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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 3 May 2005

Mardi 3 mai 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 May 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 mai 2005

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GREAT LAKES JAM

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to applaud an event that occurred last August just outside of Owen Sound. It was the Great Lakes Jam: three days of rock and roll. Would you believe, Alice Cooper and his snake made an appearance on Coffin Hill, along with other legendary musicians like Steppenwolf, Johnny Winter and Kim Mitchell?

It's called the Great Lakes Jam because Northern Sound Grove Park is situated between Georgian Bay and Lake Huron, offering a panoramic view of Georgian Bay. The 415 acres of rolling hills of the main site offered camping, washroom and shower facilities and provided an amazing venue enjoyed by all who participated.

Steward Madill and Rudy Meier own the property, and the event was professionally produced by Wolfgang Siebert and supported by the concertgoers.

Unfortunately, a slim majority of the council of the municipality of Meaford could not see the benefit of this event occurring this year and voted against it. This event has been hijacked by a small majority of malcontent rate-payers, referred to locally as "wallygators." Their opposition will stop the tourist potential and economic spinoff that an annual event concert could provide to this area. This NIMBY attitude prevents the region from being promoted provincially and nationally and even impacts on local charities.

The plan was that part of the proceeds of this year's event go to the Grey County Cattlemen's Association as well as St. John Ambulance, which is building a new training centre and office called the Ed Tottenham House in Owen Sound.

Most importantly, the majority of the local people want this. It's a chance for them to have an experience of a lifetime. My hope is that the council will come to its senses and issue a temporary bylaw for the next Great Lakes Jam and help bring world-class entertainment and an injection of money to the business community of my riding.

ANNIVERSARY OF POLISH CONSTITUTION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It gives me great pleasure to rise today on the occasion of

the annual commemoration of Poland's May 3, 1791, constitution, which was the first in Europe and the second in the world.

To the Poles and their descendants, May 3 is a national holiday, for it bestows upon them a priceless heritage of humanitarianism, tolerance and freedom conceived at a time when most of Europe lived under the existence of unconditional power and tyranny.

The tyranny deemed the Polish Constitution too dangerous, and Poland lost its independence; its territories annexed by Austria, Russia and Prussia. In terms of a national life, Poland lost the entire 19th century, being reborn in 1918.

In the mid-1800s, the ancestors of my father, Paul Yakabuski, immigrated to Canada from the Kashub area of Poland. In 1963, he became the first person of Polish descent to be elected to the Ontario Legislature.

Barry's Bay also became home to the famous Polish Canadian test pilot Janusz Zurakowski. He passed away last year, but not before a monument and a park in the middle of Barry's Bay were dedicated in his honour.

This is a week of special celebration for those of us who are of Polish descent. At noon today on the lawn here at Queen's Park, I attended the flag-raising ceremony by the Polish Canadian Congress. On Saturday, May 7, I'm looking forward to joining the Wilno Heritage Society in celebrating friendship, fellowship and freedom from Communist rule, as well as the recognition of the tremendous impact the Polish Kashub culture has had and the contribution it has made to our community, Ontario and Canada.

EDUCATION WEEK

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): This is Education Week, and yesterday I had the opportunity to go to two schools. At one, a choir of 450 students and an orchestra, simultaneously with students right across Canada from coast to coast, sang a song called A Little Music, by Chris Tait, where they celebrated what music is to our culture—all cultures, regardless of where you come from—how it's a level playing field for students so that they can participate in knowing and learning the discipline of music and understanding its correlation to a subject such as mathematics. It was a wonderful opportunity. There is nothing better. Can you imagine your world without music, the arts or literature? I certainly can't.

From there, I went to another school where 20 students in grades 6, 7 and 8 worked after school—not

during school hours—with Dell, a computer company, and the Toronto District School Board. Those students learned how to take apart a hard drive and put it back together again, and they got to keep the computers for the skills they had amassed. It was phenomenal, because Mr. Drummond took his time after school to work with those students.

That's what Education Week is really all about: celebrating the wonderful teachers, the administrators, the secretaries we couldn't possibly even begin to run our schools without, the maintenance people. They're phenomenal. Of course, the governance and the trustees are important as well, but the other critical component of every school is the parents, who make a difference every time they take their children to school, participate in learning, read to them during the evening or when they can, or engage them in any kind of sport after school or during the school hours.

As we all celebrate Education Week, let's not forget two very important words, and they are "thank you" to everyone who helps our children.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Yesterday we heard that the government plans to table its budget on May 11, the day when Ontarians will again witness the sad reality of Dalton McGuinty's mismanagement of the province's books and his back-of-the-napkin approach.

The McGuinty Liberals simply make it up as they go along. They weave and dodge all fiscal responsibility, and when things get tough they just blame it on somebody else.

In the face of an ever-increasing unbalanced budget, the McGuinty Liberals have gone on a reckless spending spree, throwing our tax dollars to the wind in order to make up for their plummeting opinion polls.

1340

Speaking of Dalton McGuinty's budget disaster, Ontarians should be aware that last year's budget is actually going to bite them twice as hard this year. Families will be expected to pay twice as much in health tax in 2005 as they did in 2004. Even though McGuinty promised over and over that he would not raise our taxes one red cent, he's now going to dig even deeper into our pockets.

People in my community are asking, "Why is he doing this? Why are the Liberals taking more of our hard-earned money and delivering less and less?" To that question, there is always one very simple answer: Dalton McGuinty. Only McGuinty would introduce a health tax and in the same breath delist chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services. Only Dalton McGuinty would go on a spending spree and shy away from his fiscal responsibilities and promises to balance the books. And only Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals would use a back-of-the-napkin approach to Ontario's finances and continue to just make it up as they go along.

SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I want to wish everybody in the many diverse ethnic, cultural and religious South Asian communities a very happy South Asian Heritage Month this May.

This month we celebrate the contributions South Asians make to our communities, province and country. South Asians from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and many other countries are a vital part of our Canadian mosaic. They work hard, respect their families and get involved enthusiastically in community life.

South Asians make up about 7% of Ontario's population and cover the breadth of world languages, cultures and religions. In Hamilton and throughout Ontario, events carry the theme for 2005, which is Acknowledge, Educate and Celebrate.

On Saturday, May 14 at Hamilton Place Studio, starting at about 3:30 p.m., a wonderful festival will be taking place, and, anybody watching, I invite you down to our theatre to watch and experience the taste of South Asia. I know all of you here will join me in applauding the diversity and contributions of citizens from South Asia.

At the same time, we need to recognize the barriers and discrimination that continue to confront the South Asian communities: income disparities, lack of affordable places to live, mental stresses on South Asian children, prejudice. We can't turn our back on these issues but, rather, must meet them head on. We can open the door wider to the many skills and talents that South Asians have to offer and fast-track their Canadian accreditation so they can work in their given professions. We can strengthen our response to racism by restoring the Anti-Racism Secretariat, which made such positive strides in the past. Yes, we celebrate this special month, and we recommit to solving the outstanding challenges facing South Asians today.

WORLD ASTHMA DAY

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I rise in the House today to ask everybody here to just stop and think what it would be like if suddenly you could not breathe. That is the way 2.5 million Canadians feel at some time or another because they suffer from asthma.

Today is World Asthma Day. Over the past two decades, the prevalence of asthma in Ontario has increased markedly. Approximately 12% of Ontario's schoolchildren have been diagnosed with asthma. Right now, it is the leading cause of hospitalization for children in this province, and it is a significant cause of school absenteeism.

While we still need to learn an awful lot about it, there are certain things that we do know, and one thing we know is that smog days keep people with asthma imprisoned in their homes or rushing to their emergency rooms. We know that the OMA has estimated that as a result of air pollution, by the year 2007, 2,250 Ontarians will die a premature death. That's like five to six jumbo

jets crashing and every Ontarian on board dying—because of pollution.

So we have to stop the killer smog. We can do it as individuals by being more judicious in our use of cars, lawn mowers and leaf blowers. As a government, we have taken action by closing the Lakeview coal generating station and replacing it with better alternative fuels, and we are taking action by bringing in legislation to ban smoking and second-hand smoke.

ANNIVERSARY OF POLISH CONSTITUTION

Ms. Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke–Lakeshore): It is with great joy and privilege that I stand today in the Legislature to recognize and pay tribute to the 214th anniversary of the Polish Constitution.

Today, Polish Canadians across Toronto and Ontario are celebrating and commemorating a country that pioneered constitutionalism in Europe and the world. As one of the first constitutions in the world, the Polish Constitution is a symbol of its people and their struggle for liberty, justice and honour.

We are very lucky to have the consulate of the Republic of Poland's office located in Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I have had the pleasure to meet with the Consul General on several occasions, and he has joined us here with his family today. As well, I have had the opportunity to meet with many members of a strong, vivacious and proud Polish community in many corners across our province.

I am pleased, on behalf of the Honourable Gerard Kennedy, member for Parkdale–High Park, to say thank you to everyone who participated in today's flag-raising ceremony in the front of the Legislative Assembly to honour this momentous day in Poland's history. Over the weekend and throughout the week, there will be many celebrations and festivities to honour May 3, 1791, and I know that many members of my community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore will be marking Polish heritage and democracy today.

I want to extend my warmest wishes on behalf of the members of the Legislature to all Polish Ontarians and Canadians on today's most important anniversary.

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I'm honoured to rise today to share with the House some of the exciting events going on in my riding of Brant as we celebrate Education Week.

Let's not make a mistake: Education Week is every week in the province of Ontario for education. Individual schools in both the Grand Erie board and the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board are hosting annual events, such as an open house all across the school system.

But they also have special events going on. One of the schools that I started my career in, Blessed Sacrament, is having a flower-shrub contribution to the environment,

and they're holding an appreciation barbecue for the students. Sacred Heart school, the last school I was principal of, is highlighting the students' written work as part of a young authors' festival. St. Gabriel's is re-writing and rerecording *The Cat Came Back*, and the grade sixes, along with St. Anthony Daniel's, are celebrating by participating in a robotics challenge at Notre Dame school. St. John's high school is doing a science Olympics; St. Peter's is having a speech contest; St. Theresa's—it's on and on and on.

AG Hodge, Central and Dufferin are having exhibitions of artwork. Pauline Johnson, where I graduated, is involved in the production, with 70 students and staff, of *Grease*. James Hillier school is inviting grandparents and special friends to celebrate the accomplishments of the school's students.

Education Week is an extremely celebratory festival of Ontario's education system. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Minister of Education and the Premier, their considerable talents are being spent on students and teachers instead of the unrest of the previous government. I look forward to more and more weeks of Education Week across the province.

ROMANIAN ACCESSION TREATY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Today we are celebrating a special moment in the history of mankind. An important event took place last week that will have long-ranging effects for the people of Romania: the signing of the accession treaty of Romania to the European Union.

Helping us to celebrate this historic event are a number of distinguished guests who are here in our gallery: the Romanian Consul General, Nicanor Teculescu; Dumitru Popescu, Mr. Radu Iatan, and others.

While we celebrate this historic event, we are mindful of Romania's recent history. The people of Romania suffered under the yoke of Soviet domination and dictatorship for over two generations. But the very generation that suffered the most never forgot the true destiny of the Romanian people: the desire to throw off the yoke of oppression and stand free. They overthrew a dictatorship. They relit the torch of freedom and passed it on to this new generation of Romanians, who hold that symbol of liberty high, never to forget its real value.

Today as Romania's government signalled its clear purpose to join the western democratic family of nations, we wish to congratulate the people of Romania on their historic decision. [*Remarks in Romanian.*]

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Ms. Jeffrey from the standing committee on general government presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption.

Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

DEFERRED VOTES

ADOPTION INFORMATION DISCLOSURE ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LES ADOPTIONS

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 183, An Act respecting the disclosure of information and records to adopted persons and birth parents / Projet de loi 183, Loi traitant de la divulgation de renseignements et de dossiers aux personnes adoptées et à leurs pères ou mères de sang.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Arthurs, Wayne	Jackson, Cameron	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Prue, Michael
Bentley, Christopher	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Bisson, Gilles	Kular, Kuldip	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogiani, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Leal, Jeff	Ramal, Khalil
Broten, Laurel C.	Levac, Dave	Ramsay, David
Brown, Michael A.	Marchese, Rosario	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Martel, Shelley	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Matthews, Deborah	Scott, Laurie
Caplan, David	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Tascona, Joseph N.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Tory, John
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Norm	Watson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	O'Toole, John	Wong, Tony C.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Hampton, Howard	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Horwath, Andrea	Patten, Richard	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 71; the nays are 12.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I would like to request that this bill go to the social policy committee.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. If the member from Burlington and the House leader would like to have their discussion, they can take it outside.

1400

VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce, in the east members' gallery, Her Worship the mayor of Mississauga, Hazel McCallion, who's accompanied by city manager Janice Baker.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I wonder if it's a point of order to introduce the mayor of Brampton. Mayor Susan Fennell is in the opposition's gallery, as is Marolyn Morrison from Caledon.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): It seems there's going to be a chain effect. There are many, many mayors here today. I'd like to recognize them all and hope that they have a pleasant visit to our Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. In asking this question, I am not asking you to tell me any secrets or to reveal any information that would jeopardize budget secrecy. I simply want to ask you this: Given that we're only a week away from your next budget, have you given your Minister of Finance instructions to produce a balanced budget by 2007, as you promised you would do?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): The leader of the official opposition is seeking something that he knows is part and parcel of our budgetary plan. We look forward to presenting that budget and providing all of the details that I know the members of the opposition in particular are very interested in.

Let me say this: We will be bringing forward a prudent and responsible plan that gives still further life to our three major priorities: education, health care and a strong and prosperous economy. We look forward to doing that on May 11.

Mr. Tory: I notice that nowhere in there was responsible financial management. It was a simple question

that didn't involve asking you about any secrets or any information; just whether you had given a simple instruction to your Minister of Finance to keep the promise you made about balancing the budget in 2007.

On page 26 of last year's budget speech, your Minister of Finance said, "The government of Ontario must balance its books ... and we will be reporting regularly on our progress."

Premier, the only report we've seen since then was an admission, three quarters of the way through the year, thanks to some accounting scheme you were doing, that the deficit was going to \$6 billion. Today you refuse to answer a simple question about an instruction and a promise you gave. You're making it up as you go. Will you stand here now and tell us that you will instruct the Minister of Finance to balance the budget by 2007, as you promised?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I'm not going to provide specific details of this budgetary plan, but I can say that, when I made reference to one of our three priorities being a strong and prosperous economy, implicit in that is sound financial management.

I would draw a distinction between the approach that we are bringing and the approach brought by the former Conservative government, which saddled us with close to a \$6-billion deficit and added some \$43 billion to the provincial debt. I would categorize that as not being sound financial management. We will bring sound, responsible financial management to the people's finances.

Mr. Tory: I'm assuming that's going to start next week, because we certainly haven't seen it so far. In fact, the budget deficit is \$6 billion and rising from there. It is clear that this government has no plan whatsoever to balance—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. You may proceed.

Mr. Tory: It's clear that this Liberal government has no plan whatsoever to balance the books and that the Premier indeed has no plan whatsoever to keep his own promises made only months ago.

One other promise that was made was to undertake a review of government spending. Your minister indicated to the Legislature that you'd be reporting regularly on the progress made in finding waste and inefficiency. There hasn't been one report containing any specifics at all since then, the better part of a year ago. What specific progress has been made on this promise, a promise that should be central to a plan of prudent financial management that you talked about, and to balancing the books, as you promised, by 2007?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I know the Minister of Finance is very much looking forward to speaking in some detail about some of the measures that we have already taken, about some of the efficiencies that we have already found and about the work yet to be done.

The minister has already identified \$350 million by way of efficiencies. Those were announced in December. There is obviously more work to do. We look forward to

detailing some of that in the upcoming budget and, as I say, we look forward to delivering that budget right here in this Legislature on May 11.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I have a new question to the Premier. You announced the number of \$330 million last fall but no specifics, and we still don't have any. You are making this up as you go along.

The amount of health taxes people pay this year will double under the scheme that was laid out in your budget last year. This, after you looked into the cameras during the election campaign and, like so many other solemn promises, promised not to raise taxes. The amount people will pay will double this year in your health tax, and we're over a month into the new fiscal year. Is it reasonable to expect that the hospitals—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The member from Sudbury and the minister, come to order, please.

Mr. Tory: People are paying double the health tax they paid last year under Mr. McGuinty's scheme. Is it fair to expect that the hospitals will be told how much funding they will receive for this year, now a month into the fiscal year, on budget day? Is that going to happen?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): We've invested an additional \$3 billion this year into health care, including \$1.7 billion more into our hospitals, and we're proud to be able to do that. One of the reasons, in part, we were able to do that is the result of our new health premium.

I want to remind the leader of the official opposition and Ontarians who may be watching that the leader is telling us that he is going to eliminate the health premium; he's going to take \$2.4 billion out of our health care system. That could mean the closure of at least 10 major Ontario hospitals. The discussion at that time will not be one about funding; it will be about the closure of hospitals.

Again, we look forward, on May 11, to introducing further details about our new financing for health care in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Tory: Of course, it's not about closing hospitals at all; it's about spending all government money better, which you absolutely refuse to do.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Tory: I want to quote from a press release that you issued on January 25, 2002, in which you said, "Ontario Liberals oppose the return of OHIP premiums because they are a tax hike on working families"—Dalton McGuinty.

Premier, the simple truth is, you are charging people double this year out of their pockets what you did last year with your illegal health tax. Last year, \$100 million of that money went to fire nurses in this province—almost 1,000 nurses. Will you stand in your place today

and tell people who are paying twice as much in your health tax this year whether one penny of that is going to go to firing nurses this year, or are you going to hire nurses like you said you would do?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: From time to time the truth is important and relevant in this place. We have funded—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The members opposite may not like to hear this, but it really is important. We have funded 3,052 new full-time nursing positions in Ontario, including 664 in our large hospitals, 538 in our small and medium hospitals, 600 in long-term-care homes, and 250 in home care and community mental health. We are proud to have provided that funding, and we look forward to doing more for Ontario patients.

1410

Mr. Tory: At least the Premier didn't deny laying off the nurses, because, of course, he did and his government did, at a cost of \$100 million out of the health tax—this, the same man who said in the same press release, "Families are already paying for health care with their taxes. Pay more for health care, pay twice for health care, but get less health care." That's what you said you were opposed to. That's exactly your plan: Pay more and get less.

My supplementary is to the Premier again. Today, the hospitals in the GTA/905 area said that your hospital funding is not keeping up with the explosive growth in population. All the hospitals ended last year with \$330 million in accumulated deficits. There has been no word at all from your government telling them what you're planning to do or whether you're not planning to do anything about those deficits. My question is this: How can you demand they send you plans by a very specific date or else and then just not get back to them with respect to what you're going to do about those plans and their funding needs for last year, let alone for this year?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it's important, once again, to compare and contrast. So far, we've invested \$1.7 billion more in Ontario hospitals. Let's understand what the Tories did on their watch. We went from 63 underserved communities to 142. They cut \$557 million over two years from hospitals. They closed 28 hospitals. They closed 5,000 beds alone in their first two years. They spent \$400 million to fire thousands of nurses, and they compared Ontario's dedicated nurses to Hula Hoop workers. When it comes to home care, they cut home care funding, they lowered standards and they fired local boards that wouldn't keep quiet because they were busy complaining about the antics of this government. That is their record. I'll put that record up against our record any day when it comes to supporting health care and making the necessary investments.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. Let me bring the Minister of Community and Social Services to order first before you start your question.

Leader of the third party?

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: Premier, one and a half years ago, you promised municipalities you would give them two cents a litre of the existing provincial gas tax to fund public transit. Today, municipalities, large and small, across Ontario are facing very tough financial circumstances, yet they still haven't seen the full two cents a litre of the provincial gas tax. In your May 11 budget, Premier, will the municipalities finally see the full two cents a litre of the provincial gas tax, or will this be yet another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): We are very, very proud of our gas announcement, and we have laid out our plan very clearly. We have already given one cent of the gasoline tax to the municipalities. The cheques have been issued. A couple of weeks ago, the leader of the third party said the cheques have not gone. All those cheques have gone, and those municipalities are putting those cheques to good use.

We have two mayors in this audience today. The mayor of Mississauga will tell you that we are buying 40 new buses, and similar announcements are being made in Brampton.

So I think we are very proud of that record, and our record is 100 times better than what your record has been so far.

Mr. Hampton: I didn't know that the question was so complicated that it needed a long non-answer.

I'll send this over to the Premier: "We will give two cents per litre of the existing provincial gasoline tax to municipalities for public transit." It wasn't one cent; it wasn't 1.5 cents; it was two cents a litre, Premier. Many municipalities are facing very tough financial circumstances. Toronto, for example, will start the next budget year \$438 million in the hole. Meanwhile, your government, the McGuinty government, isn't keeping your promise, and you're not meeting your financial obligations to municipalities. So I say to the Premier: Are the municipalities going to see the two cents a litre, as you promised, or will it be another McGuinty broken promise? Give this to the Premier, please. It's his promise.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I'm not sure what is happening to the third party. It was very clearly laid out in our budget documents right here last year. I'm not sure whether or not the leader of the third party has read that. Let me just read it for him. It says, "Starting in October, we will begin to deliver on our commitment to make two cents of the existing provincial gas tax available for public transit.

"We will begin with one cent this October, increasing to 1.5 cents in October 2005 and two cents in October 2006."

I'm not sure what is not clear in this statement that he doesn't understand.

Mr. Hampton: I want to remind the Premier that what we remember from that budget is your \$3.7-billion Enron accounting trick.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'd like to hear the final supplementary from the leader of the third party. I'm getting disruption from the government side.

Mr. Hampton: What we remember from last year's budget is your attempted \$3.7-billion Enron accounting trick, which the provincial Auditor General blew the whistle on and said, "This isn't permitted."

Your ministers tried this past weekend to peddle the Minister of Finance's story with mayors and councillors from northwestern Ontario. If you want to read the press reports, they're quite interesting, because they told your ministers that you're not meeting your financial obligations to municipalities—not on the gas tax; not on the so-called new municipal financial partnership. You're not meeting your obligations.

The question is: In the election, you promised two cents a litre. Will municipalities see two cents a litre now, or are you going to continue to break your promises? Which is it, Premier? Are they going to see the money, or are you going to continue to break your promises?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I'm not sure why it's so hard to take yes for an answer. We are already giving one cent of the gasoline tax, we're going to move to 1.5 cents of the gasoline tax starting in October 2005, and then we'll move, in 2006, to two cents of the gasoline tax.

Let me just read what the mayor in the Kirkland Lake area said. He said, "I have been presenting our case since the mid-1980s and this is the first time that the government of the day has listened and taken action. Without your understanding and timely moves, our town would be facing huge tax increases, little, if any, capital works and a desperate future."

That says it all, for me, about what our government has done for municipalities. But I want to say to you again that we are moving from one cent to 1.5 cents, and then we'll be moving to two cents of the gasoline tax.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Premier: Last week I think your government really hit a low point. Despite your promises of funding autism treatment for children, despite your promises to end the clawback of the national child benefit, despite your promises to invest provincial money in child care, your members actually came in here and voted against a resolution which would hold you to your promises. Premier, my question is very specific: Are you, in this budget, going to keep your promise? Are you going to end your clawback of the national child benefit supplement from the lowest-income children and families in

this province, or will that be another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Obviously, I'm not going to provide details as to the upcoming budget. But let me speak about our very short and recent history. We have provided more than \$1.7 billion in new funding benefiting Ontario's children. We've done something no other government ever did: We created a ministry responsible for children and youth services. We've invested \$1.1 billion in new education funding, \$365 million in special education funding, and \$58 million to create 4,000 new affordable child care spaces. That, by the way, is the first boost in 10 years.

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I know that, insofar as the NDP are concerned, we can never, ever spend enough money anywhere, but we've got to take into account our financial circumstances. Given those circumstances, I am proud of the investments we've been able to make that support Ontario's children.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, this isn't your money. This is money that the federal government designates for the lowest-income children in this province. It's money that they're very clear is supposed to go to the lowest-income children in this province. But you and your government take that money. You take thousands of dollars a year from families who are surviving on the lowest of incomes.

This was your promise, Premier. It was a very specific promise. You said that the clawback was wrong. You said that you were going to end the clawback.

Premier, in this budget, are you going to keep your promise? Are you going to stop taking federal money from the lowest-income children and families in this province, or will this be another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I do like the opportunity to clarify the record. I think it's important to note that individuals involved with the national child benefit—when the government re-directs that money, it goes right back to Ontario families in the form of the Ontario child care tax credit.

This is hardly a party that is going to argue against assisting families with child care. In fact, they bemoan that we don't move quickly enough in child care, and I agree. We are doing the best we can. Moreover, that funding goes into children's mental health agencies; it goes into children's rehab centres; it goes to municipalities, where \$42 million is driven into children's programs like new breakfast programs run by those municipalities for the very children all of us are talking about.

We have made a list, which is growing every day, of what our government has done to help Ontario's most vulnerable, and we will continue to add to that list be-

cause our determination is that this will be a government with a difference. We will take care of our most vulnerable people.

Mr. Hampton: I want to quote someone: “We will end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. The clawback is wrong and we will end it.”

Quote again: “I oppose the Conservative government’s practice of clawing back the national child benefit ... a practice we will end during our first mandate.” You’re halfway through your first mandate, Premier.

This is what poor children say about your government. What’s it like having this clawback of money? “Feeling ashamed when my dad can’t get a job; not buying books at the book fair; not getting to go to birthday parties; not getting a hot dog on hot dog day at school; pretending that you forgot your lunch; not being able to play hockey; being teased for the way you’re dressed; not getting to go on school trips.”

Premier, you can say you’re using the money for something else. The fact is, you promised to end taking money from the poorest children and the poorest families in this province. It’s not your money; it comes from the federal government. It’s supposed to go to the poorest children. Are you going to end the clawback?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I think it’s important to note that the moment this government took office, we made a significant shift in the policy around the national child benefit. Let us say right now that the moment it became a McGuinty government, we returned \$7 million to the families in Ontario who are also on social assistance. I can tell you that that was a significant shift.

The last government was one of eight provinces across the country that started this child benefit clawback. I can tell you that all of us wish they hadn’t done it. I can also tell you that we are moving—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I would ask the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Timmins–James Bay to come to order.

Minister, you have 10 seconds to wrap up.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Thank you, Speaker. It would take far longer to suggest what we have done since we became government to help children in Ontario. We will not stop. We are moving in the right direction. We have given a clear signal that we have stopped all the future increases that are coming from the federal government. That is far more than you did, because this—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby–Ajax): My question is for the Minister of Finance, and I want to compliment him on the improvement in his ties. You’re looking much better.

But that’s not the Minister of Finance. The question, then, is for the Premier, in the absence of the Minister of Finance.

It’s about the budget and about spending, Premier. You said in the budget last year, “We must hold the line on other spending,” and that you’d restrict program spending to an average growth rate of just 1.9% a year. Well, this year, your spending has gone up—we’re not sure what, and the Minister of Finance couldn’t tell us the other week, but at least 6.9%; probably more than that. In order to accomplish your fiscal plan, spending next year will have to be a 0.6% increase in program spending. My question, Premier, is: Where are you going to cut spending in the fiscal year that just started?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Chair of Management Board.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Of course, the details will be outlined here on May 11. I’d say again to the public, it will be right here in the Legislature. It won’t be like the Conservatives did, presenting their budget in an auto plant; it will be right here in the Legislature. The minister will outline a responsible fiscal plan.

I would just say to the public, you should recognize that, the last year in office, the economy grew at 1.3% under this government. Spending in the last three years of that government went up 21%. I don’t want to take any lessons on the economy or the finances from that party over there. We will present a responsible fiscal plan that will deal with the essential areas for the province: health care and education. As I say, it will be a budget that is presented right here in the Legislature next week.

Mr. Flaherty: So we have from the putative Minister of Finance that he doesn’t know where they’re going to cut spending. We’ll find out about that.

Do you know this? Or maybe the Premier knows this. You said a year ago in the budget—this is a promise; you’re good on promises—two promises a year ago: first, a thorough review of major provincial assets and to report to the people of Ontario; and second, a major review of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario with terms of reference saying to report in the spring of 2005 on a date to be approved by the Minister of Finance. When are the people of Ontario going to see these reports? You promised them a year ago. Produce them.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Again, I will take absolutely no lectures from that party. I’ll tell the people, 450 consultants were being used by them, primarily to take people off the payroll. We brought them back into the civil service and saved \$20 million a year. This is artificial—moving people off the payroll and wasting taxpayers’ money. We are dealing financially responsibly with our budget, and there’s but one example: \$10 million a year on partisan advertising hidden away. We’ve gotten rid of that. We have identified \$350 million of savings, and I assure you we’re working aggressively on that. So I’ll take absolutely no lectures from that party that took spending up 21% and 450 consultants outside. We saved \$20 million.

You will see next week, here in the Legislature, a responsible, long-term, fiscally sustainable plan that will

restore our health care and education system and get our finances in good control.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I'll just wait until the member from St. Catharines stops heckling.

ILLEGAL TAXI OPERATORS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, today, several hundred taxi drivers circled this building. They came and held a press conference, and they are really opposed and discontented with your amendments to the Highway Traffic Act. Your so-called anti-scooping amendments and provisions may be easily enforced at Toronto International Airport, but they are not nearly so easily enforced within the confines of the city of Toronto, and we know that there's more scooping taking place inside the city by airport limousine drivers than ever takes place at the airport.

Minister, we want you today to stand in your place and to announce that you will pull your amendments to part IV of the Highway Traffic Act and replace those with fair provisions for both sides. Will you do it?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for his new-found interest in transportation issues.

1430

Let me tell you about the intent of this legislation. This legislation is intended to protect the public. It's intended to improve the safety of the passengers. This legislation is a major step forward for the taxi industry in this province. For 30 years, nothing was done to protect the taxi industry or the passengers and move this step forward. Our government is the only one that is moving this step forward.

I want to say to this member that he was on the Toronto council for a long time, and they are responsible for some of the legislation for the taxi industry. He did nothing when he was there. Now we are moving forward to actually move some of the things forward and make the life of the taxi industry—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. Prue: I'm proud of my role in the past. Even when you were doing nothing and couldn't even dream of politics, I was there.

You may recall as well, last year, that on September 10 the Premier, yourself, the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale and the member from Brampton Centre attended a fundraiser at Pearson Convention Centre, of which the airport taxi and limousine drivers were a part—a fundraiser of \$200,000 for your party. You remember that, don't you? You also remember that the next week, a newspaper by the name of Sanjh Savera Weekly came out and talked about how you had promised, for the \$200,000, to make these amendments. It came as no surprise to us that in February you brought these same amendments forward.

My question, Minister: Did you discuss those amendments of the Highway Traffic Act with the members of the airport taxi and limousine industry at that fundraiser, and what promises did you make them?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me tell you, I'm absolutely surprised and even, I think—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Many members seem to want to answer this question. Let me give the Minister of Transportation his opportunity to answer that question.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me just say this: I think there is absolutely no basis to these allegations, and this doesn't even require an answer from my point of view. But let me tell you that this legislation is about fairness, for making sure that the public gets protected and that we make the taxi industry viable in this province. What is wrong with making sure that illegal taxi drivers do not pick up passengers when there are licensed taxi drivers available? We are also making it illegal that anybody who arranges for taxi scoopers will get penalized.

I'm not sure what is wrong in this legislation that he does not find that it will improve the taxi industry in this province.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today we voted and passed second reading of a monumental piece of legislation: the adoption disclosure bill. Bill 183 brings forward the first substantive legislative amendments to Ontario's adoption disclosure laws in almost 80 years.

Minister, there were some concerns raised yesterday when the legislation was being debated surrounding the protection of privacy, specifically as to whether the proposed legislation allows adopted adults and birth parents the same right to privacy as Ontarians not involved in the adoption process. No adopted person should be forced to meet with their birth parent, and no birth parent, frankly, should be forced to meet with their child unless they want to. It's essential that both parties have the right to privacy and are protected at the end of the day. Minister, can you please assure this House that the privacy of those Ontarians who have entered into an adoption agreement will be respected?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the question, because we are in fact making history today with the vote that we had in the House earlier. We're moving forward still. This bill is moving to hearings, where we'll have yet another opportunity to hear from the Ontario public around the provisions that we're outlining in the bill.

Let me say that if we do nothing, if we don't have a bill in the House, what currently happens is, no protection for people—

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): You're going on and on. Answer his question.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I'm trying to answer the question. I hope the members opposite are keenly interested in this. I understand that some of the Conservatives didn't vote—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. Member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, I know you're in good health, so come to order.

Interjection.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Stop it, Bill.

The Speaker: Order. Ten seconds to wrap up.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: In the absence of bringing in legislation for protection, frankly there is no protection out there for people. What we have in this bill is a no-contact provision. What the bill does is allow the right to information without the right to a relationship. No-contact is very important.

Mr. Duguid: I can assure the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound that indeed I did get an answer to my question, and I'm pleased to hear that the privacy of adoptees and birth parents will be protected.

Another concern that's been raised was with respect to the adoption disclosure act is the retroactivity of the bill. Under the proposed legislation, all adoptees and birth parents will be able to access information from birth records and adoption orders that was previously unavailable. There are people across Ontario who have been trying to locate their birth parents or children they have given up for adoption with little help from the government. They're extremely grateful for the help this legislation has provided.

Minister, can you please share with the House your commitment to making this bill retroactive in nature?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I am very happy to address the issue of retroactivity. The government did finally have to make a decision, because it really is the nuts and bolts of what we're doing.

People who have given up children for adoption or individuals who have been put up for adoption in that period of time have no availability to access who they are, and all this time we have respected that there are people who do not want to be found. We believe that the compromise is the right to information about someone's identity without the right to a relationship. Bringing in a no-contact provision protects those who don't want to be contacted, and yet those who have grown up never knowing who they are, or birth parents who have always wondered how their children fared, will at least have the most basic information. We believe that for those individuals who have had their rights trampled, it's time to right that wrong.

REGION OF PEEL

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): My question is to the Premier. I have in my hand an e-mail from Brampton mayor Susan Fennell stating that you told her in January 2004 that Peel restructuring was “not on the agenda.”

I also have a memo from Emil Kolb, chair of the region of Peel, in which he states that on June 30, at

6:30 p.m., you told him your government “will not be making any restructuring changes in Peel.”

I have a letter here from Caledon regional councillor Richard Paterak, which states that on February 25, 2005, you told them that you would be “following Judge Adams's report.”

Bill 186, as it stands, is a betrayal of those three promises that you made. This bill was born out of broken promises. Premier, what signal does it send to municipal leaders in Peel and across the province when the word of the Premier can't be trusted?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): First of all, let me take the opportunity to welcome all three mayors to Queen's Park today. We're delighted to have them here.

You will be aware, Speaker, as of course the mayors themselves are, that we invited Mr. Justice Adams to provide advice and recommendations. We are pleased and proud to be adopting eight out of nine of those recommendations. Let me tell you as well that we believe we have found a fair and balanced approach to dealing with this matter. No community has a majority. The end result is that the council itself will now be required to select its own chair.

We think we've set up these three communities and the Peel region itself on a path to success. We think it speaks to a tremendous amount of optimism that our government has when it comes to the community of Peel, and we have every expectation and desire that the mayors will work together in the interests of their respective constituencies.

1440

Mr. Hudak: Premier, the problem is that you've taken about a half-dozen different positions on this issue in the last year alone. Municipal leaders say that Bill 186 will deadlock Peel regional council with frequent tie votes. Your Minister of Municipal Affairs can't even answer basic questions about what happens with tied votes and how the chair would be appointed in that eventuality.

You mentioned the mayors. Just look to the gallery: Mayor McCallion on one side and Mayor Fennell and Mayor Morrison on the other. Your indecision and your broken promises have created a deep divide within Peel region. Effectively, your bill risks turning Peel council into a model of yourself: dithering, deadlocked and unable to make substantial decisions. Will you do the right thing and withdraw this legislation until a consensus can be found that all three mayors can work with, and bring the municipalities back together again?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's a little hard to stomach this commentary from a member of a government that thrilled itself in forcing amalgamations on so many communities throughout Ontario.

Again, to be clear in terms of what we've done here, we invited an independent, objective, expert third party in to provide some good advice. The communities themselves were having difficulty coming to terms with their shared future. We have adopted eight out of the nine recommendations. We have ensured that no single com-

munity has a majority. We'll require that the communities themselves, through their representation on regional council, select their own chair. We think that is a fair approach. We think it is the best approach, given the circumstances. The only additional element that is required to ensure this is a success is goodwill on the part of the people of Peel and on the part of the representation. They have everything it takes to enjoy still further successes long into the future.

DANGEROUS OFFENDERS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Attorney General: Moira Welsh's articles in the Toronto Star expose Ontario's criminal justice system as, to this point, failing to protect children from a dangerous, chronic, serial, predatory pedophile. Applications for dangerous offender status are very much the exception rather than the rule. When are you going to be able to assure us that every pedophile conviction receives a thorough and complete review to determine the likelihood of a successful dangerous offender application and subsequent application in the courts?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I say to the member with respect to that particular matter, that particular issue and that particular person that the recommendation came up from crown counsel and I reviewed it, as I do all dangerous offender, long-term offender applications. I agreed with the recommendation and consented to a long-term offender application. That matter is before the court. I know the member would not want me to comment on that matter because then that would be an abuse of process and at the end of the day would have the opposite effect, I think, that the member would like to have.

I have consented to 35 dangerous offender applications since I have been Attorney General. We have a system in place that always flags those people who may constitute dangerous offenders. The crown then goes before the court to obtain a psychiatric assessment. If that is granted, then recommendations are made. The deputy or the assistant deputy makes a recommendation which I review. I consent to it, or I consent to a long-term offender application, or the third option is not to consent. But as I say, I've consented to 35 and I consented to this one.

Mr. Kormos: Attorney General, you know full well I'm not asking you to comment on a particular case, and that wasn't what the question was. You also know full well that preparing and presenting dangerous offender applications is incredibly labour intensive. Our crown attorneys' offices are burdened with incredibly high caseloads. Crown attorneys across the province are having to make some very radical decisions on a daily basis to clear those caseloads that cause huge backlogs in their offices and, quite frankly, in our courts as we are at the cusp, continuously, of yet more Askov applications.

When will you announce additional resources for crown attorneys across this province so that they can effectively pursue dangerous offender applications in every instance where there is a reasonable likelihood of that application being successful, rather than in the rare instance when you've made your own approval?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Well, 35 dangerous offender applications is hardly rare. I say to the member that this government has done more on high-risk offenders in achieving a national consensus that will see—if Parliament agrees—changes to our dangerous long-term offender system, recognizance of high-risk offenders, DNA databank and a restriction of conditional sentences. We will have done more in 18 months on this subject than the NDP government did in their five years or the Tory government did in their eight years. I'm sure the member does not want to suggest for a moment that our hard-working crown attorneys are not in fact reviewing the cases appropriately, because they are.

I say to the member, with the greatest of respect—and I'm responding to him in the way in which he asked the question—you are an experienced member of this House who can lecture me on a lot of things, but not on this one.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, a year ago, you introduced legislation to end the 60-hour workweek, a promise that we made that is now law in Ontario, and it's certainly a positive change that allows people to spend more time with their families. However, at that time, you committed to ensure that employment standards would be more vigorously enforced so that workers' rights in Ontario would be more effectively protected. As we all know, Ontarians enjoy a standard of life that is unparalleled in many other places in the world, but unfortunately there are still violations in the workplace. Minister Bentley, can you elaborate on the progress of our government's initiative to vigorously enforce employment standards?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I would like to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for his question and also for his advocacy on behalf of the most vulnerable workers in the province. He has truly been an ardent advocate on behalf of the people who cannot always advocate for themselves.

The member is quite right. We introduced and passed the end of the 60-hour workweek, notwithstanding the opposition of certain others. The right legislative framework is where we start. The next level is to make sure that employers are aware of their obligations and workers are aware of their rights. If you are not aware of your obligations, you will never be able to comply with them, and if you're not aware of your rights, you will never be able to seek the law's assistance. We've done two things. For employers, we've introduced the workplace gateway, an easy-to-use Web site that provides employers with easy-to-use information about how to be in compliance

with their obligations. For workers, we've introduced a series of information pamphlets and Web site information available not only in English, not only in French, but in 19 additional languages, and we've partnered up with more than 100 community groups to get the information out there to the people where they need it and how they need it.

Mr. Oraziotti: I'm pleased we're taking the steps necessary to help workers exercise their employment rights and expedite their claims, not just in English but in numerous languages. This is a very important issue, as Ontario's workforce is so diverse and comprised of many people whose first language may not be English.

Minister, I would also like to know what we are doing for the most vulnerable workers, those who may be aware of their rights but too afraid to demand them because they are afraid that, by speaking up, they could lose their jobs or suffer other consequences.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Once again, the member from Sault Ste. Marie is thorough in his analysis of the situation. If the positive doesn't work, what do you do next? There are two aspects to that: First of all, as the Provincial Auditor outlined in two audits—one conducted in 1991 and the other completed at the end of the Tory watch, in 2003—you've got to have proactive inspections. They had gone down to only 151 in the entire province in the year ending March 31, 2004. We committed to more than 2,000 proactive inspections; those are unannounced, surprise inspections at workplaces. We actually completed more than 2,300 such inspections for the protection of workers, but that's not all. In the previous 14 years to the end of 2004, there were 97 prosecutions—March 31, 2004. In the next 12 months, we conducted 226 prosecutions. We've done more to enforce the law in 12 months than the two previous governments did in 14 years.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, it involves the realignment of Highway 26 between Stayner and Collingwood. As you will know, to our astonishment, last summer your government cancelled, in mid-construction season, the continuation of constructing this highway. It's 6.7 kilometres; it's vital to the greater area. All the mayors have talked to you during AMO and other conferences. You've had delegations down. Some 20,000 cars a day travel on the old piece of Highway 26. This new realignment is badly needed for safety reasons.

Will you re-begin construction? I've never heard of any government coming in and cancelling such a small project, which is needed for safety, as you did last summer. The construction season has started now, and there is not a bulldozer in sight. When are you going to get the people back on that highway and get it built?

1450

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the member for asking this

question. I think I have answered questions on Highway 26 in the House prior to this as well.

We are completing the design and property acquisition on that highway, which is the realignment of Highway 26 between Collingwood and Wasaga Beach. The environmental study is also underway to examine ways to address the congestion on Highway 26 between Collingwood and the Stayner area that the member asked for. All those plans will be outlined in our 10-year infrastructure plan as we move forward.

Mr. Wilson: Minister, that was your excuse when you removed the construction crews in the middle of last summer—an astonishing sight for all of us up there. Right in mid-contract, you pulled them off the site because—I don't know; what?—it's in an opposition member's riding? Is that why you've done this? You're here to govern for all the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Wilson: So far, every time I ask this question, the same thing is done as today: I hear about property acquisition. I've talked to everyone, including the retailers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I'm trying to hear the member from Simcoe–Grey's question. Could you come to order, please.

Mr. Wilson: I've talked to the people you say you need to buy property from, and they say that no one from your ministry is talking to them. There are only a couple left and they happen to be big retailers—the big-box stores—that want to build on the new realignment. You talk about the design study. Well, here is the design study, completed in September 2002.

Finally, you talk about your government's 10-year capital plan for highways. This was included in the 2000 budget: \$33 million. The ministry had that money. It is a dereliction of duty that they have not spent that money on what Parliament acquired that money for.

Minister, when are you going to start reconstructing the highway?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Sometimes the truth does come out in this House, though. This was in the 2000 budget, as the member said.

They had eight years to complete this highway and they did nothing. According to their own plans, they were supposed to have this completed in 2003, and it was never done. It's one of those plans—they always announced a project but never completed any, and this is one of those projects.

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I request a late show, and I'll file the necessary papers.

Could you drive up there and see the half-completed highway that you stopped—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. As you said, I'm sure you will file the necessary papers for that late show.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. In northwestern Ontario,

there is now information technology that provides for medical X-rays and diagnostic images done in smaller communities to be instantly digitally transmitted to medical specialists at larger health science centres who can make immediate diagnoses and recommend treatment. Obviously, this saves the health care system a lot of money. Patients don't have to travel. Specialists don't have to travel. You can make better use of medical specialists.

But the northwest health network has informed your government that an immediate funding increment of \$5.6 million is needed to sustain and develop this important medical and information technology system. What they want to know is, will that funding be made available as a result of the May 11 budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I appreciate that the leader of the NDP is taking the opportunity to put his request on record, but he knows that we can't speak to the details on that.

Coincidentally, I was flipping through the channels last night and saw, I think it was on TVO, a story about that kind of technology, which is very impressive. I know it's very helpful to communities that are particularly affected by a shortage of doctors. I'm sure the Minister of Health is considering that and would like to have further opportunity to speak to it, but the member knows that I cannot disclose specific details regarding the upcoming budget.

Mr. Hampton: I'm going to send the Premier the letter that the northwest health network sent over. What was really interesting is that, last week, someone named Prime Minister Paul Martin was in Thunder Bay to have a photo-op at this telemedicine demonstration, to say to the world that this is leading-edge technology that needs to be developed.

This is what the northwest health network says to you: "Simply put, the regional hospitals do not have the capital or operating funds to continue with these projects. An immediate cash injection of approximately \$5.6 million is needed. Given the progress to date, the collapse of both of these projects due to a lack of funding would be a terrible waste."

Premier, you've received new funding from the federal government for medical technology, for diagnostics, for virtually everything that's involved here. What the people who run this system want to know is, since this system actually saves money for the health care system, will you use some of that federal money to ensure that this system can grow and be sustained and developed even further?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We're very pleased with the arrangements we've been able to make with the federal government when it comes to providing further investments of health care dollars in the province of Ontario. But I can tell the member opposite that, taking into account all the new federal health care funding, taking into account all the new revenue generated by the health premium, it is not nearly enough to satisfy the kinds of investments that we have to make in health care.

I thank the member for his question. I will direct it to the Minister of Health and encourage him to speak with the member directly about it.

COURT FACILITIES

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, last year, this government announced that we would be investing \$21 million to provide the community of Pembroke with effective and timely justice services. As you know, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke seems somewhat shy to discuss good news in his riding. So I would like the people of Pembroke to know, because they are looking forward to finally having accessible and effective court services in their riding: Can you reassure them and this House that the work is underway in Pembroke and that the community will have their new courthouse soon?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I want to thank the member for her question. Yes, I have noted the lack of questions on this particular issue from the local member, but I'm sure he too is very pleased with the good news that we have for the people of Pembroke.

I'm pleased to report that we are indeed moving forward on a new consolidated courthouse in Pembroke. Work is underway. The new consolidated courthouse is a priority for the residents of Pembroke. Just last month, we announced that the construction tender contract had been awarded to an eastern Ontario construction company. The site will house a consolidated courthouse, which will include the Superior Court of Justice and crown attorney offices as well as court administration offices. Not only that, but the expanded facility will feature barrier-free access for people with disabilities and enhanced security measures to provide greater safety for court users. Additional courtrooms will also allow—

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

Ms. Smith: That's great news for the people of Pembroke. It also dispels some of the conspiracy theories of the member from Simcoe–Grey.

I understand that Pembroke, however, is not the only new consolidated courthouse underway in this province. I understand that there's another courthouse underway in Durham, where their member is equally reticent to refer to any good news. Can you let us know the status of the consolidated courthouse in Durham?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I had better share the good news and refer this supplementary to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I was hoping that the member from Whitby–Ajax would ask this question before he leaves this Legislature, but I understand he's too busy with his nomination.

We'll get on to the Durham courthouse, which has a long, tortuous history. First announced by the Rae gov-

ernment in its dying days, the Harris-Eves government literally did nothing to advance it, despite the fact that the member from Whitby–Ajax was the Attorney General, despite the fact that two finance ministers were there.

1500

I have absolutely great news to share with this Legislative Assembly. We are proceeding with the Durham consolidated courthouse. The RFP has gone out. It's been in the newspapers. As we have committed with our partners at the region, we are on time. We are on schedule with a winter 2008-09 delivery. It is good news for the—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member from Whitby–Ajax, come to order. You're skirting some very unparliamentary language. I'm hearing it from my side, and I didn't want to interrupt the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his well-earned question.

CANADA-ONTARIO MUNICIPAL RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a question for the Premier. I just returned from a recent northern trip, and on that trip I met with several municipalities. Many of these communities expressed frustration with the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund program and the municipalities that haven't been approved.

I met with the mayor from Smooth Rock Falls, and I'd like to draw to your attention their application. Smooth Rock Falls applied for COMRIF funding, and that municipality was turned down. They're under a Ministry of the Environment Safe Drinking Water Act work order, and that has to be completed by December 31, 2005—its work on their water system. The total cost of the work order is \$432,000. The amount they're asking for from the province is \$288,000. To put it into some perspective for you, this will mean a tax increase of up to 40% for the municipality of Smooth Rock Falls. They said that under the past government, they were at least treated fairly. The mayor's exact words to me were, "What's this government trying to do? Wipe out the north?" My question—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I'm more than happy to answer the question and to reassure the municipalities that this government plans on working with them, that this government believes that infrastructure is important.

You know what the member forgets? What the member who used to be the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines forgets to say in his question is that his party, when he was the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, cut \$658 million in funding to

municipalities in their 1995 budget. Do you want to know where all these problems started? It started when the Tory government, the Harris-Eves-Tory government, decided that they would abandon municipalities, not only across northern Ontario, but across Ontario.

We are proud of the relationship we have with the municipalities, not only in northern Ontario, but across Ontario, because we understand municipalities—

The Speaker: Thank you. That brings us to the end of oral questions.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I appreciate the opportunity to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal Income Tax Act at present has a minimum amount of medical expenses for which a taxpayer is entitled to claim a non-refundable income tax credit;

"Whereas the health and medical expenses of every citizen in the province of Ontario, great or small, affect their overall net income;

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government moved in their 2004 budget on May 18, 2004, to delist publicly funded medical services such as chiropractic services, optometry examinations and physiotherapy services;

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

"That the Income Tax Act remove the present minimum amount of medical expenses for which an Ontario taxpayer is entitled to claim a non-refundable income tax credit."

I am pleased to support that in the context of all the cuts to health care by the Liberal government.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas 20% of the adult population, or 1.8 million adults in Ontario, continue to smoke; and

"Whereas hospitality concepts like bars, pubs, taverns, nightclubs, Legions, bingo halls, racetracks and casinos are businesses with a high percentage of patrons who smoke; and

"Whereas more than 700 businesses in Ontario have invested tens of thousands of dollars each to construct a designated smoking room to comply with municipal bylaws;

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

"Permit properly ventilated and separate designated smoking rooms in hospitality establishments that regulate

and control employee and customer exposure to second-hand smoke.”

I have signed it and will send it down with Cassandra.

TEACHER QUALIFICATION

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the 2005 graduates of the publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario will have met all the requirements of the individual faculties; and

“Whereas these same publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario have all met the stringent standards as outlined and controlled by the Ontario College of Teachers; and

“Whereas the 2005 graduates of the publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario will be placed at a severe disadvantage if they are given a provisional certificate of qualification by the Ontario College of Teachers;

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

“To make the changes necessary to the Education Act and/or its regulations in order to grant the 2005 graduates of the publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario a permanent certificate of qualification, or

“To deem that the bachelor of education degree granted to the 2005 graduates of the publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario deems them to have completed the equivalent of the Ontario teacher qualification test, thus allowing the Ontario College of Teachers to grant these same graduates a permanent certificate of qualification.”

HALTON RECYCLING PLANT

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

“Whereas noxious odours from the Halton Recycling plant in Newmarket are adversely affecting the health and quality of life of residents and working people in Newmarket; and

“Whereas local families have lost the enjoyment of their properties for themselves and their children, face threats to their health and well-being, and risk a decline in the value of their homes; and

“Whereas for the 300 members of the nearby main RCMP detachment, as well as other workers in the area, the odours are making their working conditions intolerable;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, demand that the Minister of the Environment take immediate action to halt all noxious emissions and odours from the Halton Recycling plant, and take all steps necessary to force Halton Recycling to comply with environmental rules, including closing the plant if the odour problems continue.”

As I am in agreement, I affix my signature.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Ontario’s three remaining regional centres for people with developmental disabilities, located in Smiths Falls, Orillia and Blenheim, Ontario;

“Whereas the regional centres are home to more than 1,000 disabled adults, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing the regional centres will have a devastating impact on people with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and economies of the local communities; and

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the regional centres to extend specialized services, support and professional training to thousands more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Ontario’s regional centres for people with developmental disabilities open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

I send it down to the clerk’s table by way of Jonathan. Thank you, Jonathan.

1510

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I have a petition that’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Thanks to Debbie Bruce from Erin Hills in Mississauga for her support and efforts in submitting this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylaxis in Ontario schools; and

“Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylaxis in the Education Act; and

“Whereas anaphylaxis is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

“Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

“Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan.”

I so sign this petition and hand it to Joshua, our page.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

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

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

I’m pleased to sign this and give it to Cassandra to deliver.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that’s very similar to the one that I just read.

“Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylaxis in Ontario schools; and

“Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylaxis in the Education Act; and

“Whereas anaphylaxis is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

“Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

“Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned,” request “that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3”—my private member’s bill—“An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan.”

I sign my name to this petition and hand it to Inderraj Singh, our page right here. This is my dude.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I’m pleased to get the opportunity to present a petition in the Legislative

Assembly of Ontario. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the current government has proposed province-wide legislation that would ban smoking in public places; and

“Whereas the proposed legislation will also prohibit smoking in private, non-profit clubs such as Legion halls, navy clubs and related facilities as well; and

“Whereas these organizations have elected representatives that determine the rules and regulations that affect the membership of the individual club and facility; and

“Whereas imposing smoke-free legislation on these clubs disregards the rights of these citizens and the original intentions of these clubs, especially with respect to our veterans;

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

“That the Parliament of Ontario exempt Legion halls, navy clubs, and other non-profit, private or veterans’ clubs from government smoke-free legislation.”

I affix my signature to the petition. Thank you very much again for this opportunity.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to read here that was sent to me by a group of people among them, Geoff Watson of Rosethorne Road in Oakville. It’s a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly requesting the banning of smoking in public places in Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas some 16,000 Ontarians each year die of tobacco-related causes; and

“Whereas the inhalation of direct and second-hand tobacco smoke both lead to health hazards that can and do cause preventable death; and

“Whereas more than four out of every five Ontarians do not smoke, and this large majority desires that enclosed public places in Ontario be smoke-free at all times; and

“Whereas preventing the sale of tobacco products, especially to young people, and banning the use of tobacco products in public and gathering places of all types will lower the incidence of smoking among Ontarians, and decrease preventable deaths;

“Be it therefore resolved that the Ontario Legislative Assembly enact Bill 164, and that the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care aggressively implement measures to restrict the sale and supply of tobacco to those under 25; that the display of tobacco products in retail settings be banned; that smoking be banned in enclosed public places or in workplaces, and banned on or near the grounds of public and private schools, hospitals and day nurseries; that designated smoking areas or rooms in public places be banned, and that penalties for violations of smoking laws be substantially increased.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I sign it, and I’m going to ask Nathan to carry it for me.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition signed by the good citizens of Cambridge, directed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the current government has proposed province-wide legislation that would ban smoking in public places; and

“Whereas the proposed legislation will also prohibit smoking in private, non-profit clubs such as Legion halls, navy clubs and related facilities as well; and

“Whereas these organizations have elected representatives that determine the rules and regulations that affect the membership of the individual club and facility; and

“Whereas by imposing smoke-free legislation on these clubs disregards the rights of these citizens and the original intentions of these clubs, especially with respect to our veterans;

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

“That the Parliament of Ontario exempt Legion halls, naval clubs and other non-profit, private or veterans’ clubs from government smoke-free legislation.”

As I agree with it, I am signing my name thereon.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Delaney: I have a petition here signed by a number of the staff members of Intercultural Neighbourhood Social Services, among them, Abla Ali, Nadia Baichon and Sophia Montague. It reads as follows:

“Whereas some 20,000 people each year choose to make their home in Mississauga, and a Halton-Peel District Health Council capacity study stated that the Credit Valley Hospital should be operating 435 beds by now and 514 beds by 2016; and

“Whereas the Credit Valley bed count has remained constant at 365 beds since its opening in November 1985, even though some 4,800 babies are delivered each year at the Credit Valley Hospital in a facility designed to handle 2,700 births annually; and

“Whereas donors in Mississauga and the regional municipalities served by the Credit Valley Hospital have contributed more than \$41 million”—and counting—“of a \$50-million fundraising objective, the most ambitious of any community hospital in the country, to support the construction of an expanded facility to meet the needs of our community;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care undertake specific measures to ensure the allocation of capital funds for the construction of A and H block at Credit Valley Hospital to ensure the ongoing acute care needs of the patients and families served by the hospital are met in a timely and professional manner, to reduce wait times for patients in the hospital emergency department and to better serve patients in the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite.”

I absolutely endorse this petition. I’m pleased to affix my signature to it, and will ask Jonathan to carry it for me.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada’s first Nobel Prize recipient; and

“Whereas this great Canadian’s original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth”—Alliston—“is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

“Whereas the town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

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

“That the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government step in to ensure that the Banting homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come.”

I want to thank Steve Dickson of Alliston for circulating that petition, and I’ve signed it.

VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I’m very pleased today to introduce good friends of mine, Terry and Laura Gregson, who are also the aunt and uncle of page captain Sean McConkey, and they’re here today to see democracy in action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That’s not a point of order, but thank you for introducing your guests.

1520

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF PEEL ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE DE PEEL

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 26, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 186, An Act respecting the composition of the council of The Regional Municipality of Peel / Projet de loi 186, Loi traitant de la composition du conseil de la municipalité régionale de Peel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I’d like to begin by welcoming the mayors and councillors, many of whom were introduced earlier today, who are in the galleries at Queen’s Park today to be a part of this discussion. I’m proud to represent a part of the region of Peel that is affected by this legislation, specifically the town of Caledon. I’m going to talk a little bit about that as we go through today.

I came to public life on the assumption that it was the job of the government to solve problems and to solve them in a way that maximizes the public's confidence in the outcome. I also came to public life thinking, as I hope most of us do, that solving one problem by creating another would not normally be seen as good government.

I think we made a decision years ago—"we" meaning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the previous governments of Ontario—to do some planning and provide some services on a regional basis. Governments were constructed at the time in such a way that people within those regions could reasonably expect balanced representation that in turn would ensure that the needs and the dollars of the constituent municipalities would be fairly and properly represented. That kind of balanced representation would in turn ensure that the region's needs would be taken into account, as well as the needs, at any given point in time, of the constituent municipalities.

I respect and recognize, as I think other members do, the fact that over time some imbalance can be created, not by the design of these governments but by population growth and things that change. The current legislation and structure have been in place for some period of time, and it's not right that legislation can remain in place for years and years and a structure can, to some extent, become outdated in terms either of the way it works or the way it represents—or doesn't represent—people.

But as so often happens in government, I think we're about to make the same mistake again. I haven't been here too long, but I've been around this place and this process for a long time, and we're about to enact a piece of legislation—if in fact that takes place, and I'm going to finish with a plea that it not take place and that we continue to give this further consideration—that we will then find is in place and very difficult to amend or change for many years to come.

We all know that by the time you have additional studies, by the time you convince the government of the day—I hope it will be us by the time it gets to 2007; it's looking more like that every day, based on the performance of the people across the way—by the time the government makes a decision, by the time they draft the bill, by the time the bill comes to the Legislature, gets in the queue and ultimately is dealt with, it is a process that takes years and years.

The result is that legislation that is on the books today or legislation that would be passed—this bill, Bill 186—could in turn sit unamended for years and years, even after it, in and of itself, has become outdated or unfair. I don't think that's a good result. I don't think it's the kind of result that speaks to good government that you put legislation in place that can, in and of itself, very soon become outdated and represent a new problem that sits where the old one used to sit.

The report of Justice Adams—the Premier made reference today that some of its recommendations had been accepted but not others—tried to take this into account by suggesting a mechanism by which further population

changes that take place in the future could be taken into account as we go forward, and adjustments to the structure of the Peel regional council could take place over time, reflecting those changes in personality, so we don't have a situation where this bill, meant to address one situation that has been claimed to be unfair, and may well be, will create just such another situation down the road.

At that point, you have to ask yourself: How will we be any further ahead; how will we have served the public interest, in the broader sense and looking at the longer view? It's interesting that the only person who is totally objective about this—the only person who is not a politician who took a look at this issue with the agreement of all parties, including the provincial government and including mayors and so on, from a position of total objectivity—namely, Justice Adams—recognized both the current issue that has been raised by Mayor McCallion and by others and also the problem that will arise in the future if you don't have some kind of mechanism that takes into account the changing population and the rapid growth of Brampton which is anticipated in the coming years.

My principal criticism of this bill is that before long, almost but not quite before we actually see the implementation and the impact of this bill at the time of the 2006 elections, almost at the same time as the bill actually becomes effective and we see the practical consequences of it, it will be well on its way to being out of date, and we will be under the same pressure as legislators to begin the cycle all over again, this time listening to complaints that may well be perfectly justified, and probably will be, from other people about exactly the same issue we hear about today.

I have three other criticisms I want to convey, and they relate more to the process. The first I think is a serious matter, and it was alluded to by my friend the member for Niagara—what is it? Lincoln?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Erie–Lincoln.

Mr. Tory: The Speaker has a little video screen up there that tells him the names of these seats. The member for Erie–Lincoln talked—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Tattle-tale.

Mr. Tory: I apologize. We're not supposed to let on about these things. I've got to learn that too, I guess—the code of silence that exists on these matters.

My friend the member from Erie–Lincoln referred this afternoon to how important it is—let me put it in a positive way—that people in government, the citizens of Ontario and people who have conversations with ministers and with the Premier should be able to rely on the word of the Premier and of ministers of the government, whatever government it might be. We have in this case an almost unbelievable list and chronology of events that have taken place. Even if you just look at the past year alone, it's an almost unbelievable list of statements that have been made, positions that have been taken, e-mails sent and so forth and so on.

January 2004: Premier McGuinty says that Peel restructuring is not on the agenda.

June 2004: Mr. Sorbara, the Minister of Finance, says that there's no intention of moving forward with the restructuring of Peel region.

June 2004: Mr. McGuinty, the Premier, again confirms that no restructuring will take place in Peel region.

August 2004: Minister Gerretsen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, says that changes must be based on consensus. There is one person who had it right.

October 2004: Mr. Gerretsen appoints Mr. Adams to try and follow through on what he said. At least there's maybe a germ of consistency in the statements made and the actions of Mr. Gerretsen.

February 2005: Premier McGuinty promises to abide by the Adams report, a promise he made at a very exclusive fundraiser held for the Liberal candidate in a by-election I'm quite familiar with. There were no media present there when he made the statement, but the gentleman in question has confirmed it in a letter that he wrote confirming a private conversation. I'm sure maybe that's why the statement was made, because it was a private conversation and there were no media at that very exclusive and only semi-successful fundraiser held at that time.

April: The McGuinty government ignores its own words, ignores the commitment to consensus, ignores Justice Adams and proceeds to introduce the legislation we're debating here today, Bill 186.

I just don't think that, in the interests of having people, whether they be municipal leaders, mayors, citizens, the media, anybody—that we can have a continuation of this say-one-thing-and-do-another kind of government. It's become really the hallmark of the McGuinty administration. I think it reduces the confidence that people can have in this system of government, I think it increases cynicism and I think it causes people to conclude that they just plain can't rely on the word of the people who are the leaders in their government. Frankly, I think it ends up being a brush that tars all of us, that people just can't rely on anything anybody in public life says.

We have the recent example here—we were discussing it earlier today—with respect to the health tax, the most famous example. I noted with interest that the citizens' coalition did not declare Mr. McGuinty, the Premier, to be a provincial promise-breaking champion; they did not declare him to be a national promise-breaking champion; they declared him to be a world champion of promise-breaking, and I want to congratulate him on that very significant recognition.

But you know what? At the end of the day, that is not the right approach to government, it is not the right approach to public life and it is not a viable approach. If we want to do something about turning around the cynicism I heard at the door when I was running to represent the people in Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey, it has to start with doing what you say you're going to do, being consistent and being straightforward.

The second point of criticism is a combination of a total lack of consultation and a question that goes with that, which is, what is the rush here, anyway?

1530

It is interesting but it is also troubling that, on an issue as fundamental as this, the very composition and functioning of an important regional government in this province, there was never one meeting that took place between the minister and the mayors of those constituent municipalities to consult. There was one meeting that took place where the minister informed the mayors of the conclusion he had reached, which of course was entirely inconsistent with all of the history that had gone before.

I would acknowledge that leadership does mean you have to take decisions on tough issues. But it also means that you make every effort you can in the process—I think this way, in any event; clearly the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Premier do not—to bring the sides together behind a resolution they can all support, that you try as hard as you can to get people to buy in. Only then can you really have the kind of regional government the Premier talked about today that functions well and properly. I only wish that what he said today, about how he wants to see Peel operate, was really evidenced in the legislation and, more importantly, the approach he's taken to the legislation that's been brought forward.

In that vein, the Adams process was good, because it attempted to put people in the room and work something out. We had, as I said earlier, an objective person who came forward with his best judgment on what could be done. You would have thought that even if that process was going to be declared unsuccessful, there could have been at least one meeting that took place between the Premier and/or the minister and the three mayors, to have an open and honest discussion about this and to let people say their piece.

I think also, in this rushed process of putting this through, it deliberately ignores the fact that—heavens above, we've got some really big issues that are affecting this province where we don't get legislation put through half as quickly as this—there is a mechanism in the Municipal Act itself to provide for the change in the composition of a regional council which can be initiated by the council itself. The Municipal Act, 2001, which was effective on January 1, 2003, was meant to reduce precisely the kind of provincial paternalism that we heard the members opposite complaining about earlier today. It caused more of these decisions to be initiated and made by the municipal governments themselves, by the people elected to serve the people who live in those constituencies, instead of having them made here at Queen's Park.

Even in this case, steps had been taken to initiate a locally initiated change to the composition of Peel regional council in the manner intended by section 218 of the Municipal Act. Section 218 intends for those changes to be studied, to be transparent, to be democratic and to be locally driven—absolutely none of which we get with Bill 186. There have been no studies aside from the Adams exercise. There has been no transparency, in that this decision to bring this bill forward was made in

secret, behind closed doors in the cabinet room, without any consultation. There hasn't been a hint of democracy aside from the fact that we will have a vote in this chamber on the legislation perhaps tomorrow and then, later on, on third reading. There has been no involvement of the duly elected representatives, either the mayors or the councillors, and there has been no other local involvement in terms of allowing the people to really have their say, aside from a very minimal amount of public consultation.

This matter, astonishing as it may seem, has never been before the Peel council in a formal way to have a kind of discussion about a specific proposal, including this bill itself. I would have thought that, for no other reason than obtaining input from the councillors and mayors, the Premier or the minister would have wanted to spend an hour or two with the people making up the council to explore their views.

We have a bill here which, first, bypasses the statutory provision that is put in place with the express purpose of dealing with this kind of issue; second, a government which, in introducing the legislation, has totally passed up the opportunity to consult with the Peel council itself; and third, a government which has totally passed up the opportunity to engage in any consultation whatsoever with the local mayors, the elected mayors, before deciding.

On top of all of that, we have the government proceeding with unseemly haste to push this bill through, a bill which will not actually have practical effect until 2006. So it could have been allowed to go out for some meaningful public consultation if the government had any interest in that kind of consultation. There would be absolutely nothing lost. Nothing would be affected by allowing some meaningful public consultation on this bill, some time to listen to the mayors, the councillors and the citizens. Nothing would change; nothing would be lost. It means that, maybe a month later, two months later, a kernel or two of an odd good idea might have come forward. Then nothing would change in terms of the composition of the Legislature. Everything could proceed, but at least people would feel their voices could be heard.

I would say to you that the one day of hearings that we're getting, divided into two parts—something we had to fight hard to get—really isn't the kind of meaningful consultation that we should get. I want to say to the House, the Premier and the minister that I just don't think this is right. This is not the way to engender confidence among the public in the way that we're governing.

I think we have to take some time, especially here, in an instance where we have some time, to ensure that people think they can be heard and that there is maybe just a chance that they will be heard. At least they would think that they're being listened to. It's no wonder people are cynical about politicians and politics when they see this kind of thing, where there is no urgency in getting it done this week or next week—or this month or next month, for that matter—and they see no opportunity for themselves to be heard.

I want to say to the mayors, all three of them, including Mayor McCallion, for whom I have immense respect, that if I have the privilege of becoming Premier of this province, I will not do that. I will not do that kind of thing. I will not impose a solution to a problem like this without consultation. I will not impose a solution to a problem like this without engaging in meaningful consultation. Only as an absolute last resort would you ever come in and do something, and in this case, it's being done as a first resort. Let me repeat what I said for your benefit: I said I would not impose a solution like this without proper—

The Acting Speaker: I apologize for interrupting. I would ask the government members to refrain from heckling the Leader of the Opposition so that he can make his points. I can't hear him.

Mr. Tory: I would only say that if various shoes were on various other feet, I expect we'd be hearing a lot more about this lack of consultation.

The last point I want to make is this, and it's kind of a question: What is really going on here? Well, there has been a great deal of speculation about what this really means. Is this really the first step in the dismantling of Peel region? The government hasn't said so. It hasn't said it is, it hasn't said it isn't, and that's what's troubling about this. But then again, they haven't said a lot of things as they've made their way to Bill 186. They've had all these inconsistent positions, and, of course, that's consistent with their history on just about every other issue.

Let's look at the history here. The process we have seen over and over again from this Premier and from this government is very troubling, and I think it could easily lead to the conclusion that there is another agenda. Promises were made about a referendum and the results of a referendum held elsewhere in the province in Kawartha Lakes by Mr. McGuinty—promises not kept. Promises were made in this instance about Peel restructuring by Mr. McGuinty, promises which have not been kept.

When you see a process like this—no consultation, a failure to follow legislation already in place, a long list of broken promises, not even a simple meeting with the duly elected mayors of the municipalities involved and then basically junking the heart of a report written by an objective third party, the only non-politician of the lot—then you do have to wonder what is really going on here.

Mayor McCallion has said—and heaven knows, with her, you know where you stand. I have a few scars to show for that, and I say that in an affectionate kind of way. But she says, and I quote from the Toronto Star, "Eventually, regional government will be gone in Peel region. It has outlived its usefulness."

Mayor McCallion is not one for a hidden agenda—I will give her full marks for that—but if there is one that goes beyond rectifying the problem that she and others have identified with respect to representation by population in Peel region, then the government of Ontario owes it to the people to say so. If this really is the first step, if the real agenda here is to dismantle Peel region,

then the government should have the honesty and the straightforwardness to put that issue on the table and to get on with debating that, saying that's what we're going to debate and we're going to have an open and honest debate about it and be straightforward with people. But to back in to such a fundamental decision as this and not put the issue squarely on the table in a straightforward manner, to go through this non-consultative, non-respectful of the existing statutory provision kind of route that this government has taken, I think, is just not right.

So to conclude, we shouldn't create a new problem in the course of solving an old one. We should consult using existing statutory mechanisms and using the prestige of the minister and the Premier's office to cause people to come together and to work together to fashion a solution. If you appoint an objective third party to look at this, you should heed their advice. You shouldn't throw their report into the trash can and ignore it. If you have a broader agenda on the question of regional government in Peel, then speak up and say what it is. I would say to you, by way of a concluding statement, what we should be doing, I would respectfully suggest, is to ask—and I am asking—one last time that this bill be sent out for meaningful consultation. There is no rush. We should let the people have their say and be a participant in reforming their government.

1540

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): It was a pleasure to listen to the leader of the official opposition on this particular topic. He gave a very careful historical analysis of what has led up to today, all of the changes, all of the very clear flip-flops that emanated from the Premier's office, all of the statements that were once made that are now recanted.

You know something? What he didn't talk about, and which I feel compelled to in the two minutes I have, is how this very carefully follows exactly the same actions of one Mr. Al Leach, who was once the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. They've done exactly the same thing. Just as Mr. Leach did with all the amalgamations, they first of all promised consultations, but no consultations took place. Then they asked the mayors and the councils for alternatives, and when the alternatives were given, they were all dismissed. Then they ignored all the recommendations from the learned people who came forward with recommendations, and I'll tell you, that's exactly what this minister has done as well. Then when all that's done, they start to attack the mayors and the councillors. They talk about fiefdoms; they talk about protection. Then, last but not least, they impose their own solution, which was not even on the radar screen when all this started.

I have to tell you, at least Mr. Guy Giorno has had the guts to say the Conservatives were wrong. I want to wait for the minister to say you're wrong too, because just as clearly as they were wrong for the amalgamations, you are wrong in this. I don't know what else to expect, when you see what happened in Kawartha Lakes—even in Kawartha Lakes where the people democratically voted

to take their city and their county back. You have ignored that. You have gone against the democratic wishes of the people, and I'm not surprised you're going against the democratic wishes of the people of these three wonderful municipalities.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): The job of government is to solve problems, and one problem that needs to be solved is the inequity of the representation on Peel regional council. About two-thirds of Peel region's population lives in Mississauga, but only 48% of Peel region's council is allocated to Mississauga. Mississauga is growing rapidly toward a population of about 800,000, up from its current 680,000. Mississauga is already bigger than Brampton is forecast to ever be. If we allocated Peel region council's seats based on population, based on 50,000 to 55,000 per seat, Mississauga would have 12 seats, just what Bill 186 proposes; Brampton would have 7 seats, just what Bill 186 proposes; Caledon would have one seat, not the five that Bill 186 proposes. Ontario has never allocated representation on the basis of population that has never taken place, and if you think British Columbia's single transferable vote system is hard to understand, it's nothing compared to the weighted representation scheme proposed by Justice Adams.

The member from Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey is showing himself to be a serial ditherer. In order for Mississauga to add two new wards to the city, we need to get this bill passed before the end of this session. In my northwest corner of Mississauga, my Ward 9 councillor, Pat Saito, already represents more people than the Premier of the province of Prince Edward Island. Maybe John and the Tories don't believe in representation by population, but I do. So do 680,000 people of Mississauga—

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member from Mississauga West to make reference to the member by his riding name or his title as leader of the opposition, not by his first name.

Mr. Delaney: Maybe the member from Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey doesn't believe in representation by population, but I do, and so do the 680,000 people of Mississauga, the heart—

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr. Hudak: The more Mississauga West talks, the more nonsense comes from across the floor. What a bunch of horse feathers we just heard from Mississauga West. Give me a break. You talk about proportional representation, but the only act that your Attorney General brought forward on provincial boundaries rejects that principal. It rejects that principal. But out of convenience, because you want to make this change, you raise an argument, and then on the other hand, they do the opposite when it comes to provincial boundaries.

There's a word that starts with "h"—hypo-something or other—that would describe it, but I can't use that, Mr. Speaker, in the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: And you can't say indirectly what you can't say directly. I would ask the member to withdraw that particular statement.

Mr. Hudak: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

What we saw today was instructive. We see in the gallery Mayor McCallion on one side, Mayor Fennell and Mayor Morrison on the other. We see a good number of taxpayers from Peel who are here today and a number of councillors. A divide on Peel council has been created by Dalton McGuinty, his dithering, his indecisiveness and his series of broken promises. This legislation, by creating a deadlocked council, is going to exacerbate that great divide. You are going to turn what has been a model regional council into a model of Dalton McGuinty himself: indecisive, dithering and unable to make substantial decisions.

The Acting Speaker: I'm going to have to say to you as well that you've got to refer to the other members of the House by their riding name or by the fact that he's the Premier, but not his first name.

Mr. Hudak: Fair enough.

I'm one who is proud of the remarks of our leader, the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey, today. He told us where he stood on the issue and had the right answer. If you truly wanted to improve Peel region, to improve the services to taxpayers, you would work with all three municipalities and forge a consensus solution, not this misguided piece of legislation that they're boasting about today.

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): I want to start by thanking the people of Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale. I'm proud to represent them at Queen's Park.

My riding has a part of Mississauga and a part of Brampton. I have held two public meetings, one in Bramalea and one in Malton. The people of my riding have told me, and I have listened to them. They have spoken their minds, they have spoken from their guts and they have spoken their hearts to me. They have told me that Bill 186 is not fair to the people of Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale. It does not really represent them. What they are looking for is fairness in representation in the Peel region, from Brampton as well as Mississauga.

The people of Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale have told me that I represent them fully, and I'm accountable to them. If this bill goes through, this will not give fair representation to Brampton, as well as to Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale. I definitely want to listen to the people of my riding. I am committing myself to vote against Bill 186.

The Acting Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Tory: I want to acknowledge the comments of the member opposite and the member for Brampton Centre, who both have followed along, finally—maybe; I'll believe it when I see it—allowing another of the McGuinty promises to be kept, that of allowing members to speak and to vote in accordance with the wishes of their constituents from time to time.

It's interesting. There are people here well beyond the members of municipal government, and I don't discount them for a minute: the past presidents of the Brampton Board of Trade, Brian Dawson, Mike Collins, Heather

Picken; Bill Burrell and George Burrows—I gather he's better referred to as "Potsy"—Brampton's citizen of the year, 2005, people who are leading community citizens, who have come here today to talk about this.

I heard the member earlier from the New Democratic Party talking about—again, I don't know the name of your riding.

Mr. Prue: Beaches–East York.

Mr. Tory: Beaches–East York. Thank you very much. I'll learn these in due course, or I'll get one of those TV screens.

You know what? I would argue with him that two or three wrongs don't make a right. We still have a chance to do the right thing in this instance. It is good government we're looking for here. The member for Mississauga West will be sitting here in a few months wondering how the regional government in Peel could be operating way worse than it is today, because they will have created such dysfunction with what they've done.

1550

There is no need whatsoever to pass this bill urgently in this session, as the member for Mississauga West suggested. I can tell you right now that we will give you an outside date this calendar year by which we will commit to having this bill voted on in third reading. It may be amended a little because you will have actually listened to some people. We'll give you an outside date if you refer this bill out for some meaningful consultation with the people and the mayors and so on, and if you use the prestige of the minister's office and the Premier's office to cause these mayors to sit together with the Premier and the minister and fashion a solution. If you did that, that would be real leadership. That would be good government. We don't see much of that. Step forward and do that, make us proud that you can actually provide some good government and some real consultation, and we'll vote on the bill with you before the end of this year. Do it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Gerretsen has moved second reading of Bill 186, An Act respecting the composition of the council of The Regional Municipality of Peel. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a document from the chief government whip asking that the vote be deferred until tomorrow at the time for deferred votes.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Simcoe–Grey has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Transportation concerning the realign-

ment of Highway 26. This matter is scheduled to be debated today at 6 p.m.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Ms. Pupatello, on behalf of Mr. Gerretsen, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 /
Projet de loi 92, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les
municipalités.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll now look to the government side for a leadoff speech in debate on Bill 92.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'll be sharing my time with the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): We came to office as a government determined to work in a different way. Our approach was, and is, to work with the people of Ontario, with the municipal governments they elect and with business and community associations on the challenges that confront us all. In our view, the best way to achieve progress is to involve all those who have a stake in the outcome and enlist them to help us chart our communal path forward.

Take our approach to establishing a permanent greenbelt to halt urban sprawl and ensure protection of sensitive lands and natural resources. Creating a greenbelt is a complex and delicate task. It's more than just drawing some lines on a map. We have to assemble and assimilate all the relevant information in terms of land use, development and growth. We have to put this information into a context of what is really happening and what is poised to happen on the ground in the Golden Horseshoe.

In this region, there are many areas that are highly sensitive from an environmental standpoint. It has significant reserves of agricultural lands that are important both for their potential as well as their current uses. The Golden Horseshoe is a reservoir of significant headwaters, water systems and water resources. It can also claim huge assets of natural resources both above and beneath the ground.

Nowhere is this competition more keenly felt than in the Golden Horseshoe. It's the economic engine not only of Ontario but the whole country. It is also the preferred destination for the majority of immigrants to this country. It has experienced unprecedented growth over the past few decades, and that growth pressure is increasing unabated.

In the fall of 2003, the Premier began working on fulfilling our government's platform commitment to establish a Golden Horseshoe greenbelt. The intent was to bring together protections that were already in place, such as those for the Niagara Escarpment or the Oak

Ridges moraine, and to add other areas to form a continuous, protected swath around existing centres of development.

The greenbelt would protect and preserve valuable natural heritage and agricultural systems and curb sprawl. It would benefit the economic and environmental health of the region and would maintain natural and recreational areas for the enjoyment of a growing population.

To allow time to create the greenbelt, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing brought in legislation and used other legal measures to hold the line on further urban encroachment on key rural and agricultural lands. The moratorium on development gave the government the time to consider policies and approaches that would lead to permanent greenbelt protection.

One of the essential ways we used this time was to consult. We wanted to reach out to the people most affected by the proposed greenbelt and get their views on how to best make it work. This was a meticulous and comprehensive consultation. It began in February 2004, when the Minister of Municipal Affairs appointed the Greenbelt Task Force—

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm here today to participate in the debate on Bill 92. The member is not conforming with standing order 23(b), where she's supposed to specifically address the memorandum of understanding which is the substance of Bill 92. I'd ask you to rule on that.

The Acting Speaker: I appreciate the contribution of all members of this House. I'm listening intently to the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and I believe she is speaking to the matter at hand.

Member?

Mrs. Van Bommel: Thank you for your ruling, Speaker.

As I was saying, our consultation with municipalities and with the people of those municipalities began in February 2004, when the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing appointed the Greenbelt Task Force, chaired by Burlington Mayor Rob MacIsaac. Made up of stakeholder representatives and experts in various fields, the task force had two main jobs: one was to develop principles and directions for the greenbelt, and the other was to consult with stakeholders and the public before finalizing its advice to the minister. The task force convened public consultation meetings and stakeholder workshops. It also conducted three phases of increasingly detailed discussions with municipalities. Altogether, the task force heard from more than 1,200 people and received more than 1,000 submissions. More than 60 stakeholder groups were represented.

In August 2004, the Greenbelt Task Force presented its advice and recommendations to the minister.

Additional consultations with stakeholders and the public took place during the fall and winter of 2004. Staff of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing presented the draft plan and the draft map to more than 3,500 people at public consultation sessions held throughout the greenbelt and Golden Horseshoe areas.

1600

Interest in the greenbelt was high. More than 81,000 visits were recorded during this time on the government's greenbelt Web site. In addition, more than 1,100 written submissions were received and more than 2,000 electronic surveys were submitted. The minister met with many municipalities, planning officials and regional chairs. I mention this initiative at some length. It is a shining example of the value we place on consultation and the lengths we go to to ensure that all who want to have their say are heard from.

The record will show that when it comes to consultation, we have no lessons to learn from the members of the opposition. I would ask Ontarians to compare our record of public consultation with the previous government's record of downloading on to municipalities.

There are other examples that I could also mention: the consultation that went into our rural plan or the collaborative work we did with the Ontario municipalities and the federal government on the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund. They will amply demonstrate how we go out and get the input of citizens, municipalities and stakeholders. Consultation is at the heart of this bill that the government is bringing forward for third reading consideration today.

Since our government came to power, building better relationships with municipalities has been a key priority. Our shared goal is to provide stronger, safer communities that work for the people who live there, and to help them provide the highest quality of life for all the people of Ontario. Our municipal-provincial relationship is better than it has been in years.

With the support of the Legislature, this amendment would commit the province to consult with municipalities. It would be done in accordance with the memorandum of understanding between the province and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. This amendment, if passed, will mean real, positive change for the people of Ontario in how their local and provincial governments interact for the benefit of all.

Consultation is at the core of the close working relationship with the province's municipalities that the province of Ontario is forging. It is a relationship based on respect for each other. When our government came to power, we made a commitment to do things differently. Under our strong communities priority, we set about building better relationships with municipalities than this province has seen in many years, and we have introduced changes that demonstrate the trust and confidence that we have in our municipal leaders.

This new approach is reflected in many of the actions that we have taken to date, such as the revamping of the northern Ontario prosperity plan or our comprehensive review of the Ontario Municipal Act, 2001, or the additional investments we've made that will benefit municipalities, for example, in education and public health costs. These are some of the results of our new relationship with Ontario's local communities and their elected governments.

Of course, you can't tap into local expertise if you're not prepared to listen. So we've started out with a commitment to create this new working partnership by listening, by valuing municipal input and by acting on what municipalities have told us. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario, or AMO, as it's more commonly known, can trace its roots back more than 100 years.

Collectively, AMO members represent a great resource of experience and knowledge in municipal administration. That's what makes AMO such a valuable partner for the Ontario government. We often call upon AMO's members to advise and help in assessing new provincial programs or policy proposals. AMO members serve as a built-in working group and expert panel past which we can fly new government programs and draft policies. Both sides gain by this relationship.

Working with AMO members gives us a local perspective that helps the government refine its proposals and tailor its responses to local needs and conditions.

It is our stakeholders' input that is most effective. Programs that will have an impact at the local level are shaped with the help of the local level. In program development and fine-tuning, this local input and local experience is irreplaceable.

Given the positive outcomes that we have experienced, it's no wonder that we want to recognize in law this way of doing business. We are striving for the best of both worlds: We want to make sure that programs and policies are aimed at making life better at the local level and that they actually do deliver that, and we want to give local elected representatives the chance to work with us in the best interests of their citizens to make government programs the best that they can be. That's the essence of the relationship that the province has with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. That's why we want to ensure that this is the way the province and the local level continue to operate and to co-operate for years to come.

That's why we've introduced Bill 92, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001. This bill would amend the Municipal Act, 2001, to recognize in legislation the memorandum of understanding between the provincial government and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. It firmly establishes our new approach to the relationship between Ontario and its municipal governments. With the support of the Legislature, it will firm up our promise to consult with local communities and their elected representatives on matters that will have significant local impact. It represents a fair and inclusive approach to program and policy development. If passed, this proposed amendment would give local municipal governments more of a voice in designing initiatives that affect them.

As a government, we are striving to make Ontario the place to be—the place with the best educated, most highly skilled people, the healthiest people and the most prosperous and forward-looking society. We build that vision from the ground up with the support and input of our citizens and their governments at the local level.

We now have monthly meetings with municipal representatives, and these meetings have a very full agenda. These meetings put cabinet ministers in front of municipal leaders for full and frank exchanges of ideas and views. These meetings are very productive and have assisted our government in refining our policies to help make Ontario's communities stronger.

We believe in giving local municipal leaders a voice when decisions are being made that affect them and their communities. Our consultation process is truly a two-way street: We consult with municipalities on emerging policies and also encourage municipal representatives to raise issues that they think need addressing.

This new spirit of consultation and partnership also shows itself in practical ways at the program level. An excellent example of this is our Ontario municipal partnership fund. This new fund is a fairer, more transparent funding model than the community reinvestment fund that it replaces. It will represent the province's largest transfer of payment to municipalities for 2005 and beyond. Our new program is greatly improved, thanks to our consultation with municipal representatives.

The OMPF will provide \$656 million to 386 municipalities in Ontario, an increase of \$38 million, or 6.1% more than the amount the community reinvestment fund provided to municipalities last year. Our OMPF goes a long way toward addressing what municipalities told us were major irritants and inequities in the complex and outdated CRF model.

The new OMPF represents another important milestone in the relationship between the province and its municipal partners. The new program will assist municipalities with their social program costs, it will provide assessment equalization to those municipalities with limited property tax assessment bases, it will respond to policing costs in rural communities, and it recognizes the unique challenges facing northern and rural communities.

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The new Ontario municipal partnership fund illustrates that our new way of consulting and working in partnership is paying off. The essence of a stronger provincial-municipal relationship is no surprises—and we want to consult. As part of our Strong Communities initiative, our government has made a strong commitment to consult with municipalities on changes to legislation and regulations that affect municipal budgets in a significant way. That was the basis for the memorandum of understanding that was agreed to within the association of municipalities, which the Premier signed, along with the former chair of AMO, Ann Mulvale, in Ottawa in August 2004. We strengthened that commitment by adding a protocol to the memorandum of understanding to ensure that the province consults with municipalities on federal-provincial matters that have a direct municipal impact.

This agreement has guided our actions and informed our dealings with our municipal partners. But we wanted to take this even further. We sought to make it a law that consultation should take place, shaped by the terms of an agreed-upon MOU. Preparing to take this next step

brings us here today. As members may recall, the memorandum of understanding is not recognized in the Municipal Act, 2001. But we, as a government, feel this is such a valuable and rewarding approach that it should be. That is why last year the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing introduced for first reading Bill 92, an Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001.

The people of Ontario are better served when all governments work together. Jointly, we can create and implement better policies and better programs and deliver better services to our shared constituents. With the support of this House, we will be able to move forward with our commitment to consult and co-operate. This amendment, if passed, will ensure that this local contact on consultations takes place. It will take what is a best practice and enshrine it as a legal principle. It will mean real change for the people of Ontario in how their local and provincial governments interact for the benefit of all.

Local governments are the ones best able to help us determine how to respond to local conditions. This bill, if passed, will formalize the process of seeking their advice and expertise. It would recognize that they have a vital contribution to make and should have a say in decisions with which they and their residents have to live. So I ask the members of this assembly to join me in voting for Bill 92.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on Bill 92. I certainly did listen to the remarks of the last speaker. It was a very well-written speech and, I might say, a well-read speech, prepared by the ministry staff, as it should be, because they are trying to communicate a message here. You would know, Mr. Speaker, that they are not really allowing the democratic process to develop as they promised during the election.

This afternoon, in the limited time I have, will try to address the litany and tragedy of broken promises as they apply to one minister; in this case, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and, I might also say, the minister responsible for public infrastructure renewal; they're somewhat overlapping jurisdictions.

With your indulgence, Bill 92—I might say I'm looking at all the legislation here and I will be referring to the specific legislation—is less than a third of a page, because it's written in both official languages, and that's it, for the viewer there. It's very small. In fact, this bill was a commitment made by the government to formalize the tradition of the consultation process with the people of Ontario.

I'll read the purpose clause here: "The province of Ontario endorses the principle of ongoing consultation between the province and municipalities in relation to matters of mutual interest and, consistent with this principle, the province shall consult with municipalities in accordance with a memorandum of understanding entered into between the province and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario."

You should know that this was introduced in June 2004. On six separate occasions, the opposition—the

member from Erie–Lincoln as well as the member from Nepean–Carleton—have stood in this House and asked for that order to be called. They have been refused. They didn't want to discuss it, because most of their changes to the municipal relationship, which I will get to, were quite staggering amendments to existing relationship provisions.

That started with the original Planning Act; I think it was the Planning Act reform, Bill 26, which is now the law. This was the very obvious provision which exempted all of the planning hierarchy that had developed over the last two decades or so. What it did was allow the minister to express an interest in a specific area for a provincial interest. So it overwrote all of the understandings passed by local official plans and regional or county-level official plans. It centralized and became a long, very arduous course, deliberately chosen, navigated, to the point where all decisions—and I'll demonstrate this in the four or five bills I'm going to talk about—were being made in the Premier's office.

Dalton McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario, ran on the ticket of democratic renewal. What we have now is a government where all the decisions are made in cabinet or by the minister himself, with very little consultation with the people of Ontario. Yes, the word "consultation" was used frequently by the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who just spoke. I still wish that Marcel Beaubien were here, but that's the way it is.

In the consultations she referred to, the only difference was yesterday. If persons want to log on to the Ontario Web site on the standing committee that met yesterday to deal with Bill 136—Bill 136 is the Places to Grow bill, which is really a planning bill talking about infrastructure. We moved, I believe, about 10 amendments. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you would not be surprised to learn that they never adopted one single amendment.

One of the amendments was dealing with public transit. For one of the amendments, which is part of infrastructure renewal—I would hope, public transit—it appears the government was not interested in bringing forward any input with respect to public infrastructure renewal as it applies to transit. The NDP moved an amendment to try to improve the development of infrastructure as it applies to the distribution of electricity. The parliamentary assistant, Mr. Rinaldi—I'm trying to find his location here—actually read the notes very dutifully as the parliamentary assistant, as he should, but they just ignored them completely.

Bill 92 purports to recommend a memorandum of understanding with municipalities, which would respect the decision of those locally elected and constitutionally involved under municipal law. They are constitutionally created by the province under the Municipal Act, and I am going through just the first one, which was Bill 26, as I said.

The next one, so there's some continuity here, that I'm going to talk about is Bill 135, the greenbelt legislation. I'm also going to refer to this consultation process, or lack thereof, on Bill 136, which is Places to Grow, as

well as the more current debate that occurred here and was voted on today, Bill 186, the Regional Municipality of Peel Act.

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Here are the acts I wanted to bring forward: 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.

This bill is now law. I can tell you, in my own riding the consultations that Mrs. Van Bommel attended in Durham were an outrage. The people of Ontario were offended by two provisions of that very onerous piece of legislation: the plight of agriculture today and the expropriation issue without any form of consultation at all. They were just greenbelted out of existence. Also the inability to find any redress. There's no appeal process. So the consultation ends when the minister signs.

I can tell you, in my own riding and indeed in Durham region and I know elsewhere, as the member from Erie–Lincoln has most admirably pointed out, there are a number of anomalies and exceptions. Those consultations, despite the democratic renewal rhetoric I hear from the government, are being discussed behind closed doors—not by elected people, in many cases, but by civil servants who are going to treacherously manipulate the boundaries.

In fact, the treachery of all that—and this is the consultation. There was a gala held at an estate in York region. It was \$10,000 a plate. The mayor of Pickering was there at the trough, provided with the ticket by one of the developers, to gerrymander some of the boundaries that, prior to the bill being passed, were out and, after the bill, were in. I know that the same is happening in other areas in my own riding. I believe it's a process that should occur and is occurring, but again, it's under the cloak of darkness.

It's in that context that even they have to come, cap in hand, to acquiesce with or access the minister to get small, logical amendments to the boundaries. Part of that was an open process. Some would disagree with the process, but at least the official plan and the public consultation at the municipal level have been somewhat terminated. So goes the memorandum of understanding.

I have to put it in context here. What this purpose clause that I read said was that they would have a formal agreement to consult, and we're just dealing with it now. It's been on the books since 2004—very early 2004, I might say. So Bill 135 was one of the bills they just ignored.

Now, you know why they didn't want to deal with Bill 92. It's because they then had another bill they had to get through before they went back to the consultation process, the memorandum of understanding. Bill 136 is An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans. This is what I call micromanagement, a centralized theory of planning. I remember in my university days studying the central place theory of plan-

ning. It was called the Christaller central place theory. In that, planning was done centrally, and I suspect in some areas, like public transit and certainly provincial roads, there needs to be a central plan. My purpose here is to make sure that the duly elected local and regional councillors, whether in Peterborough or Pembroke or Perth, all have access to the process. But no, no, if you look at this bill, in all cases the minister ultimately decides.

I'll just read one thing. "Contents of plan" is on page 3 of the legislation. We tried to change this. They are going to dictate the intensification, the density, the land supply, the expansions, the location of industry and commerce, the protection of sensitive and significant lands, non-renewable resources, infrastructure, transportation, municipal waste, the coordination of planning development among municipalities, growth-related capital expenditures, affordable housing, community design, and there's one catch-all, what I call the Henry VIII clause, which is all other things that the minister shall consider.

It's the provision of this all-encompassing, omniscient kind of wisdom of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the secret cabinet documents. That's consultation? I think not.

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: The member—I'm trying to find where he's from. I should know that, actually; from Northumberland.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): Good member.

Mr. O'Toole: He's a very good member, yes—read well the notes that were well prepared—but even he, as a previous mayor, knows that they pretty well exempted any functionality in planning with respect to the municipal lower-tier level of government. Who is closer to the people than the municipally elected person? I can say that the member from Northumberland served well as the member from Brighton, and I would say that the member from Peterborough served on council. They must be sitting in tears now, heartbroken by the years they put into these official plans, and now the minister with a stroke of a pen—the centralized theory, Bill 136—you can tell them where you are siting your transit, everything. It's heartbreaking.

But it doesn't end there. There's more to it, in the little time I have been allocated here today. The more recent debate in the House has got to be troubling, and I hope stirs the members of the government to real consideration of legislation. What I mean by that is that Bill 186 is An Act respecting the composition of the council of the Regional Municipality of Peel. That is very controversial, and our leader, John Tory—Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey—spoke today to several interruptions of applause, some from the gallery, from Hazel McCallion and the mayors of Peel region; you might know that Caledon is part of his riding. I'm also impressed that there are members on the government side, and I am going to put their names on the record out of respect for their careful consideration here, who are considering voting against the government. What this is is a death knell for them. This is how it works: Strike three, you're out. Linda

Jeffrey, the member for Brampton Centre, who was actually Chair of the committee yesterday —

The Acting Speaker: I realize that the member for Durham is mentioning the member's riding name, but I would ask him not to use her surname.

Mr. O'Toole: Thank you for that. You have a television screen, so it's a lot easier, but members who are listening—and the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale as well, I think. Missing in action here were a couple of members—the member from Brampton West–Mississauga. I am a little concerned on his position. There's some ambivalence emerging there. I will be making sure there is a recorded vote on this, and they will be distributed appropriately at a certain time and place.

But when you have three members of the government who have all to gain by conforming to the wishes of the whip and to the Dalton McGuinty know-it-all cabinet, their futures are somewhat at risk. I know them to be good and honourable members, but I admire them for their standing up for the right thing.

But what has happened, and the points have been made very clear today by the member from Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey, does nothing but create a stalemate. In fact, you would be wise to know that Justice Adams was convened to do consultations; not the government, not the elected people but Justice Adams. That's like throwing it over the fence, in hopes that they come back. Also, when they throw it over the fence, they probably give him the answer they want, so the report complements the work. What happened was, and this might be of interest to you, that Justice Adams's report to recognize the formula for growth was not adopted. What a disappointment to all three mayors. They have solved nothing.

If you want to look at how important democratic renewal is in that broader debate of memoranda of understanding, of consultations, of conformance with due process: During the election, the leader now of the government, the government of dithering and withering, committed to recognize the city of Kawartha Lakes. They tried to recognize the city of Kawartha Lakes with a referendum on their amalgamation or de-amalgamation. It was controversial, as all amalgamations are. Cities, towns and villages and their history are extremely important. Certainly Victoria county in the city of Kawartha Lakes today, and Lindsay—there's been much, much controversy over the years. The Premier clearly indicated that he would respect the referendum that was duly constituted and held during the election, municipally, and then he threw it out the window.

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Mr. Rinaldi: What did you guys do, John?

Mr. O'Toole: The member for Northumberland has interrupted, and for those viewing I'm going to put it on the record. What did you promise to do, member for Northumberland? That's the question. That is the question you have prevaricated on and, in many cases, not been straightforward about with the people of Ontario.

You're the government. You are winning every single vote you put forward. We understand that. As members of the opposition, it's our duty, indeed our privilege and in fact our responsibility, to point out frailties, as I've done with Bills 26, 135, 136, and 186, which is the current topic of my consideration.

When you look at the history—

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: The member for Peterborough has just brought up an interesting thing. I hope he follows the debate through time. He may recall the formation of the municipal restructuring in our own time as government. He may also recall how that developed over time. It is important to learn from history or you're doomed to repeat it.

That whole debate about municipal restructuring really culminated in two reports. I don't want to veer off into a technical discussion, but for the sake of history it's important to recognize that there were a couple of reports. One was the Fair Tax Commission—the disentanglement report. They talked about what revenue from tax paid for what service, and then they looked at the service capacity and the tax capacity of lower-tier and upper-tier municipalities. They finally realized that some areas in the province's organized and unorganized territories did not have the revenue to support certain levels of service. There's much to be made about that. All three governments, including the NDP, tried to address the restructuring, and all failed to deal with it.

What happened? Out of that discussion, when they got wind that there were changes, there was a report issued called the four mayors' report. The four mayors were from the rich municipalities that felt they could exit from regional government and make it on their own.

One of the authors of the report was Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga: rich; new infrastructure; lots of revenue from the airport; fell into a golden bucket; lots of tax revenue; big commercial-industrial tax base, including the airport; provided no services, got all the revenue, including development charges; had all new sewers and pipes; no decaying infrastructure. They were absolutely loaded. Revenue was going up twice as fast as expenditures.

A second one was Mayor Mel. Mayor Mel saw the same thing, that they had all the industrial-commercial tax base. For those laypersons listening, a municipality that has a tax base dependent totally on residential tax has a very difficult time providing the level of service you would see in Toronto. In my riding, most of it would have an industrial-commercial tax base of under 15%. Many of the rural members here would know that issues of standards of service are extremely complicated. That means that if you have no tax base—guess what?—when you look at the municipal budgets, be careful what you're doing because most of the budget is wages and benefits, and policing is the biggest part. Emergency services—ambulance, all those—are the fastest rising. Ultimately, if you look at that agenda, the goal is to have one pay scale for all emergency service workers, whether it's police,

fire or ambulance. Your budgets municipally and your house are going to go up considerably.

The city of Toronto has a \$458-million shortfall this year. I can tell you that every municipality in the province is raising taxes. What are the taxes for? They're for high salaries and benefits, and for early retirements. The OMERS problem is the age-old problem. The OMERS contribution had been forgiven because of a surplus condition in their pension funds. Now there isn't one, so the employer is paying their contribution, into what? An employee benefit, which is a negotiated, reasonable thing, but when you look at your municipal tax bill, if you're a senior on fixed income, get ready for the 10% tax increases annually.

The Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act brought to your attention the importance of this issue, because the pages of the \$100,000-plus are growing—not getting smaller, but growing—because now their comparators, rather than being just a small village like Hastings, are Mississauga. They're all rising to the highest tier. The single-tier study done in Ottawa showed that all costs of amalgamation rise to the highest level. The single-tier study from Ottawa, prior to the amalgamation of the city of Ottawa into a regional form of government, is a very important study.

What I'm trying to do here, in some kind of conclusion, is make sure that members realize how important the consultation process is. We hear that now. If you want to apply the same theory of consultation, Premier McGuinty cannot get a meeting with a Prime Minister of the same stripe—the Liberal Party. Why? Because it's about the same issue: who pays for what. It's all about transfer payments, whether it's federal, provincial, upper-tier or lower-tier: Who pays for what services and what are the transfer payments to support those service level agreements?

I can tell you that the delay in Bill 92, which sat on the order paper—we requested hearings; we requested all sorts of commitments—was no more eloquently described as essential legislation than by Roger Anderson, the chair of Durham region. I know him very well and respect the work he does. He's also the president of AMO. He appeared at the pre-budget consultations. It happened that the consultations were held across the province. I am a member of the finance and economic affairs committee, which was part of those hearings, and I do enjoy the process.

Out of respect for Roger Anderson, I'm going to read his concerns for the record. This was at Le Gala, the centre where these hearings were held on January 20, 2005. He was asked a question in the context of pre-budget consultations. He was asked to pick the top three items that would benefit from this committee's hearings. Here's what he said:

“CRF, first and foremost”—

Interjection: What's that?

Mr. O'Toole: The CRF? That's the community re-investment fund. I can tell you that the CRF we are debating here today, which is the OMPF now—they've

changed the name, and they've changed the criteria; it's a fairer, more transparent model, blah, blah, blah. There are 47 or more municipalities that are going to receive less money, and the ones that are going to receive more are going to say it's not enough. I put to you that next year, in the phase-out period, you're actually clawing back money in that formula.

If you haven't looked at it, it's very skilfully crafted by ministry civil servants who know how this works. They're going to skate you just past the 2007 election date, and the revenue is going to be falling off the table at that time, just after the election. Most of your commitments are being phased in past 2007, like 2010 for some of this stuff—the 10-year capital plan, blah, blah, blah. It's like the federal government on Adscam; it's not to be trusted. I hate to be so blunt.

Mr Anderson said, “CRF, first and foremost; Bill 92 going through the House and giving the municipalities legislation that says the province wouldn't change rules without consulting with us; and a total 100% rebate on provincial sales tax. I don't know why we have to pay taxes to each other. It doesn't make sense.”

That's Roger Anderson on January 20, 2005. It really does make a lot of sense when you think about it. It is a case that Mr. Anderson went on to say, when asked—this again is a direct quote. I'll be giving this to Hansard so they'll get this exactly, because I intend to send this to Roger Anderson out of respect for the work I was privileged to do at the region of Durham. I suspect the member from Whitby–Ajax or whatever riding he's from—

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): Somewhere out there.

Mr. O'Toole: No, no; I should know it. It's Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge. In fact, hopefully I'll be serving the people of Uxbridge during the next election, but that's for the future.

Here's what Mr. Anderson said in his continuing remarks: “I don't know if it's a question of consequences.... I think it's a question of, it'll be in the legislation. All parties understand the legislation. I don't know any parties that purposely go around legislation to do something. I think if it were enshrined in legislation”—meaning Bill 92—“the government of Ontario would have to meet with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. It would be good for (a) the association and (b) for all of our municipalities.”

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I'm continuing: “The biggest problem municipalities have is when governments make changes and don't understand all of the ramifications that could be impacted.” That has been outlined on this OMPF. For every single fund, they did it without consultation, clearly. Despite the outrage by the members of the government, you are so continuously kept in the dark that I'm surprised some of you believe what the ministers are telling you—the truncated briefing notes you get. You are only getting half of the cabinet minutes. You don't know what's happening. I think they should really pay some

attention. Demand more from Mr. Gerretsen. Demand more from Dalton. He's not straightforward with anyone, really. During the election he promised 231 things. He isn't doing any of them. Name one.

I'll get back on topic. I'm continuing here with Mr. Anderson's remarks: “I think if you knew the impact at the end before you passed the legislation, some legislation might not go through” this way.

I think that Mr. Anderson, who has a great understanding of this, having served at the municipal level—he wasn't the mayor but he certainly became the regional chair; Mr. Arthurs knows precisely what I mean—did put on the record the importance of the CRF, and we heard the same thing in Sudbury. They were outraged.

In the limited time I have left I just wanted to put on—the member from Erie–Lincoln is diligent on this file of municipal affairs; he's outstanding. His question today of the leader should be framed, because the Premier was just backing up. He was just overcome. I'm trying to describe this for the people who may not have been able to tune in: the top 10 municipal screw-ups. This is sort of like Saturday Night Live or David Letterman.

The first was the city of Kawartha Lakes; number two was forcing municipalities to deal with the Liberal pit bull legislation; number three was the cancellation of the tile drainage program; number four was the local health integration networks, with communities like Niagara opposed because they don't want major decisions for their local municipalities made by another municipality; number five is the greenbelt, Bill 135, and it goes on.

The government tried to ram this legislation through before Christmas with no consultation. Only the opposition cared enough to take up the issue of the greenbelt, that it would affect real people and their lives. Thank goodness our leader, John Tory, was there to make sure that was heard. Mapping problems: The government put together a greenbelt without even asking municipalities how it should be approached. As a result, dump sites, cemeteries and alleyways ended up classified as tender fruit lands. It's legendary errors in action.

Number seven is inconsistent logic—well, that's consistent with Liberal logic. The government keeps claiming that they listened to duly elected councils when they were making greenbelt decisions. I can tell you that they are still listening in Durham. Hopefully the government is still listening, even though the bill is passed. The Vaughan, Pickering and Grimsby official plans were ignored, absolutely ignored—rammed it through, tried to get it through before Christmas. Bill 186: The government ignored its own facilitator's recommendation and is ramming through the legislation that doesn't really make anyone happy at all. If Hazel is not happy, you'll pay the price. At the end of the day, she'll appoint the regional chair anyway.

Number nine, the 2004 CRF reallocation: The government is trying to hide the fact that it shortchanged municipal funding by including one-time funding in the figures they are publishing. This is the issue. They are pulling ahead some money for the fire department train-

ing; they are pulling ahead little pockets of money to make the current number look good, get this through and pull the carpet out from under them. They have been doing it; many governments, including probably our own, did it.

The OMPF numbers: The government is making \$47 million out of a one-time transaction with the municipal funding system. No matter where you try to hide the numbers, there is less money going forward. In a climate of growing population and inflation, these numbers are actually going to grow. The shortfall, I put to you, will be \$200 million by 2007.

I could go on, and it's in disappointment and frustration that I will be supporting Bill 92, because our leader, John Tory, believes, as he said emphatically today, that he agreed with consultation and that he agreed with supporting the consultation consensus, not picking the best three out of seven.

Honestly, there's some frustration in being in opposition, but at least it is our job to learn and to listen and to bring to the government's attention things like the travesty that has taken place here with Bill 92 being delayed so they could quickly and hastily put through planning reforms—Bill 135, Bill 136 and Bill 186—before they pass Bill 92, which is the bill that says they must consult.

There's more to be said. I can only hope that some member of our caucus will stand and take the time to put on the record the concerns of the people of their riding.

The question I put to you and leave with you is this: Are the elected members of the Liberal government, besides Mrs. Jeffrey and the others, really listening?

Mr. Marchese: It's a real pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to such an important bill with a great deal of substance. In fact, I would say it's so weighty that I need to read it for the record so that those of you who are watching this debate understand the full import of the bill. We're on live. It's a quarter to 5.

Here's what the bill says. It's really long too. It's one little page. It's very substantive. This is what section 1 says:

“Consultation

“(1) The province of Ontario endorses the principle of ongoing consultation between the province and municipalities in relation to matters of mutual interest and, consistent with this principle, the province shall consult with municipalities in accordance with a memorandum of understanding entered into between the province and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.”

Then there's section 2: “This act comes into force on the day it receives royal assent.”

And 3: “The short title of this act is the Municipal Amendment Act....”

That's the extent of the substance of this bill.

Do you understand, good citizens of Ontario, how important this is? Why, it's so important we devoted two days to this particular substantive bill, and with today, three days. That's how good this bill is. Good God, it needs to be debated.

I'm here to demystify this bill and to demystify the substance and to simply tell you it's an empty bill. There is nothing in the bill.

The Tories introduced this in 2001. Why did they do that? They did that because Mike Harris was a very pugilistic individual. Some people would argue he was pugnacious; some would say he was a very resolute man, unflagging in his principles.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Yes, pugilistic.

He was the right man for the times. Boy, he beat up the municipalities so badly that in 2001 he wanted to make amends with the municipalities, or at least pretend to make amends, by introducing this kind of bill, which he did in 2001, and then proceeded to disregard it.

Now the Liberals have reintroduced the bill because, you understand, the weight of it is so important. There's nothing in the bill. There is nothing in this bill that we're debating for three full days in this Legislature that does anything for municipalities. It does absolutely nothing. Whatever the government wants to do, it will do. If it doesn't want to consult them, it doesn't—and it didn't. I will point out a list of areas where the government didn't consult.

If the government wants to do the right thing with the municipalities, it has the power to do so; it doesn't need to pass a memorandum of understanding. If they really agree with the content, the substance, the import of this bill, why would they not have kept the promise around Kawartha Lakes?

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You will recall that, in opposition, the Liberals said that if the people of that region wanted to de-amalgamate, McGuinty would allow that. They did so through a referendum; the majority of the people said, “We want to de-amalgamate.” They had a referendum a year or so ago and over 50% of the community there said, “Yes, we want to de-amalgamate.” What did McGuinty say? “Too bad, so sad.” That's what he told them: “Too bad, so sad. Yes, we made a promise before the election, but now we're in government, and what we said then and what we do now are two different things. So the promise we made to you folks of the Kawartha region meant nothing,” as with so many other promises they have made in this Legislature.

If you want to be consistent with this memorandum, why would you not have kept this promise to give the people of Kawartha the power to de-amalgamate once it was given to them through a referendum? Why did you refuse them that right, which you had given to them prior to the election and that you so easily took away after the election? All they got was a slap in the face, more or less, a “too bad, so sad” slap in the face.

Do you see how ridiculous this bill is? When faced with the facts around so many issues, where you didn't consult, or where the communities consulted and you didn't listen, and you did the opposite of what they did and the opposite of what you promised, when that happens, these bills are a mockery of what we do and say

in this place. How can the people of Ontario trust us as politicians when you can so easily dismiss your promises and dismiss the public of Kawartha region with regard to that right they thought they had through that referendum vote?

Then there is the issue of the community reinvestment fund, which you got rid of, where you now introduce a new municipal partnership fund and you call it the new fair funding model, an equity kind of funding model. It reminded me of the Tories, where they would say, "We're cutting to make it better. We are doing more with less." It reminds me of the same kind of politics. Now the Liberals are in government and they call this new funding formula equitable or fair. All I can think of is that we are whacking communities with fairness, because so many communities are going to lose so much money from this so-called equitable partnership fund and so many of these lawyers who are in this place think it's fair.

We've got one lawyer sitting there, or about to sit over here, saying this is okay. We've got so many lawyers that I've going to mention you by name: David Zimmer from Willowdale—

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Distinguished lawyer.

Mr. Marchese: —distinguished lawyer, who believes that the new fairness bill is about whacking people with fairness. I thought fairness was about two sides feeling good about the arrangement, but if you're whacking one side and saying to the other, "You're OK, you're going to get more money," but the other one is not going to get any, how can that be fair, and how could the member from Willowdale think that's good? He's a lawyer, and he's not the only lawyer in this place. Monsieur McGuinty, the Premier, is a lawyer too, and he thinks it's fair. Whacking people with fairness, in his view and McGuinty's view, is OK.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Bentley's a lawyer.

Mr. Marchese: Bentley's another lawyer, a very prestigious, well-known—the Minister of Labour, no disrespect intended to the Chair, to the president of this Assembly, no, siree; nor to that member, no, siree. The Minister of Labour is a very well-recognized Minister of Labour. He understands issues of fairness, because he was—what?—a management-labour lawyer kind of guy. Management and labour sort of go hand in hand. His job is to sort of treat everybody fairly, right?

This particular municipal partnership fund is going to whack a whole lot of municipalities with a whole lot of fairness, and he says that's OK. He does it with a smile. He does it with all that contrivance. If you notice, the Minister of Labour, with his great legal skills, contrives and constructs an answer wherein he says very little. That's the beauty of being a lawyer: You say little or nothing, and then you say it's fair. God bless the lawyers in this assembly and God bless the lawyers outside of this place, because I suspect we'll face the same problem with them as well. But that's the new partnership fund: whacking municipalities with fairness. So they're going

to get whacked with municipal tax increases, and the Minister of Labour says, "That's OK." So what, they've got to raise municipal taxes? In his view, that's OK, that's fair.

Moving on, the Muskoka area: Six municipalities in Muskoka are taken out of the north, mysteriously, it seems. There was no explanation—not much. They unilaterally decided that Muskoka is no longer in the north. Jim, did they consult you?

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): No.

Mr. Marchese: You're sure?

Mr. Wilson: Yes.

Mr. Marchese: Because this substantive bill—you see how weighty it is?—talks about consulting. It says to the municipalities, "If we're going to do something, like whack you and treat you good, we're going to talk to you about it." Right? Well, they took Muskoka out of the north and they said, "That's fair." It's consistent with the weightiness of the bill. It's so substantive that I wanted to point out how big it is and how important it is. Muskoka is taken out of the north. As far as I know, nobody was consulted—no one.

You will argue, those of you who are fair-minded, as I do, that taking Muskoka out of the north is not consistent with the spirit of this bill. Correct, member from Willowdale?

Mr. Zimmer: I've got a cottage in Muskoka.

Mr. Marchese: That's why he's going to oppose this bill, because, good lawyer that he is, a reasonably minded individual—including the Minister of Labour, who is a good lawyer and a reasonably minded individual. They're going to vote against this bill because they have discovered in the process of being here and because they're becoming so much more experienced, that when you do things that are inconsistent, you're going to stand up on principle and say, "No," as Mr. Kormos, the member from Niagara Centre, did when we were in government. So many times he'd just say, "Man, oh, man." I remember him with a lunch bag, him and Mr. Morrow, his friend, coming to one of our caucus meetings with a lunch bag to make a point. Man, oh, man, did he beat us up on principle each and every time. And he was right; on so many issues he was right. We didn't like him, this is true, but he was right in doing a lot of the things he did. I agreed with him on the auto insurance, that we should have kept that promise, and we didn't.

That's why I believe the lawyers in this place, who are so principled, especially in the Liberal caucus, are going to vote against this bill. A number of areas that I mentioned, like Kawartha Lakes, where they broke their promise, the new municipal partnership fund, where they're whacking people with fairness, getting Muskoka out of the north without consultation, are so inconsistent with this bill, they're going to vote against it.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): You can't count on the lawyers.

Mr. Marchese: But if you can't count on lawyers, who are you going to count on? Who are you going to count on? We've got McGuinty, who is a lawyer;

Bentley, the Minister of Labour; Mr. Zimmer from Willowdale—all lawyers. Any other lawyers on the Liberal bench?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): A whole bunch.

Mr. Marchese: A whole bunch. There are more lawyers, and they're going to vote against this bill because they're the ones with the keen minds, the discerning minds, who are able to see inconsistencies. Right? When they see those inconsistencies, they're going to say, "No, we can't put up with this. We can't stand having a double position on things." I'm just looking forward to seeing how many lawyers are going to stand up after this, when we have this bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: "Dissembling." I notice the clerks; they know all these words. You can't say any of the big ones, because they know them.

The municipal drainage program: unilaterally cut by the Minister of Agriculture. Did anybody consult you, Jim, from Simcoe–Grey, on that one?

Mr. Wilson: Which one now?

Mr. Marchese: The municipal drainage program.

Mr. Wilson: No. They took it away.

Mr. Marchese: It was just gone—poof.

The Acting Speaker: I wish I didn't have to interrupt the member for Trinity–Spadina, but I would ask the member to make his remarks through the Chair.

1700

Mr. Marchese: Speaker, I apologize. In the event that I wasn't looking at you when I was looking at the member from Simcoe–Grey, I apologize. You understand how I do this; I try to keep an eye on you and an eye on the rest of the assembly. I try. It's good that you point that out to me from time to time.

Mr. Wilson: Leave me out of your debate.

Mr. Marchese: You were here.

Then there's the closure of the Frost Centre. Do you remember that one?

Mr. Wilson: Oh, that's horrible.

Mr. Marchese: You remember it?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I thought you said, "Leave me out of it."

Mr. Marchese: Yes, and then you reeled me back in.

Mr. Wilson: That's not in my area.

Mr. Marchese: That's it, Simcoe–Grey. He understands this issue very well, the closure of the Frost Centre. They just announced they were going to close it: "Oh, it's too expensive to maintain." This is an outdoor centre where young people—

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): It's still open.

Mr. Marchese: Still open? They closed—

Mr. Wilson: There's nothing going on there.

Mr. Marchese: "Closed," "Nothing going on there," and "It's being used." OK.

You remember, for a whole year, a whole lot of people demonstrating against the desire of this government to close that centre. I was out here making a couple of remarks when they came downtown to speak to this a

long while ago. Man, you've got to move mountains to get this government to listen to you. But did they consult people? Did they consult you, member from Simcoe–Grey, on that issue?

Mr. Wilson: No.

Mr. Marchese: Are you sure now?

Mr. Wilson: Yeah.

Mr. Marchese: I'm just checking, because I want to be certain.

Mr. Wilson: Are you about done?

Mr. Marchese: They were going to close this centre, the member from Simcoe–Grey reminds me, and the member from Ottawa Centre says, "No, we didn't close it." But the member from Simcoe–Grey said, as far as he knows, it's closed. And that is in his area. Correct?

Mr. Wilson: Next door.

Mr. Marchese: Next door, but pretty well there; right? He says nothing is happening. So who do you believe? I hear the member from Simcoe–Grey right here. Was the closing of the Frost Centre consistent with the weightiness of this bill? It wasn't.

The final one that I might mention is Peel governance. They hired Judge Adams. I suspect it cost them a couple of bucks; right?

Interjection: A few.

Mr. Marchese: A few; right? It's a whole lot of pecunia when you hire a judge to do the job.

Interjection: How do you spell that?

Mr. Marchese: It's just a Latin word. It just means moolah.

So you hire some individual—well respected; he's going to cost you money. At the end of the day, all of the players on the field are saying, "Well, hopefully, his views and recommendations will be respected." What did Premier McGuinty, the lawyer, say to that agreement? He said, "No, forget about it. Yes, we paid you a whole heap of money, but we're not going to listen to you. We're going to listen to me."

What's the point of hiring an expensive judge—a good man he is—to, at the end of the day, not pay any heed to what he had to say? Do you get that, Speaker? I'm talking to you. Do you get that?

I don't get it. That's inconsistent with the spirit. You forced a consultation they didn't want, and they got it. Then we're waiting for the recommendations to be accepted by the Premier, and he says no. Expensive judge—what's the point of all that? I have the same feeling you do, Speaker, about this, as you're expressing it right now.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: I'm just concluding.

All I want to say is that this flimsy little thing is empty. There's no reason to bring it forward. The reason they're doing it is to pretend they're doing something. They have the power to do anything they want. They don't need this piece of paper to do it. There is actually, in this bill, no penalty attached to the government or a municipality if they don't abide by some agreement—no

penalty. There is no enforcement mechanism built into the substantive bill—nada, nihil, niente.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Let's put an amendment.

Mr. Marchese: An amendment? You should just get rid of it. You should just say, "Why are we spending three days on this?"

Mrs. Mitchell: Let's just pass it then.

Mr. Marchese: The Liberal member is saying, "Let's just pass it," because they just want to get over this.

That's why I wanted my whole 20 minutes—and that's all I got today. I just want to point out that there's nothing in the bill. We've demystified it. We've pointed out the inconsistencies, and we know that the lawyers of the Liberal caucus are going to vote against it because they're bright, discerning individuals, and we know how a lot of Liberals might think about this, now that I've made my remarks.

Mrs. Mitchell: Don't take it to the bank.

Mr. Marchese: Maybe not, eh? But, to the citizens of Ontario, we thought we got rid of the Tories' playing with all those bills, where I used to say, "When you look at the title of any bill, it belies the substance of it." Look at the content of the bill and you will know that it belies the title of the bill. The Tories used to do it all the time. Now we've got Liberals doing the same thing. It just tires you out. I get tired. I do get tired of it. Three days of debate on an empty bill—I don't know. What a waste of my time and of this Legislature's. I just wanted the opportunity to say that.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

Ms. Pupatello has moved third reading of Bill 92, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HIGHWAY 26

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 37(b), today's late show shall occur now, and that, following the late show, the Speaker shall adjourn the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there unanimous consent to have the late show now and adjourn the House afterwards? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): I want to remind those at home that we have five minutes each—my side and the government side—in response to the dissatisfaction I expressed at the answer to the question I asked the Minister of Transportation today about Highway 26,

and why, when this project began and construction began on the 6.7 kilometres of highway, which is a major safety issue in my riding of Simcoe–Grey, the Liberal government, when they came to office in the summer of 2004, right in the middle of construction season, pulled the construction workers off the work site and nothing further has been done.

I want to remind you that this a huge economic issue. It's really the gateway—the beginning of what could be a very prestigious gateway for the Georgian triangle area in my riding—to the four-seasons area of Collingwood, the Blue Mountains and Wasaga Beach.

I want to thank Mayor Cal Patterson, who has called in since I asked the question this afternoon in question period. He wants me to note for the record that nothing is being done there, and that we have at least two big retailers, two big-box stores that want to get on with construction along the new, realigned highway.

I would remind the minister that, for the first time this afternoon, he has admitted that the \$33 million was included in the provincial Tories' budget for the year 2000. I asked Ernie Eves, the Treasurer at the time, to include that as a safety issue, not a political issue. If I wanted to make it a political issue, I would have four-laned the whole thing from Barrie right through to Owen Sound.

The fact of the matter is, the construction started. The impression I get from your response this afternoon, Minister, is that you said, "Well, you guys had eight years to build this." The fact of the matter is, we made a commitment in 2000 to get on with this, because it came to my attention from people like the mayors of Wasaga Beach, Collingwood, Clearview and the Town of the Blue Mountains that this issue was getting more and more urgent. Since 1988, there have been 420 serious accidents, many of them fatal, on the old stretch of highway we're trying to replace. It's a safety issue and an economic issue, and it's one we are getting conflicting messages on.

You refused to talk to some of the mayors about this particular topic during the AMO conference. You talked to them about concerns they had about other projects, but you didn't want to talk about this. I have your own House notes—this is some of the conflicting messages we're getting—which I received, not out of the generosity of the government but under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The most recent note says construction is continuing and the project is being re-evaluated as part of the province's 10-year infrastructure plan. This should never have gone into your 10-year infrastructure plan. It's a simple realignment. It preceded you by years. You had no business meddling in it. So I asked you today, did you meddle in it because it's in an opposition member's riding? Are you going to hide behind this excuse of this 10-year plan?

1710

By the way, it took only three years to build a railway from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. It's going to take you about five times that to get this piece of road completed. Today I got the impression you think the road

hasn't been started. There's a big sign just north of Stayner on the existing Highway 26 that says, "Highway 26 Realignment: Construction Completion 2003." We did have some hiccups with property acquisition. That occurred back in 2000, 2001 and 2002. There is no excuse now. So I ask you, in the minute and a half I have, when are you going to complete it? Tell me what properties and I'll personally go and talk to these people. I want to know their names: Who's holding up this project?

I want you to know about, and I don't have time to read in, the dozens of letters I get from constituents, recent e-mails, every time I bring this up. There are over 130 entrances, I believe, on the existing highway. People who live along the existing highway have a hard time backing out on to this highway, getting out of their driveways and their homes. We're looking forward to making that a local road and safely completing the realignment. I'm not even asking you right now to finish phases 3 and 4 of the project. Phase 1 was the grading and the clearing that has been done to date. It's only half done. You have another three kilometres to go where you still have to clear. You've got to put in some culverts, some bridges and a cloverleaf.

Why did you stop this project when it's a serious safety issue? It should never have been rolled into your 10-year plan. I can only think it was a political move. You've used it a dozen times in this House when I've asked you or the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal or the Premier this question. I've got a list of questions, pages of them, that I've asked all through 2004 and 2005, ever since you pulled the bulldozers off the existing construction site. It was a shock. The local media had to call me that the bulldozers had gone.

It's construction season now. Minister, when are you going to complete this highway? When can we see bulldozers back on the site? Please don't penalize the people in this area because they voted Conservative, and at the provincial level have done so since Confederation.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Transportation has five minutes to reply.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the member for asking this question and giving me the opportunity of five minutes to actually answer his question.

Let me set the record straight here. Mr. Speaker, you were in the House. I'm sure you recall that in July 2002,

the previous government announced it would build a new alignment of Highway 26. I am sure the member opposite agrees with that. But it took three years, from 2000 until April 2003, for the previous government to announce the first contract. They had planned to complete that contract in 2003, which they didn't do. The contract they let out in 2003 was for one phase, which did not include—I'm sure the member opposite knows—these five kilometres he's talking about. I wonder why they didn't include it. We completed that contract, which the previous government started, in 2004. I want to go on the record to state that.

Phase 2: Well over a dozen properties needed to be acquired. The last one was acquired at the end of March. This is a \$30-million project involving a six-kilometre stretch, approximately. Current design work is being completed, because they didn't complete it. So we're working on it. He should be feeling thankful for this rather than giving us criticism. We will start scheduling out the construction, following the design phase, starting with grading and drainage and then paving.

My question is, it started in 2000, and they didn't even announce the contract until 2003. We completed the contract. They did not include six kilometres of work in the first contract, but we are moving ahead with it. That is the answer I want to leave here.

Since I have a few more minutes left—

Mr. Wilson: When are you going to bring the bulldozers back?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: You didn't bring them for eight years, so we will bring them sooner than eight years.

Let me just say this: Since I have about two and a half minutes left, I want to address another question that was raised in the House today, and that question was about the taxi scoopers.

The Acting Speaker: I would say to the Minister of Transportation that you can't use this remaining time to discuss another question that was raised in the House today.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Then I have basically answered the question the member was asking.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to the previous agreement of the House, this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1715.

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

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