner. It is not allowed for me to interfere with that process, and you must know that.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Premier. Students and teachers are very worried about the crumbling state of our schools, and quite frankly I think it's a province-wide disgrace.

Last night, viewers of CITY TV news—I happened to be one of them—saw the latest chilling example: A 25-pound slab of concrete fell from the wall on to the arm of a janitor and continued its fall on to a student's chair, causing a crack in the middle of it. Fortunately, no one was seriously hurt, but Ontarians don't want to wait until someone is.

During the election campaign you promised to fix our crumbling schools. You promised to implement the Rozanski recommendation of an annual amortization fund. Last May, you promised to do it again, but we're

still waiting for action. Where is the fund that you promised?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Let me say at the outset that I'm very sorry to learn of this incident, and I offer our very best wishes to all those who were or might have been affected by this.

I can tell you that we are concerned about the state of our public infrastructure but particularly concerned about the quality of the schools in which our children do their learning. Earlier, the Minister of Education made an announcement that the government will provide funding to support \$2.1 billion of renewal work in Ontario schools through a new \$200-million amortization fund. We're proud of that announcement, and there is obviously much work to be done in making sure that becomes a reality for many school boards and schools.

Mr Marchese: In my view, kids can't wait, students can't wait and schools can't wait. Viewers who watch CFTO and CITY get it. They saw the damage at Vaughan Road collegiate, and they heard the caretaker who was injured state the obvious: "If you don't upkeep the buildings ... they'll fall apart." It's very simple.

Rozanski first proposed a repair fund in 2002. It's 2004 now, and this fund is still not here. He proposed a \$200-million annual fund. In case some of you don't get it, that means every year—not when Liberals decide to be generous, but every year—otherwise, buildings fall apart.

A 25-pound slab of concrete fell from the wall and injured a caretaker. It could have been worse. Can you see now what happens when you promise change and don't deliver?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Just by way of a very brief list of some of the changes we've made in education already, we've reduced class sizes in the early grades this year for about 1,300 schools, we've hired 1,100 new teachers, we've trained 8,000 JK to grade 3 lead teachers in literacy and math, we've trained 7,500 classroom JK to grade 3 teachers this past summer on strategies for teaching literacy and math, we've boosted funding for public education by \$854 million this year, we've ensured public money is invested in public education by eliminating the private school tax credit—the list goes on and on.

If my friend is not aware of the change, then if he asks us more questions over the ensuing days and weeks and months and years, we'll be more than pleased to provide him with that information.

Also, by way of change, on May 25 of this year we announced funding to support \$2.1 billion in renewal work in Ontario schools. It has taken years of neglect, and we are finally putting forward a fund in a practical, pragmatic way that will make a real difference.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Earlier today, you and the Minister of Natural Resources announced funding to help municipalities and conservation authorities

prepare source protection plans. After the tragic events that took place in Walkerton, we know all too well how important it is to protect our water. It is, after all, our most precious resource. Water sources are our lifeline.

Commissioner O'Connor, in his report of the Walkerton inquiry, made nearly 100 recommendations on how we can better protect our water. Can you please remind this Legislature and the people of Ontario which O'Connor recommendations this announcement fulfills and can you please update us on the government's progress on implementing all of Commissioner O'Connor's recommendations?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm happy to report on the progress that our government has made on what is a very key priority, and that is protecting our drinking water from its source to tap. Today, the Ministry of the Environment will participate in the initiative to the tune of \$12.5 million.

I would refer to the Walkerton inquiry recommendation number one, that we should implement a source protection plan and that it should apply to all watersheds in the province. I'm very happy that our government is committed to ensuring we have protection of our source water. We have hired more water inspectors, we have appointed the advisory council on drinking water quality and testing standards, and we will continue to work toward implementing all 121 of O'Connor's recommendations. The announcement today will enable us to move forward on an additional 37. To date we have accomplished 51, and we will be able to add to that 37 with today's announcement.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Mrs Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. I'm extremely pleased that our government is living up to its commitment to protect our drinking water. You have explained that protecting our water is vital to our very survival. I understand that the funding provided today will help municipalities and conservation authorities safeguard one of our most precious resources: our water. What kind of work can we expect from conservation authorities on this front, Minister?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): A healthier Ontario is a key commitment of our government, and, of course, protecting our ground and surface water sources is the foundation of that commitment.

To the member, the more than \$12.5 million the minister and I made available today will allow conservation authorities and our municipalities to hire expert staff to do the technical studies required to quantify and qualify our water sources. These conservation authorities and municipalities will also use the money to conduct technical studies needed to move ahead with our source water protection plan. The information from the studies will give us a better understanding of how much ground and surface water we have available to support our communities and will also further our understanding of the interaction between ground and surface water and how quickly our groundwater gets replenished after use.

The Speaker: I would point out and let you know that the question that was put to—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The question was put to the Minister of the Environment, and then the minister has to refer the question for the supplementary. I wasn't quite sure I heard a referral to the Minister of Natural Resources. In the future—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I didn't hear, and I would like to note—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. In the future, I would like you to follow that direction.

There'll be a new question now.

1430

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, your Minister of Community Safety issued a directive to police forces across Ontario saying they are to stop all traffic safety courses, or the so-called "option 4." Many communities, including the city of Barrie in my riding, offer this option to drivers for minor offences to help steer cases away from the already overburdened court system.

We now have learned that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police disagrees with this directive and feels that your government is taking a valuable traffic safety tool away from police forces in this province.

The association has also said, "The government was not interested in working together to address the legitimate needs of those communities that chose to implement option 4," and that yesterday's announcement was made with no prior notice to the association or to impacted police services, such as the city of Barrie.

Premier, for the communities that offer this option, monies raised are invested in enhancing police resources. What plans do you have to make up for the funding, given your hasty, knee-jerk directive?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Community Safety and Corrections.

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member for the question. I should just correct some of the information that he has just given. I have met extensively with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. I met with police chiefs who are using option 4 and I've met with those who aren't. The truth is, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police have not taken a position on this, even though we had asked them to, because they were sorely divided. They wouldn't take that step.

I just want to refer back to October 1, 1998, when this issue first came to light. The then Solicitor General and the then Minister of Transportation said that they were very, very upset with this thing. In fact, the Solicitor General said, "My concern is that they are doing this because of budgetary pressures. I don't think the justice system should be utilized for that purpose."

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Who said that?

Hon Mr Kwinter: That was the member for Leeds-Grenville.

I want to tell you that the money that is being—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Mr Tascona: To the Premier: Your minister is wrong, because he knows what the city of Barrie police chief thinks about this issue. But that's not the issue. Clearly, you have no regard for the communities that used option 4 as a traffic safety tool, like the city of Barrie. According to the public accounts tabled by your government in March, you wrote off almost \$200 million in uncollected bills and fines from the Ministry of Finance and the Attorney General alone—\$200 million. Your directive ending option 4 will force more people into our overburdened court system and will cost municipalities hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost option 4 fees.

Guarantee us today that those who take these minor traffic offences to court will have their day in court and that justice will be served. Guarantee us today that these cases as a result of your cancellation of option 4 will not be written off as you've done to the tune of \$200 million just a few short months ago.

Hon Mr Kwinter: Again I'd like to correct the member's statement. The money that comes from option 4 does not go to the municipalities, so they're not losing it; it goes to the police service, which is one of the reasons why we are opposed to it. But I should tell you that without option 4, the money that has been going to the police service, and more, will be going to the municipality. All fines that are levied go to the particular municipality.

As far as not collecting that money, you should turn to the member Mr Flaherty, who was the Treasurer at the time. He was the person who didn't collect it. I should tell you that the idea of having the police, who are the beneficiaries of this money, also collect it is something that we are not prepared to condone.

LABOUR POLICY

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Premier. Premier, when you said that you planned to transform government, you didn't tell anybody that you were going to use Wal-Mart as your model.

On November 30, the Centre for Leadership, Cabinet Office, is paying senior civil servants to go on a Wal-Mart study tour to meet with Wal-Mart managers and discuss Wal-Mart's people practices. Just so we're clear, Wal-Mart's people practices include union busting, unfair labour practices and shipping off jobs to sweatshop operators. Are these the sort of people practices that you want to incorporate into your government?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I can't tell you how much I have been waiting for this opportunity, because I have in my hands a letter. It was sent to Howard Hampton by the president of OPSSU, the Ontario Public Service Staff Union, and it reads in part as follows:

“[I]t has saddened me to see that party status has not yet returned all our OPSEU NDP caucus bargaining unit brothers and sisters back to their jobs.

“Rather, the caucus has made every effort to exclude senior bargaining unit members, especially union activists, from the new human resources (HR) plan....

“The current plan that has 13 managers/excluded and only nine members in the bargaining unit is a travesty.”

I look forward to hearing more from the champions of the working people.

Mr Kormos: You're spending a huge amount of public money sending senior public servants to a Wal-Mart-driven exercise, a company that has excelled at busting unions, hiring scabs and exporting jobs.

The United Food and Commercial Workers have been working with Wal-Mart's workers in an effort to get them a union. You've demonstrated with your labour legislation that you're no friend of non-union workers in this province, or of unionized workers.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I'm going to ask the Minister of Energy to just tone it down a bit. I cannot hear the member from Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: You've demonstrated yourself to be no friend of either union or non-union workers in this province, and now you're inviting Wal-Mart's managers in to show your public sector leaders how to bust unions.

Mike Fraser, president of the United Food and Commercial Workers, points out that Wal-Mart workers on an average make less in a week than your staff will spend on their day at the Wal-Mart academy of higher learning. He wants you to pull the plug on that. Will you?

Hon Mr McGuinty: As you might suspect, there's more. This, from Robert Field, who is, by the way, president of OPSSU:

“The Ontario NDP should be a model progressive employer, sensitive to labour principles and workers' rights. However, it appears to be far from that....

“Until the caucus proposes an appropriate HR plan to the OPSEU representatives, you will be asking me in vain for donations to the party. Further, I am recommending to my membership and to the 100,000 members of OPSEU that PAC donations, and perhaps memberships, ought to be withdrawn unless fundamental change is made now in the way the NDP caucus is organized and run.”

It is signed:

“In waning solidarity,

“Robert Field,

“President, OPSSU.”

The Speaker: New question?

Interjections.

The Speaker: It seems to me that the government House leader and the Minister of Infrastructure wouldn't like to hear your question, so maybe the member for Chatham-Kent Essex—

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm sorry, a point of order.

Mr Kormos: Leah Casselman would be very concerned that the Premier has replaced her with one Robert Field as president.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. Member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In this year's budget, our government announced the allocation of \$600 million for the creation of 150 family health teams across the province.

Southwestern Ontario is facing a serious doctor shortage. Our current doctors are struggling under enormous caseloads. A high percentage of the doctors in our communities are over 55 years of age. The Chatham-Kent Health Alliance determined that one in three people leave our community for their health care. Residents without a family physician often turn to hospitals as a primary source of care.

Family health teams will improve primary care and bring badly needed doctors and health care services to our communities. Minister, can you reassure this House that our government is working to deliver on our campaign promise to bring family health teams to southwestern Ontario?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Yes, I can. I am pleased to say to the honourable member that I had a chance, as he well knows—and the member from Essex too has been working very hard on projects.

We made a commitment to build 150 family health teams until the next election, and we will. The first 45 of those will be announced this year. Our government has put \$600 million behind an investment to enhance the quality of primary care, because we know in many communities, such as the ones identified by the honourable member, the sheer absence of access to family practitioners is a very serious hardship.

Our model will bring health practitioners of a variety of sorts together so that there is a team environment working on behalf of the patients in that area. This stands out as one of the most essential elements of our government's strategy to transform health care by driving it down to communities and making family doctors available again in communities, after years and years of the absence of any commitment in that regard from two parties while in government.

1440

Mr Hoy: Minister, Chatham-Kent Essex supports our government's initiative to improve health care and to bring more care to the community level. Across my riding, family health teams are being designed for communities and by communities. Tilbury has been working diligently for the past nine years to bring a family health team to that community. As well, Leamington has started work on its own proposal. Minister, can you please tell this House what we should expect in the coming months?

Hon Mr Smitherman: First and foremost, because so many communities in Ontario have asked to be considered for community health centres—I'm pleased to say that last week we had the chance to launch 10 new community health centre satellites, three of them in southwestern Ontario, one in northeast London, one in Sarnia and one in Windsor—we're going to make those communities that desire community health centres our first priority for expansion of family health teams. They've invested a considerable amount of community effort in the work to prepare so far, and we're going to take advantage of that community effort and seek to make sure we have success in that area.

I know the honourable member has been advancing, on behalf of the communities of Tilbury, a Chatham-Kent Essex family health team working group, that there's a proposal down there that has a lot of merit and a lot of community support as well. The assurance that I give this honourable member and others in the House who have communities similarly interested is that we will be launching the first 45 of these family health teams this year. I would further say that our agreement with the Ontario Medical Association is designed to dramatically align doctors in family practice behind the commitment to deliver more resources at the community level.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): My question today is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Rural communities such as mine depend on double-hatter firefighters. Municipalities in my riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock have been clear about the important role these volunteers play in protecting community safety. The firefighters' union is acting in a self-serving manner by threatening these double-hatters. They are threatening the jobs of full-time firefighters who are simply trying to give something back to their communities.

The people who understand the importance of protecting public safety are telling you that these volunteer firefighters are needed, that the small communities don't have the resources to spend the approximately \$450,000 a year it takes to have a full-time firefighter. Double-hatter firefighters are some of my community's most dedicated volunteers. They're protecting their communities and bringing needed firefighting expertise to largely volunteer fire services. Minister, will you do the right thing and stand up today to support the right of firefighters to volunteer however they wish?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): As I've said many times before, my primary concern is public safety, and I want to make sure the people of Ontario have adequate fire coverage. Having said that, the issue is one that is being addressed and monitored by the fire marshal. We appreciate the valuable role of volunteers; we support volunteers. But we think the way to handle this is through the collective bargaining process. The fire marshal is

monitoring it. If he feels the safety of the people of Ontario is at risk, he will make recommendations to deal with it.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): The member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock deserves credit for her steadfast support of volunteer firefighters, and in turn for her understanding of this important community safety issue in rural and small-town Ontario.

On March 31 of this year, this minister made a commitment to this House that he would convene another round of mediation, and if that didn't work, he said—I quote him again—"I'm going to bring forward legislation." I know this minister to be an honourable member. I know he understands—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm going to ask the member to quiet down a bit.

Mr Arnott: I know this minister understands how vital double-hatters are in the communities they serve—communities they help make safe. I know he's aware of the headline in last Saturday's Kitchener-Waterloo Record that states, "Fire Marshal Sides with Double-Hatters." I know he's aware that Greg Ankenmann, of the Perth East Fire Department and captain of the Shakespeare station, has been forced to quit as a volunteer because of union threats. Captain Ankenmann has written to me saying that these forced resignations, obtained under duress, are "going to jeopardize emergency response in our area and across Ontario," therefore putting public safety at risk.

When will the government listen to the fire marshal, volunteers themselves, the chiefs' association, AMO, 165 municipal councils, and even the Minister of Community Safety and take action to protect—

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister?

Hon Mr Kwinter: In the past, I have commended the member for his efforts and for the diligence with which he has been pursuing this issue. The only thing I have to say to him is that when he was on the government side, he brought forward his private member's bill. Not only did it not pass, but several members of his existing caucus did not support it and most of them didn't even show up to vote. So for him to sit there and condemn me for not dealing with it when his own party would not support it—I will be taking my direction from the fire marshal. We will make sure that the safety of the citizens of Ontario is protected, and we think the collective bargaining process is the way to go.

POVERTY

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Premier. Today, the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton released a damning report on incomes and poverty in Hamilton. The stats are absolutely staggering. It shows that one fifth of all people in Hamilton are living below StatsCan's low-income cutoff. Some 80% of single moms with children under the age of six are living in poverty.

Your government is responsible for the lack of affordable housing, affordable and accessible daycare, job training and other programs that could actually address some of these conditions. You can fix this, but not with a simple little pilot project here or there or a totally inadequate increase in social assistance rates. I want to hear from you, Premier, that you are making the city of Hamilton's survival a priority. How could things get so bad on your watch?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm very happy to address this. The people of Hamilton really do deserve this government, which is there as a partner for them like no government before. Let me tell you that Mayor Di Ianni is very appreciative of the assistance that this government has brought to bear on social service issues, for example: \$19 million worth last year alone.

This government, whether it be through the increase in the minimum wage for the first time in 12 years—for the first time in many years, there is new child care money from the federal government going to child care—a significant issue for families who do live at or near the poverty line; for the first time in 12 years, increasing social assistance to the tune of \$110 million across the province. And agencies that work daily with people who struggle with poverty all saw at least a 3% increase in their base budgets to assist them in helping people who truly need help.

Ms Horwath: A \$19-million one-time hit to a budget in a crisis during a by-election is not a sustainable solution to the problem of poverty in my city. We need some serious investments and some comprehensive plans to deal with this crisis, not the tinkering that we've seen from your government.

Believe me, poverty has huge costs—we all know this—for everyone, not just those who are struggling to survive. Hungry children cannot learn. Hungry people with no housing get sick, and they get sick more often. They have more encounters with police and with the judicial system. It's obvious that people cannot survive on the kinds of supports that you are willing to provide. It's obvious that the economic and social effects of these kinds of crises in communities like mine are absolutely huge. When are you going to start taking this seriously?

Hon Ms Pupatello: On behalf of this government, let me say to the people of Hamilton that we are very positive about the city of Hamilton. We believe the city of Hamilton has a great, bright future. We will be there for the city of Hamilton as a partner, and we will especially be there for the people of Hamilton who need help, the people who are at or below the poverty line. We are coming through with programs, like our minister for infrastructure, who just announced 140 more affordable housing units for Hamilton.

Let me say what we are doing in our ministry alone to help on homelessness issues, where we are talking about

streamlining programs to save administrative costs, where we're talking about agencies that have to work diligently and will finally see the provincial government as a real partner. But most of all, let's say to the people of Hamilton: We believe in you, Hamiltonians.

1450

GREENBELT

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question, the member from Stoney Creek.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): Thank you, Mr Speaker—a part of the great city of Hamilton.

My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The government's proposed greenbelt legislation is of particular concern to my riding of Stoney Creek. Most agree on the principle of the legislation; from 10,000 feet up it's perfect, it's gorgeous. But at the grassroots there are issues in my riding and in other areas that we have to sort out.

Some of the people I've talked to want to know whether or not there's any flexibility built into where those lines are going to go and what is still truly tender fruit land. How are you going to deal with any adjustments that might have to be made to those draft lines, and is there some flexibility built into this?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I thank the member from Stoney Creek for her question.

First of all, let's get the facts straight. This government is doing what no other government has done before: We are protecting an additional one million acres of environmentally sensitive land for future generations to come. The proposed greenbelt was based on science.

As the member knows, we're holding eight meetings around the province of Ontario, around the greenbelt area currently, in order to hear from people, what their opinions are and whether or not adjustments should be made to this particular plan. We want to hear from the people, we are consulting on this plan and we're going to end up with something that we can be proud of for the next 100 years to come.

Ms Mossop: In addition, the Niagara regional agricultural task force is recommending that the government undertake a number of things to help farmers out through this transition period. What is the government's view of those recommendations and how likely is it that we are going to have them implemented?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: I'd like to refer that to the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I want to thank the member from Stoney Creek for the question. We appreciate the work that the Niagara region undertook with their task force report. It's quite interesting, when you review the Niagara region task force report and look at the good work that was undertaken by Lyle Vanclief and Bob Bedggood, that the agricultural advisory team's recommendations back to the provincial government virtually mirror the report that

was put forth by the Niagara region. For anybody who would like to see the work that Mr Vanclief and Mr Bedggood undertook, it is available on the OMAF Web site. Certainly if anybody would like a hard copy, we're prepared to send it to them.

We want to use the advice that the ag advisory team put forward to help strengthen agriculture in this province. We want to move forward with strong provincial policy statement reviews to deal with the question of surplus dwellings in those areas. We want to deal with minimum distance separations. Right now, we have two classifications of minimum distance separations. We're going to move forward and move that into one.

As well, we're going to work with the Attorney General and the Minister of Transportation to enhance the Trespass to Property Act, as well as moving forward in time with other of the recommendations—

The Speaker: Thank you.

PETITIONS

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition regarding the Leslie M. Frost Centre.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Centre has been Ontario's leading natural resources education, training and conference centre aimed at fostering an understanding of natural resource management, with a focus on ecosystems and their sustainability for future generations; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government refused to consult with municipalities and other user groups before taking this drastic action and continues to operate in a clandestine manner; and

“Whereas this move will hurt the people and economies of Muskoka and Haliburton, especially those in the local tourism industry; and

“Whereas the Frost Centre is a valuable resource for elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions, as well as a variety of other groups;

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

“That the McGuinty government reverse the decision to close the Leslie M. Frost Centre.”

I support this petition and affix my signature to it and will give it to Danika Hawthorne, the page from South River, Ontario, in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

“Whereas,

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

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

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

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

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

I send this to you by page Eric.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) expired March 31, 2000; and

“Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

“Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

“Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists, in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examination; and

“Whereas it is in the best interest of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure that the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care that they need;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process, in order to ensure that optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario.”

I am in agreement with this and I will affix my signature.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that was sent to me by the United Steelworkers of America. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario regarding support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

“Whereas,

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Speaker, I will present this to you through this wonderful page, Ellen.

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PIT BULLS

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I’ve got a petition sent to me by the Golden Horseshoe American Pit Bull Terrier Club—the mailing address is in Grimsby, Ontario—with almost 2,000 signatures.

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed, and

“Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

“The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training, and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation that is breed specific, and instead implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds.”

In support, I affix my signature.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition sent to me by thousands of patients who are concerned about this government’s cut to chiropractic care. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with the petitioners and sign this as well.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I rise a second time, because I keep getting petitions regarding the Ministry of the Environment. It’s addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since I strongly agree, I certainly want to sign my name to this petition.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

“Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to ‘phase out’ these double-hatter firefighters; and

“Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

“Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

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

“That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott’s Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time.”

It’s signed by a number of my constituents in the Woolwich Township area, and, of course, as you’d expect, I’ve affixed my signature to it as well.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition sent to me by about 70 constituents from Sudbury and Nickel Belt. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently approved a request by the Sudbury Regional Hospital to expand the geographic area where hospital patients who need long-term care can now be placed;

“Whereas this situation has occurred because there are no long-term-care beds available in the Sudbury region for these patients;

“Whereas patients now face discharge and placement in long-term facilities far from home, in ... Espanola and Manitoulin Island;

“Whereas the redevelopment project at Pioneer Manor has freed up space which could be converted into 30 temporary long-term-care beds;

“Whereas this provides a positive solution to our bed crisis;

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

“We demand the McGuinty Liberal government fund these 30 temporary long-term-care beds so that no patient is sent far from home for long-term care.”

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

IMMIGRANTS’ SKILLS

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding access to trades and professions in Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario’s professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce.”

I am very pleased, Speaker, to sign this petition and I send it to you by page Aisha.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

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

“Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters

and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

“Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to ‘phase out’ these double-hatter firefighters; and

“Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

“Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott”—my colleague—“has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

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

“That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott’s Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time.”

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition with, on this round, 150 signatures. I delivered the first 7,011 on April 5. It’s sent to me by Cynthia Boufford of London, whose autistic child, Jordan, was cut off from IBI treatment under this Liberal government.

It reads as follows:

“I support the resolution to ensure all people with autism receive appropriate services for their disability through the health care system.

“Autism is a medical condition and, as such, these citizens of Ontario should not be deprived of medically necessary treatment based on their age or the severity of their autism.

“Waiting lists for intensive behavioural intervention providing less than the optimum number of hours of treatment, penalizing families for advocating and discharging children just because they turn six are human rights violations and are, quite frankly, just morally wrong.

“Funding autism treatment through the health care system would ensure that service providers follow clearly established medical ethics and regulations.

“Discharges from the intensive behavioural program are occurring daily as children turn six years old. These children may regress, and then the money invested in their therapy programs will have been wasted.

“Act now, because this is an emergency for these families and their children.

“Premier McGuinty, please take immediate action to ensure not one more child or adult with autism is deprived of medically necessary treatment which will enable them to reach their full potential.

“As a citizen of Ontario, I will not allow this injustice to continue.”

As I said, I now have 150 of the next 5,000 to come. I agree with the petitioners and I’ve affixed my signature to this.

1510

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREENBELT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Just by way of explanation, the last speakers were the members from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and London-Fanshawe. The member for London-Fanshawe is here today, so we will have a round of questions and comments, beginning with the member for Erie-Lincoln.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you for the explanation. I was very curious during question period today about the Minister of Municipal Affairs’ response, where he seems to now be getting it, that there are problems with the greenbelt map.

Another curious answer the minister had was that he said it was based on science. Some of us wonder about what kind of science is underlying the greenbelt map as it stands. We think maybe he meant political science. Members of the opposition are certainly going to look closely to see if these boundaries were based on good science—physiographic features, for example—or if they were based on the political concerns of government members.

A recent article: “Erin Fighting Mad over Suddenly Being Placed in Green Belt: Puslinch Councillors Adopt a Wait-and-see Attitude for Now.” Mayor Rod Finnie of Erin said in this article that he was hopping mad that they were not included in the initial greenbelt map, and that they woke up one day and found out that they now were included. His biggest concern is that the town “was not informed from the start. If we had been, we would have spent” more “time on it.”

A similar article recently: “Greenbelt Delivers Blow to Georgina,” causing a loss of jobs in the Georgina area. Last night in Pelham, at a town hall meeting with a great

crowd out—Pelham wakes up one morning and finds that the greenbelt boundary had shifted considerably. You should have heard last night—my staff member reported back the kind of angst, the vitriol directed at Dalton McGuinty and his lack of support for farmers in the Niagara Peninsula and across the province of Ontario, and the surprise.

We're going to look very closely to find out exactly what science is behind the greenbelt mapping. We fear that it's more political science than anything else.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I was here last night for the debate, and I'm just going to say again that there's much in this bill that we support and, quite frankly, are going to vote for. But there are a number of issues that the government is failing to put on the table when it comes to the whole greenbelt issue.

For example, how are we going to deal with intercity travel? How are we going to deal with urban travel within the greenbelt area? It's one thing for the government to say, "We're going to create a greenbelt in this area in order to be able to protect sensitive lands," but it's quite another thing if you don't put in place the policies and the dollars necessary to develop the type of transportation policy that you need to protect the greenbelt.

You know the old saying when it comes to the construction of freeways and highways: build it, and they will come. The point I make here is that we have been relying more and more on highways and superhighways in that area for a long time. If we want to protect the greenbelt area, we're going to have to seriously take a look at putting some dollars into supporting public infrastructure such as rail, in order to be able to move people on what we now call the GO system and possibly expand it across the GTA and throughout the entire greenbelt, in order to allow a lessening of the need for highways. The problem is, if you don't do something, we're just going to have to build more highways, and the more highways you build, the more pollution goes up in the atmosphere and the more encroachment there is on greenbelt lands.

The other issue, and we talked about this very quickly yesterday, was the issue of what happens in agriculture. It's one thing for us to say as legislators that we want to protect the greenbelt and we're going to protect those farms within the greenbelt. But if you really want to protect farms, give the farmers the kind of support they need. We know the industry is very hard-pressed. Take a look at the BSE issue; take a look at everything coming at the same time. It's almost like the perfect storm when it comes to the agricultural industry.

The governments, both provincial and federal, have to do more in order to be able to support the agricultural industry, to help them deal with the difficulties that they're going through. The greenbelt in itself is not going to protect the family farm. It's going to take far more than that to actually do the protection.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): The proposed greenbelt plan is intended to strike a balance between environmentally sensitive lands, agriculture and the need for growth. I just heard about the

issue of scientific analysis. The greenbelt is a plan that takes in technical analysis and scientific analysis. What we're trying to do is identify the areas that are best suited for the purposes we intend. As I said, there are three particular areas we're trying to deal with in this. We're talking about natural areas, agricultural systems and settlement areas. All those have to be taken into account.

You mentioned earlier that the minister was talking about the boundaries. We're in the process right now of doing consultations. As he said, we've done eight of them. At this point, if boundaries were frozen, then really, what would be the point of doing consultations? That is exactly why we're doing this. We want to hear from people as to how they feel about the boundaries we've put in place, the kinds of plans that the greenbelt is going to be. Last night there were 400 people who showed up in Burlington to talk about this very issue. We want to take all that into consideration. It's not a matter of it already being set in stone. This is what the consultation process is all about, and that's what we're trying to do.

You talked about farmers. Certainly I'm concerned about farmers. But the issue of viability is not just an issue of viability within the greenbelt; it's an issue throughout the entire province. We have issues across all of Ontario.

We talked about the whole issue of viability and land use. I just read a report from the region of Niagara in which they asked about the impact of the greenbelt on the Niagara region. Agri Choice, which is a real estate firm, came forward and said there would be no impact on the land values for farmers. So we know at this point that that, at least, is solid.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and make a few comments on the comments that were made last night when we finished debate. I'd like to go back a little bit to my colleague for Erie-Lincoln, who is our lead on this bill and who has done a tremendous amount of work dealing with the stakeholders and showing leadership. Obviously, from the government side all we've seen is a fancy announcement with some fancy lines drawn around what may now be political areas, if I'm gathering what my colleague for Erie-Lincoln is telling me.

I'd like to reflect on the comments he made about his concerns for the agricultural community and tie it into his friend from Owen Sound, Mr Murdoch, who gave a passionate speech last night on his interest in the agricultural community and how they've been let down by this government over and over again. Today I heard the Minister of Agriculture referring to a question in Stoney Creek. There are so many questions the Minister of Agriculture could be listening to. I can go over and over these questions. Basically, what we're hearing from agriculture stakeholders is that we don't have a Minister of Agriculture. Everyone's turning on him. He's not making a lot of people very happy.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): That's not true, Garfield, and you know it.

Mr Dunlop: I can hear some heckling going on already. I deal with a lot of agriculture stakeholders and I haven't heard anyone speak friendly about this guy. Look forward to a cabinet shuffle, because this bird's on his way out.

We're serious. This is a very serious concern. We, in the opposition party, are concerned about the agriculture community. It makes up the bulk of rural Ontario. Hundreds of thousands of jobs and millions of dollars, and we don't have any support from this government on it. They're just laughing in the face of the agriculture stakeholders. That's a disgrace, and so is this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for London-Fanshawe has two minutes to reply.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'd like to thank all the members who spoke, from Erie-Lincoln, Timmins-James Bay, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Simcoe North.

First, in question period we listened to a question to the minister who is in charge of this portfolio. He answered and spoke clearly about open consultation, asking the people, holding meetings across the province, across certain areas, who are going to be affected by the greenbelt, and also listening to their concerns. Of course, it's going to take quite a bit of time, but all the members of this House agreed that this greenbelt initiative is something that has never happened before. I believe all members of this House are going to vote in support, I hope, because I believe it's a good thing for Ontario.

1520

Also, I was listening to the concern of the member for Timmins-James Bay, who was talking about investment in transportation. I want to just remind him—I was looking at my paper here—of some good things about transportation. Our government invested \$90 million to assist the TTC, in addition to the \$1-billion initiative from the federal government. This initiative is very good, I believe. Also, we're investing to improve public transit. We have committed \$600 million to Ottawa for rapid transit expansion programs. So I believe it's working, as a government, to ensure good public transit efficiency in this province in order to support all the people who commute. Then we don't have to eat the farmland and we have to support the farmers. This is what it's all about, to my colleague from Timmins-James Bay.

Also, I believe the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex phrased the whole thing very well when she said that our government initiative is not just to protect certain areas for farmland but for all farmers across the province. I would applaud the Minister of Agriculture, who's working hard on behalf of all the farmers in this province to make sure that their voice is being heard, not just in this place but everywhere in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): As we debate Bill 135 and deliberate on the science of greenbelt approaches, or, as the member for Erie-Lincoln has just put it in the box, of the political science of greenbelt issues, I'd like to review some issues that are of

interest to landowners and farmers in my riding in Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. We are not part of the greenbelt area. However, the northern part of our riding will be, and is now, receiving the migration of leap frogs who will jump out of this green line on the map of Ontario to find more affordable housing to the south. I'm thinking mainly of the Caledonia area, south of Hamilton.

Over the past number of months this government has picked up on a direction, an initiative, of both the Harris and Eves teams, where we left off in addressing a growing problem across so much of southern Ontario, not just the GTA and the Golden Horseshoe, a trend we've seen for decades and decades: the threatened gobbling up of massive tracts of farmland, while at the same time much of our cities and city cores go to seed. While the PC government brought in Ontario's first-ever brownfield legislation to encourage redevelopment of aging buildings and to bolster reinvestment in our city cores, more must be done to ensure that growth that continues to push into rural Ontario is held in check.

I think of the Smart Growth initiative of the former PC government, and to give credit as well to this particular bill, Bill 135, the Greenbelt Act, 2004—not to be confused with Bill 27, the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003. The Smart Growth initiative, coupled in part with the brownfield legislation brought in by the previous government and this proposal, have considerable merit to battle urban sprawl. As urban areas continue to reach into so much of rural Ontario, instant communities continue to spring up on not only vital farmland but forested areas, on marshland, on so much of Ontario that is still viable with respect to wildlife habitats, for example. Regrettably, vast sections are being paved over, are being contaminated to allow for, again, the larger commutes encouraged by this expanded sprawl. What's worrisome is that millions of new people are projected to arrive in the GTA and the Golden Horseshoe area over the next few decades.

As I've mentioned, the Greenbelt Act is one way this government is attempting to tackle the spreading problem. The legislation did create a greenbelt study area—Oak Ridges; Niagara, including the tender fruit lands—and established a moratorium temporarily, and I stress that, preventing new urban usage. The goals of the greenbelt legislation seem laudable; however, as we've been hearing in the hours of debate, there are growing concerns that while preventing sprawl into rural areas, this legislation freezes farmers out of the planning decisions on their own land. And that goes for other private landowners in the catchment area.

Farmers are already in a situation where they see their present-day opportunities being threatened on the economic front, whether it's the ever-increasing cost of energy, obviously the BSE crisis with our cattlemen, uncertain weather that leads to poor growing conditions, and, as someone who derives part of my income from soybeans—soybeans today are half the price they were last spring; grain corn is now half the price that it was last spring. And now, this government in effect is

offering a proposal to our farmers to freeze their assets without compensation. What kind of an opportunity is that for farm families in Ontario?

The issue in many quarters of the agricultural community is the perception of a lack of adequate government support and, worse yet, the perception with many that the direction of this legislation is raising the spectre of government intrusion on their land.

If the government decides to tie the hands of farmers through this legislation, surely there must be compensation. For that reason, I join with the OFA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, requesting compensation for any loss of farmers' equity and demanding a clear statement from this government that the long-term viability of farm operations is assured—we know there's no guarantee, certainly, in the business of farming, but that there's an assurance—that future generations would be left with the confidence to continue to stick with it.

It's in this context that I wish to highlight a program. We were discussing this just now. It's an ambitious program. It's a farmer-driven program. It's a conservation program. There's a pilot project being launched in Norfolk county in my riding. The pilot project is essentially to test the waters with respect to a program. The short term is ALUS, which stands for alternate land use services. It's a program that has been jump-started really by our local Norfolk Federation of Agriculture and also our Norfolk Land Stewardship Council and that not only protects but enhances natural areas and further encourages an environmental partnership between farmers and people in town. It's a partnership that includes all stakeholders: government, of course, is key; landowners, as I mentioned—in this case, farmers; and it is a partnership fully tied in with conservationists.

In contrast, while in this greenbelt legislation, from what I see, the primary focus is to freeze development, the ALUS program goes many steps further with respect to encouraging the planting of trees, for example. I'm not sure if this legislation will result in any trees being planted. The ALUS program is designed to enhance wildlife habitat, to encourage a farmer—and I've done it myself. When you have a dry spring, you're working up ground, some cattails have come up in one corner of the field, which is a natural occurrence. Invariably, you make that decision and you disc them under. That gives you an extra bit of area to put in beans or corn. I will admit that, myself and our family, over the years, as we transferred from livestock to cash crop, took out an awful lot of fencerows on many, many acres. You take out a fence-row, you get another eight or 16 rows of corn.

1530

Coupled with that, and with respect to our land, over the years we've also had the opportunity to put probably 150 acres back into trees as well to try and compensate for our approach to using the land that we have been blessed to own for a number of years. Again, not only protecting what we already have but enhancing what could be very simply boils down to planting trees, setting aside land, allowing those cattails to come up, setting

aside land for grassland. There's tremendous potential for a continued expansion of prairie grass habitat on the Norfolk sand plain to the south of here. Again, how can this be done? All of this lies on the principle of the public paying for environmental benefits that they, as society at large, would derive from private farmland. So we have a present government considering the Greenbelt Act as a remedy for urban sprawl.

I wish to introduce into the mix—and I have mentioned this ALUS program before, this ambitious, farmer-driven program. It came out of Manitoba originally. It's something to consider as some of these ideas take shape, not only in this designated greenbelt area but elsewhere in Ontario, elsewhere in Canada. Again, instead of simply freezing development without compensation, as the Greenbelt Act proposes, the ALUS program encourages the planting of trees, setting aside prairie grassland, marshland, wildlife habitat—all of those good things—all the while with public money paying for the environmental benefits that society at large would accrue.

Good stewardship of the environment is not only a personal responsibility. Again, this is one of the principles behind the ALUS program. It's not only a personal responsibility, it is a public value. Don't put all of this on the shoulders of the private landowner or the farmer. It's a value—this is how it would work—based on payments to farmers for rendering ecological services that provide environmental benefit to society. Again, some options: property tax credits or conservation agreements. There have been some precedents in the past.

By paying for ecological services, a market develops. A market is created for public resources—in this case, land. We've seen there's a market, certainly, that can be developed—and has been developed for air emission trading, for example—a market for society in the province of Ontario to continue to develop and to go beyond continually destroying wildlife habitat, for example.

At present, no markets exist, obviously, for public resources on private lands. Farmers are essentially forced to maximize production, as I indicated. When push comes to shove, you do take out that fencerow, if you're a cash-cropper. You do work up that marshland. If it's dry enough, it gives you, again, that additional acreage to grow your crop. Again, farmers are forced to maximize production—albeit, on occasion, through government-subsidized initiatives—from private resources, not only corn and soybeans—I'm perhaps suggesting my bias with what we're into now—but other crops and livestock.

The ALUS concept, as I mentioned, came out of Manitoba, the Keystone Agricultural Producers—I understand that would essentially be the counterpart of our Ontario Federation of Agriculture—in partnership with a group, the Delta Waterfowl Foundation—I think the core group would be duck hunters.

These kinds of farmer-friendly conservation programs and the pilot project that is being launched in Norfolk county are being considered not only in Manitoba but also here in Ontario, as I mentioned. I know one of the forums on this farmer conservation program was attended

by the Minister of Agriculture for Prince Edward Island. Both Saskatchewan and Alberta expressed interest as well.

Again, the pilot project is getting a lot of local support: 39 different organizations have put their logo on the proposal, 50 are now participating in the development, and 10 organizations have shelled out well over \$39,000 for a benchmark survey.

The MNR—I'm happy to see this—is continuing to fund the pilot project at a level of about \$20,000 a year. This was something initiated in 2003 by the previous government.

Also through the Canada-Ontario agreement, a further \$35,000 has been committed over the next three years for what is essentially a habitat restoration project, something that will result in trees actually being planted, prairie grass actually being planted where needed and marshland actually being developed. In other words, we would have the real evidence of a greenbelt. It's a very proactive, ambitious and action-oriented program, in contrast to some of the more passive aspects of this greenbelt concept, which relies on freezing assets and, I assume, just hoping the trees come up on their own without anybody putting a seedling in the ground.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this in the Legislature. I do wish to continue to focus on some of the advantages of this program. I think what's most important, and I hear this in many of these greenbelt legislation meetings that are being held, is that farmers have the feeling they are being presented with a *fait accompli*. They're being told what to do. They seem to be—including the OFA, in part—in a reactive mode. This program repositions the farmer's role with respect to the environment from reactive to proactive. It gives the farmer more control with respect to the ever-growing environmental agenda.

ALUS is seen as reducing government reliance and public reliance on regulations and legislation such as this, as well as converting environmental risk into a business opportunity for farmers. Developing a predictable revenue stream for our farmers, again, has a direct benefit for not only rural communities but urban communities that have developed in our rural areas.

I call on this government to look beyond the GTA, to look beyond the Golden Horseshoe, as the previous government has done with Ontario's Living Legacy, with the development of the Bruce Trail, going way back, the Niagara Escarpment concept—to go beyond. Take a look at a very interesting proposal, the NOAH project, which takes us beyond the GTA and beyond the Golden Horseshoe to the newly created Kawartha Highlands Signature Site, and swings around to the east and south to the Adirondacks.

Just to wrap up, we ask this government to think beyond this designated green swatch on the map and to take a serious look at some of the perhaps unanticipated consequences. I think of leapfrogging, which is inherent in this kind of development freezing. Take a look at a much broader, province-wide conservation program, and

at a much broader, province-wide compensation program that will not only continue to protect but will enhance Ontario's natural areas, and will ensure we leave a legacy for our grandchildren and the next seven generations after that.

1540

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to rise and make some comments on the debate by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. I think the member gave some really specific and clear examples of where the legislation is going to do some positive things, as well as of where he thinks there needs to be some improvement. I similarly have comments that will be in the same vein.

As you've heard already through this debate thus far, it has been very clear that many members of this Legislature are supportive, overall, of the direction Bill 135 takes. However, depending on one's own experiences and one's own perspectives, there are some things that many people believe can be added and/or adjusted to increase the value of this legislation.

A little later on this evening I will be discussing some of those issues particular to the city of Hamilton, from where I hail. Like so many other wonderful communities in this province, the city of Hamilton has wonderful, natural areas that are right on its doorstep, like the Bruce Trail, the Niagara Escarpment and so many other wonderful assets that really need to be protected over time.

With this legislation, we can start moving in that general direction. There are still some major concerns around some areas of the tender fruit belt, particularly, and some concerns about increased quarrying, aggregate extraction, that might be happening in our community in particular, as well as a really needed look at what's happening in the farming industry overall and how we not only outline where farmlands will be, but how we continue to make them productive over time for our farmers and communities.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 135. I have to say that of all the issues I've dealt with in my 18 years on local council in the town of Oakville and the region of Halton, no issue has touched the nerve of the community the way planning issues have. In the past decade, the issue of green space preservation has become one that is first and foremost in the minds of people in my community.

I had the privilege of chairing a meeting on the greenbelt in Oakville last week. It was very well attended. I don't know the exact number, but I think there were close to 400 people there. It was important that I was able to not only chair a meeting on green space preservation and the greenbelt strategy, but previous to that we had been able to make a tremendous announcement in my community on a \$1-billion investment by Ford of Canada.

So I think we're trying to prove to people that these two issues are not mutually exclusive, that you can have economic growth and population growth, and that you

can do it in an environmentally responsible way. That's what I think is at the heart of the greenbelt issue.

We know that four million more people are going to move to the greater Toronto area within the next period of time. There's no secret to that. It's a wonderful place to live. People are attracted to this community. People are attracted to this area from around the world and around the country.

What I heard the other night was that environmentalists simply love the greenbelt strategy. It's something they want to see pass. Ordinary people love this strategy. I get stopped on the streets now and I get complimented for this strategy that we're proposing be adopted by the government.

There are some agricultural concerns that need to be addressed. Those seem to me to be issues of farm viability, and we need to address them as a government in some way. But what most people are saying to me is that finally we have a Premier who is able to treat the issue of green space preservation and a greenbelt strategy with the importance and the priority it deserves in an economic area such as the GTA.

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I'm pleased to speak today in response to my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, who is a farmer and who, I think, eloquently put in real terms what it does mean to farmers.

Will trees be planted? He mentioned an alternative pilot project, ALUS, which is farmer-driven. I think that sounds like a great program. We should have more farmer-driven programs.

Have all the farmers been able to understand what's going to happen with the greenbelt area? I don't think so. We're having public hearings as we speak. This legislation is being pushed through. Have we been able to think of what the full ramifications are? Farmers are good stewards of the land. We should let them say their piece.

What are the boundaries going to be? Are the boundaries going to change? Mr Sorbara spoke to a municipality, and he said, "Well, some of the boundaries might change by the time the plan becomes legislation. The devil is in the details. We're going to have it. The question is where the line is drawn." Well, if the devil is in the details, then that's the right spot. We should all be concerned.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said today that it's based on science. What science? Is it political science, or is it agricultural science?

Part of the greenbelt comes into my area of Brock township. They had gone to all the meetings, had eloquently stated their case of why Brock township should be excluded. They were not listened to at all. Are they going to have another chance? They only have one meeting to appear before. How are they going to have more growth? It's predominantly residential revenues that they get their income from, not commercial. They had development plans existing. What is going to happen to them? Will they be given a chance? Will they be able to expand their boundaries?

I hope there are going to be changes in the greenbelt legislation, and I look forward to further debate.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm delighted to spend a couple of minutes to talk about the greenbelt. I think I'll have an opportunity later on in the debate to join in with a little more time.

This is a ground-breaking initiative, and it definitely is precedent-setting. I've had the opportunity to sit in on a number of the consultations so far, and I've got to tell you, this is getting very good reception from people right across the Golden Horseshoe, whether it be environmentalists or others. I think the average person in our communities really appreciates what we're doing here and recognizes how important it is that we move on with creating this greenbelt across the Golden Horseshoe.

It will help us with our gridlock problem. That's on the mind of each and every one of our residents in the greater Golden Horseshoe. That helps residents and it helps us in terms of economics, making sure we can ship our goods in and out of Toronto and the regions around Toronto.

It helps us in preserving essential environmental lands. We need to preserve these lands. Without this kind of initiative, we can't guarantee that we'll be able to do that.

It helps us in ensuring the quality of our water table. We all know how important that is to the sustainability of our quality of life in the Golden Horseshoe area. It helps us in terms of maintaining and preserving our air quality, something that a lot of people have concerns about.

It helps us as well in terms of preserving essential agricultural lands. We need to have a food supply that's located in fairly close proximity to where that supply is going to be marketed, to where the demand is located.

It's important in terms of curbing urban sprawl. It just doesn't make sense to be building infrastructure all over the province. It makes more sense to try to encourage development where that infrastructure is.

I'll be speaking further to this later on, but I appreciate the opportunity to spend a couple of minutes now.

1550

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has two minutes to reply.

Mr Barrett: I appreciate the comments from the members from Hamilton East and Oakville. A number of years ago, I worked on the Bruce Trail overlooking your areas, right up on the escarpment. I think the city of Hamilton probably has one of the most beautiful geographic locations of any city anywhere. I compare it to Vancouver. There are some problems—too many people. I made mention of the leapfroggers coming south to Caledonia, and that has certainly some short-term economic advantages in our area, but as with Brantford, we wish to see a continued aggressive program of brown-field redevelopment in your beautiful cities.

The member for Oakville mentioned population growth. That's the bottom line. We have too many people. There's an estimate that by the year 2021 the GTA will have a population of six million people. I hate to be the bearer of bad tidings, but it doesn't matter how

many greenbelt plans and pieces of legislation come in now or in the future, and we look at some of the initiatives in the past, this greenbelt area, given the present trend, no matter what we do, no matter what every government does, is going to be covered with subdivisions regardless. It will be covered with people.

I appreciate the comments of the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, a riding in a beautiful, beautiful part of Ontario, the Haliburton Highlands. They kept the farmers out; they didn't keep the loggers out. Again, as with so much of southern Ontario, we are one gigantic clear-cut. What beauty and open space that certainly remains in that particular riding, in my view, is in direct relationship to the sparse population.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Ms Horwath: It's certainly my pleasure to enter into the debate on Bill 135, the Greenbelt Act. I have to say that this legislation is really something that has been welcomed by many across the province. I know it has taken some great scrutiny by people in my community, and I'll be making some comments later on in my remarks about what some of the people in Hamilton have been saying about this particular piece of legislation. But I think it's clear—and it has been said many times during this debate—that overall there's a general sense of support for something to be happening in regard to protection of green space in the province. It's certainly something that has taken place in many other places, both across Canada and in other jurisdictions across the world, so it's time that we start putting our minds to this type of initiative.

What I have to say is that the legislation is an excellent first start, but really there are some things that need to be done, or that can possibly be done, to tweak it and improve it a bit. I hope that the opportunity we're taking as the third party, and certainly members of the opposition, some of the comments we're making, some of the recommendations we're making, both in debate at second reading but also in committee, are really taken to heart by the government. This is one of those bills that, when you're looking at a general overall positive response from people, province-wide and people sitting on both sides of this chamber, then it's incumbent upon the government to take seriously the really good work that people have been doing, to try to make some of those improvements and try to ensure that everybody is doing what's seen to be and what is a productive, positive critique for the purpose of bettering the legislation. I think that's what I'm hearing myself in this debate. I have to tell you, I'm actually quite enjoying this discussion thus far, what I've been able to hear personally and what I've seen in Hansards, because I think it's what is positive about government. It's something that we can actually hold our hats on collectively as productive action toward a positive end that we can all, hopefully, end up supporting when the final day comes for the final vote on this particular bill.

Having said that, what I'd like to do over the next couple of minutes is just highlight some of the areas

where I believe, and where we as a caucus believe, there can be some of that tweaking, where some of the details could be strengthened and/or adjusted to further make this bill effective and further make this legislation protect the greenbelt, areas of environmental sensitivity and areas of farming in this province.

First and foremost there's some concern that with the drawing of the greenbelt itself, it is going lead to all-out, massive pressure to have that 143,000 hectares of land developed, and developed quickly. That's a real concern and a real worry. I think anything that appears to be or seems to be or can be interpreted as signalling a broad and widespread race to urban sprawl, or can be seen to be encouraging a quick, massive urban sprawl type of behaviour, is not actually productive in a proper planning sense of the word "productivity." You really have to be careful about sending the wrong signal.

The greenbelt itself as well, as was mentioned by the previous debater on this, is something that—and again, I'll speak specifically to my community, because this has come up in my community. It's based on the issue of protection of farmland overall; again, something that we not only must ensure for Ontario but must do in a way that is going to identify specifically and in detail which lands are in fact productive, farmable lands and which lands are not. My understanding, certainly in the city of Hamilton, is that there are some areas that have been identified as farmland that the farmers are saying is simply not farmland, not really productive in terms of the growing of crops. However, there are other pieces that are not protected by the greenbelt that actually need to be.

Again, some of my previous colleagues on city council have spoken to me on this as recently as a meeting—Mr McMeekin and Ms Marsales were with me not too long ago at the board of education. One of our city councillors at that time indicated to me that there were some specific pieces of land that they felt needed to be added into the greenbelt to be protected. They'll probably both know Councillor David Mitchell, who represents an area on the Glanbrook portion of the city. I would urge them to talk to Mr Mitchell and to then bring his concerns to their minister in regard to his particular concern about the areas that should be added in, which are extremely fertile and positive farmland, that currently are not covered by the greenbelt. Again, it's this local knowledge of what's happening on the ground—no pun intended—that really needs to be added in when we're tweaking the boundary, to make sure we don't miss out on the protection of some really significant farmland in Ontario.

One of the other concerns, overall, that have been raised by other people in this debate—I know that our environment critic, in her lead, raised it as well—is the issue of the concern that aggregate extraction will continue unabated, that expansion of existing operations will be approved without a problem, that this legislation doesn't address the existing aggregate extraction industries, in terms of trying to put some parameters on the expansion, as well as, quite frankly, new aggregate extraction operations being developed within the pro-

tected greenbelt area or within at least greenfield areas within the greenbelt. We have to ask why that was left out, and we have to start to wonder whether that's one of those places where we can get some further oversights and further review to see if there isn't something that can be done to address the fear—or maybe not the fear; maybe that's the wrong word—but the concern that the aggregate operations are not going to be appropriately maintained in the time frame of this legislation.

1600

There's also some concern about what happens to small settlement areas within the greenbelt plan—quite frankly, having frozen boundaries is one thing, but making sure that those communities are given the supports they need to provide infill, to intensify their communities, to provide all of the infrastructure that's required in intensification programs.

I can tell you, as someone who represents an urban area that has gone through a history of intensification efforts and is now similarly looking, in the city of Hamilton, at how we are going to grow over the future: We're doing a program right now called GRIDS, which is the Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy, for the city of Hamilton. It includes all kinds of planning documents, all kinds of studies, all kinds of analyses about future growth and future needs and all those kinds of things. One of the pieces that has come up in that process that, in fact, has come up many times in the city of Hamilton's planning processes around urban boundary expansions and those kinds of things, is the idea of intensification.

If you look at the city and you look at some of the areas that are already serviced—that already have transportation, that already have soft infrastructure like schools and churches and libraries and places like that, that already have all of the things you need to have communities that are sustainable and that are well-related to their environment and utilizing their environment to the maximum—you'll see that there are several parcels of land, there are several areas, there are huge swaths of the city of Hamilton, that have all these assets, and yet there is no development on them. They're either vacant parking lots, or in some cases they are brownfield sites, or they are warehousing or industrial-commercial—all kinds of different configurations of parcels of land that have everything they need to be productively reused in terms of intensification, yet they are not being reused.

A big part of the problem to that reuse or that new use of these old lands that already have all the services there is that there's been a lack of real attention by governments on how we fix the problems. Let's identify and fix the problems that we've identified in regard to barriers to infill development. I know we all talk about infill development and how very wonderful it is, but I really don't think that we've found enough tools, or that we've provided enough tools, or that we've done enough work to identify the tools that are necessary to really have successful infill development and infill projects, and that's for a city of the size of Hamilton.

Also, I think it relates very clearly to some of the smaller communities whose boundaries will be made permanent and made restricted by the legislation. Again, I don't necessarily think that's a bad thing, but what I think we need to do is make sure that, then, we give these places the tools to ensure that the infrastructure they need to grow in a sustainable and progressive environmental way are provided.

I think there is some issue or some concern around the fact that there's a lack of public accountability overall. It seems to me—and I'm going to find the specific note on that issue—that there's a need to have an advisory council established by the Greenbelt Act. What the act needs to state is that the government shall establish the Greenbelt Advisory Council—not “may” establish, but “shall” establish. That council needs to be mandated to develop and submit annual reports, because you know what? We really don't know how we're doing when we put new pieces of legislation in place. We won't know how well they're accomplishing the goals that they've set out to accomplish if we're not, in fact, monitoring how well we're doing. This is something that's absolutely necessary; not only the progress, but also any problems that might come up. As has been debated and discussed many times in this debate, it's legislation that we overall support. We're hoping, on this side, that the government will see fit to provide some amendments and some changes. However, if at the end of the day we do end up with legislation, which we will, we need to make sure we have the measurement tools in place: not only what they look like, but what they're going to measure, and then who's going to be monitoring to make sure these indices are reviewed and that proper amendments and proper problem-solving are done as the years go by with this particular legislation.

I'm running out of time already; I'm surprised how fast this is going by.

You might know that some work has been done in previous years in terms of a greenbelt, in terms of the protection of lands in areas surrounding Hamilton, particularly around the Niagara tender fruit belt. In the 1990s, in fact, the NDP government at the time introduced the Niagara tender fruits program, and it protected specialty croplands in the Niagara region. Mr Hudak's not here, but I'm sure he would agree that there are significant amounts of land that provide—well, several of you were at the reception for the Ontario wine growers, so you'll know how important the tender fruit belt is, and not only for wine.

Ms Mossop will know that the Peach Festival that happens in her riding every year is an important cultural festival. It celebrates the farming community, the tender fruit community and the fact that people still make a living off the land, and provides opportunities to celebrate the crops they grow and the many things that can happen with those crops. At the Peach Festival, you get everything from peach sundaes to peach jam and those kinds of things. Again, it's not only the products themselves, the fruits themselves, but the entire culture of a

community that we have to make sure we're protecting and preserving, no pun intended—preserving, jam—in the province of Ontario and in areas like the tender fruit belt in the city of Hamilton.

I asked specifically for some comments from people in my community about this legislation, because I know there have been some public meetings, which we appreciated very much, not only on this legislation but on some other legislation around the Planning Act. People who represent anywhere near Hamilton know that there are many vocal activists on environmental issues and planning issues, and there is a lot of dire concern in our community about how the government is going to move forward on many of these initiatives.

One of the things that people are really concerned about in the city of Hamilton—Mr Jackson, who is from the city of Burlington, is not here, but his city has concerns too. A specific group of people have major concerns around the greenbelt legislation and how we deal with the mid-peninsula highway, if and when it comes. Again, it speaks to the first point I made around whether we'll see a vast rush of urban sprawl out to the edges.

Certainly, if and when that mid-peninsula highway is built, it'll be built on the edges of the greenbelt, as is my understanding in looking at the maps. Many of the people from our environmental communities are concerned that urban sprawl is just going to pick up speed like there's no tomorrow and we'll end up in situations where we've got sprawl upon sprawl and further and further erosion of our built-up urban area, which we already have some problems with at this point in time.

I spoke about one of the previous city councillors I served with, who was mentioning issues around agricultural land that has not been included. The notes I brought specifically describe it as agricultural land south of Rymal Road. It has been excluded from the greenbelt, and they're concerned in my community that this is for more sprawl development.

The reality is, though, when you look at the maps and determine what amount of land that is, it's about 40% of the size of the current urban area of Hamilton. So we're looking at about 30 to 40 years of growth land. If that 30 to 40 years of growth land is just allowed to expand with this legislation, then we have some serious problems.

People who know our city will also know that we have real infrastructure challenges in Hamilton. So we know there's a major highway project going in, but what we also know is that there are some real challenges the city has in its ability to afford some of the other infrastructure costs of that roadway, and in terms of how we're going to have the capacity to even deal with the sprawl the roadway will bring, let alone the sprawl that may, and again I say "may," result from some of this legislation. I've made some commitments around making sure that these issues are raised because they're important to people in my community.

1610

There is some concern about the Pleasant View rural area in Dundas. Mr McMeekin might have something to

say about that. There was some concern that it was excluded from the greenbelt. I don't think I will expand on that. I'm sure he knows more about it than I do. My understanding is that there had been an OMB decision in the 1990s that was won by citizens of that community in regard to that area. From what I'm hearing, it looks like that might be included in terms of being allowed to be developed. There are some concerns about that in the environmental community in Hamilton.

There are many other examples. In fact, environmentalists in my community are talking about Durham region. They're talking about many of the other issues around leapfrog development, and around our airport and other issues in that regard. I think it's important to note in this forum that, overall, the environmental community in Hamilton thinks the idea of the greenbelt legislation is a positive idea, and again, I'm only speaking for the few; I certainly wouldn't want to speak for all the people who are active on environmental issues in Hamilton. They want the province to be involved in the planning process once again, but they want the provincial government to take a serious look at the specific issues they raise.

I can provide my notes to others here or to Hamilton members if they're interested. They are really pleased about areas in Winona-Stoney Creek that are going to be protected. They just want to make sure there's a real look at how we're going to not only protect agricultural land, but support it in order to make it thrive over the long haul, particularly with the tender fruit belt area. That is the end of my opportunity. I really did enjoy debating this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): It is with great pleasure that I stand to endorse this bill. In Canada, we have traditionally thought that three of our great natural resources are our vast farmlands, our forests and our great mineral wealth. But today I would like to add a fourth, and that is the phenomenal amount of great green space we have in Canada.

In my business life, I have visited Japan and I have seen how 60 million people live on an island the size of Nova Scotia, and the degradation of the open space so that at cherry blossom time, which is a very fascinating and well-renowned Japanese festival, over 100,000 people will have to visit one acre of cherry blossoms and view 10 or 12 trees. I've also visited India, with a population now approaching one billion people, where the Bengal tiger has lost its grasslands to erosion because people there have not planned the proper vast green space. So is it not time that we in Canada control development on our prime areas?

I have been very pleased to be appointed by Mr Bradley, Minister of Tourism and Recreation, to head up a trails policy for Ontario. To me, that will be the planning of green space linked to green space linked to green space, so that we can have and protect the great expanse of space we have in Canada. As one of the largest countries in the world with one of the smallest populations, this is one of our great natural resources.

When I was down in Austin, Texas, just a month ago reviewing trails policy in the United States, they also found that where they had proper planning of trails and green space, they had lower rates of crime and an increase in property values. So those who would argue that this will be a punitive bill have not got it right.

It was a great pleasure to speak to this.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Speaking to the greenbelt bill, I don't think anyone could argue that greenbelt areas won't result in enhanced quality of living for many residents. I remember driving outside of London in the UK and hitting a greenbelt area, and the impression it made on me.

However, this bill neglects to address a number of serious issues. There's no agricultural plan. The tax base in all the greenbelt municipalities will be frozen. More seriously, there's no transportation plan. How are people to pass through this greenbelt? It means people living further away, especially to go to work in downtown Toronto. And of course housing prices, which have increased rapidly during the last few years, will increase once more in many of the greenbelt centres and cause a problem for young couples seeking to raise a family and wishing to own their own house.

My biggest problem with this particular bill is the lack of regard for our agricultural community. In effect, what has happened is that the savings of many of the farmers within the greenbelt area will be transferred or lost. When I say "transferred," the benefit will be transferred to other residents. But for those individuals who own farms in the greenbelt area, the money that their farms would have brought outside the greenbelt area will, of course, be lost. It may be part of their savings plan in life; it probably is. I think that is a fatal defect in this bill.

Mr Bisson: I want to congratulate my colleague the member from Hamilton East. She made a number of points. I thought she presented well, as other members in this debate have as well. She raised a couple of points that I think are worth consideration.

One is the whole concept of the government, once they've introduced legislation, being willing and prepared to deal with opposition amendments when those amendments come forward. I think that's something we've all experienced. Members who were here in the last Parliament on the government side would know how frustrated we were when the Tories wouldn't accept our amendments, and I'm sure people were frustrated with us. Such is the case. But I think at one point we need to stop the sort of downward spiral that's been created in this place over the years about how this place sometimes doesn't bring out the best ideas when it comes to how you develop legislation.

I would hope the government, when they go to committee, will take heed of the comments that were made by the member for Hamilton East that if amendments come forward that are reasoned, that make some sense, that are going in the direction the government wants to go—I can understand if it's an amendment that's completely, diametrically opposed to what the government is doing. I

wouldn't expect the government to pass it. On the other hand, if there's an amendment they are supportive of, let's not play the old game that's been done around here, which is: "I'm not going to support the opposition member's amendment. Instead I'll bring in my own, because my amendment is better than yours." I would ask you to work with opposition critics in order to build the kind of partnership that we need to in this House to make legislation work better.

At the end of the day, the only people who will really benefit out of that are the people we are here to represent: the taxpayers of the province of Ontario and all the citizens out there who want to see this Legislature work. They want to make sure that at the end of the day, all members here are working and putting their best foot forward in order to represent the views of the people we represent and also to make better legislation.

I want to again thank my colleague the member from Hamilton East for having raised that, and I think it's a point that the government should take seriously.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's a privilege to rise to support Bill 135, the Greenbelt Protection Act, which is the result of not only inspired leadership but also wide and deep consultation.

I wonder, with your permission, Speaker, if I might just offer a quick medical observation. Have you ever wondered about the colour green; why, for example, surgical gowns, drapes, masks and so on are the colour green? It is the colour of nature, and there's something about the colour green that makes the human body respond in such a way that it feels soothed, refreshed, sustained and detoxified.

It's specifically this bill, the Greenbelt Protection Act, that seeks to implement that same concept on a much wider basis. It seeks to strategically and intelligently allow growth, control sprawl, foster prosperity in both urban and rural settings, preserve our precious resources, such as croplands and, in particular, leave a vital heritage for generations to come.

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Why? The demographic trends tell us that four million individuals are going to come to live within the Golden Horseshoe. This initiative seeks to actually preserve almost two million acres. This is on par with some of the great national parks programs of the United States, and this makes sense on multiple levels. For example, just with regard to air quality, things like asthma, or, today, on World COPD Day: Untold benefits—economic, health, medical, social and so on—will accrue to the province of Ontario and its people with an initiative of this kind.

To conclude, I quote Greenpeace: "Take care of the earth. A good planet is hard to find." Bill 135, the Greenbelt Act, seeks to do precisely that.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton East has two minutes to reply.

Ms Horwath: I want to thank the members from Mississauga South, Cambridge, Timmins-James Bay and Etobicoke North for their comments. I was happy to hear

that particularly my colleague from Timmins-James Bay heard what I was trying to get at in the initial parts of my discussion, when I was talking about how we find ways—not to arrogantly say we've overturned every stone, we've talked to every single person and we know that this is completely, 100% right, but rather in the spirit of understanding that everybody in this Legislature is looking toward moving in this direction, that there may be one stone—or two—that hasn't been overturned and hasn't been looked underneath, or one or two areas of the province where perhaps the line that was drawn doesn't quite include what we need it to include or perhaps includes something that it shouldn't include.

I think there are still opportunities for some of those changes, as well as one of the things that I think is extremely important, and that is making sure there is a strong way that we as a society, as the people of Ontario, can make sure we have an act or a piece of legislation that is going to be reviewed on a continuous basis, year after year, where there is real oversight as to what it's accomplishing, as well as a real commitment to making the adjustments that need to be made so that it never becomes obsolete but rather continues to grow and to take care of our green spaces and our green lands across Ontario.

Again, I want to thank all of those who have commented. I only want to close by saying that as a caucus you will have heard that, generally and overall, we support the direction of this bill but we look forward to a few amendments that hopefully will come.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I will be sharing my time with the member from Thornhill.

I'm very pleased to stand today in support of the Greenbelt Act. We need to start with the observation that by the year 2031 there will be an additional four million people in the greater Golden Horseshoe area, which means that simply as a province we have a choice: We can keep on paving or we can start planning. Our government has chosen the second model. We need to do some serious planning about what is going to happen in this province as we face this tremendous growth over the next 30 years.

Bill 135 would authorize the establishment of a greenbelt area in the Golden Horseshoe and a greenbelt plan retroactive to December 16, 2004. The greenbelt area would encompass those lands covered by the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan, the Niagara Escarpment plan, and add protected countryside lands, including the Niagara tender fruit and grape lands, the Holland Marsh and other prime agricultural and rural areas. The act, if passed, means permanent protection for a greenbelt proposed to extend about 325 kilometres from the eastern edge of the Oak Ridges moraine near Rice Lake in the east to the Niagara River in the west.

Now, I must admit that one of the concerns I have heard is that, when you think about this huge greenbelt encompassing the GTA and the Niagara area, a number of people are concerned that in fact what will happen is that development will simply leapfrog the greenbelt.

My riding is Guelph-Wellington and the greenbelt just touches the southern fringe of my riding. A little bit of the south end of Puslinch is in the greenbelt, because that's where the headwaters of some of the rivers that feed into the greenbelt are. So there's a little bit of my riding in the greenbelt, which is fine. But then the rest of my riding, particularly in the Guelph area, is just outside the greenbelt, and people are concerned about what will happen if growth simply leapfrogs the greenbelt.

What I want to share with people today is that on the day the greenbelt protection act, Bill 135, was tabled, there was a companion act tabled. The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal introduced Bill 136, which is the Places to Grow Act. This proposed legislation is a companion piece. It follows closely on the heels of the discussion paper on the government's plan for growth in the greater Golden Horseshoe; in other words, for the lands outside the greenbelt.

The discussion paper Places to Grow: Better Choices, Brighter Future outlines a vision and proposed strategies for where and how the greater Golden Horseshoe should be growing. This vision includes municipal and provincial decisions on such issues as urban development and land use planning, capital investment planning, housing, transportation, environmental protection, infrastructure and economic development. In other words, we're looking at where do the roads go, where does the public infrastructure go, where will growth go, and where will growth not go, just as importantly, because as part of that greater Golden Horseshoe plan, we are looking very carefully at what water resources, what natural areas and what agricultural areas need protection.

So I want to assure my constituents that what we're doing here when we talk about the greenbelt is not self-contained, that in fact the government agrees with your concerns and is already planning for the companion piece, which is, how do we manage growth outside the greenbelt?

I'm very pleased to report that we are thinking forward, and that as these two acts come forward together, we are going to be able to plan for the whole package of how this area continues to grow over the next 30 years, because one of the facts of life is, if we're going to have four million more people, everybody has to live somewhere. We're not ducking that responsibility. We're taking on the responsibility as to how we protect our natural environment, our natural resources for future generations, but also as to how we plan in a responsible way for the growth we know is coming.

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): On October 28, the Premier outlined the government's vision for permanent greenbelt protection and growth planning in the Golden Horseshoe. We are moving forward with protecting green space in the Golden Horseshoe, preserving Ontario's natural heritage and curbing sprawl. This is a good thing for Ontarians who live and work in these communities today and for generations to come.

As Minister Gerretsen has noted, the Golden Horseshoe is one of the fastest-growing regions in North

America. The Golden Horseshoe growth in the next 25 to 30 years will add two million more jobs and create new strength in our economy, and add four million more people in the area. The greenbelt area will encompass those lands covered by the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan, the Niagara Escarpment plan, and add protected countryside lands including the Niagara tender fruit and grape lands, the Holland Marsh, and other prime agricultural and rural areas. The total greenbelt we are proposing to create will protect more than 1.8 million acres of land. The act, when passed, means permanent protection for a greenbelt proposed to extend about 325 kilometres from the eastern end of the Oak Ridges moraine, near Rice Lake in the east, to the Niagara River in the west.

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There is another side to the quality of life in the Golden Horseshoe, another side to making sure greenbelt protection works. My colleague the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal recently introduced Bill 136, the proposed Places to Grow Act, 2004. The proposed legislation follows closely on the heels of the discussion paper on the government's plan for growth and economic expansion in the greater Golden Horseshoe. The discussion paper, *Places to Grow: Better Choices, Brighter Future*, outlines a vision and proposed strategies for where and how the Golden Horseshoe should be growing. This vision includes municipal and provincial decisions on such issues as urban development and land use planning, capital investment planning, housing, transportation, environmental protection, infrastructure and economic development.

The proposed greenbelt plan identifies where growth cannot take place but allows room for growth if and when the local government chooses to do so. A growth plan will indicate where and how that growth will take place. It will chart a course of safeguarding the quality of life in the Golden Horseshoe and ensure that the greenbelt does what we intend it to do: stop sprawl.

Our government's goals are ambitions, and this is a good thing—something that the people of Concord and Thornhill have been waiting for, for years. We are planning beyond today, beyond our mandate. We want to ensure that as Ontario strengthens, grows, builds and develops, this growth will always be balanced with care for and preservation of green space. We want to ensure that as more and more people settle in central Ontario, there will be simultaneous protection of our natural resources, watersheds, ecosystems and agricultural and rural lands.

The draft greenbelt plan would strike a balance between protecting our green spaces and meeting the needs of growing communities. For example, as we have included provisions to protect the environment, we also want to ensure protection for the province's specialty croplands, such as the Holland Marsh and the Niagara tender fruit and grape lands, where the most productive farmland is located.

The draft plan supports a range of opportunities for tourism, sports and recreation. People from all over the

world come to Ontario to enjoy open space, nature, fishing and many outdoor sports. This legislation supports all that. It would establish a system of parklands, open spaces, water bodies and trails.

The proposed greenbelt is being developed so that it protects a natural system and agricultural lands, while allowing room for urban areas outside of the greenbelt to accommodate long-term, properly planned—by the people—growth.

Urban areas currently designated within the proposed greenbelt plan would remain available for urban development and would be subject to the normal municipal planning processes. This would provide certainty by identifying where growth can or cannot go and would end the continuous speculative land-value increase of agricultural lands in the proposed greenbelt, which ultimately increases the cost of housing. Infrastructure that supports growth would be allowed, but subject to strict criteria to avoid damage to the environment and to ensure that all practical alternatives have been considered.

As the member for the riding of Thornhill, I attended a public meeting last week, along with my colleagues from Markham and Scarborough Centre and staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to find out what local community members from the region of York think of the draft greenbelt plan. It was a great opportunity for them to participate in the democratic process of being engaged in an important issue that affects all of us and future generations to come. I am very happy with the comments I heard at the meeting. They were all positive comments.

Thornhillers believe that when this legislation is passed Ontario will thank the government for taking advantage of an opportunity to preserve the green space we love, the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. On behalf of the people of Concord and Thornhill, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this very important issue today.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to rise to comment on the speeches by the member from Guelph-Wellington and the member from Thornhill. Again you'll see that the debate has been a positive one, and one that allows members to provide insights and information about their particular communities in their particular ridings. I think that's a very important part of the process.

I do have to say that I believe there are still some opportunities in that regard, that as we listen to and hear from people in their own communities, there are likely some opportunities for some tweaking of this legislation, for some small amendments to be made. There is certainly an overall sense that it's the right direction in which we should be heading but that, in fact, some real attempts to look at the issues raised by individual members of this Legislature as they represent their individual ridings would be a positive move, as well as looking at some of the recommendations or suggestions that have been made during this debate in regard to more

overall amendments that could be made, particularly in regard—and I'll say it again—to reviewing what's happening on an annual basis to ensure that the oversight committee is established and that it is given clear mandates as to what it needs to look at. It needs to set some serious and specific targets and some serious indicators that it can then review on an annual basis, which will then, of course, lead to an ongoing improvement, an ongoing debate about not only the effectiveness of the current legislation or the current bill once it becomes legislation, but also about how we ensure that, as time moves on and as we look at how it's being implemented and how it's affecting the preservation of green space in Ontario, it continues to be improved over time.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I just wanted to spend my two minutes bragging a little bit about a greenbelt we already have in Ontario and why I'm very pleased to support this piece of forward-thinking legislation.

The greenbelt located in and around the city of Ottawa is something that we're very proud of in the nation's capital. It was a visionary called Mackenzie King who commissioned an architect named Jacques Gréber to put together a plan to help contain urban sprawl over 50 years ago.

The greenbelt is affectionately known in the Ottawa area as the emerald necklace. It surrounds the capital of our country and it's something that is partly in my riding of Ottawa West-Nepean, and it has worked well. It's one of the great strengths, I think, of that part of eastern Ontario.

One of the responsibilities I have as the Minister of Consumer and Business Services is the protection and promotion of the wine industry. I am so proud of the wine industry—people like Linda Franklin, the president of the wine council; Don Ziraldo—I think most people who know the Canadian wine industry can trace it back to the vision and foresight of someone like Don Ziraldo, who was extremely supportive of this piece of legislation put forward by my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

This is a piece of legislation that is not thinking about the next election but is thinking about the next generation. When children and grandchildren of members of this House look back on some of the accomplishments of this government, they will be very proud that our Premier, our minister and our government, and those members who do support this, had the foresight to bring about a greenbelt in the area that we're talking about.

Mr Barrett: Under questions and comments, and listening to the presentations by the member from Guelph-Wellington and the member for Thornhill, who talked about attending one of the meetings—there was a meeting very recently, on Monday, November 8, in Markham. A large number of farmers from the GTA area attended this meeting. I did not attend. I understand that there was something in the order of 300 people who attended the meeting.

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It's important for all of us to realize, first of all, that 90% or 95% of the land in the GTA is privately owned. A very large percentage of the land in the greater Toronto area is owned by farmers—I know; I have a report from the meeting. The president of the York Region Federation of Agriculture, Terry O'Connor, attended the meeting. It was part of the input to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

What came up during that meeting were the concerns of farmers and agribusiness with respect to a taking, a loss of equity by being frozen in the agricultural zoning and, going hand in glove with any discussion of a loss of equity, a loss of value of the land and essentially the value of the farm business itself. This is repeated again and again: the need for compensation.

I think there was a call for land value monitoring to see how serious this is. Of course, the OFA wants further consideration of the Line Fences Act and the Trespass to Property Act for many of these changes.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I also am happy to rise in support of Bill 135. I've been listening intently to the debate. I want to echo the comments of my friend from Ottawa West-Nepean, because it strikes me that there's a similar analogy in my home community of Stratford. What I want to talk about is the question of vision and legacy.

In our community of Stratford, where 600,000 people come for the festival, there is a wonderful park system. My understanding is that it has the greatest number of parkland per capita in the entire country. That was because of a forward-thinking man of 100 years ago, R. Thomas Orr. Stratford was a CNR town. The proposal was to run a railway right through the middle of town. That was just swampy land. This forward-thinker, R. Thomas Orr, decided no; that we would have a wonderful park system modelled on the parks they had in England.

The reason I bring that up is that that's what is infusing this bill. What infuses this bill is the question of legacy and vision. Years from now, I think all of us in this House will look back with pride on the fact that we debated this bill. There are some things we do in this House that are transitory. We do set laws that come and go, but there are some things that don't change. I think of those of us in this House who helped create the Niagara Escarpment. You think about those types of things, those lasting legacies, when you see the park system we have in this province. Ten, 20 or 30 years from now—not 10, 20 or 30 days from now—people will turn back, and our children and grandchildren will thank us for being part of this very important debate about the history of the growth of this province.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Guelph-Wellington, you have two minutes to reply.

Mrs Sandals: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Thornhill, Hamilton East, Ottawa West-Nepean, Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant and Perth-Middlesex for their comments. We would like to thank the NDP, who have been quite supportive on this. It is certainly encouraging to hear that they recognize the value of what we're doing

here in setting up a greenbelt and are generally supportive of this initiative. So thank you for that.

We've heard from the Ottawa and Stratford areas that in fact we do have precedents, albeit on a somewhat smaller scale, and the tremendous impact they had on a community when forefathers in that community had the foresight to set aside a park system, a greenbelt system. I've visited Stratford many times and enjoyed wandering along the Avon River. One of the most fun winter afternoons I ever had was in Ottawa, where I sort of arm-wrestled some colleagues and dragged them off to go skating on the canal when we were out of a meeting a little bit early—it was much more fun skating than meeting.

Those are the sorts of systems that somebody had the foresight to set up long ago. We talk about the concern of preserving farmland, and inside the greenbelt are two very, very special areas: the Niagara tender fruit and grape growing land and the Holland Marsh vegetable growing area, which is very specialized soil. Those are things that can never be duplicated. If those lands are ever lost, if we allow people, particularly in the Niagara area, to pave any more of that land, for the most part Ontario loses its tender fruit growing, it loses its grape growing, it loses particular vegetable growing. That's not what we want. We're leaving a legacy with this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Scott: I'm pleased to join again in the debate on Bill 135, the greenbelt initiative, certainly to tie in to what legacy we are leaving behind, and that we are debating this, although in a kind of hurried fashion; I'd certainly like to take a longer time to consult with the farmers in my area.

The Conservatives have supported the goal of addition of environmentally valuable land and to protect its status, and it goes back many years. But what comes to mind first of all is certainly Chris Hodgson and the Living legacy we have in my riding: the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site. Under the previous Conservative government, we brought 378 new parks and protected areas, a total of 23.4 million acres of land across the province. The Kawartha Highlands Signature Site, although it's just getting up and going, is 37,000 hectares. It will be the largest protected area in Ontario south of Algonquin Park. And I'm sure the present Liberal government is going to protect the Frost Centre and all the lands surrounding it. I look forward to further progress on the Frost Centre with the environmental sustainability this government has promised the people of Ontario.

The bill has a good goal, but it has some flaws. We have heard some of them here today. The four main weaknesses I have seen with the bill are: no agricultural plan; small towns will have a frozen tax base; no transportation strategy; house prices within the GTA will increase and those in selected hubs will increase around the area, and who is going to be able to afford to buy these?

There are a few other worries that I want to address quickly. The government, I believe, needs to bring for-

ward a plan to address some of these flaws, but is it possible to support the protection of the green space while opposing this particular piece of legislation, as my friend from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant mentioned? The leapfrogging of development is really a strong possibility, and there is no indication of support from this government for the municipalities that will become the new targets for this development, and no efforts to protect the farmland there.

A large amount of the substance of the bill will be contained in regulations. The bill can give the minister the ability to issue minister's zoning orders which would allow for the changing of the land use designation for any parcel of land from protected to developed land. That provision has huge potential for abuse. At the very least, it could mean that the minister will have a lot of people attending his fundraising events. That gives a lot of power to the minister. In his comments Monday, "We're always open to good suggestions as to how we can make a proposed law a better law." I hope the members opposite will understand that the concerns I'm raising today are raised in that spirit. It should be non-partisan. We should be doing the best we can for our future, and this greenbelt legislation should be refined.

1650

My riding is partly made up of lands within the protected area and partly of lands outside that area—as I have mentioned many times, the impact the bill is going to have on the farmers who have land located within that greenbelt area.

I'm also concerned in a general way with the whole way the bill treats farmers. We need to protect farmland, as has been mentioned by many colleagues in the government, but I think we're going about it in entirely the wrong way. If you want to protect farmland and you want to make sure you have locally grown produce available in stores, you should do something to protect the farmers. You don't protect farmers by driving down the value of their land. As is said many times, if you want to save the farm, you have to save the farmer. A lot of farmers have spent their entire careers putting every spare cent back into their farms. They hold jobs, more commonly than we want to hear about, outside of the farm in order to make the farms viable. They don't put money into their retirement savings. Up until now, their retirement plan has been the farm.

We quote from the Toronto Star of November 8:

"Those inside the greenbelt fear their property values will plummet now that the government has closed the option of selling out to developers. Older farmers will lose their retirement plan; younger ones may find it more difficult to borrow money.

"The cost has to be borne by the whole society, not just the agricultural sector," says Ron Bonnet, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture."

Again, in order to save the farm, you have to save the farmer. When they go to the bank, as I've said, requesting a loan to allow them to plant crops, how will the banks react to the reduced collateral being put up?

You're decreasing the number of farmers in the area. You say you're going to protect farmers, but you've just told them they have second-class property rights. When your family home goes up in value and you sell it for a higher price than you paid for it, you're not a land speculator. I can tell you that farmers care about their land and care about providing for their families. You're stripping them of their right to provide for their own retirement, to provide for their families.

Farmers need our support now more than ever. The crises go on: the BSE crisis, the failure of the CAIS program so far to deliver the monies they need. It's a crisis. It just shouldn't be part of the usual support payments from the agriculturalists. This is a crisis. I know the provincial government and the federal government haven't dealt with it in that manner. The bottom line is that without farmers, the crops will not get planted and the livestock will not be kept.

The members opposite have to be hearing from their constituents about this problem, and I hear a couple of them have admitted that. Farmers, municipal leaders and taxpayers have to be telling you that there need to be changes in the greenbelt legislation. How are you going to ensure the future viability of farms? Show them you have a plan. We want farmland and green space to stay green, but the best way to do that is to make sure it's in the farmer's interest, in his or her economic interest. Agri-food business being the second biggest economic driver in Ontario, are we doing enough? Are we paying enough attention to them? I don't think so. We need to do a much better job. So you need an agricultural support plan before you bring this bill forward for the second reading vote.

The second part of the bill that concerns me is the impact it will have on small communities within the greenbelt area. Your plan has serious repercussions for small communities located within the greenbelt. As I've mentioned before, they could end up with frozen property tax bases in Brock township, which is affected in my area.

In an article in the newspaper, they had been consulted by the task force and they felt confident that Brock township would not be included, and all of a sudden, it is. They felt they were ignored in the consultation process: "1.8 million acres in an area from Niagara Falls, along the escarpment past Hamilton, across the Oak Ridges moraine north of Toronto (including Brock township), to Rice Lake near Peterborough"—so 800,000 acres.

It quotes from local councillors: "I really couldn't believe" that they've included Brock.

"It's more than double the size.

"Should the legislation proceed as is, all development outside the urban boundaries of any municipality in the greenbelt would essentially be permanently frozen."

There was a proposed development that the moratorium will affect in Brock, which was a proposal of a "Tim Hortons/Wendy's complex on Highway 12, a 45,000-square-foot grocery store and gas bar on Beaver Avenue, an executive golf course in the Beaverton area, as well as the expansion of two existing businesses."

A lot of that land had not got to the process of being zoned commercial yet; it was zoned rural. They were waiting, which is common in rural Ontario—obviously, there is a tax implication for the people who own it now. They wait until the plan is further developed before rezoning occurs. Are they going to have the chance to expand the boundaries of their towns? Sunderland, Beaverton and Cannington are the three that are of concern in Brock township.

The mayor of Brock, Keith Shier: "I am certainly not impressed by that. I would have liked to think that there would have been some hope of development for us, but it doesn't look like there will be any." This is a big impact on our rural communities. Is it going to shut Brock township right down? How are we going to survive? Various members of council and township staff have pleaded with members of the task force at municipal affairs and housing to exclude Brock. But again, I say to you, they've fallen on deaf ears.

We're hoping that in the town hall meetings—I believe Oshawa is the closest for them, on November 25—they'll have their chance to state their case. Hopefully, as we've discussed before, some of the boundaries will change to allow them to have growth in these small towns. We need to survive out there. We don't want to be in the greenbelt. We feel that we have a case, and I'm hopeful that the government is going to listen to their concerns.

They introduced the recent COMRIF announcement as a source of funding for some small municipalities, based on financial contributions from communities that wish to accept this infrastructure funding. This may cause a problem for some communities, because they don't have the resources to put up their share. Again, if they're going to be included in the greenbelt, they're going to have less revenue, less resources, to put back into their communities. They'll no longer have the option to increase the property tax base to afford the improvements that they see are needed.

I'm hopeful, again, with regulation 170, that rural communities will have a chance for a change in regulations so that the further death knell in rural communities that the Liberal government is doing will stop and we'll be able to keep our town halls and our community centres. It's just logical regulation changes to allow rural municipalities that aren't necessarily on town and municipal water systems the chance to grow and be reasonable with their testing. That's a big burden on a lot of municipalities right now. These improvements to their town sewers and water won't be able to be done because they're not going to have money for infrastructure, even to fit in with the COMRIF program that the government is bringing out.

Many things that are taken for granted in the larger centres we just don't have in the smaller towns and villages. The dream of their expansion is going to be delayed.

The lack of a transportation strategy: I just cannot see that more waiting on highways, more emissions being

sent into the atmosphere have anything to do with improving the environment. You're going to have to spend more money to move people around the Golden Horseshoe area if your plan is to have any success. No plan to accommodate population growth would be complete without addressing the transportation needs for these people. Where are your plans to build the roads necessary to move people and goods throughout the greenbelt?

The transportation plan should absolutely include public transit, but it also has to include roads. I wish I did have more public transit in my riding. Maybe the day will come when there will be GO buses to the southern end of the riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. Recent meetings with the MTO—I'm hoping that the four-laning of 35 will be faster than it's planned, which I know they're working on. The 407 expansion into the 35/115 would be an added bonus for us, and the 404 expansion into 48—it's my wish list.

Interjection.

Ms Scott: That's what the plans are, based on future growth for the area.

Interjection.

Ms Scott: Oh, yeah. For roads. Absolutely.

The growth is coming to our area, and we have to support it with the infrastructure. That's what the area wishes, because people aren't going to be able to live—I hope someday that there is more economic development in my riding and people can live and work there instead of travelling so much on the roads. But for right now we need to have that plan thought out: where to build the roads, where the people want to live, if the jobs are here. What's the infrastructure if you're going to leapfrog across the greenbelt?

1700

What is it going to do to the increased price of houses in areas? Are people going to be able to afford it? Are there going to be more renters and less homeowners? The prices are going to go through the roof for the average middle-income family.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Added value to homeowners.

Ms Scott: They can't buy it, though. They mightn't be able to buy it.

The home builders' association, I know, has warned you that your plan to stack people like cordwood is not going to work. You're out of touch with the hopes and dreams of Ontarians. People have clearly indicated they don't think the suburbs should be populated by huge apartment buildings. Are they going to be able to develop more in these small towns, have severances off their lots? Is there going to be help from the provincial and federal governments to the municipalities for more infrastructure? Again, water and sewers is a big concern with people up in my riding. Are they going to decide to live on the other side of the greenbelt boundary? Do you have any actual real plan to deal with these roads?

I know they discussed the Smart Growth panels. I wasn't here for Smart Growth. I have seen a lot about it, and I know that Chris Hodgson did an extensive con-

sultation process on that with the municipalities for the plan for growth. We want people to be able to live in their own homes if they wish to and be able to afford them.

I hope this greenbelt discussion is not done with partisan views in mind, which I've mentioned before. We're raising concerns about the plan. I would hope that some of the boundaries will be looked at again, the farmlands will be protected or else some remuneration arranged with the farmers in the greenbelt. We don't want to pave paradise and put up a parking lot.

On this side of the House, we want to ask you to listen closely to the concerns that are being raised by municipal leaders. I mentioned Brock especially because that's the area in my riding that's mostly affected. This is a good opportunity for that area to be raised in the Legislature, so that all members can hear about it.

We want to work with the legislation, with the municipalities and with the farmers. We want their views heard. As I said, it's kind of a short time. They're still trying to figure out how it's going to be impacting on them and what the value of their land is going to be. They're kind of busy these days just trying to pay the bills and eke out a living. Where their future goes in farming is still very much up in the air. So I urge you to pay very close attention.

Regarding the impact we're making here, sometimes I think how the legislation affects everyday lives is not paid very much attention to. Certainly economically we can shut down a township. The Minister of Natural Resources is over there. I've spoken to him often on the Frost Centre: the sudden closing of the Frost Centre and the economic effects it had on the local communities involved and also on the whole province; the purpose of maybe giving some more time to the Frost Centre to come up with an alternative, because of sudden job loss up in Haliburton county, with the second-lowest income in the province of Ontario; the economic spinoff that the Frost Centre had; with it being closed right in July, the 5,000 schoolchildren who could not attend the outdoor education classes planned for them.

I just think that in rural Ontario we need to listen a little carefully. The impacts there are greater than they are in the urban areas. You know, closing the Frost Centre can be equivalent to an auto parts plant being closed down in Toronto, with the economic impact and the loss of jobs.

I'm hopeful now that we may be able to open the Frost Centre with Management Board's approval and that we can restore some jobs and economic growth and do more outdoor education and outdoor stewardship with that. That's one of the many things that are affecting the rural communities.

Is there infrastructure in place to go with the greenbelt? Are you protecting the farmers? Will there be remuneration? Will you work with the municipalities for the expansion of their boundaries, especially, as I'd mention again, Sunderland, Beaverton and Cannington, their proposed new investments there to let people work in

their own homes and be close to their work, and the economic viability of that area?

So before you embark on this law that is going to hurt ordinary Ontarians, I encourage you to please listen to our input, listen to the town halls that have gone on, and make the changes that are appropriate and that can really do what I think the intent of this legislation is to do, which is to protect the green spaces, the farmland, and provide a way to coordinate the managed growth that we expect, because it is coming; it is a natural evolution. I think we can make some amendments, make some changes to the greenbelt and work with all the stakeholders that I have mentioned so that this legislation is effective and is something that we're going to be proud of for generations to come. That is what we want: sustainability in our environment and planned growth. I welcome further debate on this. I see some of the members opposite are taking notes and are anxious to respond, so thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Horwath: In putting my thoughts together around the questions and comments on the speech by the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, I think a couple of common themes have been coming up all afternoon in this debate.

Again, there's the one about what is happening in specific communities. That's why these debates are so important, and to have them in such a fulsome and appropriate way so that we can actually look at how the details will affect each particular area in Ontario that's represented in this Legislature. I just wanted to take the opportunity in that vein, and following on the comments of the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, to once again highlight some of the concerns that have come up in the Hamilton area.

One that I have mentioned already is the pressure that will come to bear in terms of urban sprawl, particularly with the mid-peninsula highway that is planned for our area being located inside the greenbelt. Of course, there are other general concerns about that initiative in regard to the urban sprawl issue overall and the need to have the infrastructure that's welcomed inside of the greenbelt. So we need to make sure we know what we're really doing there and how that is affecting each community.

My previous colleague from Hamilton city council, from the area of Glanbrook, Mr David Mitchell, has some real concerns around the agricultural land that is not in the greenbelt in the Rymal Road area. That needs to be looked at and reviewed in terms of possible amendments to the boundary.

Again, one of my colleagues from Hamilton city council, Margaret McCarthy, represents the Flamborough-Waterdown area. In fact, there is a big debate happening in that community as we speak—well, in fact, this evening. At 7:30 there's a large community meeting around a quarry that's slated for a huge expansion that's currently under debate in our community. Ms McCarthy has raised these issues with me as well, particularly around how the greenbelt legislation will affect aggregate extraction in her community.

These are, again, important issues, and I am pleased to be able to bring them.

Mr McMeekin: I'm always delighted to follow the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, as I am my good friend from Hamilton East, when they talk about the concerns they are hearing.

The member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock concluded by saying she is looking for sustainability and for planned, intelligent growth. Well, do you know what? We on this side of the House are looking for exactly the same thing.

Her comments were largely positive. In fact, the comments of both the member who spoke and my good friend from Hamilton East were largely positive. I think it's understandable. It has been said that every journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. But do you know what? That only makes sense if you know where the heck you're going, if you're not heading in the wrong direction. We're going in the right direction.

I think there is general consensus across the province that this is the right thing to do, and I suspect that in 50 years, when my grandkids and their kids are looking back, they are probably not going to observe that the worst thing the new Liberal government did was to protect too much green space. You don't hear anybody in London or New York or Hamilton or Burlington saying that we need to reduce the size of Hyde Park or Central Park or Gage Park or La Salle Park. That just isn't happening.

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I think the observations about the farming issues are important. I would just point out that our government believes farming is an incredibly important industry. We need to be moving to put in supports, enhance safety nets, redouble our efforts around the border crossing issue and what have you, because farming really is important. I hope to get more time later to speak about that.

Mr Barrett: It really is a pleasure to listen to the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. In passing, she made mention of the threat to the Frost Centre, and in the same breath highlighted the importance of awareness of sustainability. When we're discussing greenbelt legislation, there is a lot more to this than just the legislation. As legislators, oftentimes when we're given the hammer, every problem looks like a nail. We seem to think the only way to go about this is to pass another law, pass legislation with the attendant rules and regulations and red tape that inevitably go along with that.

To go back to the Frost Centre, I attended environmental sessions there many years ago. The purpose of our days there was to pick up some real practical hints from MNR staff—it might have been lands and forests staff back then—on how best to transmit this knowledge to our students. I was teaching environmental science at the time, and our environmental science teachers' conference would be held at the Frost Centre.

Legislation and laws and rules and regulations are one way of going about this, but at best it's a half measure. It has to be coupled with information and education and

awareness. It has to be something that's promoted in the schools. If not, we just end up with lots of new subdivisions.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): It certainly is my pleasure to speak on this legislation. It's such an important piece of legislation, as I've had a chance to talk about in my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, which is a community that's part of—obviously it's an urban community, but I know that when I have a chance to speak to the people in Etobicoke-Lakeshore about what are some of the most important things in our community to them, they always talk to me about the lake, our lakefront, the importance of having that natural green space around Etobicoke. We're certainly hopeful that a community like ours will have people move in to the community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, have a chance to see some of our brownfields redeveloped. All of that is part and parcel of a government plan that allows us to save that green space.

I know people in this Legislature have heard many times that I talk about how I was born in Saskatchewan. When you are a girl from the prairies, you certainly understand the importance of farmland and of preserving that history in our province. It's not a preservation for history; it's a preservation for the fact that we need to grow food in Ontario, that we need to support the farmers who are doing that and that we need to acknowledge publicly the importance of doing that and the importance of that support. So for me, that's what this legislation is about.

It's very disconcerting when you drive outside of Toronto and you drive through what used to be an apple orchard, and now you see all those trees cut down, and you see the ground razed and what is happening.

So this legislation really says, front and foremost, that this government is interested in putting a priority on the preservation of our greenbelt in this province, and that we're going to support the industry that is so important to all of us to make sure we have food in this province to eat in years to come.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Ms Scott: I appreciate the comments from the members for Hamilton East, Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant and Etobicoke-Lakeshore. As I get to know more of the members here—I didn't realize the agricultural background of the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore. It is wonderful to hear.

I hope we can work with this legislation to make some of the amendments. The weaknesses are a lot, we've heard, being the farming industry, and with no agricultural plan—the small towns and the frozen tax bases that they will have, their growth, the transportation strategy and the housing prices. I was happy to be able to share the local concerns that we have, probably just some of them, and more will come from the villages that I mentioned that are going to need some amendments to this greenbelt legislation.

We support, certainly, the concept of protecting the green spaces, of having a plan to further protect them, but we really have to deal with some of the issues in there that I have mentioned. I'm sure we and the government—I'm cautiously optimistic, and maybe it's because I'm still new in the job—can work on these issues together. I want the Liberals to be proud of this legislation that they are bringing through, and I want us as a party to contribute to the changes that are made to it, so I look forward to further debate.

I look forward to seeing that they are going to make some changes, and I look forward to the fact that they're going to be involved in reopening the Frost Centre somewhere down the road, which is going to be a sustainable outdoor education centre. I can't say enough about the Frost Centre and the good work it has done in the past and that we know will be done in the future, because this government says it believes in more green spaces and in protecting the environment and sustainability.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I want to say that we support greenbelt legislation in principle, that we support the establishment of greenbelt. But I also want to point out that there are a number of deficiencies in what the government has put forward. I want to spend time today dealing with some of those deficiencies.

The government says that this will protect farmland. It may protect farmland, but that does nothing to protect farming. If farmers can't farm the land, then they immediately come under pressure to do something else with it.

Secondly, there is the whole issue of aggregates. One of the realities of what the government has put forward is that aggregate extraction would not only continue to be permitted within the so-called greenbelt area, it would actually be accelerated. I think that is something that would have to be fixed.

In general, this does not go far enough in terms of protecting farmland, it does not go far enough in terms of protecting farming and it does not go far enough in terms of enhancing the capacity of farmers to continue to work within what is regarded as, or what will be regarded as, the greenbelt. I want to zero in on some of the real farm issues because I think that's something that needs to be considered here.

Protecting farmland but failing to protect or enhance farming, or failing to safeguard Ontario's important agricultural industry, it seems to me, leads not to a good end. Farmers want to farm, and farmers within the greenbelt want to farm. Farmers within Ontario want to farm. But the global crash in agricultural commodity prices, combined with the ongoing effects of the BSE crisis in the North American cattle market, have put many farmers in the position of being on the brink of financial disaster. In fact, I think it's fair to say that most farmers who are in the cattle industry are probably looking at another five or six months before they go under.

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Most farmers who are livestock producers have re-mortgaged their farms, their homes; have gone out there and arranged lines of credit but have exhausted those lines of credit, and are also in debt to their suppliers. If something doesn't happen within the next five or six months, this will all, of course, end in terms of their financial failure. But it will affect not just those individual farmers it will affect virtually everybody across the rural landscape. So when you talk about protecting farming and farmland within the proposed greenbelt, this is one of the issues that has to be addressed.

As I say, farmers want to farm, but are often, as conditions now stand, forced to become speculators because this government and the Liberal government in Ottawa are not doing enough to make farming financially viable in the greenbelt and elsewhere in the province. Farmers' concerns with the greenbelt and its potential to decrease their equity and increase their taxes simply illustrate the inadequacy of farm income strategies on the part of the Liberal government here in Ontario and the Liberal government in Ottawa.

What needs to be done? It seems to me that we need to see a meaningful farm income support system. If farming is going to continue in the province and continue within the proposed greenbelt, this is one of the elementary things that needs to happen. If farmers are going to continue to act as guardians of our prime agricultural farmland within the proposed greenbelt and safeguard important environmental benefits for present and future generations, and not sell out to developers, then they are entitled to make a living. There has to be a strategy to ensure they can continue to make a living. So immediate steps are required to recognize the important economic and environmental benefits Ontario farmers provide through the development of a comprehensive farm income support system.

I think people should note that we often get lectures from our neighbour to the south that, "You shouldn't subsidize this or you shouldn't subsidize that." Who is the greatest subsidizer of farm incomes? The United States government. Who is not far behind? The European Union. In terms of the two jurisdictions with which we are most closely comparable, the United States and the European Union, they have farm income supports and we don't. If the government says that it wants farming to continue within the proposed greenbelt, this is one of the issues which must be addressed: What is the farm income support plan?

I just want to point out that there are some options here. In the early 1990s, the NDP government that I was a part of introduced the Niagara tender fruits program, which protected specialty crop lands in the Niagara region through providing funds in exchange for agricultural covenants that ran with the land. The budget for that was a modest \$15 million a year, but helped protect tender fruit lands from urban development. Regrettably, that was killed by the former government on July 13, 1995, soon after they were sworn into office. But it

seems to me that that is one viable strategy to ensure that what is designated as farmland within the proposed greenbelt continues to operate in terms of farming; that farmers can continue to stay on the land.

I would argue that we need to see land covenants or conservation easements, as well as land trusts. These are just some of the approaches needed to be implemented on any proposed greenbelt space to ensure meaningful protection and sustainability—not just farmland within a proposed greenbelt, but farming within a proposed greenbelt. I note that the agricultural advisory team recommended that the government here in Ontario work with the federal government to recognize agricultural land trusts, so even the government's own agricultural advisory team says this needs to happen.

In the couple of minutes I have remaining, I just want to talk about aggregates. Those of us who come from northern Ontario know that if you really want to change the landscape, all you need is an aggregate pit or a gravel pit, and the physical appearance of the landscape will change very, very quickly. In fact, two years with a gravel pit or an aggregate pit in place and you won't recognize what used to be a green space.

While the government says this is going to be a protected greenbelt, what is incredible is that there is practically no limit on aggregate extractions. Areas within the so-called protected countryside of the proposed greenbelt are major sources of aggregates for the GTA market. And what's clear when you read the proposal is that extraction will continue and expand under the so-called Greenbelt Act or plan. We can see expansion of aggregate extraction, with all that means for habitat destruction and threats to habitat of endangered species. So if the government is really serious about greenbelt protection, it seems to me these are two issues that have to be addressed.

I know, from a question that I asked just before the constituency break, that the government doesn't seem to want to talk about this. The government doesn't seem to want to talk about an income plan for farming. It doesn't seem to want to talk about covenants or land trusts to ensure that farming activity continues to be carried on. The government doesn't seem to want to talk at all about aggregate extraction. It seems to want to pretend there won't be aggregate extraction within the so-called proposed greenbelt. But it's very clear, when you read the legislation, that that's going to continue.

If the government is serious about this, it has to have a plan for agriculture. You've got to have a plan so that farmers can continue to earn a livable income. And if you don't, then this is quickly going to evaporate. If you think that aggregate pits are going to go everywhere and you're going to continue to have a greenbelt, you're sadly mistaken. Two areas that need to be improved.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Ramal: It's my pleasure again to stand up in this place to speak about a very important issue concerning all of the people of this province. We heard a lot of members speaking about it, and recently we were listening to

the honourable member from Kenora-Rainy River speak about his concern about Bill 135, the Greenbelt Act, as other members have expressed their concerns before.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs, who's in charge of that portfolio, said to them that we are going to send this bill to committee. We're going to travel the province of Ontario to listen to the great people of this province about their concerns, and take their input and hopefully make adjustments to it. As a matter of fact, he is open to all the negotiations and the discussions and he's willing also to debate it with all members of the House in order to create a bill that speaks for all the people of this province and talks about the future of this province.

As you know, I come from London, Ontario. We call our city Forest City. We appreciate the green land a lot. We try as much as possible to plant many trees on a yearly basis to keep our city green and the forest alive in the city of London. Also, we have many parks like Victoria Park in downtown London, and we have Springbank Park. Those parks are important for the people of London because on the weekend many people go to the park, have fun, meet and gather families and have barbecues. They also give a beautiful atmosphere for the city of London.

I believe the greenbelt bill will also add flavour to the whole province, give protection to our farmland and keep it alive. Also, we can keep getting the fresh fruit and vegetables that we're looking forward to, and protect our future.

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Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I think it's really important for this Legislature to understand some of the implications of this particular piece of legislation. In his remarks, the member certainly pointed to some issues around agriculture. I think that, for too many people, they have misinterpreted green space in agriculture and agricultural land as being synonymous. This is simply not true. Agriculture is still the second most important economic driver in the greater Toronto area.

All of the regions have huge concerns about this particular piece of legislation and the kind of impact that it will have. The members of the regional governments around Toronto as well as the Ontario federations of agriculture have been meeting for about two years now to look at ways by which government could support agriculture in the greater Toronto area and are, quite frankly, disappointed by the kind of initiative that we see by this government, where green space has now come to mean prime agricultural land, with very little thought or consideration to the issues that will make it, and allow it to continue to be, a viable economic driver of this area.

Issues like that make this piece of legislation extremely problematic.

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to make some comments on the speech and the debate given by my leader, Howard Hampton, from Rainy River. I want to say that he actually did quite eloquently reflect some of the concerns that have been raised by our environment critic as well as others in this debate. Again, the issues of

aggregate extraction and of what's really going to happen in terms of the farming industry—and not specifically each and every farm but rather the industry as a whole—and how we ensure that industry survives and thrives over time is significant. We don't want to be missing any of the key pieces we need to put that into place and to make sure that happens. Certainly, one key thing will be the protection of those lands, but then there are many other pieces that need to be put into place, and I think he appropriately outlined those issues.

I wanted to indicate once more that in fact there are some positive things this legislation covers off but, quite frankly, there are some things I have described in my own riding and in the general area around my riding that we need to look at, including specific issues around aggregate extraction, which we're dealing with at this very moment, as well as concerns around the Niagara Escarpment and the tender fruit belt particularly. Also there's the issue of this government's willingness to hear what we are saying when we are bringing these issues forward, and a real expectation and hope that amendments will come and we will be in a position to wholeheartedly and without reservation at all support the final iteration of this greenbelt legislation.

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I'm delighted to speak to this bill this evening from another perspective. We've heard a lot of discussion around Hamilton today, but let me talk to you about what is good about this bill for Hamilton.

Downtown Hamilton is just on the fringe of a wonderful renaissance. The renaissance is going to be around the redevelopment of its brownfields. Hamilton is a leader in brownfield development. Just recently, Sergio Mancha was awarded the gold star, I think it was called, for brownfield redevelopment. With the opportunity that's afforded in revisiting downtown Hamilton and some of this wonderful land that we have abutting the shores of Hamilton Harbour, I think there's a wonderful opportunity to redevelop it, to make more space for residential.

I was just talking to some of my friends recently, and they said, "Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a condo in downtown Hamilton overlooking the water?"—something that has been unheard of in Hamilton over the centuries. I think we want to re-embrace the waterfront in Hamilton. Hamilton is rediscovering its waterfront. We are one of the few communities in the world that actually ran away from our waterfront until quite recently. So I think the greenbelt legislation has wonderful opportunities for Hamilton in that regard.

It also allows, perhaps, a new vision for the downtown of Hamilton. We have the most amazing architectural buildings downtown, and at the moment a lot of them are empty. This is going to give people a new opportunity to revisit those buildings, to take a look at what great opportunities exist in downtown Hamilton.

I want to thank all of my colleagues for supporting this legislation, because I think it is a wonderful, wonderful opportunity for us in Hamilton to take a look at what we

can do downtown with this land that's available to us, and in particular my colleague here from the Prairies, as I just found out, because I too am a prairie girl. So thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Kenora-Rainy River, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Hampton: I appreciate the comments that have been made.

In my two-minute response I just want to go back over the aggregate issue, because I think it is so important. As I said earlier, it is very strange in proposed greenbelt legislation to actually see not only provisions that allow for the continued extraction of aggregates, which, as I say, can completely change a landscape, but provisions to allow for the expansion of gravel pits and the taking of aggregates. To me, this is a complete contradiction. I think what we need to see is that instead of allowing new and existing aggregate operations to continue to gobble up what would be proposed greenbelt, the government needs to follow the lead of other jurisdictions and move immediately to implement measures, financial and/or regulatory, to, first, reduce the demand for aggregates and, second, increase the substitution of recycled materials instead of increased aggregate extraction.

I just want to point out, for example, that in Europe, specifically in the United Kingdom, Sweden and Denmark, they have put in place measures that result in the recycling of aggregate rather than new aggregate. The result of that is that you actually have more and more recycled aggregate being used, you have fewer new gravel pits being opened, fewer new aggregate extractions, and everybody is better off. Sometimes this is done by means of regulation; sometimes it is done by simply increasing the tax or the levy on new aggregate and having no levy on the recycling of aggregate. But something like that needs to be done if this is to work.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Mississauga—no, Scarborough Centre.

Mr Duguid: The other side of Toronto. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Every decade or so, generations have an opportunity to make a decision that will impact future generations. This is one of our opportunities as a generation, not only as a government but as legislators, an opportunity to have input into a decision that will be felt and appreciated not only two years down the road, when we're all back into another election, not only 10 years down the road, but 40 or 50 years down the road, when people will look back and say, "Thank you," to those who participated in this debate, to those who supported this greenbelt to make sure the quality of life in the Golden Horseshoe could be maximized, to make sure the quality of life in the Golden Horseshoe was sustainable in a number of different ways.

I have had the opportunity to attend a number of the consultations so far, and probably one of the best questions that was asked was, why are we doing this? I'd like to talk a little bit about why we're doing this.

By the year 2031, four million additional people will be coming to this region. That's like having the

equivalent of Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton, all the people in those cities, packing up and moving here. That's an incredible number of people. It's a good thing, because it is going to create jobs; it is going to create wealth. It's a good thing, but it's also a challenging thing because we're going to have to accommodate all those people and do it in a way that's not going to lead to uncontrolled urban sprawl. That's what, in part, this is all about: finding a way to accommodate that growth, but as well to preserve the quality of life that we all treasure in the greater Golden Horseshoe area.

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We're doing this because we're concerned about gridlock. We recognize the importance of dealing with it, that reducing travelling time is important from a convenience point of view for people coming to and from work, commuters, and it's important from a quality-of-life point of view as well for people who want to get home and spend some time with their kids instead of spending an hour, an hour and a half or two hours on the road each and every morning and night. It's important from a business perspective as well because we need to move goods around. If our roads are gridlocked, we're not going to be able to do that. This initiative will assist in controlling gridlock.

It's important that we preserve our environmentally sensitive lands. We need to preserve these lands for a number of different reasons. We need to ensure that our water quality is secure and safe, and this initiative helps us to do that. Even if you live in downtown Toronto, you have rivers running through your city. We want those rivers to be as clean as they possibly can be. That's important to our quality of life and it's important to the safety and security of our drinking water. So this is important from a preserving-of-water perspective as well.

It's also important to ensure that we preserve the quality of our air. We all know that woodlots are an important part of replenishing the quality of that air. This initiative will ensure that there are hundreds and hundreds of acres of woodlots that might have been paved over, had we not moved forward with this, that will not be now. That's something that will benefit not only us as we grow older but future generations as well.

It's also important to preserve our precious agricultural lands. It's important to ensure that we have a viable farming industry that is close to the source, close to where the demand is. Otherwise, we're going to have to be trucking our agricultural products in from other jurisdictions, if not from other parts of Ontario. It's going to increase the cost of agricultural products; but, worse than that, it's going to impact the gridlock that we're working so hard to try to address.

It's also important that we curb urban sprawl, and that's part of this. It's important from an economic point of view as well that we curb urban sprawl. The cost of infrastructure—of highways, of public transit, of sewers—will be much greater if we don't get a handle on our growth in the greater Golden Horseshoe area. It's very important that this greenbelt legislation go through.

Most important of all, probably more important than anything else, is what impact this is going to have on the quality of life for our future generations, the need for our future generations to have green space to enjoy. I think that, more than anything else, is the gift all of us in this Legislature are giving to not only our children but to our children's children. I think it's something we'll all be proud of once all is said and done.

There will still be much room for further consultation on this. There will still be a lot of room for consultation as we go through the committee process. I'm looking forward to further debate on this. We all know we're doing the right thing here. We know this is something we're all going to be proud of and that our grandchildren and our grandchildren's children are going to appreciate as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Barrett: The speaker opposite kicked off by raising the question, "Why are we doing this?" I have heard that question raised a number of times. I hear what you're saying, your concern with respect to population growth. You in part described that increasing the number of people in this greenbelt area is a good thing, as far as it brings jobs and wealth. It does raise that issue of sustainable development or economic sustainability. To take that further, we need some proactive, kind of far-reaching measures in this initiative, certainly beyond this particular legislation. I guess I'm using the concept, rather than sustainable development, of developing sustainability. That's an economy that's based on something beyond merely growth, something based beyond merely building houses, which I know has been a major factor in our present economic growth.

I represent a rural area of Haldimand county, a county somewhat similar to Haliburton that has been able to get by. I will make the point that the average income is not near what you see in much of the GTA, as with the Haliburton area, but it is an area that has gotten by. Haldimand county went for 100 years without any increase in population growth, and they were able to sustain their economy, raise families and put their children through school without being addicted to population growth.

Ms Horwath: Once again, I want to make some comments on the debate that's been ongoing this evening. I have to say that there are a lot—it seems to me—of comments coming from the government side that they are willing and prepared to hear what is being said, probably both in their consultation process but also, hopefully, with what's being said by the members of this Legislature as this debate unfolds. I think it's an important debate. I think it's one that can only add to the value of legislation that protects green space across the Golden Horseshoe area of the province of Ontario.

I think we all recognize the growth pressures that exist, and the fact that we need to really seriously plan for what that growth is going to do to our sustainability as communities, particularly those that are directly affected, those around the GTA and the Hamilton corridor. As we continue on in the progression of this bill, I look

forward to seeing some of the insights, some of the comments, some of the suggestions, some of the recommendations that are brought forward by the members, not just those I've raised on my own as a result of some of the consultations I have personally done in my own community, but also hearing what some of the members are saying in regard to their own communities.

I think there are specific issues that need to be dealt with around where the boundaries are going, but also broader things that need to be dealt with, particularly around things like the aggregate industry and issues around sustainability of farming over time. I think all of us would agree that these things are extremely important and need to be addressed in the bill.

Mrs Sandals: I'm pleased to rise to comment on the debate here on Bill 135 this afternoon. I would like to comment on a couple of the comments I have heard as the debate has unfolded. One has been the statement around protecting farmland and the fact that for many farmers—it's the quote we keep hearing—their retirement plan is the farm. I think this is a really interesting comment because it implies that when the farmer retires, the only retirement income they will have is if they sell their farm to a developer for significant dollars.

I think we need to stop and think about what the logical outcome would be if every farmer in the greenbelt, in the Niagara tender fruit and grape land areas, were to depend on being able to sell their farm to a developer. The logical conclusion is that once we went through a few generations where everybody retired by selling their farm to a developer, pretty soon there would be no farms left. They would all be paved over by developers. That's the reason this legislation is so important: that we protect that farmland and make sure it's there.

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Then there's the comment that if farmers don't have the speculative value of their land, they won't be able to get loans. Well, I have a lot of farmers who live north of me up in the Drayton area, north Wellington, and up in the north Perth area, where there's wonderful farmland but no speculative value. Those farmers are able to get loans to carry on very productive farms.

So I would like to discount both of those arguments. I support protecting our farmland so that future generations will be able to grow crops, not pavement.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments on the speech this afternoon on the greenbelt legislation, Bill 135. I've had a chance to make some brief comments previously, but I would just like to reiterate that farmers do have concerns with this bill. Fruit growers have concerns with this bill. They're concerned about devaluation of their properties. They're concerned about expropriation without compensation.

I note that Len Troup, chair of the Ontario Tender Fruit Producers' Marketing Board—he's the owner of a 120-hectare operation that employs 100 people—stated in the Hamilton Spectator, "They've got to slow down

and be prepared to deal with real-world situations,' he says.... 'They'd better start listening'"—this being the government—"and working with the people on the land and stop issuing ultimatums,' he warns."

Even the member from Stoney Creek, the Liberal member, is quoted in this paper, saying, "'From 10,000 feet up, it looks good, but there are some serious issues at the grassroots level,' Mossop admits."

Also, a local councillor, Dave Mitchell, is quoted in the paper: "Mitchell says in principle the greenbelt is a good idea, but it should make scientific sense based on the viability of the land."

I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing this afternoon was saying that this bill is based on science. We're concerned it's political science, not real science, not the science of whether it makes sense.

So there certainly are some concerns that have been expressed by farmers, in particular, with this bill. I'm in favour of producing green space, but we have to take those farmers' considerations into account.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Scarborough Centre has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr Duguid: Thank you to all those who participated in the debate: the members from Guelph-Wellington, Hamilton East, Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, the member from Muskoka. I thank them for their comments.

We're talking about a very, very important initiative here: a million acres of additional land that's now going to be preserved, 1.8 million acres in total; an area about the size of Algonquin Park, maybe just a little less than that; an area larger than Prince Edward Island. Every piece of this area that's being preserved is important.

I look to my colleague, my seatmate here from Oakville, Mr Flynn, and I look at the effort he put through to ensure that 1,300 acres in Oakville were preserved and included in this area. I commend him for that, along with Minister Ramsay, for recognizing the importance in their areas of this kind of thing.

As we're going out and talking to people in these consultations, one statement that's made from time to time is, "Are you basing this on political science or are you basing this on real science?" You know what? I don't give a damn whether it's real science or political science, because when we're talking about something like the 60-metre buffer zone on rivers, developers will tell you, "The norm is 30 metres. Why are you doing it 60 metres? You don't have science to support that." Well, you know what? Twenty years from now, when there's a 60-metre buffer on each side of that river, young people who are walking through that ravine and enjoying that ravine are not going to be saying that you didn't have the science to make that ravine as large as it is. They'll be saying, "Thank goodness you had the vision to recognize that it's not all about science; it's about quality of life as well."

Green space is important to our quality of life. You don't need scientific studies to tell you that a 60-metre buffer is better than a 30-metre buffer. A 60-metre buffer is better on every occasion.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, according to this gold pocket watch of mine, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1755.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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| St Paul's | Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique | | |

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

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