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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 26 September 2006

Mardi 26 septembre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 September 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 septembre 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PREMIER OF ONTARIO

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Today Dalton McGuinty released a progress report on his government that should be classified as fiction. It's a classic example of his government's practice of pronouncing mythical information to confuse the public, to deflect attention from the truth, the damages of the McGuinty broken promises and the mismanagement of a government in disarray.

He claims that class sizes are down in primary grades, but he hides the fact that class sizes have spiked in older grades, that there is a proliferation of portables in schoolyards and that split classes are reaching as high as 47 students. He claims that test scores are up in grades 3 and 6, but hides the fact that tests have been watered down. He claims that more students are graduating, but hides the fact that standards have been lowered. He does not want to be confronted with the fact that school boards across the province are facing deficits, program cuts and school closures, but that is the true state of education in this province today.

Dalton McGuinty gets a failing grade from parents of autistic children for his broken promise to them and their children. Their message to Dalton McGuinty on the lawn of this place yesterday was, "No more excuses." We resound with those parents and with parents across this province: No more excuses for your broken promises. Come clean with the people of Ontario. Tell them the truth.

VIJAY JEET AND NEENA KANWAR

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's an honour to rise today to recognize two extraordinary Ontarians whose generous contributions have helped make Mississauga an even better place to live and to receive health care. Last week, I attended a reception at the Credit Valley Hospital to honour two inspirational members of the western Mississauga community: Mr. Vijay Jeet and Mrs. Neena Kanwar.

Mr. Jeet and Mrs. Kanwar came to Canada in 1985 from their native India, bringing with them aspirations

for business success and philanthropy. After establishing several successful medical diagnostic centres, they strengthened their commitment to health care in western Mississauga by investing in the Credit Valley Hospital. Their \$5-million pledge to support the hospital's expansion fulfills their dream of giving back to their community, and it gives our western Mississauga community a world-class treatment centre, The Vijay Jeet and Neena Kanwar Ambulatory Care Centre.

In addition to outpatient services, the new ambulatory care centre provides additional space for other critical ambulatory care programs such as cardiopulmonary, mental health, rehabilitation, satellite diagnostic imaging, diabetes education and our regional renal program.

I thank Mr. Jeet and Ms. Kanwar for their generous pledge to Credit Valley and for their contributions to Canada, to Ontario and to the city of Mississauga.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Today the Premier's report included a statement on wait times, but this is the truth that he tried to hide:

First, not all the targets have been met. The Minister of Health has already admitted that he will not meet the targets for knee replacement and diagnostic scans that he himself set. We have not yet seen wait time guarantees from this government as promised. The report says this is the first time that wait times are being tracked, yet it was our government that built a province-wide cardiac care network that tracked and reduced wait times for cardiac surgery by half.

While the report focuses on the five priority areas, it neglects to mention the impact on the other surgical wait times and the human suffering. According to the Ottawa Citizen, there is "growing concern among doctors that the government's strategy is creating two-tier ... care that is leaving many sick people behind." They say patients who need services like neurosurgery, psychiatry, pediatric, back and abdominal surgeries face agonizing delays and suffering. Moreover, a news article in the Kingston Whig-Standard states, "The province has received complaints from other Ontario hospitals that operating room resources are being 'cannibalized' for ministry-selected surgeries from others not on the ... priority list."

Yes, others in the province are waiting. This is the real story on the progress on wait times—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

RIDING OF PARKDALE–HIGH PARK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I rise upon the integrity and honour of those sitting today, this assembly that represents to our provincial electorate and to our children the most responsible and principled amongst us. I rise in awe of the generations who have served here, who have formed our laws and traditions and sacrificed their own comforts and hours so that we might all have democracy and freedom in Ontario. I pledge, as I know we all do, to uphold the values of this institution.

I rise upon the integrity and intelligence of the Parkdale–High Park electorate. The issues they demand action on are green renewable energy, not \$40 billion invested in nuclear reactors, fixing the flawed funding formula, and accountability and ethicality in government. They voted to send the Liberal government of Ontario a message: to keep their campaign promises made in 2003. It is my honour to serve the constituency of Parkdale–High Park and represent them in such an undertaking. Their courage gives me courage.

Finally, I rise upon the love and support of my family, my husband and my children, and my congregation at Emmanuel-Howard Park United Church, all of whom have made great personal sacrifices so that I might be able to stand among you.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and honoured members for your attention.

SENECA COLLEGE

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Last month, I joined Premier McGuinty and Minister Bentley at Seneca College in Willowdale, my riding, to make an historic announcement. For the first time in the history of Ontario, our provincial government is investing in projects and programs to help young people become the first in their family to pursue higher education. Our government is on the side of Ontario families who are working hard to build an opportunity for their children, and this is why we are investing \$6 million in programs and bursaries that will help young people whose parents did not attend college or university.

I'm extremely proud that under the leadership of Seneca College and its president, Rick Miner, Seneca's Centre for Outreach Education, or SCOrE, as it's known, is a leader in breaking down barriers for at-risk first-generation youth. This is why we are investing \$750,000 in Seneca's SCOrE program this year.

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Under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, the education Premier, we have invested \$6.2 billion over five years in post-secondary education and training, doubled our investment in student aid, established a new student access guarantee, and 60,000 students will receive grants this coming year.

Our government is genuinely determined to create new opportunities for youth and immigrant families in

communities like Willowdale. I'm proud to be a member of a government that recognizes that an investment in first-generation students not only strengthens our economic growth—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): Further to the McGuinty progress report, which many of us watched today, I rise to present, if you will, a lack-of-progress report with respect to the Caledonia-Six Nations land dispute. As this House will know, the Douglas Creek Estates just south of Caledonia has been occupied since February 28.

I'll quote the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs on the deliberations with respect to Six Nations and Caledonia. May 9: "We feel we are making progress." May 18: "David Peterson is making very good progress." June 5: "Great progress was made"—again, I'm making reference to an occupation that goes back to February 28 of this year. June 14: "We're making great progress." But on June 15: "The Premier of Ontario basically called off these negotiations a few days ago because he did not see the progress we were expecting." Then, on June 21 there's a reversal: "We're making progress." In one week, we went from progress to failure and allegedly back to progress.

BOMBARDIER IN THUNDER BAY

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): I am pleased to announce that our government has helped secure more than 300 high-quality manufacturing jobs for Thunder Bay for the next five years. Last night, over a year's worth of hard work successfully ended when Toronto city council voted in favour of supporting a sole-source agreement to contract work to Bombardier's facility in Thunder Bay. Last night's positive vote confirmed a \$710-million deal with the TTC, which means their next 234 new subway cars will be built by workers in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. The TTC and Toronto city council did this because our workers at this facility deliver world-class, quality vehicles and service at very competitive prices.

This would not have happened without the support of our government and its investments in public transit. This deal was helped by the fact that our government invested over \$200 million in the TTC last year. We have also seen this public policy position manifest itself in other ways. For example, the city of Thunder Bay will receive \$4.5 million from our government over three years in support of our municipal transit system.

I'd like to thank Premier McGuinty for his help with this issue. Discussions with the Premier and his former chief of staff, Don Guy, clearly indicated that we, as a province, would not have any issue if the TTC chose to engage in a sole-source negotiation. I can tell you that after watching most of the debate yesterday at Toronto

city council, this letter was instrumental in the decision-making for many of the councillors who supported the recommendation by the TTC.

I'd also like to give special thanks to all the people in Thunder Bay who worked so hard at making this vision a reality. Without their effort and diligence—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

RIDING OF STORMONT–DUNDAS– CHARLOTTENBURGH

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): It was under the last government that the expression “Ontario ends at Kingston” was coined. Indeed, the only time the opposition seemed to pay attention to my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh was at election time, when they would promise everything but deliver nothing.

Under the McGuinty Liberals, eastern Ontario is back on the map. Not only have we received a great deal of support from this government, but many members of cabinet have made the effort to come down and meet my constituents and learn what makes our part of the province so special and what makes Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh tick.

This summer was no exception. Starting in June with Premier McGuinty's visit to Cornwall, I had the privilege of hosting, among others, the Ministers of Health and Long-Term Care, Transportation, Finance, Health Promotion, seniors, Labour, and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in the riding and introducing them to my constituents. These ministers wanted to meet with the people leading the renaissance that is taking place in Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh and to see what else could be done to assist them. The benefits of these meetings have been and shall continue to be enormous, and to see the construction at this moment going on in the city with regards to the St. Joseph's Continuing Care Centre and the early works at the Cornwall Community Hospital, these are to be certainly expressed today and thanked.

I would like to thank my colleagues for creating opportunities to dialogue with my constituents from every rank and station, and look forward to hosting them again in the years to come.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN BRANT

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I rise to talk about some wonderful news in the riding of Brant. After working with the Ministry of Agriculture, in July, I had the opportunity to announce a grant of almost \$2 million under the rural economic development program to Ferrero Canada. Thank you to the hard-working ministry staff and indeed to all of the hard-working staff of all the ministries. The McGuinty government partnered with Ferrero to undertake a comprehensive recruitment and specialized training project to support its 900,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in my hometown of Brantford. That's

right: Brantford is now home to one of the world's great confectionary makers.

We are seeing and will continue to see a flurry of economic activity come to the riding of Brant. When it is complete, this facility will be the largest of its kind in North America. Ferrero will employ up to 1,200 skilled workers by 2009. The spinoffs in a variety of sectors include transportation, packaging suppliers, residential housing and many more, including the retail industry. The benefits are not only going to be for Brantford but the entire surrounding communities. In other words, the McGuinty government's partnerships with companies like Ferrero help bring jobs to our communities. Ferrero is already well on its way to finding and fulfilling its employment needs, and I am confident that this will help continue to bring prosperity to communities like mine and those around the province.

Companies like Ferrero in Brantford bring jobs and prosperity with them. This is just a renewed proof that, as Walter Gretzky says, “Brantford really is the centre of the universe.”

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg the indulgence of the House to provide the pages with the opportunity to assemble for introduction. I would ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the second session of the 38th Parliament:

Maddy Bondy from St. Paul's; Norah Bonsteel from Mississauga South; Dominic Brisson from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell; Julia Duimovich from Ottawa Centre; Sarah Edgerley from Thornhill; Patrick Griffiths from Waterloo–Wellington; Jasmine Ho from Oak Ridges; Annaliese Ionson from Niagara Centre; Adam Kelly from Oakville; Stephen McGuire from Lanark–Carleton; Paul Michel from Oshawa; Dominic Pizzolitto from Windsor West; Breanna Plourde from Timmins–James Bay; Chad Richards from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; Bryce Robson from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock; Taylor Rodrigues from Mississauga West; Shaké Sarkhanian from Don Valley East; Max Shcherbina from Etobicoke Centre; Olivia Steven from Perth–Middlesex; and Lindsay Walker from Hamilton Mountain.

Applause.

The Speaker: Thank you, and welcome.

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MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting this afternoon's business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, the order for third reading of Bill 89, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Coroners Act to better protect the children of Ontario, shall be called as today's first order; and

That each recognized party be allotted up to five minutes to speak on the motion, following which the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of Bill 89; and

That the order for second reading of Bill 130, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to municipalities, shall be called as the second order; and

That this afternoon's debate on Bill 130 be considered one full sessional day.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TOBACCO CONTROL CONTRÔLE DU TABAGISME

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I have some good news to share with members of the Legislature and the people of Ontario. As you know, in 2003, the McGuinty government announced details of an aggressive plan for reducing tobacco consumption in Ontario. Since then, we've increased the investment in our smoke-free strategy sixfold to \$60 million to protect Ontarians from second-hand smoke, prevent young people from starting, and help smokers to quit.

We also enacted the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, fulfilling a key platform commitment to improve the health of Ontarians. Now families and friends can enjoy a meal or go to a club without being surrounded by smoke. All employees, regardless of the type of work that they are involved in, have equal protection under the law from second-hand smoke.

Today I'm pleased to announce that we are on the verge of fulfilling yet another commitment. Shortly after we took office, we set an ambitious target to reduce tobacco consumption levels in Ontario by 20% before the end of 2007. We made this commitment because we understood Ontarians expected to see real, measurable results.

Earlier this year, we were able to report that tobacco consumption in Ontario had fallen by almost 10% since 2003. Today, I am very proud and pleased to report that tobacco use is already down by 18.7%, according to Health Canada's tobacco consumption report. That's a significant achievement. It's an achievement that everyone involved in the smoke-free movement can be very proud of.

Il s'agit également d'une excellente nouvelle pour les familles ontariennes, qui ont manifesté leur appui solide à nos ambitieux objectifs de réduction du tabagisme.

Permettez-moi de vous décrire ce que représente une réduction de 18,7 % du taux de tabagisme en Ontario. Cela signifie qu'en 2005, on a fumé 2,6 milliards de cigarettes de moins qu'en 2003.

Let me just repeat that in English. What that 18.7% represents is 2.6 billion fewer cigarettes smoked in the province of Ontario since 2003.

Il s'agit de la santé des gens, une question de vie ou de mort.

Every year, tobacco claims 16,000 lives in Ontario. That's about one preventable death every 30 minutes. On top of the death toll is the incalculable cost in sickness and suffering that all of those smokers had to endure. Clearly the reduction in smoking across Ontario since our government was elected in 2003 has been significant, but we didn't do it on our own. We couldn't have gotten this far without working with the many partners in the community. I want to thank such organizations as the Ontario Medical Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Ontario Lung Association, the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network, the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco and the Non-Smokers' Rights Association. These organizations, with countless volunteers, have all worked over the last 40 years to achieve this announcement we're making today.

I also want to commend the 36 public health units across this province, people like Dr. David Salisbury, who is the chief medical officer of health in my hometown of Ottawa, and his dedicated team of public health nurses, tobacco control officers and other professionals who have been at the forefront of tobacco control for years.

Avec l'aide de ces organisations et d'autres partenariats, le gouvernement McGuinty a pu mettre en oeuvre l'une des stratégies de lutte au tabagisme les plus complètes en Amérique du Nord. L'Ontario devient de plus en plus une province saine où il fait bon vivre, travailler et apprendre, un bon endroit où élever des enfants.

Notre santé à tous s'en trouve améliorée; une collectivité en santé attire les employeurs et accroît la prospérité.

Major businesses understand this. That's why chains like the Westin hotel and the Marriott hotel have gone completely smoke-free, a strong signal to the industry that protecting staff and patrons from second-hand smoke is good for business. In fact, John Jarvis, the general manager of the Westin in Ottawa, tells me business is up this year over last year.

Yet there's more to be done and we face many challenges, but at the end of the day, a healthier, fitter population reduces the strain on our health care system and makes all of our work a wise investment.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Response? The member for Lanark-Carleton.

Applause.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the applause from some of the ministers.

I rise today to respond to the Minister of Health Promotion. As he knows, the opposition caucus and our

leader support initiatives to decrease smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke, and I personally support it. In December 1985, I was the first elected official in all of Canada to introduce a bill to protect smokers in the public place and in the workplace from second-hand smoke. Subsequent to that, I introduced seven other private member's bills, eventually forcing the Peterson government in 1989—four long years later—to bring forward a bill to do what I asked in 1985.

While I am glad to hear of the reduction of smokers in this province, because of this terrible addiction to nicotine, our problem relates to the callousness with which this government has implemented this policy, and I want to talk particularly about nursing homes and long-term-care facilities.

With regard to the estimates of this year, when I questioned the minister who has just spoken about the provision for our elderly who are in these institutions to continue a habit which they have undertaken over the whole of their lives, the minister's answer was callous and disregarded the respect our seniors deserve. We found that only 29 of some 500 long-term-care homes in the province have applied for smoking rooms. The reason: the cost of putting these facilities there.

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We have a cold winter coming upon us, and many of these residents who are addicted to nicotine and at a late stage of their lives and do not want to abandon this habit are going to be caught in a terrible conundrum. I asked the minister about a specific case, about an 85-year-old woman, and I want to read the letter from her son:

"My mom is 85 and is a cigarette smoker since 1932. She respects all non-smokers in her life. She has always been independent and self-motivated.... In January 2005, she entered a nursing home with smoking facilities"—a non-profit, long-term-care facility. "She, as well as most residents, is not capable of leaving the facility on her own and she uses the smoking room daily. It is her only social interaction. Otherwise, she remains in her room except for monthly church communion and visits from us.

"In early July, we began to hear about the enactment of a provincial law which would apparently force closing" of this smoking room, "but didn't receive any notification until the 6th of August. All this time we felt that the provincial law would have some sensitivity to this kind of situation, but last week we were informed that the smoking room for the residents would close and she must stop." The letter goes on to say she was given all kinds of excuses and that she should stop smoking at the age of 85. The institution could not afford the \$100,000 to redesign a smoking room that would fit the new regulations.

When the minister was asked specifically about this situation, here is his response: "Mr. Sterling, the answer is no. We are not going to take scarce health dollars and subsidize a business, a non-profit long-term-care facility, whether it's a long-term-care home or a bar, and use these dollars to construct a smoking lounge that encourages people to smoke"—that encourages an 85-year-old

woman who has smoked all of her life. It's going to encourage her to take up the habit. What an argument. What a lack of generosity. What a lack of compassion towards our seniors who are afflicted with this terrible addiction.

We agree with the policy with regard to young people. But the way they have done this has shown such callous disregard for our seniors, the people who built our country, built our province, and is without explanation; a terrible, terrible mistake. This could have been done with care and respect for the people who deserve that respect.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm pleased to respond on behalf of New Democrats to the statement made by the Minister of Health Promotion. I want to make these points: It has been over 100 days since the legislation went into effect, and young people are still subjected to row upon row of cigarettes in their local retail store or local convenience store. Why is that? Because this Liberal government and the Liberal majority in committee voted down our NDP amendment that would have banned retail displays of cigarettes in convenience stores on May 31, 2006. The Liberal majority did that despite the overwhelming evidence at the public hearings from young people who said that retail displays made smoking normal. Retail displays enticed them to start smoking in the first place and then they got hooked.

This is what Tanya Wagner had to say: "[R]ecently I was thinking about why I smoked in the first place. I smoked du Maurier and sometimes Player's, and I noticed the other day that those two brands were the most noticeable behind the counter of my local store. I think that I am living proof that tobacco advertising affects teens. This is why I wanted to talk to you today and ask that you ban retail displays of cigarettes, including power walls."

This is from Olivia Puckrin and Caylie Gilmore: "You probably know that tobacco companies aren't allowed to advertise their products. But still, every kid I know can name five different brands of cigarettes. How is that?"

"Well, it is no mystery. Every time we go into a store, cigarettes are there. Cigarettes are displayed on the counter, behind the counter and even in the counter.... This advertising not only tempts adults to smoke ... it makes cigarettes look ... normal.... But no other product will kill you if you use it as the manufacturer intends....

"If the province allows cigarettes to be advertised in stores with countertop and power wall displays, well now, that would be stupid."

The NDP said that the government should ban retail displays. The government instead should replace the money that retail owners get from big tobacco to do this with promotion on healthy lifestyle, promotion on exercise. We urged the government to give increased revenue to retail store owners from lottery ticket sales. And the government didn't want to hear any of this. The government didn't want to do any of this.

So here we are, 100 days after the legislation has been passed, and young people can still see package after package of cigarettes in their faces in their convenience

stores. That will entice them to start smoking, and these are going to be our cancer statistics 20 years from now.

In the last election, the government promised as part of its anti-smoking strategy that it was going to provide \$31 million a year for a youth mass media campaign. At the estimates on September 5, we found out that the government has allocated a mere \$8.8 million this year for a youth mass media campaign. That's a shortfall of \$22.2 million. We also found out at the estimates that the government promised some \$46.5 million in smoking cessation programs to help people quit smoking. How much has the government is allocating this year? Ten million. That's a shortfall of \$36.7 million from what the Liberals promised.

What's most interesting is that the Liberals have increased tobacco taxes three times since they've been in government. The total new revenue coming in from tobacco taxes now is \$1.5 billion, and I thought some of that \$1.5 billion was supposed to go to keeping these Liberal election promises. In fact, if you go to the Liberal election platform, you see that the Liberals did promise this, and I'm going to quote this from the Liberal election platform: "We will use increased tobacco tax revenue to make smoking cessation medications available to all smokers trying to quit." It's clear the revenue's rolling in, it's clear the promise was made, and it's also clear that the government isn't keeping its promises.

In conclusion, some 100 days after the legislation has been passed, it would have been great to stand here today and say that young people no longer have to have row upon row of cigarette packages in their faces at their local convenience store, enticing them to smoke, but we can't do that. It would have been great to say that young people and organizations representing them have been given the money for ad campaigns to get them to stop smoking or not start in the first place. Regrettably, we can't do that today either.

It would have been great if we could have stood here today and said that all those people who are addicted to tobacco—and there are thousands of them out there and they want to stop smoking. It would have been great if they could have accessed all those cessation programs, the \$46.5 million worth of them that this government promised, and we can't do that either.

VISITORS

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm happy to introduce two members from my riding of Windsor West who are joining us in the gallery today, and they are Mrs. Ada Pizzolitto, who is also the grandmother of one of our pages here from Windsor West, Dominic Pizzolitto. They are joined by another gentleman from my riding, Mr. Alfeo Masotti. The important thing is that Mrs. Pizzolitto also happens to be my mom. The good news is that that makes this particular page my nephew, who told me very clearly that he was very proud

of the fact that he made his application to the page program without reference to his aunt being in the House. So congratulations to Dominic.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

ORAL QUESTIONS

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for Premier. I should say, by the way, that young Dominic is a smart boy. He's going to go places.

Interjections.

Interjection: He's a Liberal, John.

Mr. Tory: There's still time.

My question is to the Premier. Premier, today the occupation of the Douglas Creek Estates in Caledonia enters its 210th day. That's 210 days in which you've tried your very best to play down and avoid the issues raised by both sides in this dispute. You ignored the early warnings in the summer of 2005. You've downplayed the concerns of the residents of Caledonia whose homes back onto Douglas Creek Estates.

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While you've never said so yourself, your lawyers appeared in court as recently as yesterday and said—and I quote them—that "the new owner," namely your government, "does not object to the protesters being on site." This was an argument repeated from the earlier court hearing.

I asked you earlier, in a letter dated August 27, what steps have you taken, if any, to insist on a reasonable minimum number of standards—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm always grateful to receive the question, but I think it's important for the leader of the official opposition to cast his mind back to the fact that, 11 years later, Ipperwash Provincial Park remains occupied and unavailable to the people of Ontario. That is the result of a particular approach brought by that gentleman's government. We think it was the wrong approach, so we're bringing a different approach.

While it's important that we remain patient, and while I can understand that there are some growing frustrations on the part of residents on both sides of this issue, I am working, hand in hand with the federal government, together with the residents. We are at the table day in and day out, working as hard as we can to resolve this in a peaceful manner.

Mr. Tory: A very interesting answer, but not responsive at all to the question.

I'll ask you again: I think it is reasonable when someone is using your land—in this case our land, land that belongs to the people of Ontario—since you're giving

permission for them to use it, that you would insist there be a written agreement, as there would be in almost any other case, that would set out reasonable minimum conditions in terms of things like standards of behaviour that would be expected by you as the owner of the land and by the public in whose hands you hold this as a trustee.

Since you're willing to have them stay there, why have you not asked and required that this kind of an agreement be entered into, one that sets out minimum standards of behaviour and sets out the terms upon which people can stay on the land, for how long and matters like that? Why have you not done that? Why is that unreasonable?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, Ipperwash Provincial Park remains occupied after 11 years. That is the end result of the approach brought by this particular former government. If there is some kind of written agreement binding the use of that land, I'm not aware of that and neither are the people of Ontario.

But let me tell you what we have done, working together with all of the communities affected by this. Just recently, Minister Ramsay visited the community. We have agreed to put in place a 100-foot buffer zone, now recognized and controlled by the OPP, behind the houses and school that back on to the protested land.

I've also written to Chief MacNaughton. I've secured an agreement from him that he will work hard to eliminate noise and other nuisances that might be occurring on the land in question.

When it comes to the future use of the land, that is the subject of ongoing negotiations at the table. The federal government is present, we are present and, of course, so are the First Nations.

Mr. Tory: This is all very interesting, that you've secured an agreement with the chief. It's the first we've heard of this. He's quoted in the September 6 edition of the Turtle Island News as saying, "The letter never made it to the chiefs." You released it to the press but never sent it to the chiefs. So now we hear there's an agreement with him, and perhaps you might make that agreement available to us and tell us what terms you have with him.

You were quoted in the St. Catharines Standard, on August 31, 2006, as saying that if the protestors stay on the land "in some kind of permanent way, through the winter for example—that is not acceptable to us."

On the one hand, you had your lawyers in court yesterday saying they can stay there as long as they want and you seem unwilling to require any conditions of them or ask for anything, although we now hear there's some kind of a secret agreement; on the other hand, you said it was unacceptable.

So my question is this: Can you clarify for us exactly what the McGuinty government policy is? Are the protestors allowed to stay as long as they want without conditions, or must they be off the land, as you said previously, by the winter? Which is it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, 11 years later, Ipperwash Provincial Park remains occupied. It's a provincial park that is not available for use by the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing the Premier. Order.

Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, we are intent on remaining at the table, together with the representative of the federal government and representatives of the First Nations communities affected by this. The leader of the official opposition knows that this particular issue predates Confederation. It is complex, it is fraught with challenges and it is taking everything all three parties can do by way of bringing to bear a request that we remain peaceful and respectful of one another as we work our way through this very difficult situation. We will continue to be at the table for as long as it takes to ensure that we have a productive dialogue, and a very important objective in all of this, of course, is the future use of that particular piece of property.

The Speaker: New question. The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: My second question is also for the Premier. I wonder if you can give us your best estimate of the costs of all aspects involved in the Caledonia matter to date, including policing, land purchase costs, assistance to the affected businesses and residents, lawyers, negotiators, and that is just to name a few of the line items. I expect that as the chief trustee of the taxpayers' money, you will be able to give us some estimate as to how much has been spent on that matter so far.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: With respect to the purchase of Douglas Creek Estates, I can inform the leader of the official opposition and the House that the total paid to the developer was \$15.8 million, and there was an additional \$4 million for builders who had started to build on the land in question.

Mr. Tory: I will help the Premier, who seems to be woefully ill informed about the finances of the taxpayers. I think by the calculation we can do, without access to all the tens of thousands of public servants you have, that the number would be about \$55 million so far, and counting. Policing costs: probably about \$30 million to date, and that is before we count in the cost of the new 72-officer detachment in Caledonia; buyout of the land—your numbers are right as we have it—about \$20.9 million; Jane Stewart's contract, \$330,000 without factoring in other staff; millions in costs to Hydro One for property damage and delay of the hydro transmission line; unknown costs—perhaps millions; we can't even count—related to the transfer of 250 acres of lands. That puts us at about \$55 million so far.

Can you either confirm that number as the total cost so far or tell us what the right number is? You should be able to do that if you're looking after the taxpayers' money.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To listen to our colleague, you would think that there must be some neat, tidy and possibly elegant solution to the challenges that face all of us at Caledonia. You would think that. But he has yet, at any place or any time, to put forward any substantive proposal that would tell us exactly what he would have us do in these challenging circumstances.

So what we have done is work hand in hand with the federal government—and it may be that Mr. Tory has contacted the Prime Minister and registered his extreme displeasure with this peaceful approach brought by our two governments; maybe he has done that but he hasn't owned up to it in this House—and we will continue to work hand in hand with the federal government, together with the First Nations, to resolve this in a manner that is peaceful.

Mr. Tory: Again a very interesting answer not responsive to the question, and I'll tell you what I have said. I have said it's important that we respect the rule of law and that we don't sit at negotiating tables with people who are not prepared to do that. I have said that, and if that puts me at odds with you and the Prime Minister of Canada, so be it.

Mr. McGuinty's government has bought out Henco. You've provided assistance to business, you've transferred 250 acres of agricultural land to the First Nations people, but there's one group of people for whom you have done nothing. It's a very small group, but they are innocent victims of this whole sorry affair. I'm talking about the homeowners whose properties are adjacent to the disputed lands, who have been pleading with your government for some consideration of their circumstances where their property values have plummeted and their houses, in many cases, are not saleable. Are you going to reconsider the request they have made so that you would inject some measure of fairness into a process for people who have found themselves caught in the middle of this situation? Will you reconsider and show some consideration to these people?

1420

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: You wouldn't blame the people of Ontario for being confused. At first, Mr. Tory was saying the problem is we're spending too much money, and now he is saying the problem actually is that we're not spending enough time to talk to more people so that we might give them more money. We're a little confused as to where he stands on this, but perhaps, in the grand scheme of things, that is to be expected.

We are proud of the way that we have managed this difficult, complex situation. The leader of the official opposition sees things differently. He is in disagreement with myself and with Prime Minister Harper and the peaceful resolution that we are seeking to arrive at.

To be specific about his question, we are in fact dealing, on an ongoing basis, with those particular homeowners. We've been dealing with the businesses. We've been dealing with the community at large. We've dealt with the developer. We are ensuring that people are intact in terms of their financial circumstances. We're doing whatever we can to maintain peace in this community.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. This is a news article from the Kitchener–Waterloo Record:

“Five ER Doctors Leave Hospital; Turmoil at Cambridge Memorial.

“There's a crisis in the emergency room,” says Dr. Paul Quinlan, one of the departing doctors. ‘We were in a death spiral.’

“Fewer patients are being treated. They are waiting much longer and some are leaving without being seen.”

Premier, this sounds like a news article from yesterday, but in fact it's from the Kitchener–Waterloo Record from a year ago, October 1, 2005, and a year later, under the McGuinty government, the situation in the emergency room has only gotten worse. Why haven't you acted to address the emergency room crisis, since it's been going on for over a year now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm sure the leader of the NDP will now want to formally acknowledge and recognize his complicity in creating some of the challenges faced by emergency room doctors in the province of Ontario as a result of shutting down medical school spaces. I'm sure he's going to want to recognize that at some point.

I can tell you some of the things that we are doing to help address this—in addition to the important productive dialogue that is ongoing right now is this: We've put in place 150 family health teams. We've put in place 49 new community health centres. We are expanding medical school spaces by 23%. We are expanding the number of our nurse practitioner spaces. We are doubling the number of spaces for our international medical graduates in our residency programs. And, of course, we've opened the first new medical school in Canada in some 30 years. All of those have in mind to ensure that Ontarians have greater access to primary care outside an emergency room setting. It's not the only answer, but in part it is.

Mr. Hampton: Most of these things haven't happened, and that's why we continue to see a crisis in emergency rooms. Tomorrow, Cambridge will announce whether it will take the unprecedented step of hiring a private, profit-driven corporation to take over its emergency room, and your Minister of Health refuses to say if he will stop that privatization. As of yesterday, he hadn't even spoken to the hospital administrators about it.

In 2003, you were very critical of the former Conservative government for hiring Med-Emerg corporation. You said, “That money could have and should have been spent to hire full-time” health workers.

Premier, you're now in your fourth year of government. Have your standards changed or will you intervene immediately to stop this health care privatization?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think that there's no doubt we have a real issue when it comes to ensuring that our emergency rooms are as effective as they possibly can be. And the Minister of Health, through his offices, is engaged in a very positive and constructive dialogue with our emergency room physicians. Let me just take the opportunity to say to them on behalf of the people of Ontario, we thank them for hanging in there under

challenging circumstances. We thank them for the work they do, day in and day out, night in and night out, for that matter—for all that they do. We ask for their patience as we work together to resolve some of the challenges that are affecting all of us.

Mr. Hampton: I'm sure all Ontarians thank our physicians. That's not the issue. The issue here is that emergency room wait times across Ontario are going up. This summer, 19 hospitals—Belleville, Guelph, Sault Ste. Marie, Atikokan, Timmins, and the list goes on—were at risk of closing their emergency rooms entirely.

Manitoba averted a crisis in their emergency rooms by doing some planning and taking thoughtful action. But here in Ontario, under the McGuinty government, hospitals are forced to use profit-driven private corporations to operate their emergency rooms while you pretend health care privatization isn't happening.

Premier, if Med-Emerg corporation can find doctors to work in the emergency room, why can't the McGuinty government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: You know what? I think one of the questions that Ontarians are entitled to ask themselves is, if the leader of the NDP is so genuinely committed to medicare, why did he vote against our Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, a bill that was before him in this House? Why did he vote against that? I think that's an important question that would weigh heavily on the minds of Ontarians.

Again, we're pleased to be working as diligently as we can with all those involved in improving the quality of care in emergency rooms. But I think it's also important to remember something that Dr. John Rapin, former OMA president, said: "As the OMA predicted at the time, 10 years later this decision in itself"—he's talking about the fact that the NDP cut medical school spaces—"bears much of the blame for the current shortage of all types of physicians in Ontario."

So it is true that we find ourselves in circumstances where we've got to clean up a bit of a mess contributed to by the NDP government, but we will work diligently in that regard.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier: 118,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs have disappeared in Ontario under your watch. That's more than 10% of the manufacturing jobs in the province. At the heart of this destruction of jobs is your government's misguided policy of driving hydroelectricity rates through the roof. Ontario's resource and manufacturing communities have told you that they need hydro rate relief now.

Premier, you've had much to say on this in the past. Is your government going to deliver hydro rate relief before thousands more jobs are destroyed in the resource and manufacturing sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The leader of the NDP will

know that we have been working particularly closely with the forestry sector, which is being buffeted by more than just circumstances that prevail here in Ontario but by a decline in pricing for their product, by a Canadian dollar which rose dramatically. We've worked hand in hand with them. In fact, we put together a package of some \$900 million to help ensure that we can not only help the forestry sector meet its immediate challenges, but also that we can transition them through some capital improvements to a point where they are more productive and producing more value-added products. That's the kind of approach we've brought when dealing with the forestry sector in particular, and we will keep working with them.

Mr. Hampton: Correction, Premier: You have announced \$900 million, and industries and mills in communities have hardly seen a cent of it. Twenty-five thousand direct and indirect jobs across northern Ontario in the forest sector have been destroyed by your government in the last two years. Kenora, Thunder Bay, Opasatika, Chapleau, Smooth Rock Falls, Kirkland Lake, Dryden, Hearst, Timmins, Longlac, Red Rock are all communities that have been devastated by your policy of driving hydro rates through the roof for an industry that has to use a lot of electricity in the manufacturing process.

1430

Northern mayors, industry leaders and labour leaders have all come together with one simple message: Reduce the industrial hydro rate in northern Ontario to 4.5 cents inclusive per kilowatt hour immediately. Are you going to listen to community, labour and industrial leaders in northern Ontario, Premier, or are you going to destroy thousands more jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know the leader of the NDP would not want to leave the impression here in this House that somehow the forestry sector in British Columbia, Quebec and New Brunswick, for example, has been unaffected by what's happening in an era of globalization.

I also know that he'd want to be mindful of some of the things that people in the forestry sector have said about our policies. Here is what they said from Tembec. Dennis Rounsville, the executive vice-president and president of the Forest Products Group: "The role played by the province generally and Minister Ramsay in particular in the re-establishment of this mill has been positive and we both applaud and appreciate their involvement."

Here's what they said over at Bowater Canadian Forest Products: "We would like to thank Minister Ramsay and the Ministry of Natural Resources for the contribution they are making to Bowater's Thunder Bay operation.... This project will assist our facility in moving towards the manufacture of new paper grades and is a step towards an improved competitive position for the operation."

What I'd ask the leader of the NDP to do is just to be a bit more balanced and a bit more broad in terms of recognizing what is in fact happening in northern—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Speaking of balance, Premier, is this the same Tembec that laid off everybody in the town of Smooth Rock Falls? Is this the same Bowater that said they're not going to go ahead with a \$200-million upgrading of their Thunder Bay mill because hydro rates in Ontario are so high under the McGuinty government that it would be a bad investment? You shouldn't lecture anyone about balance, Premier.

Eight months ago in Thunder Bay, you had a lot to say about reducing hydro rates. You told the mayors and other municipal leaders that the McGuinty government was going to look at reducing hydro rates in northern Ontario, since it costs a lot less to produce electricity there. Eight months later, thousands more jobs have disappeared, yet you haven't done anything. I ask you again, when are you going to reduce industrial hydro rates in northern Ontario and stop destroying thousands of forest sector jobs?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I'd ask the leader of the NDP to be a bit more open-minded in terms of trying to gain a basic understanding of what's happening in the forestry sector in North America. It's not just specific to us here in Ontario.

It's true that I did have a good opportunity to chat with some of the folks in northwestern Ontario about electricity prices. I can tell you that we continue to work with that community and with others as well to ensure they are in a competitive position and can take full advantage of some of the opportunities we are creating with our programs to help the forestry sector in particular transition itself to a point where it is more competitive and more value-added.

I want to conclude with something said by the folks at Flakeboard in Sault Ste. Marie, who said in short, "Flakeboard will continue to do everything possible to ensure that our plants remain competitive and continue to support our customer base. We are appreciative of the provincial government's support of these important initiatives." We will continue—

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. New question.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question again is for the Premier. We noticed the campaign-style, taxpayer-financed pamphlets you put out this morning, giving yourself lavish praise for all the things you claim to have done. I suggest you get an A+ for broken promises and an A++ for saying absolutely anything you have to say to get elected.

The book has one other little thing on it in terms of disrespect for the taxpayers' money; namely, a confirmation that you're going ahead with this misguided plan to change the government trillium logo. Can you tell the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario how much of their

money you are using to unnecessarily change the trillium logo? Can you tell them how much it's all going to cost?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I really appreciate the opportunity to speak about the progress that we've been making. This is our third annual report, and I would encourage the leader of the official opposition to turn the page and take a look at the contents. Ontarians may want to visit our website as well if they can't get hold of one of these.

One of the things it talks about, for example, is that class sizes are down. Over 60% of all of our primary classes are expected to have 20 students or less. Test scores are up. We've gone from 54% of grades 3 and 6 students meeting the Ontario grade to 64%. High school graduation has gone from 68% to 71%.

That is just a snippet of all the good news to be found inside this document that speaks of the progress we're making together on behalf of Ontarians.

Mr. Tory: We ought to get a few of the farmers, emergency room doctors, autistic kids, and forestry industry people to write a few chapters for you and see what they have to say.

We know that the redesign costs started at \$219,000, given out to your friends at Bensimon Byrne, the Liberal advertising agency, part of their \$16-million McGuinty bonanza they've received so far. That doesn't even begin to cover the cost of replacing the logo on government buildings and government cars. According to the public accounts, the government of Ontario owns 3,500 buildings, and the estimated cost of replacing signs is \$1,500, so at two signs a building, that's \$10.5 million. Some 10,000 cars are owned by the government of Ontario: \$50 a car just for the labour to replace the decal, so that's \$500,000. That's \$11 million for building signs and car decals. The fact is that if you were not changing this logo, you wouldn't have to spend that money at all.

Why don't you cancel this boondoggle and instead spend the money on emergency rooms or helping farmers or autistic kids? Will you stand up and cancel this now?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition is just making this stuff up. What we have said is that we will replace—

Interjections.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): And it's not all that good.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's not even good fiction. There's good fiction and there's bad fiction. This is bad fiction.

We're replacing the logo on an ongoing basis, as and when the product in question calls for it. He knows that, and he should just stand up and admit to that.

But let's get back to the good news. If you take a look at this progress report, one of the things that is truly remarkable is that when it comes to cardiac procedures, we have a reduction in wait times by 50% for angiography and by 25% for angioplasty; cataract surgeries are down by 20%; hip and knee joint replacements are down

by, respectively, 18% and 12%. We're making real progress on behalf of Ontarians.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. I know, Minister, that my question won't reflect it, but I wish you the best and I congratulate you.

Now my question. Before your election, you were highly critical of the previous government because they forced school boards to balance budgets while admitting that the education funding formula was flawed. Three years later, you and your government have admitted the funding formula is flawed—and you admitted as much again this morning—but you're still forcing boards to make cuts in the classroom to compensate for your government's inaction. When are you and your government going to deliver on the fundamental changes to the education funding formula that you promised?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I accept the congratulations of the honourable member and I look forward to his many questions going forward.

The fact is that this is a different government. This is not the previous government. The member opposite talks about the cuts and the disarray in the system that was the hallmark of the previous government. We are in a completely different environment. I know that if the member went into the schools in his riding and talked to the teachers and talked to the students and talked to the superintendents, he would hear that the tone has completely changed, because they know we have invested money in more teachers in their schools, the class sizes are down, and there are more students graduating. It's a different time.

In fact, in the supplementary, I'll talk about how we have started changing the funding formula.

1440

Mr. Marchese: It is so very disappointing that after the promising rhetoric of the last election, so many of the needs of so many of our students are not being met. We're talking about English as a second language; we're talking about special education in general and autism in particular; we're talking about transportation; we're talking about capital projects, where so many of our schools are not being fixed. Boards across Ontario, trustees and teachers that I've talked to, are being forced to make cuts in the classroom. From downtown Toronto to the shores of James Bay, students are losing their educational assistants, their buses and, in some cases, their local schools.

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic school board has drawn a line in the sand and they have refused to make the cuts. Your government expert has told them to cut remedial reading and continuing education, and to defer desperately needed maintenance. Which of these areas do you feel should go—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question's been asked. Minister.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: The fundamental difference between the previous government and this government is that, first of all, we believe in publicly funded education and, secondly, we have invested in publicly funded education. I know the member opposite knows that. There is not a school in your area or in the Toronto District School Board or in the Toronto Catholic District School Board that has not felt the result of the millions of dollars that we have put into Good Places to Learn. There are capital projects across this province, including in the city of Toronto, including in Dufferin-Peel, where boilers are being fixed, where windows are being replaced. Maintenance that I as a school board trustee was forced to put off and defer is being attended to. Those lists of facility concerns that I was presented as a school board trustee are being addressed because of the millions of dollars that we have put into the system. I look forward, as we move forward—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question. I can wait.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. As the MPP for a rural riding, I've been fielding questions this summer from several of my constituents about the government's proposed Clean Water Act, Bill 43. None of the farmers or the rural property owners dispute the need to better protect the sources of municipal drinking water. However, many expressed uncertainty about the potential implications for them, both during the planning stage and once the plans are implemented. Unfortunately, some were needlessly upset by inaccurate statements that have been made about the act. Minister, could you please describe for the members of this assembly, and for my constituents, what actions the government undertook to ensure that the issues of relevance to farmers and rural property owners were heard.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I've had an opportunity in this House before to talk about the consultation that has taken place on the Clean Water Act since October 2003, by way of a white paper, round table discussions, consultation across the province, expert panels, my travels across the province. But really, what's critical right now is to focus on what transpired this summer. The Clean Water Act travelled, by way of standing committee, across the province. Hundreds of community representatives came forward and gave us their good ideas and told us how we could make a good act even better. Our colleagues on this side of the House and that side of the House brought forward their ideas, and on September 6 this government proposed amendments that will be made to make that act even better. We travelled the province. We listened to those concerns. We are amending the legislation. It will make a good act even better.

Mrs. Van Bommel: Minister, it's obvious that the government has taken on a lot of consultation in terms of

talking to the people who will be affected by the Clean Water Act when it is implemented.

I want to contrast this with the little effort that the previous Conservative government put into consulting Ontarians prior to the introduction of both regulation 170 and the Nutrient Management Act. Upon taking office, the McGuinty government had to re-engage rural Ontarians in constructive dialogue and, in the end, the McGuinty government made both manageable for rural Ontarians.

Minister, can you please describe what amendments the government will make in response to the good ideas that have been brought forward by rural Ontarians during the recent standing committee hearings into the Clean Water Act?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I want to thank Maria Van Bommel and all of my colleagues who also brought forward those good ideas into this legislation. Some of those amendments include \$7 million in 2007-08 for early action to protect drinking water; \$5 million to support action to protect land and water surrounding municipal water wells and surface water intake; and \$2 million to support local education and outreach related to source protection planning.

We are replacing the permit system with a risk management plan, and we're ensuring that the risk management officials have the training and qualifications that they need to develop the plans with property owners. These and other amendments have been well received. Among others who have given us their support are Ron Bonnett, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture: "This first stage financial assistance goes a long way toward addressing the concerns of the farming community"; and John Maaskant: "This is an encouraging announcement and indicates that agricultural concerns have been taken into account."

LANDFILL

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. The city of Toronto's purchase of the Green Lane landfill just outside of London has taken on a life of its own. What is even more shocking is the lack of representation in the area where Green Lane is situated. The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, in whose riding Green Lane is located, has known about this expansion since it was announced. He was copied on your June 28, 2006, approval letter, about which you stated, "The expansion of Green Lane is good news for municipalities across Ontario who are seeking disposal capacity within the province rather than sending it to Michigan." Yet other local and municipal elected officials, including those in your own caucus, had no idea.

Minister, why were neighbouring municipalities and your local members not consulted about receiving Toronto's garbage?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): What a fantasyland the folks on the other side of

the Legislature must live in: eight years of inaction; a current member and the leader of that party has indicated himself that he would not alter this transaction one single way. Your leader on the other side of the Legislature can sit and criticize, but he brings no solutions to the table.

On this side of the House, we're rolling up our sleeves, and we are ensuring in each and every case that matters are dealt with by the Ministry of the Environment and that communities are consulted. The terms of reference of this environmental assessment were approved by the former government, and that environmental assessment transpired over three years—a full year of analysis, consultation and scientific review by the Ministry of the Environment to absolutely ensure that this landfill would operate, as it always had, in an environmentally responsible manner.

Ms. Scott: Minister, the question was about being consulted about receiving Toronto's garbage. So it has become abundantly clear that the people of the London area have lost the representation of their MPPs, and that is a shame. The hard-working citizens of London and surrounding communities are now getting a real sense of McGuinty Liberals. Dalton McGuinty Liberals have shown us that Toronto votes trump London votes and he will say anything and reach any lows in order to get re-elected.

Yesterday, the member for London–Fanshawe said, "I will do whatever is possible to block this," followed by, "I do not know what MPPs can do to block it."

If members of your own caucus feel so helpless, how concerned should the regular, hard-working people of London and other areas such as Ottawa near the Carp landfill site be that they are going to bear the brunt of your broken promise of 60% waste diversion and your lack of any real plan for Ontario's garbage crisis, including energy from waste?

1450

Hon. Ms. Broten: It's always interesting to hear from those on the other side of House whose *raison d'être* was creating a crisis. We're very confused by the perspective that the members opposite bring forward. Would their leader cancel the landfill? I've not heard that be said. Would their leader intervene in a private contractual relationship between the city of Toronto, who has stepped forwards to manage their waste, and a private entrepreneur who has supported his party in the past? I don't think so.

This is a process whereby the Ministry of the Environment has the responsibility to impose conditions to ensure that a landfill operates in a safe and environmentally sound fashion. Those conditions have been imposed. They will continue, no matter who is the owner or operator of this site. The members of their communities in London are advocating on behalf of their constituents, as they should be doing. They are bringing those concerns forward. I will be meeting with the municipal representatives later today—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, Minister of Labour.
Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound will come to order.

New question.

DISABILITY BENEFITS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): In the absence of the Minister of Community and Social Services, my question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, on May 15 this year, and again on June 21, I asked your community and social services minister why she slashed Brian Woods's special diet allowance just a few short months after the Ombudsman's office, upon our intervention, reinstated it and even made his payments retroactive?

I'd like to remind you about Mr. Woods. He is a very sick man, very ill. He has diabetes, bleeding ulcers on his feet, heart problems, congestive heart failure, osteomyelitis, and he is legally blind. His health is deteriorating because he cannot get proper nourishment. As of today, Mr. Woods still doesn't even have a date to plead his case to the benefits tribunal.

Premier, he thinks the minister is ignoring him. Will you take charge of this file and reinstate his special diet that the Ombudsman said he is legally entitled to?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I can't speak to the specifics of the case raised by my colleague, but I will undertake to bring it to the attention of the minister and have the minister pursue it from there. But I can say that, as a matter of general principle, the purpose of the allowance is for people who require a special diet as a result of a medical condition. The Ontario Medical Association has helped us create a new application form that clearly lists the medical conditions that require a special diet.

I gather my colleague is telling me that, even under our criteria, this particular individual should qualify for this special allowance. I don't know whether that is in fact the case, but again, I do undertake to take it up with the minister.

Mr. Prue: It is not under your criteria; the Ombudsman of the province of Ontario has ordered him reinstated, and you've taken him off again.

On May 15, I asked the minister this very question. She did not respond. On May 16, I wrote to her asking for an answer. She did not respond. We did get a voice mail saying she might be able to do something, but we heard nothing. We asked again on June 21. On June 28, my executive assistant called the minister's office begging for a reply and got none. As recently as three weeks ago on the streets of Parkdale–High Park, we met the minister out knocking on doors with her executive assistant. She promised to do something but, as of today, nothing has been done. On September 12, we e-mailed her again and, one more time, there has been no response.

Brian is watching today. He is watching from his home right now. I want you to tell him straight: Will you

order the minister to seek to reinstate his badly needed money, money that the Ombudsman of Ontario has already said he deserves?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I want to thank the member for his question. What I will undertake is this: I will raise this matter with the minister. I think that certainly the member is entitled to a response in a timely fashion. I think that's the best I can do at this point in time.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. On December 21 of last year, you came to my riding promising capital projects of not one, not two, but three hospital projects. The people of Cornwall and all of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh were at first skeptical. They had heard such promises before. It was during the last election that your predecessor, the current federal Minister of Health, came to Cornwall promising that he had a cheque for the redevelopment of the Cornwall Community Hospital in his back pocket. Upon assuming office, the McGuinty Liberals found that no funding had been set aside for that purpose and that no plan had been created.

I'm pleased to say that, unlike the last government, the McGuinty Liberals have put their words into action and the money of my constituents back in their hands in the form of these hospital projects. Could you update this House on the current standing of these capital projects?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm privileged to do so. In fact, Cornwall was one of those communities where the Conservative rubber cheque policy was actually acknowledged by John Tory, who questioned it as appropriate. But we're really excited about the progress that's going on there.

At the main site at Cornwall Community Hospital, we're just about to get shovels going on a new wing project. That is to complete renovations for critical care, maternal and child care, and emergency services that will allow for a further \$60-million redevelopment. We're excited about that. Over at St. Joe's, which is taking on the complex continuing care role, renovations are substantially complete. Up the road in Winchester, it won't be long now that we'll begin to rebuild that hospital.

The reality is that if people visit Jim Brownell's Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, they will see a very, very fine piece of evidence of health care renaissance taking place. That community has the benefit of excellent representation and will very soon have the benefit of the most modern health care facilities of any riding, I dare say, in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Brownell: One of my first acts as MPP for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh was to present you with the plans for these three hospital projects in my riding. I have since participated in the shovel in the ground at the St. Joseph's Continuing Care Centre and was present from the start at the first stage of the

redevelopment of the Cornwall Community Hospital. By themselves, these hospital projects will have a huge impact in health care delivery in my riding. People will no longer have to travel to Ottawa or Kingston for certain advanced treatments, and wait times will continue to shrink.

The hospitals aren't the only projects that are forming the renaissance in health care in my riding. On that same day last December, you announced that a new community health centre would be built in Cornwall. Minister, health care is more than just bricks and mortar. My question to you: Are there more health care professionals delivering more services for my constituents?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: At the heart of it, health care is about a public service delivered with a lot of love alongside. We're so proud that about a quarter of a million health care workers every day bring that love to the front line. We're really proud of what's going on in the Champlain local health integration area as well: 11 new family health teams; 12 new community health centres and/or satellites; 350 more nurses; and 75 foreign-trained doctors, new, who are in practice in those communities.

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The reality is that all across Ontario, instead of having more and more orphaned patients, we have fewer. The reality for Champlain is that because we've had a 407% increase in the number of Ontarians who are accessing primary care through an organized model, we've been able to accomplish, at least so far, 91,000 patients, previously orphaned by that party and that party, who can identify with having a doctor and receiving the care that they need as close to home as possible.

We're proud to stand behind our public system of medicare and to make these investments to restore confidence in health care by being confident about our public health care system and putting the people's dollars where they're required: behind good-quality public services.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Premier. Recently, your energy minister, when questioned on how people were to cope with the policies of this government that have resulted in thousands of dollars being taken out of the pockets of working families in this province through skyrocketing taxes and energy and hydro rates, your minister told them, basically, "Wrap yourself up in some blankets, get some good red wine and cuddle up with someone you care about. It'll help you get through those cold nights." Premier, do you agree with this flippant and dismissive attitude and the reply to hard-working families who are finding it tough in this province? Do you agree with the comments of your minister?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I think I suggested about five or six different ways that people

could conserve energy. I also suggested that conservation is important to the future of this province's energy supply, and I suggested that by conserving energy in modest ways, people could in fact cut their energy bills, cut their consumption and help the environment at the same time.

We think conservation is an extremely important component of fixing the energy system. That's why we've invested in it and that's why we're going to continue to invest in conservation. It's the view of this government that conservation can not only help the environment, it can be something done with relatively modest changes in one's lifestyle, and it can also be something that people should participate in and should try to help out with.

Mr. Yakabuski: Well, Premier, thank you for not answering. Maybe you'll answer this time.

Ontarians are feeling the weight of your government's failed energy plan. Jobs are disappearing across northern Ontario faster than Liberal caucus members are leaving. While those people are hurting, your minister plays Marie Antoinette to people in northern Ontario. While he may be able to afford good red wine, people who have lost their jobs simply cannot.

Premier, I'm asking you to tell your minister to apologize for his flippant and dismissive attitude to hard-working families. Ask him to apologize to the people of Ontario who are suffering under your regime.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I think the Tories should say why their leader said that conservation is a misplaced priority. We think it's an important priority. He should turn to his colleague, who is normally sitting next to him—here's what he said about conservation: "The private sector asked us to get out of large-scale government conservation programs. Those efforts may have made the odd person feel good but they had absolutely no effect." We don't agree with that.

I will continue to say that people can manage their electricity bills better through conservation. There are a number of things they can do in their individual lifestyles. I know members around here have done that, members opposite have done that. It's important to do that. Conservation is an important part of the solution to the challenges facing our energy sector. People can make important changes with modest changes in their lifestyles. Those changes, in fact, can not only be important to the environment, they should also help us educate ourselves and enjoy the fruits of all our labours.

ORGANIC WASTE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. You will recall your 2003 election platform where you promised to divert 60% of waste from landfills and implement a ban on organic material going to waste dumps. You said then, "Organic waste is a resource, not garbage. We will phase in a ban on organic waste in our landfills, diverting it instead to environmentally friendly compost."

Premier, in your fourth year of government, where is your ban on organic material going to waste dumps?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): It's great to be back and have a chance to talk about in this Legislature all of the steps being taken in this province to see increased waste diversion as we move forward with waste management tools for the municipalities and industry for the 21st century.

Let me focus on one of the announcements the Premier and I made over the summer with respect to the bottle return and the fact that we will now see bottles that have clogged our blue box system returned to the Beer Store, at the request of the municipalities, responding to a long call being made by the municipalities that they needed a change in the approach with respect to the management of the blue box program. Two new programs on their way for blue box: household hazardous waste, special waste, electronics.

We are also seeing regulatory enforcement in the ICI sector, who to this date have not done enough work with respect to diversion. When we come back on the supplementary, I'll speak directly to the work being done on organics.

Mr. Hampton: Once again the McGuinty government calls a photo op and a press conference a plan. The fact is, Toronto wants to divert more waste from landfill, Guelph wants to divert more waste from landfill, London wants to divert more waste from landfill. But they need a plan from the McGuinty government and they need funding from the McGuinty government to make it happen. Here we are in the fourth year of the McGuinty government and there's still no waste diversion plan and there is no funding for municipalities. Instead, the Minister of the Environment stands up and says to London that they should simply accept a mega-dump.

My question to you again, Premier, is this: When did your promise to ban organic waste from dump sites become cash for trash, and London being forced to take a mega-dump?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I guess as it continues, the leader of the third party never lets the facts get in the way of a good fearmongering story.

Let me tell you what's happening in this province with respect to organics. A number of communities are on their way with household organics programs, and that will divert 480,000 tonnes of household organics each and every year. Six municipalities already have those organic recycling programs in their commitment under way, developing those programs. Another number of communities—York, Peel region—are expected to go region-wide this year, 2006-07, and that will divert another 135,000 tonnes of household organics. Nine more communities have trial programs across the province.

That's what's happening in organics in this province. We are not focused on a piece of paper. We're focused on results, and that's what we're going to deliver to the people of Ontario.

CHINESE LANTERN FESTIVAL

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Tourism. Throughout the summer, I attended many different festivals and events in Thornhill, in the city of Vaughan, in Markham, all over Ontario. I think that one of the greatest attributes of Ontario is that we celebrate our diversity through colourful events that excite our senses and allow us to explore many cultures. I recall you speaking in the spring about an event that was coming to Ontario Place this summer called the Chinese Lantern Festival. Minister, can you tell us about the Chinese Lantern Festival that is taking place right now at Ontario Place?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I certainly can. I want to thank the member for an excellent question today. This summer, the government of Ontario partnered with the People's Republic of China to bring the world's largest lantern festival outside of Asia to Ontario. With just a short time to go, the festival has attracted 33,000 more attendees than had been expected for the entire two-and-a-half-month run. That is 163,000 attendees.

Anyone who has attended this event in the last few months has most certainly been in awe of the 30 elaborate, large-scale lantern installations and 3,000 lanterns that transform the Ontario Place middle kingdom landscape, depicting the tales and traditions of one of the world's largest and most ancient cultures and lighting up Toronto skies. Remember, you've got till October 1 to see it. Don't miss it.

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Mr. Racco: Thank you, Minister, and I will definitely be encouraging my constituents to get out to the festival this weekend.

It is great to hear about successful events such as this one happening in our province, especially in a time when China is becoming one of the world's largest sources of tourists. You mentioned that our government has partnered with the People's Republic of China on bringing this event to Ontario. Can you explain the benefits of working together with governments such as China on these and similar events in our province?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I certainly can. China, obviously, is emerging as a huge tourist market. By 2020, the number of outbound Chinese travellers is expected to reach 100 million. Promoting Ontario in this market and creating new partnerships is vital to our tourism industry.

But we want Americans to come to see this as well, and I have some good news for the member today. I just saw a Canadian Press story that says that as we advocated, US legislators on a bipartisan committee today agreed to extend the deadline for tough new identification measures at the Canada-US border for some 17 months. That is what the province of Ontario was fighting for, that is what we wanted to see happen and, through the efforts we have made, we are seeing some progress that will allow American friends to come in

greater numbers to visit the Chinese Lantern Festival which was so successful.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I am pleased to present a petition.

"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'm pleased to sign and endorse this and present it to one of the new pages, Olivia.

COLORECTAL CANCER

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have petitions that have been given to me by the Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada. This reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is incumbent that the Ontario government introduce a population-based screening program for colorectal cancer immediately based on the 2002 report by the National Cancer Commission on Colorectal Cancer Screening and recommendations by Cancer Care Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario government has not implemented a colorectal cancer screening program, and still has an extra duty to provide the standard of care that is recommended in the treatment of colorectal cancer;

"Whereas the Ontario government has elected not to fund the medications which form the standard of care for the treatment of advanced colorectal cancer; namely Oxaliplatin and Avastin;

"Whereas the government should rightly fund these medications;

"Whereas forcing patients to pay for these drugs constitutes a two-tiered health care system which is unacceptable for the standard treatment of Canada's second-biggest cancer killer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to:

"(a) introduce and implement a population-based colorectal cancer screening program; and

"(b) fund necessary medications for the treatment of advanced colorectal cancer, namely Oxaliplatin and Avastin."

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

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I've got a petition here to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from a lot of our brothers and sisters in the Canadian Auto Workers from Oakville, from Georgetown, from Brampton and from Holland Landing, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas more than 260,000 Ontarians make their living and support their families through their careers in the auto industry in Ontario, which has become the pre-eminent manufacturer of motor vehicles in North America; and

"Whereas Canada imports more than 130,000 vehicles annually from the Republic of Korea, which imports virtually no vehicles or parts from Canada and does none of its manufacturing or assembly in Ontario or in any other Canadian jurisdiction, even though Canadian auto workers make the best-quality, most cost-effective vehicles in the world; and

"Whereas the government of Canada aims for a free trade agreement that would include the Republic of Korea in 2006, does not address the structural trade imbalance in the auto sector, and includes no measures to require Korea to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers to Canadian-made vehicles, auto parts and other value-added services or components;

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

"That the government of Ontario insist that the government of Canada either cease free trade discussions with the Republic of Korea or make any proposed agreement contingent on fair and equal access by each country to the other's domestic markets in manufactured products such as motor vehicles and in value-added services, and ensure that Korea commits to manufacturing vehicles in Canada if Korea proposes to continue to sell vehicles in Canada."

This is an excellent petition. I wholeheartedly agree with it. I've affixed my signature to it.

I'm going to ask my Mississauga West page, Taylor, to carry it for me, and welcome him to the Legislative Assembly.

CELLPHONES

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present another petition on behalf of my constituents of the riding of Durham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the safe operation of a motor vehicle requires the driver's undivided attention; and

"Whereas research has shown that the operation of devices such as cellphones," pagers and other devices distract "from a driver's ability to respond and concentrate on the task at hand," which is driving; "and

"Whereas approximately 40 jurisdictions around the world have already passed legislation to restrict the use of cellphones while driving;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact legislation to curtail the use of" cellphones and other technology, "as proposed in the private member's legislation introduced by John O'Toole, MPP for Durham."

I'm pleased to support that and present it to my petition friend Patrick, the page from Waterloo-Wellington.

COLORECTAL CANCER

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): More petitions have been sent to me by the Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada. I want to thank them for doing that. They've been signed by thousands of people. They read as follows:

"To the Honourable Assembly of Ontario in Legislature assembled: ...

"That based on the 2002 report by the National Commission on Colorectal Cancer Screening and recommendations of Cancer Care Ontario, it is incumbent that the Ontario government introduce a population-based screening program for colorectal cancer immediately;

"That the Ontario government has not implemented a colorectal cancer screening program, and owes an extra duty to provide the standard of care that is recommended in the treatment of colorectal cancer;

"That the Ontario government has elected not to fund the medications which form the standard of care for the treatment of advanced colorectal cancer; namely Oxaliplatin and Avastin;

"That the Ontario government should rightfully fund these medications;

"That forcing patients to pay for these drugs constitutes a two-tiered health care system which is unacceptable for the standard treatment of Canada's second-biggest cancer killer;"

The undersigned request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to do the following:

"(a) Introduce and implement a population-based colorectal cancer screening program;

"(b) Fund the necessary medications for the treatment of advanced colorectal cancer, namely Oxaliplatin and Avastin."

I agree with the petitioners. I've affixed my signature to these.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to introduce the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by many customers from Scoops restaurant in Niagara Falls. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

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"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child.

"Subsection 24(2.2) requires that a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child.

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

We support Bill 8, as introduced by the member from Niagara Falls.

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this petition.

PASSPORT OFFICE

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas, at present, residents of Barrie and surrounding area must travel to Toronto to receive a passport; and

"Whereas the only service available to obtain information or make application for a passport in the city of Barrie is through the post office or through the local MP office; and

"Whereas a passport to travel is now becoming a way of life for Canadians and there is a great need for a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie; and

"Whereas, due to the growth in population and demand and necessity for a passport to travel, a full-

service passport office in the city of Barrie is essential; and

“Whereas, due to the current security enforcement in place, a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie is essential; and

“Whereas a full-service passport office would be beneficial not only to residents of Simcoe county but also Parry Sound-Muskoka region;

“We, the undersigned, petition the federal government to give consideration for a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie.”

I support the petition and affix my signature.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING RESTRUCTURATION MUNICIPALE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have petitions that have been sent to me by Mr. Claude Berthiaume, who is a councillor in ward 2 in the city of Greater Sudbury. They read as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the citizens of the city of Greater Sudbury believe they are overtaxed and underserved and feel like second-class citizens;

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

“Direct the city of Greater Sudbury council to hold a referendum. The purpose of this referendum would be to obtain the citizens’ opinion as to whether they prefer to maintain the city’s new structure or return to the previous regional municipality structure.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Alors que les citoyens de la ville du Grand Sudbury croient qu’ils payent trop de taxes, voient une diminution dans les services et ressentent que leur voix ne compte pas;

« Nous, les soussignés, pétitionnons l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario comme suit :

« Exiger que le conseil de la ville du Grand Sudbury tienne un référendum. Le but de ce référendum est de connaître l’opinion des citoyens : savoir s’ils préfèrent conserver la présente structure de la ville ou de retourner à l’ancienne structure de la municipalité régionale. »

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

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today regarding fair auto trade with South Korea.

“Whereas more than 260,000 Ontarians make their living and support their families through their careers in the auto industry in Ontario, which has become the pre-eminent manufacturer of motor vehicles in North America; and

“Whereas Canada imports more than 130,000 vehicles annually from the Republic of Korea, which imports virtually no vehicles or parts from Canada and does none

of its manufacturing or assembly in Ontario or in any other Canadian jurisdiction, even though Canadian auto workers make the best-quality, most cost-effective vehicles in the world; and

“Whereas the government of Canada aims for a free trade agreement that would include the Republic of Korea in 2006, and does not address the structural trade imbalance in the auto sector, and includes no measures to require Korea to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers to Canadian-made vehicles, auto parts and other value-added services or components;

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

“That the government of Ontario insist that the government of Canada either cease free trade discussions with the Republic of Korea or make any proposed agreement contingent on fair and equal access by each country to the other’s domestic markets in manufactured products, such as motor vehicles and value-added services, and ensure that Korea commits to manufacturing vehicles in Canada if Korea proposes to continue to sell vehicles in Canada.”

I’ll affix my signature to this petition, and give it to page Julia.

CHILD SAFETY

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I have today to present in the House, along with the families who have been securing 65,000 signatures, a petition to the Parliament of Ontario entitled “Justice for Jared and Kevin.”

“Whereas eight-year-old Jared Osidacz of Brantford was brutally murdered by his father on March 18, 2006, during a court-ordered unsupervised access visit; and

“Whereas two-year-old Kevin Latimer died on February 2, 2004, after falling from his father’s third-floor apartment window during a court-ordered unsupervised access visit; and

“Whereas Burlington MPP Cam Jackson has introduced Bill 89, Kevin and Jared’s Law, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Coroners Act to better protect the children of Ontario and mandate an automatic coroner’s inquest when a child dies while in the care of a parent who is or has been the subject of a court access order; and

“Whereas Kevin and Jared’s Law will designate family members as having standing during such inquests and be eligible for financial payment of legal costs through the victims’ justice fund; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario has unclear guidelines and inconsistent policies for court-ordered supervised access programs that fail to prioritize the safety and welfare of children above all else; and

“Whereas section 22 of the Coroners Act allows the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to direct that a coroner’s inquest be held into a death whose circumstances merit public scrutiny so as to prevent other deaths and injuries; and

“Whereas on April 4, 2006, Cam Jackson, MPP, on behalf of the victims’ families, formally requested the minister to direct such an inquest into the deaths of these children, which was refused without substantive reason;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, call upon the McGuinty government to call an immediate coroner’s inquest and to pass into law Bill 89 as soon as possible to give Kevin and Jared the voice they were denied in life before any more children’s lives are lost.”

I won’t sign all 65,000 of these petitions, but I will submit this group today and recognize the families who are here in the House to join us to see the work they’ve been doing.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEVIN AND JARED’S LAW
(CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT), 2006
LOI KEVIN ET JARED DE 2006 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LES SERVICES À L’ENFANCE
ET À LA FAMILLE

Mr. Jackson moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 89, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Coroners Act to better protect the children of Ontario / Projet de loi 89, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l’enfance et à la famille et la Loi sur les coroners pour mieux protéger les enfants de l’Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Jackson has moved third reading of Bill 89. The member for Burlington.

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): At the outset, let me say to all members of the House how very pleased so many people are that the government and the three party House leaders have come together to determine that this is an important piece of legislation that has within it the ability to further protect children in our province. I want to acknowledge the work that’s gone on over the last few months in order to make this bill become a reality. That includes the support from the government in getting it to committee this summer, and for the courage of the families who came forward under very, very difficult circumstances in order to deal with the issue of the loss of the precious lives of Jared Osidacz and Kevin Latimer. Jared Osidacz was only eight years old when he was brutally murdered by his father, and Kevin Latimer was a few days short of his second birthday when his innocent young life was snuffed out, under circumstances which I believe that we will determine at some point in the future could have been prevented.

I personally want to thank the members of the House who have encouraged the forward movement of this legislation, particularly because of what it purports to do. The issue of a mandatory coroner’s inquest is a sensitive issue. Governments of all stripes are reluctant to direct a

coroner to do anything. But Ontario has, perhaps, one of the most rich and profound histories when it comes to the work of the chief coroner in this province. The work that they have done has made Ontario a safe and better place. Tragically, we have seen four children die this year in Ontario under the circumstances set out in this bill. I don’t believe that we’re going to see a lot of mandatory coroner’s inquests as a consequence of us passing this bill today.

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The second substantive issue—and this puts Ontario again into the forefront in Canada and perhaps even in North America in its efforts to make sure that our justice system is more responsive to the victims of crime. As you know, many years ago this House approved the victims’ justice fund. Every time someone breaks the law, a little bit of money is added to a pot, and that amount of money is there to assist victims of crime in our province. This bill will empower and enable those persons who obtain standing at a coroner’s inquest to seek funding to assist them with legal counsel. After all, in one of these kinds of coroner’s inquests, the children’s aid society will be represented there by a taxpayer-funded lawyer; the police will have a lawyer there representing them, paid for by the taxpayers; if there are any municipal issues, the municipality will. The only person in that inquiry who will not have that support will be the actual victim and their family. So this is a major step forward for victims’ rights and for justice in our province and something that we can all share in with great pride, knowing that we have done something very right, very important and very noble for the citizens of our province.

I want to pay public tribute to the courage of these two families. This has not been a journey they asked for, it’s not one they wish to continue to be on, but in the memory of the loss of their beloved children, they soldier forward in the hopes that Parliament will move things along for them.

I am touched by Kevin Latimer, who didn’t achieve his second birthday, a constituent of mine, a beautiful little boy. On his headstone read the words, “Tread lightly; an angel lies here.” Carved on that headstone is a beautiful image of Bob the Builder and Thomas the Tank Engine. Why Kevin loved Bob the Builder so much is because his favourite expression was, “We can fix it,” and yes, we can. That will be the legacy for Kevin Latimer: that he will fix it for other children in this province.

To his grandmother and to his mother, who have been an inspiration when we thought there was a chance this bill may not go through—and we’re delighted that it is. She sent me this piece of short scripture from Timothy: “At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all might hear it. And I was delivered out of the lion’s mouth.”

Thank you to the families. Thank you to this House. Let's get on with the good work of helping children in our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm proud to speak in favour of this bill on behalf of New Democrats today and want to say that I'm pleased that the government has decided to have second thoughts and that we are in the position of debating this bill today. I look forward to the day this bill receives royal assent and comes into force in the province of Ontario.

When we went through the committee process for this bill, the final result of that discussion, after the public hearings and after the clause-by-clause debate, was that we had every member of the committee supporting this bill, supporting it coming to third reading, supporting what it was going to be able to do to change the way things were happening currently in the province of Ontario.

Nobody could have sat in that room, particularly during the public hearings process, and shared the anguish and the pain that was shared with us by the presenters, particularly Jenny Latimer and Julie Craven, and simply do nothing about the injustices they saw in the system that led to their children being in harm's way. It became very clear that in many ways our child protection system is still in significant disarray.

What Bill 89 provides is a way for us to learn from those tragedies—the ones that have occurred and, God forbid, the ones that we know are likely to happen in the future. Those deaths of children—it's incumbent upon us to learn from those deaths. It's incumbent upon us to find out what it is that we can do to change the system to remove children from harm's way in the future.

I heard that day very obvious changes that I could see, as they took us through their experiences, needed to be put into effect in the province. One of the very basic things that needs to change is that, first and foremost, the voices of these women need to be heard and heeded. That's one of the basic things that needs to be changed. You simply need to look through the Hansards and the remarks that were brought to the table during the hearings process, where you could see, time and time again, that these women's voices were not heard. They were not heard by the justice system. They were not heard by the lawyers. In some cases, they were not heard by the children's aid society when they warned, time and time again, that the fathers of their children were abusers, that the fathers of their children were not going to provide a safe environment for their children to be placed in without supervision.

In fact, in Jenny Latimer's case, there is still fear that her child whom she still is trying to protect may be put in that position yet again because the system simply is not hearing her. She does not feel that her son is going to be safe in his father's care without supervision.

So woman abuse and family violence needs to be heard and needs to be heeded and needs to be acted upon

in this province. It needs to be heard by all of those people I just described a moment ago.

Our overcrowded Family Court system needs to be dealt with. It can't handle the volumes of cases that are there, so things are hurried up; things are moved along. In hurrying up and moving along, we end up putting children at risk, and that is unacceptable in the province of Ontario. The lack of financial resources, the fact that women in many cases are the ones who are not able to afford the better lawyer and so have to take whatever they can afford—because there isn't enough money, there isn't enough access to financial aid to be able to get legal assistance of a calibre that will help them ensure that the rights of themselves and their children are taken seriously by the system.

There are a number of things that we learned during those committee hearings, and yes, Bill 89 will go a long way to help the coroner in an inquest put some real teeth behind some of the changes that need to take place to make these children safe in the province of Ontario.

My last remark is about other changes that I believe need to be made. Those include having Ombudsman oversight over children's aid societies in the province of Ontario. That's another big step, because what that will do is help us identify and implement systemic changes in the province of Ontario before a child is put at risk, before a child is in a situation where they're not in a safe custody situation.

There are many things we need to do. Bill 89 is one of them, and I'm proud to be here to support it. I want to thank the family members, too, for the very good work that they've done. I feel very, very badly for the fact that you've had to go through what you've had to.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I stand before you complimenting the private members' bill process, as I've done since I was elected in 1999, to indicate that private members' bills, although they don't become legislation all that often, provide us with the opportunity to use this place as a voice of the people. That's what we're hearing today.

It's very safe and very fair to say that everyone in this Legislature does want to ensure, to the best of their ability, that the children of Ontario are as safe as they can be. When a child dies, like Kevin and Jared, not only do the families mourn, not only do the communities mourn, but indeed everyone mourns. No one knows the pain. No one knows the suffering of the families. When a child dies after a parent who has been ordered against them, that death should be investigated.

I've heard about Kevin's struggle and his fight for life. I've heard Jared's mom talking about her son, talking about the incident. I've heard grandpa talk about Jared as a "special angel." These, indeed, were special children.

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During the committee hearings, I did put forward a motion that I thought was appropriate in order for us to cover and capture even more circumstances that could happen to children under care. The motion didn't receive unanimous consent and, therefore, may have caused

some people to think differently than what the bill was intended to do.

There's not one member in the House who wouldn't want to do anything that would prevent these tragedies from happening again. Indeed, the parents have made it quite clear that they do not want to have another thing happen to another child, even though they still grieve. We as legislators have a responsibility to do our utmost to protect children. We all take that responsibility seriously. There are very few people in this province who have walked in the shoes of the mothers of Kevin and Jared—so few. We cannot express what they feel.

Today is a day to move forward and indeed, dare I say, at least in a small way, to celebrate that we have collectively come together to indicate to the rest of the people of Ontario that we will do our best, we will continue to move and improve and step forward in a reasoned way, to protect the children of Ontario.

I leave us all with a challenge, and that challenge is to keep our minds open, to continue to think beyond today to ensure that we respect the legacy that has been given to us in oh, so short a time by these children; that we respect the families; that we intend, to the best of our ability, to continue to keep children in our hearts and in our minds; and—as I've used in the past and will continue to use—the message of our First Nations people: to continue to look to seven generations in front so that these types of tragedies, to the best of our ability, can be stopped once and for all.

I thank all the members in this place for putting us in the position to be true leaders in keeping our children safe.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Jackson has moved third reading of Bill 89, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Coroners Act to better protect the children of Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

MUNICIPAL STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS CONCERNANT LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 25, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 130, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 130, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): As I started my speech yesterday by reminding people that I am usually in the unenviable position of giving bifurcated speeches, half one day and half another, this is the continuation of what I started yesterday—and since there

are so many new people here in attendance who were not here yesterday, just to, in about 30 seconds or so, recapture where I started from yesterday. We are talking about Bill 130 but I felt it necessary to talk about Bill 130 as being part of a very large package of bills which all deal with municipal structure. There's Bill 130, which we're dealing with today. There was the City of Toronto Act, which passed earlier this year. There is Bill 51, which has to do with the Ontario Municipal Board and the powers of municipalities and the citizens who appear before it. There is also, as the minister said yesterday, ongoing discussion and possible changes of policy and procedure under the guise of the municipal service review. All of that is taking place together and in conjunction with each other.

When I started off yesterday, I talked about what had transpired to date and how disappointed the members of the opposition were, and indeed I think many members of this House were disappointed, that the lofty goals set out in the City of Toronto Act, which was to allow the city of Toronto to finally shake off those shackles of 1867, when it was determined that cities and towns would be the creatures of the province—we all had some very high hopes indeed that that would happen with the passage of the City of Toronto Act.

I had to remind members of the government that although we in the New Democratic Party voted for that bill, despite some of its warts and some of its problems, we were very disappointed to find that the provisions of that act lasted all of about two weeks and that, some two weeks later in the debate at committee stage of Bill 51, what the province and the Liberal government had given to the city of Toronto, they summarily took away. They took away the right of the city of Toronto to have any say on energy proposals located within the city, a right that they had granted them only two weeks before with the proclamation and the promulgation of that very City of Toronto Act. So within two weeks, the very high and great-sounding words that came from the government's mouth were no longer there.

I started off yesterday by talking about the government's platform and how they said they wanted to work with governments at the municipal level, who were senior levels of government and needed to have the right to work in their own right and showed quite, I think, fairly and honestly what had happened. Although those high-sounding words were used in the passage of the act and those same high-sounding words are used as this bill goes to second reading, the obvious actions of the government belie those words.

During the hearing on Bill 51, we saw what I take—and I hope it's not a word—if it is, you will remind me, Mr. Speaker. We saw what we considered to be the hypocrisy of the government on this issue, saying one thing and acting in quite a different way. Before the ink was dry on the City of Toronto Act, the McGuinty Liberals were back amending it to ensure that the city of Toronto did not have the ability to stop or to slow down the government's misguided Portlands mega power plant.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I know the member to be an honourable one, and I'm sure that his use of the word that was said just a short time ago would be withdrawn because he knows it's not acceptable language in the House.

The Acting Speaker: I appreciate the intervention of the member for Brant and would ask the member for Beaches–East York to use language that does not inflame the passions of other members of the House.

Mr. Prue: I'm not sure what that word was, but I will be very careful in my language, Mr. Speaker, as I always attempt to do.

Instead of focusing on providing the city of Toronto with the powers to protect and develop its eastern waterfront for the benefit of its citizens, in Bill 51 the McGuinty government sought to remove council's control. As you will recall, it is not just the city of Toronto that lost this control. If you look at Bill 51, section 23 of that act, which was passed by a majority of Liberal members sitting on the committee—five hands went up, as in almost all of the contentious articles of the bill. Five hands went up to take away the self-same right of literally all 460 municipalities in the province of Ontario. As of that date—and I'm sure it's coming back for third reading soon—the municipalities in Ontario no longer have control over energy projects which occur within the jurisdiction of the municipality.

The minister yesterday chided me—I got two minutes to talk about what he had to say and raise this very point—by saying that in Ontario there has never been a right of a municipality to do anything against the Ontario Power Corp., against the electricity company of the province of Ontario as it existed prior to its being dismantled and rebuilt in its many guises and forms.

But what he said is correct: The municipalities have never had the power to question the site location or the need of or the ability of Ontario Hydro to provide hydro-electricity to the citizens of this province, and that's probably a good thing.

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What this legislation does and what it says is that any private developer, any group that is not a part of the government of Ontario, has the self-same right that we have always vested in the Ontario power corporation, in Ontario Hydro. They have the same rights. If they want to put a windmill on a property, there is nothing the local residents can say. If Bruce nuclear wants to build an extension of the nuclear power plant there or build another one in a completely different town, the residents of that town or city will no longer have anything that they can say: whether it is properly located, whether it is safe, whether it meets the norms and requirements of the city, whether it's part of the official plan. They will no longer be able to have any say. If they want to put in gas-fired generation, as TransAlta is trying to put in and unfortunately may succeed in doing in the port lands, the citizens will no longer have any authority or power.

If there is going to be incineration of waste—and I think this government is heading in that direction—if

somebody wants to bring in the waste from across Ontario and start burning it or incinerating it or gasifying it or doing anything else in a local municipality, that municipality will find itself in precisely the position of the city of London today: They will no longer have a say in whether or not it happens.

I'm not sure that I think this is what this government should be doing. I have to question, with the lofty standards you set for yourself coming into government, the lofty standards that you stated to the people of Ontario three years ago during the time of election that you would consult with and work with the municipalities to make sure they were stronger and better able to function, whether it is your intention to do this, because this is what you are doing.

Now you ask all of us on this side of the House, and all of yourselves together, to believe—when you can so easily turn the clock, when you can so easily undo the good work that you did on the City of Toronto Act, when you can so easily undo everything you promised to the multiple mayors and councillors at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, when you can say, “We know what's best. We are going to site or allow the siting of some kind of energy project which doesn't necessarily jibe at all with your municipality or your official plan or what your residents want”—you're just simply going to say, “Tough.”

Those municipalities that for over 100 years—much more than that—have had the authority under the Planning Act, under the Municipal Act, to determine whether or not an energy project fit into the community and to approve it or not approve it, will no longer be able to say one thing about it, and I think that's very sad.

If you were at the committee hearings and listened to what the residents had to say, the residents came forward and some of them opposed to windmills. To me—and I have to be blunt—I find them rather attractive. I find them rather benign. But I don't live there. It is not up to me to determine whether or not that fits into my municipality. It's not up to me to determine whether or not the land on which they are situated is the appropriate land. It's not up to me to determine whether or not that's the best use of that land. It is surely, though, up to them. So when they were opposed, I wanted to listen to them. I wanted to hear why.

I even went out this summer to look at some of the large windmill farms that you find in the southwestern part of the province. I remember seeing hundreds upon hundreds of windmills just east of Goderich, hundreds upon hundreds of them on the highway. They were, to me, rather beautiful. But I can understand why the adjoining farmers may think this is not an appropriate use of the farmland. I can understand why the people who live on the shores of Lake Huron wonder whether or not this is an appropriate use of the natural resources which they are attempting to use to bring in tourists.

I have to tell you that in larger cities like my own, where it is a gas-fired plant in the very heart of what we dream of as being the new waterfront, the new beauti-

fiction of Toronto, when we look at what cities like Chicago or London have done with their waterfronts, or if we look at Spain, at Barcelona, the magnificent job they've done with their waterfront. You have to ask: Is this all we can do in Toronto, dream about a mega gas-fired generating plant? I have to think that surely the residents and city council should have some say in all of this. But unfortunately, as of what happened the other day, no municipality is going to have anything more that they're going to be able to say.

I wonder, in reading this bill—to come back to this bill—we've heard all the lofty statements of the minister. We've heard them all. How long is it going to take for there to be amending legislation to take away the very rights which today we are supposedly granted? I have to ask that question because, quite honestly, the bill is benign. It gives a few little powers here and there to the municipalities, which I'm sure that they would gladly take, and I'm sure that I would want to give in the majority—and I'll get to some of the points later—except that I know and they know that the heavy hand of the province will always be there to take away those same rights that today we supposedly are granting.

We believe in the strength of municipalities, with all my heart, and it's the reason I came here. Because I saw, as a former mayor of East York and as a megacity councillor once the amalgamated city came about, that the cities did not have the power that they required to do the job properly. I came here and that was my sole intent and interest: to make sure that cities, finally, and towns were listened to and that they were observed and they were given the powers and authorities that they needed to move into the 21st century.

Sadly, I don't think this bill accomplishes it. It's not a horrible bill; you know, it's just a bill that's going to do a couple of small things. But the actions of the government, to my mind, speak louder than the bill. What this government promises to do is very easily turned around and taken away.

I don't know whether there's any respect for municipalities. I really have to question that statement. I have to question it in terms of what has just happened as well to the city of London and the Green Lane landfill expansion.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): The cash for trash?

Mr. Prue: The cash for crash. Ask the people of London whether the McGuinty government is treating their municipality with respect. I don't live there. I did see a copy of the newspaper, or the articles about the cash for trash from the London paper this morning. I did see that what is being written in that paper and the quotes that are taken from the people who live in the city of London are not very kind to this government. What they see is that they are being used as some form of dumping ground. Now, we ask, if the province is intent upon giving municipalities their due respect, ought not they have to have been consulted by this government?

I know when the government was talking about expanding the landfill site, when the government was talking about making it for a longer period of time, when the government was doing all of those things, the leader of the third party stood up and questioned it. He was pooh-poohed, of course. He was answered almost every day, "Do you live in fantasyland?" He quite correctly asked the members who represent the London ridings—London Centre, London–Fanshawe, London North—if they would sign, saying that they disagreed with the expansion of this landfill site and it would not end up being a dump site for the rest of Ontario. The members from London refused, of course, to sign that. But we all knew in the back of our minds, every person in this Legislature who has been around here for more than a few weeks should have known, what was coming: The people of London would not be consulted, the landfill site was being groomed and readied for some other purpose, and the purpose manifests itself with the purchase by the city of Toronto.

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I don't blame the city of Toronto. I don't blame them. This is the mature and largest government of a municipal structure in this country. There are 2.5 million people. As I said yesterday, it is larger than six of the provinces in Canada—larger in terms of population—and it has a larger budget. They have to have somewhere to put the garbage. They had a place. I didn't vote for it, but I think lots of Liberals did. I know my good friend the PA to the minister voted when he was a councillor to send it to Kirkland Lake. I know that other members of the Legislature who now sit on the Liberal benches did the same thing. They voted to send it to Kirkland Lake. But this government determined that the city couldn't send—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): You voted to send it to Michigan.

Mr. Prue: I didn't vote to send it there any time. Just so you know, I have been consistent, not like some of my colleagues.

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: Yes. Okay. My friends over here are having a good time laughing at their own foibles, I think, because they remember only too well the inconsistencies of their approach, depending on which seat they were sitting in.

The city of Toronto couldn't send it there. They sent it to Michigan, of course, which was supposed to be a short-term solution. The Minister of the Environment made sure that the city had nothing they could do about this by negotiating a deal that was going to cut it off after four years, in the year 2010, and the city had to scramble to do something else. The city, in its wisdom—I am a citizen of the city only; I am not a member of that council anymore and have not been so for more than five years now. The debate that took place with the mayor and the city council is that they had to find another long-term solution. They knew that shipping it to Michigan was short term. They knew that at some point governments in the United States would turn around and try to stop the

garbage and they knew that they had to find another alternative.

Many people in the city of Toronto question the wisdom of burning garbage. They question gasification. They question any of the other technologies that may be used. For them, the alternative is a dump site. I'm not going to go into whether or not that is the right alternative; that's their decision. Those are the elected members of the city of Toronto, the ones you say you want to work with and the ones you empower to make the decision. They have decided to purchase the site.

What we have now, though, is a war between two cities: a war between the city of Toronto, which needs to find a place to put its garbage and chooses not to gasify or incinerate it, and the city of London, an equally prosperous and lovely city that says they don't want Toronto's garbage in their backyard. I understand both positions, and surely the government must understand both positions. But in washing your hands of this, you have not treated the municipalities in a fair and equitable way, nor have you treated the citizens of those two municipalities in a way that you yourself would want to be treated. You have treated them as second-class individuals. You have treated them like the province has always treated the cities, as being mere small-time players, under every whim of the government of Ontario.

It is not surprising that the people in London are upset. People all over Ontario are probably upset too, because they see this as another wasted opportunity. Where are the lofty goals that this government set for itself in the last election? Where is the 60% diversion rate that was promised? Where is all of the organic waste being separated out? This is right on the bill.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): Is this Bill 130?

Mr. Prue: I'm sure it is. Have you read Bill 130, my friend?

Mr. Sergio: Yes, sir.

Mr. Prue: And you don't think this is part of your bill?

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Yes. I am speaking to 130—

The Acting Speaker: I'd like to be involved in this discussion too and would ask the member for Beaches—East York to address his comments to the Chair.

Mr. Prue: I just want to remind my friends who perhaps were not here the other day that, had they listened to the minister and to the parliamentary assistant, they would have said—

Mr. Sergio: Yesterday.

Mr. Prue: —yesterday—they would have heard that this bill is one of a compendium of bills which are all intertwined. They're all intertwined, and it's very difficult to separate one out from another. I'm going to get to the actual meat of this bill within my hour—I promise you, the actual points of this bill—but they are all intertwined and they all need to be dealt with.

If the government of Ontario does not do what it says it will do in helping the municipalities to divert the waste, how can one fault, then, the municipalities who are

unable to divert the waste by their own means and with their own monies, if they are unable to meet the 60% target set by this government to do anything but what they have done, with the consequences to both the people of Toronto and the people of London?

It's very disappointing for the people of southwestern Ontario to learn that this is a political deal. It's very disappointing for them to learn that amounts of cash changed hands, amounts of cash went to the governing party. As the person who owns Green Lane said yesterday and was quoted today in the paper, it made all good business sense to him.

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: We're looking for respect. We're looking for respect for municipalities. Unfortunately, we have found that very, very little has changed in terms of the respect for those municipalities.

Turning to the actual meat of the bill, there are six provisions.

My friend here in front of me, the member from Timmins—James Bay, wants, since there was some heckling on this point, to actually quote Green Lane owner Bob McCaig as he is quoted in today's Toronto Sun, page 9, September 26, 2006. It's the last paragraph of the article: "Green Lane owner Bob McCaig says he donates money to the Liberals and Conservatives because 'it's good business.'"

Mr. Bisson: You're telling me. He got a big contract out of it.

Mr. Prue: Let's just put it that way: He thought it was good business. Obviously, you did too.

The bill itself, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: No, no, no.

Okay. The first provision which we find that ought not to survive committee hearing is that which talks about closed council meetings. This bill proposes to allow council meetings to be closed to the general public, the press and anyone else other than the council members when, and I quote, "it does not materially advance decision-making."

What does that mean? That any council given this authority can say, "We are going to go into closed session." In the past, they could only do so under two circumstances, and I remember those only too well. The two circumstances were, one, if it involved the sale or the purchase of land—sorry; there were three. The second one was when it involved a legal dispute that was before the courts and it was to instruct the lawyer. The last one was when it involved personnel of the municipality. Those were the three grounds. There were three grounds only. But as of the passage of this bill, should this provision pass, there will be a fourth provision, a very nebulous provision which any council can do. They can say, "We're going to go into private session and we're going to discuss this amongst ourselves, but we promise you that we are not going to materially advance decision-making. We're going to have any and all conversations we want, but we're not actually going to vote. We're not

going to vote to proceed. We're not going to vote to send it to a report or to ask for a legal report, but we're going to sit down amongst ourselves, we're going to hash out a deal and we're going to come out and say that nothing happened."

I really find this appalling. I remember only too well in this Parliament and in the previous Parliament, the member from Sarnia, who is now the Minister of Culture, had a private member's bill. It was a good bill, and it's died, of course, on the order paper because she's now the minister. But it was a bill to ensure that there would not be any of these private meetings, and we all supported it. Everybody who has been in municipal government before, anyone who has ever been a councillor, a mayor or a reeve, anyone who has ever been there before knows that you cannot have these little private meetings of councillors and expect that the public is going to think this is okay. Too many deals have been made in too many ways in this province in the last 100 years to say that this is an acceptable practice, yet this bill will allow it because it's very nebulous. It opens the door for any member of council or any mayor to say, "We had a private meeting, but we did not materially advance decision-making." And what happened there? Who will know? Who will know what was said? I have to question whether this government really wants to go down this road.

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The citizens feel that they are no longer part of the process, and this is particularly true in those cities that were forcefully and forcibly amalgamated. If you go into places like Toronto or Hamilton or Kawartha Lakes or Ottawa or Chatham and all of those other places where the citizens continue to dream about de-amalgamation, where they continue to think that that which was most lost in the process was the right to influence the council, their right to be present, their right to have their neighbours and their neighbourhoods considered in the decision-making process, they are the ones who have suffered the most, and they are the ones who are going to suffer the most here, because if there has been one thing that has been lost more than anything else in the forced amalgamations of those places, in the making greater the citizenry of any single municipality, it is that the citizens no longer have the control, no longer have the ability to influence council as they once did. That is very sad when this particular provision will be added on top of it. If you want citizens to be upset about their municipal governments, I can't think of anything you could do better than to add this provision.

The second one is the appointment of an individual to investigate public complaints. Ordinarily, this may be a good thing, but it depends who is appointed. It's not clear from the bill who can be or who should be appointed. When the city or town sits down and says, "We are going to have an ombuds-type person look at complaints," is this person going to be an employee at the city? Is he or she going to be picked by the council or by the mayor? Are they going to be beholden to the council or to the

mayor? Are they going to have to use the principles of proper hearings to make sure that they're held independently and fairly? None of that is spelled out in the bill, and we need to know that. Although I am not opposed to the idea of having an ombudsperson, there is nothing here that would clearly indicate to me that the ombudsperson hired by any of the cities or towns would have the same responsibility, the same jurisdiction and the same clout that the Ombudsman has here in the province of Ontario.

We have to question the bill because there's no cost provision. How can a municipality afford to hire such a person if, indeed, the municipality is one of the more than 400 or so in this province that has 10,000 or less people? The majority of towns and cities in this province are small, although most people live in the big ones. The majority of those councils are small and may not have the wherewithal to hire or to take the money.

What is the hiring process? I've touched on that briefly. What is the hiring process, how are they to be chosen and, once chosen, who would hire and fire them? You also have that problem if the ombudsperson uncovers wrongdoing by the city, by the council, by the mayor, whether or not the council would then have the authority to fire the same person they have hired to investigate them.

We need to know what the powers of the ombudsperson are going to be, and we need, most essentially, to know for those small towns and municipalities what the fallback position is when they do not have the money, when they do not have the wherewithal to hire such an individual. When they send it to the province of Ontario, what clout will the Ombudsman of Ontario have? Will he have the budget? Will he have the staff? Can he undertake to go off and look at these complaints?

I do know that the system we have now has not worked. I remember only too well in the city of Toronto what I thought were two absolutely excellent cases of malfeasance among councillors of the city of Toronto—from a former council, not the ones who are on there now—who, in the citizens' view, disobeyed the laws that got them elected. The citizens brought forward, I thought, absolutely compelling evidence of wrongdoing under the Municipal Act, under the Elections Act, without a doubt in my mind establishing a prima facie case that people who had run and been elected to council had done so illegally.

The council, under the leadership of then-Mayor Lastman, determined that, "No, we weren't going to go there," and there wasn't an ombudsman, but there was a council that did it and the citizens were stymied. In the unlikelihood of their finding the tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars for legal counsel, it was a dead-end issue because the council refused to act. We need to know that an ombudsman will have that authority and will not be afraid to do so.

If there is one good thing in this act—and I always try to find one good thing; I like to talk about that—it is the provision for community councils. We know amalgam-

ation in the larger cities has not worked, because people have lost touch with their neighbourhoods, with their communities and with their elected representatives. I commend the government for what they've put in here on community councils. I expect to see this in an election brochure at some point, just this section of the speech saying that I commend them. But it is important that the decision-making go to the lowest possible level of the government, and in this case it is important that it go back to a community council.

In my own city of Toronto, the community councils are hardly of a community nature. There are four of them in a city of 2.5 million people; therefore, each community council has 600,000 people, which is, just to put this in perspective, about half the size of the greater city of Ottawa, about the size of Mississauga or bigger than every other municipality in Ontario. I see my good friend here from Peterborough. How many people are in Peterborough—100,000? A community council in Toronto is six times as large as that and is supposed to look at the neighbourhood. I don't know how a neighbourhood six times the size of the city of Peterborough can be considered much of a neighbourhood. It is clearly an idea that has not worked, and I was heartened to see that there is some debate taking place now in the city of Toronto about community councils better reflecting the neighbourhood, including a column in the *East York-Riverdale Mirror* last week by my friend and neighbour Joe Cooper, who wrote about the necessity of having at least 11 community councils in Toronto, reflecting about 200,000 people each, so that we at least have some semblance of neighbourhood.

I commend the government for putting this in. I only hope it will work. We look to see how this is going to be fleshed out, some of the arguments that might be brought forward in committee, some of the changes that might be made. But if there is any hope at all for the amalgamated cities, especially the large ones of Ottawa, Toronto and Hamilton, it is that local control is again vested locally and ordinary citizens have a right to come forward and be heard.

In the question of appeals, number four—this is appeals of decisions of the committee of adjustment—we look at this and we see that it too may or may not be a bad idea. It all comes down to who is going to pay for this. We know that now it goes before the Ontario Municipal Board; we know that the costs are largely borne by the board, the province of Ontario. But if the cities and the towns themselves want to go that route, want to set up their own bodies, who is going to pay for it? I am afraid that in the majority of cases of the 450 municipalities in this province, they will not have the money, the wherewithal to do it, and that this idea, although it may seem like a good idea to bring back some sense of community control, will not happen because of the costs. I look forward to the government members in committee describing exactly whether the necessary monies will be made available to the communities, to the municipalities in order to ensure that this happens.

The fifth thing I'd like to see in this bill that I don't see—we saw it in the City of Toronto Act. I know it caused my friends in the official opposition some considerable consternation that the city of Toronto was going to get some kind of taxing authority so that they would be able to tax, in certain small ways, parking, theatre tickets, the amount of money that was paid on a drink in a restaurant, in order to gain some revenue. Generally speaking, I don't think the municipalities are looking for these types of funding. I certainly know the mayor of Mississauga, who was clearly heard by every person in this Legislature—when she speaks she can be very forceful—says that that's not the money they're looking for. But I have to question, if the government of the day thought this was a good thing for the city of Toronto and insisted, under a considerable barrage from the official opposition, on leaving that provision in, why have you taken out that selfsame provision for large cities in Ontario? Why, if it's good enough for Toronto to raise funds in this way—and we've heard the figure of as much as \$50 million might be raised in Toronto if they fully extended and took the opportunity of what you gave them in the City of Toronto Act—why can't Hamilton do it, why can't Ottawa or Mississauga do it?

1620

If you are trying to be fair to the people of this province, no matter where they live, and if they live in a large and mature city, if they live in a place that has lawyers and accountants and a civil service and a structure and can monitor it, I fail to understand why the citizens of Hamilton should be treated differently than the citizens of Toronto. I fail to understand how the citizens of Mississauga, living right next door to Toronto, cannot have, and the council cannot have, the same rights that the council and the citizens of Toronto have. I fail to understand why Ontario's second-largest city, Ottawa, cannot have those same rights. Perhaps the government members, in speaking to this bill, can explain why only the city of Toronto can raise extra revenues, that the City of Toronto Act has this provision, and every other municipality, all 450 of them in Ontario, is shut out. Particularly, if you can tell me why the largest cities in this province are shut out in this way, I would be very anxious to hear that, because in that absence, I think this is another mistake you're making in this bill.

Sixth, I want to talk about electronic meetings. My God, what a bad idea this is. Electronic meetings. I can see it now: the mayor or a member of the council lying on the beach in Acapulco with his cellphone to his or her ear and a margarita in one hand, saying, "What's going on in there? I'd like to vote." That's what you are going to allow, you know; that's what you are allowing. "I'd like to vote. Now, I know I don't count as quorum because I'm not physically there, but you do have five members of council. A couple of us are down here at this great party with a margarita on the beach, and we want to vote." This provision allows for electronic voting. They're not there. They don't hear the citizens. They don't hear the arguments. I guess you can hear them if

they are being said loud enough on your cellphone, but they are not there to read the reports, they're not there to hear the citizens, they're not there to hear the arguments of their fellow councillors, they're not there to make quorum, but you want to let them vote.

Are you going to extend the same thing to this House? No one has ever voted in this House electronically. If anyone tried to do it, I'm sure all hell would break loose. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you know that. If somebody phoned in right now and said, "I want to vote," I don't think you'd let them. But that's what this government wants to do for 450 municipalities: to have someone who is not physically present, someone who has not heard the arguments, someone who cannot look the citizens in the eye, someone who cannot ask questions or did not ask questions of the staff at the meeting—they want to allow for electronic voting. It is, with respect, a hare-brained idea. It is not one that is allowed, as far as I know, anywhere else in this country; certainly not in the Parliament of Canada, certainly not in any of the Legislatures. Until this bill and when this bill and if this bill passes, it will be the first time that municipalities can just have someone on vacation vote electronically, no matter where they are in the far corners of this world. They just have to phone up and say, "I cast my vote with this side or that side."

I oppose it. I oppose it for exactly the reasons that this Legislature has never allowed it in the past. If it's not good enough for us, why is it good enough for them?

There's nothing in this bill that allows or talks about funding. If there is one single problem that the municipalities of Ontario have, it's that they don't have enough money. They don't have a way of getting the money. They are mired in an antiquated system of our own making, where they have to get the majority of their money from property taxation. We know the property taxation system is not good. The government has decided to set up a task force and report after the next election. I don't think that's a good enough answer, but that's the government answer. But even they realize that the system is not a good one. People's ability to pay is not necessarily reflected in the value of their home. We all have archetypal evidence of people who have saved their whole lives—widows and people in their homes—to retire in their home, only to find that it's now out of reach, that they can't afford the taxes. Their income is not as great as the home they have spent their whole life working for. In many cases, they are forced to sell and to lose the most valuable asset that they ever had or in many cases that they ever wanted. We know that system doesn't work for them, but we must also recognize that it does not work for the municipalities.

Now, I was heartened in part when the Liberals came up with the two-cent gas tax. I want to commend you for stealing my idea. It was a good one, and it was in our platform first. It came to your platform a few weeks later.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Yeah, okay. Ours was for three cents, but that's notwithstanding. You still took the guts of the idea, and it worked. Two cents was a good thing, but we need

to find other ways to get money for municipalities. We need to free them up to find ways, and we need to end the downloading. If there is one thing that is hurting us and holding us back from our cities being truly great, it is that they are hamstrung by the taxes that people are paying on their properties.

We need to find ways. This bill does nothing. There is no new funding mechanism for municipalities, and that has been the failure throughout. Without the additional monies, our cities are going to start a downward spiral. We saw this happen in the United States, sadly, for too many years while the big cities went to wrack and ruin. We have seen, though, that governments in that country have started to recognize that this is not the way things should work. Monies are pouring into places like Cleveland and Boston and New York. Monies are flowing into Los Angeles. Monies are flowing into smaller towns and cities right across the United States, and you are seeing a rebirth of their urban structure.

We need, as a province, to do much more than simply tinker with who can do what and whether or not speed bumps can be put in without the permission of the minister and all of those arcane things that are found in this bill. What we really need to find out and what we really need to do is to make sure that money starts to flow to the jurisdiction that needs it the most.

I woke up this morning, I read the front page of the Toronto Star, and there it was: The government of Canada is running a \$13.2-billion surplus, and the government of Canada, in its wisdom, is going to further cut another billion dollars out of expenditures. So there it is: They're going to have \$14.2 billion, I guess, by the end of the year in surplus.

I'm just wondering, is this what we truly want to have in this country: a surplus at one level which is enormous by any standard, and cities and towns and school boards at the other end coming running to the Ontario government, trying to find funds which, sadly, are not there?

We need to restructure. Just as the Premier talks about restructuring the fiscal imbalance between the province and the federal government, we in the province need to see that there is an equally large and perhaps worse imbalance between this province and the municipalities of this province.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Solve one and apply it to the other.

Mr. Prue: My friend here is saying, "Solve one and then apply it to the other." I think you cannot solve the first one and then hope for the second one. You have to solve them both simultaneously if it has even the slightest chance of working.

I'm asking that this be done. I'm asking that, within the provision of the bill, we start to look at how we can flow monies more readily, more easily, and without hindrance to the municipalities.

If you listen to the municipalities today, their number one concern is the provincial downloading and the Ontario municipal fiscal gap. There is approximately \$3 billion taken from the ratepayers of the province of Ontario,

the ratepayers of the various municipalities, which goes to provincially funded programs, those programs being health, being ambulance—

Mr. Flynn: GO train.

Mr. Prue: No, not GO train. You're trying to confuse me here.

Health, child care—there's one more. Anyway, there are four of them. There are only four, and it's about \$3 billion. We think the province needs to start uploading the download.

We've heard once in a while that there is some little, tiny talk of uploading the download—the land ambulance, a little bit of money changed hands; a little, tiny bit of money shifted in terms of health.

Mr. Leal: Public health—upload.

Mr. Prue: Okay, here it is. Here it is.

Mr. Bisson: No, they haven't. They're trying to say they've uploaded.

Mr. Prue: They haven't uploaded. They haven't uploaded in any meaningful way whatsoever. And this is the really sad reality: There is about \$3 billion. You chose to upload a couple of million. I ask you to do the percentage in your own head. It is very, very little, and the cities and towns are asking for a great deal more.

1630

The cities and towns are asking for a great deal more in your other legislation. Look at the Clean Water Act: How are little, tiny municipalities supposed to comply with the Clean Water Act? My own parents live in a little, tiny town—you know; I've talked about it before—near Bancroft. The West Highlands is the name of the town. It's an amalgamation of three even smaller towns, Cardiff being the one they live in. There it is: They are wondering today, the town council there—and I read the paper when I was there in the summer—how they're ever going to afford the provisions of the Clean Water Act. The total population is 3,800 people. It used to be three towns. How are they going to do it unless there is provincial money? There's nothing in these bills. Sure, they can have secret meetings. Sure, the mayor or the reeve can phone in from Acapulco. But where are they going to find the money?

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: I'm sure he might want to go there, I don't know.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: You're giving him that authority. Whether he exercises it or not, I don't know. Okay.

Mr. Leal: He should come to Peterborough.

Mr. Prue: I'm sure he does. I'm sure that's the big city.

I've just about run out of time. I just want to say that when this goes to committee, we expect a great deal more. I'm hoping that the really onerous provisions are withdrawn and that this government starts to look at proper funding.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 130. I have to commend Minister

John Gerretsen and his parliamentary assistant, Brad Duguid, for the fine work that they have done.

If we look back at the many years of Tory rule here, under those eight years there was a lot of trickery that was put forth in this House where they were telling the people of Ontario, "We're going to cut your taxes and we're going to keep the same amount of services." Well, what the municipal politicians will tell you across this great province, what the mayors are going to tell you, is that what they did is in a draconian fashion download everything onto the municipalities: the downloading of public health, downloading of transportation, downloading of affordable housing, social services. It went on and on and on. And how would it affect us? Many constituents coming into my office talk about how the property taxes have increased and how they're on a fixed income and talk about what the Tories did. Now they're starting to feel the real impact of what the Tories did over those eight years.

What we've done is reversed that trend. We see municipal government as mature government. Through this legislation, we want to give them permissive powers, and we have started the trend towards uploading in a partnership with our municipalities: uploading of public health, uploading of ambulance, uploading of social services, working to better transportation for our municipalities, all this leading to a better quality of life for all our citizens, a partnership between all levels of government, because we know, as Liberals, that working together we will achieve more. We are about working together and making sure that the municipality's voice is heard and heard loudly in this province.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech of the member from Beaches–East York on Bill 130, which is the Municipal Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006. He was talking about municipalities being affected by energy projects. At this time, in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, I have some 20,000 people who are being affected by a lack of power in that there are some 20,000 Hydro One customers who have been without power since Sunday. It may not be until Wednesday evening that all the customers are back and have power restored. This is the second significant storm we've had and major long-term outage we have had since October 2. I say that Hydro One should be doing more to put resources into line and forestry maintenance so that this doesn't happen. I've just recently heard from an elderly constituent in Torrance, who is 94 years old. He's a veteran, he's on a pacemaker, and he won't have power until tomorrow night. There are other issues, like the cost of freezer contents that have to be thrown out and replaced. The Hydro One response on phones is such that they are getting inaccurate information on when the power will be restored. Constituents are being told that they are in a remote area. Well, they aren't on Baffin Island; they're only a few hours north of Toronto.

Area schools are being affected, like Almaguin Highlands Secondary School, Evergreen Heights Education

Centre in Emsdale, M.A. Wittick and Land O'Lakes in Burk's Falls, Magnetawan Central and Sundridge Centennial.

These frequent and long-term power outages are unacceptable. Hydro One has got to do a better job.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Applause.

Mr. Bisson: Thank you very much, my friends. I'm so happy to be back. It's been a long break and I've missed this place so much.

I first of all want to say that I enjoyed the comments of the member from Beaches–East York because this is something that he has taken a lot of interest in. I have talked to my good friend about this a number of times. He comes from the municipal level of government and has always felt that municipalities should have more power to be the masters of their own destiny when it comes to being able to fund the services they provide.

He and I have a bit of a difference of opinion about how would you go there. One of the things that I don't like, and you see it in this bill—first of all, the government has taken an approach of saying with the city of Toronto, "We're going to give you some additional taxing powers in order to offset the downloading that the province has put on to the municipalities." In this particular bill, they don't go there. If they had gone there, my criticism would have been the following: It's quite one thing for the city of Toronto to go after big high-rise buildings, to tax those or multiple residential units in the city, but when you get into small towns across northern, central, southwestern and southeastern Ontario, there isn't the tax base. As the member pointed out correctly, how is the small community that his parents live in—some 3,800 people in total within the amalgamated town—able to find the money to offset the costs that the province has downloaded on to the municipalities?

It's kind of ironic, because the provincial government has been arguing through our Premier, Mr. McGuinty, that the federal government has created a fiscal gap between what we get from the federal government and what we used to get, so that the gap is getting larger—and all of us agree—but in the same breath he's doing the same thing to the municipalities and is doing nothing to close the gap that the municipalities find themselves in by some \$3 billion in shortfall to pay for provincially mandated services that we tell them that they must provide. You can't say to the federal government one thing and then go do the exact same thing to the municipalities.

Mr. Leal: I listened very carefully to my colleague the member from Beaches–East York. I recognize a respected former mayor of East York, who knows the municipal file very well.

One of the things that I think is very important about Bill 130, for a person who spent 18 years in municipal politics, is certainly the reform about how closed meetings operate. Essentially, under the Municipal Act you can hold closed-door meetings dealing with personnel

items and negotiations with unions, to provide legal advice on legal activities associated with the municipality, and development matters dealing with the sale of properties. Those are the big three that really control what happens in closed meetings. But I remember that from time to time during my 18 years I actually left closed-door meetings because some councils could get very lazy and start including things in closed-door meetings that I always felt should be in the public domain and discussed in a very public fashion. There always has been that temptation to move a number of topics into a caucus or closed-door meetings. I note that under Bill 130 there will be the opportunity, I believe, to protect the public by putting an investigator in place to take a look at those times when councils go into closed-door meetings and, frankly, don't have the legislative authority to do so. I think that's an important protection for the public.

I just want to get on record Roger Anderson, the past president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, when he stated, "Ontario's proposed Municipal Act recognizes that municipal governments are respected, responsible and accountable municipal governments, and that with improved legislation, we can better serve our communities." I think that's a very important statement by the former chair of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario to endorse this legislation.

1640

The Acting Speaker: I return to the member for Beaches–East York, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Prue: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Mississauga East, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Timmins–James Bay and Peterborough. You have all raised relevant points, and I thank you for listening. You all talked about things that I raised in my one hour of speaking time.

Just a couple of points to make sure that they're clear on the record, and I don't want to ever disagree with my good friend from Timmins–James Bay, but for the record, what Toronto has been granted has nothing to do with their industrial or tax base. It has to do with the ability to tax parking lots, drinks and theatre tickets, if and when they should ever decide to do it. So any municipality could do that, but I do recognize that the number of parking lots and theatre tickets is probably a great deal larger in Toronto than in most municipalities in Ontario.

In terms of what my good friend from Peterborough had to say, I agree that most municipalities will like what is being said here, but I do have to take exception to his analysis. He's right: There are only three times—and I pointed out those same three in my speech—when you can go into closed session. I too have walked out of meetings where I did not believe that they should be in closed session, particularly in the megacity of Toronto—not so much in East York when I was the mayor; I would never allow that to happen. But in the megacity of Toronto, we had to ask time and time again, "Why is this in closed session?" because people naturally wanted to gravitate there.

In this bill, notwithstanding that there's going to be somebody watching it, I wonder about the provision that says, "does not materially advance decision-making," which allows them to stay in there. That is a catch-all. Any mayor and any council can say, "We're not materially advancing, and we're sitting here," and that causes me a great deal of nervousness.

Having said that, yes, if there's somebody there to police it, fine. But this is a "may" provision and the municipality has to have the money to do it. The majority of municipalities in Ontario simply will not have the money to hire someone.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on the bill?

Mr. Sergio: I am delighted to join in the debate on Bill 130 today. Let me say that I have enjoyed very much the contribution by the member from Beaches–East York. I know he comes from the local municipal level and he carries a lot of experience. He has dealt with a lot of the issues that local municipalities are facing on a daily basis. I guess it is a different way of interpreting the benefits of the contents of Bill 130, and that's where we have the difference. But he is in the opposition, and of course he has to do what he has to do.

Let me say that early in our mandate, our leader recognized the importance of bringing some changes to the local municipalities, the Municipal Act. I would have to say that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing took up the challenge or made the commitment, and today we are about to deliver, indeed, on that particular commitment.

Let's find out, first of all, how we got here. It is because municipalities, for a long time—and this didn't happen in 2003 or 2006; this has been happening for a long time—have been requesting of the upper-tier government, which is the provincial government, more flexibility, more power to run their day-to-day affairs. Unfortunately, not much was done, but we have to recognize—and I think this is the importance of this bill and the importance of the government having recognized the importance of that request—that municipalities have a right to conduct their day-to-day affairs on behalf of the citizenry that they represent in a much more accountable way, flexible way, expeditious way, effective way. Our leader has recognized that, and Minister Gerretsen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in his contribution yesterday, his remarks on the bill, has made it quite clear. So the bill comes to us not on our own whim; this comes to us after extensive consultations with the various agencies, commissions, individuals, groups, union representatives, various industry sectors, municipal organizations, mayors, councillors. We recognized that there was a need to make changes so that they can indeed conduct their business their own way, provided that they know what they are doing. And we believe that they know what they are doing; otherwise they have their local constituency to deal with. I think it's fair to recognize that. I think it's fair because when the local municipality makes a decision, it's a local decision. It affects the local constituents and it should stay with the local municipality.

I come from a municipal government as well, and I remember all too well, as do many other members on both sides of the House, the frustration, the aggravation of having responded to the needs of individuals or groups and having spent time to deal with the various issues, and when you finally bring it to your own local council and you make a decision, then you say, "It's not final. Now we have to ask for permission or approval or a final bylaw or whatever from such-and-such ministry." I believe that this is not fair. So we have recognized that. We believe that the local municipalities have the right to conduct their business.

What are some of those things that they can do with respect to the powers in Bill 130? Yes, we give them more power. This bill gives them more power; as a matter of fact it gives them broad powers. But what does that power do? What are some of those powers? It's to deal with their own financial accountability, their own financial affairs, financial management, transparency. "Transparency" is a very big word at the local level, the provincial level—at any level—but I think more so because it is the local government that touches so closely the people we all represent on a daily basis.

Governance structure: If they want to make changes to their own council, especially if minor, why should they finally, after long debates and once they have decided, have to have the blessing of the provincial government? Passing of local bylaws, protecting the local affordable housing stock, promoting local economic growth, the power to create boards and commissions, the power to hire, as we heard, ombudsmen or integrity commissioners—why shouldn't they have the power to decide, to take that upon themselves and let that decision be final? This is one of the things that is not coming out from the opposition with respect to the content of this bill. On many of these issues a local decision, made for local improvements, for local benefit, should stay there and should be final. That's their decision. We are talking about local issues.

The member from Beaches–East York has touched on a couple of other bills because they are intermingled—especially Bill 51. There are issues in that bill very important to the necessity of local municipalities to deal at the local level with those issues, especially when it comes to planning: how planning is done; appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board; when an application is complete or incomplete; time limits to deal with a particular application; who has the right to appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board. Yes, he is quite right; there are a number of other bills which deal with local municipalities, local issues. And he's quite right that indeed—and I was on the same committee. We heard the same people, we had the same people with the same complaints, the same concerns, and we had people saying, "Yes, we do need these changes." And we have responded.

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I do hope that, at the end, both oppositions will see, indeed, that the bill contains, I would say, those require-

ments that are so necessary to allow local municipalities to conduct their affairs in a very straightforward and very effective way on behalf of the people they represent.

We have had representations from school boards. You may say, "What do school boards have to do with that?" They have a lot to do with that, especially with Bill 51, which the member from Beaches–East York has mentioned. It deals with what you may call a very simplistic issue, a very simple issue. It deals with locating portables on a school site. Do you believe that the local municipalities should have the power to decide where the portables should go, how the portables should look, or somebody else should say, "No, no, no. I don't like the look of this portable. It's painted white. I want it blue," or, "It should be one foot higher or one foot lower," or, "It should be at this location in the parking lot there, instead of this particular spot here"?

If we cannot give the local municipalities, the local communities, that particular authority, then I believe we are not doing the right job; we are wasting our time. And that's important. Time is important, especially to local communities, local individuals and local councils. Why do they want that? Why does a local board want that? Because they understand. They understand that it's important for them to make a decision, make a quick decision, make the right decision, and that decision should stay with them.

Can you imagine, if we are at the end of August, the school year is about to open, they have to set up 20 portables and one particular person, because they may not like whatever—the colour of the portable—is going to appeal it to an upper body and waste perhaps months and months at a time? I don't think it's fair.

We have recognized a need. We have allocated that responsibility. The minister has brought in a bill that is supportable. I have to compliment not only Minister Gerretsen but the parliamentary assistant, who has had considerable time in dedicating that to the various public hearings. I hope that at the end we can have a bill that indeed will give municipalities the power they need to run their own affairs.

I do thank you, Speaker. I have run out of my time. I do thank the House for listening.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from York West on Bill 130. I certainly recommend to government members that if they want to know how municipal politicians in northern Ontario, particularly in northwestern Ontario, feel about the way they're being treated by the McGuinty Liberal government, they should tune into CBC Thunder Bay and listen to some of the clips on the recent Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association conference, where they'd have an opportunity to listen to over five minutes of clips from Mayor Dave Canfield from Kenora, Mayor Lynn Peterson from Thunder Bay, Mayor Anne Krassilowsky from Dryden and Mayor Michael Power from Greenstone, who's also the NOMA president. They need to hear those clips because they'll

understand how neglected those mayors are feeling right now. They use quotes like they have a wall of silence, they have no response to their letters. They highlight in those clips the Minister of Energy's callous comments in Sudbury when he did his energy announcement, where he was asked about what northerners should do about dealing with high energy costs. Michael Power paraphrased it in saying, "Too bad, so sad. Turn down your thermostat, put a blanket around you, drink some good red wine and cuddle up with somebody you like." I tell you, you should listen to those clips, because you'll realize from the emotion of the mayors speaking that they're very strong and they very much feel neglected by this government. The government is not dealing with energy prices, which are affecting the forestry sector and creating a crisis in the forestry sector.

Mr. Bisson: Again, I'm going to get a chance to speak to this in a little bit more detail a little bit later, but I guess my problem is that, although I agree with the principle of what we are trying to do here in regard to trying to give municipalities the ability to deal with the fiscal inequities they have, caused by the province down-loading much of the responsibility for provincially mandated services on them, and we're trying somewhat in this bill to do that, I don't see this bill doing anything for the communities I represent that would, in a meaningful way, deal with those shortfalls. We know that there's about a \$3-billion funding gap between what we mandate cities and towns to do in this province and what they actually get from the provincial government when it comes to transfers and what they're able to raise as far as capacity of taxing their citizens and businesses.

There's a \$3-billion shortfall, and that \$3-billion shortfall is causing many cities and towns across Ontario to not be able to fix their aging infrastructure, and we all know that in the long term that's going to cost a lot more money. Changing a water plant today is going to be a lot cheaper than changing a water plant 10 years down the road, etc. Although the bill title sounds good and what we're trying to do as far as the purpose of the bill is all right—I guess I don't have a problem in principle—it doesn't go anywhere to dealing with it. I'm just saying that we need to, in a serious way, take a look at: Do we want to continue mandating these services? That's the first question we have to ask, and I think the answer is yes. If that's the case, how will we then assist municipalities in having the wherewithal to fund those services and fund the infrastructure that they need to maintain in those municipalities?

I am not a big fan of giving them more taxing powers, although we're not doing that in this bill, because at the end there's an inequity in that, depending on the size of your community, and I'll speak to that later. The basic issue we have to look at is: What are we prepared to do as a province as far as transferring dollars to our municipalities to assist them in doing the things we tell them they must do by provincially mandated laws?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): I am pleased to rise and speak on the second reading of

Bill 130 today. This bill is doing what the government said it would do. It's going to provide broader, permissive powers to municipalities. I just want to comment and add to the debate of my good friend from Beaches–East York, a former colleague of mine in the city of Toronto, and what he was saying about the bill: that the bill opens it up so that councils can go in camera and have a discussion, but don't advance any decision-making process.

In my 18-year career in government, I'll tell you that there have been several times that councils would have liked to go in camera without the media there, because a discussion will take place on an issue, the media will put it out and then the public believes we are doing it. I'll give you some perfect examples. As a council, you would like to meet to discuss strategy for the next two or three years of your term. This is a pure discussion so that your staff will have an understanding of where the council is coming from. There will be no decisions, but the staff will then prepare a strategic directions document that will come to committee and council, be debated and be adopted by resolution. In the initial stages of those discussions, if you invited all your council members and all your staff there, the meeting had to be open to the public. That was not very conducive to conducting business, and it did not advance the municipality's best interests and the interests of the voters.

That's where this bill gives the municipalities a lot more power. I think it's good power. I think the public elected these people to represent them and has to put a lot of trust in their hands, a lot of integrity to these members who were elected to represent them. I could see that what the McGuinty government is doing here is supporting and respecting municipalities.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): In terms of supporting municipalities, we could point to a number of municipalities who would have a different perspective with respect to whether or not they're getting adequate or any support from the McGuinty government. London is a case which we can talk about a little more as we go forward: the decision to truck in Toronto's waste without consultation with the council in that area.

Another relevant one is the Caledonia situation, where that municipality has been left twisting in the wind. Our leader, John Tory, raised the issue today with the Premier, who again refused to respond to his questions with respect to Caledonia and the people who live in the general area where the land has been occupied for over half a year and the fact that we know their properties have been devalued dramatically. There's no effort on the part of the government to involve MPAC to do special reassessments. That's one initiative that could be undertaken to recognize the dramatically reduced property values and how that might impact on property taxes that the municipality is levying across the municipality in the upcoming year. Even rebates for the past year I think could be taken into consideration given the devaluation.

1700

The other thing we know is that there's noise, harassment, a whole range of very serious matters that have

impacted the residents of that community; tax losses which again are not being recognized to any significant degree by the McGuinty government. I think that's an indicator that when a municipality gets into real difficulty, the McGuinty government will be missing in action.

The Acting Speaker: The member for York West has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Sergio: I want to thank the members from Leeds–Grenville, Scarborough–Rouge River and Timmins–James Bay for their contribution, as well as the member from wonderful Parry Sound–Muskoka, which I'm sure at this time of the year must be just about ready to turn into the many colours. I'm not privy to the comments or the views that the mayor of the Muskoka area may be thinking about the government, but I really wonder what they would be saying about Bill 130. That might perhaps be something interesting to know.

Part of the consultation process was to consult very expensively—extensively, and maybe expensively as well—with AMO, which is the association that speaks for all the various municipalities in Ontario. I know that on a regular basis ministry staff, the minister himself and the parliamentary assistant have had numerous encounters with AMO. We don't perchance debate Bill 130 today. The minister has introduced a bill based on the comments and views and the wants, if you will, of those municipalities, on behalf of AMO, which is the spokesperson for all the municipalities in Ontario. Therefore, we are very confident and very positive that the changes that are proposed in Bill 130 will indeed go a long way to giving municipalities the tools—and yes, we have given them plenty of tools. We have given them the toolbox as well. I hope they will use those tools very wisely and, on behalf of their local municipalities, will be able to deliver faster, better, more efficient services to the local constituency.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Runciman: I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate. The previous speaker talked about consultation, and I take him at his word, but I know that the two McGuinty government bills that I've been involved with to some degree recently, one dealing with the so-called Clean Water Act, where I think the government has brought in well over 100 amendments, and Bill 14, the justice bill, where the government brought in over 85 amendments—I think that brings into question the amount of work that's going into research and preparation and consultation with respect to the development of legislation that comes before this House and raises some relevant concerns.

One of the things I want to talk about I think is certainly timely. We've heard some discussions surrounding the ability of councils to go in camera or to have secret meetings. The government's argument of course is that the provisions in this legislation will minimize those opportunities. I guess if we read the language used in the bill, where it suggests that the bill would allow councils to close meetings to the public "if,

at the meeting, no member of the council ... discusses or otherwise deals with any matter in a way that materially advances the business or decision-making of the council," on the surface of it, that would seem to mean that virtually nothing could be discussed in camera. But I suspect that if you dig a little deeper, in fact it's going to be subject to a wide range of interpretations of what is materially advancing business or decision-making.

If there's a general discussion around a matter like the discussion that took place in the city of Toronto, I guess it was last week, surrounding the Green Lane dumpsite decision, which took place in camera—part of it, I would argue, was certainly appropriate for in camera if you're talking about perhaps a purchase price of a property, which was one of the elements, I gather, of that conversation. But the other parts of it—and I'm not aware of any significant public discussion surrounding the intent of the mayor of Toronto or the city council to move in this direction in terms of disposal of Toronto waste. So I think those are the kinds of decisions and discussions that can occur.

Partially you can justify it when it's dealing with personnel matters: firing, hiring, salary increases, that sort of thing. I would argue that those are appropriately initially discussed on some occasions, and perhaps all occasions, in camera, especially when you're dealing with personnel matters. But the other matters—I think we're going to have a great deal of difficulty in concluding whether this materially advances the business or the decision-making of the council. I think those are pretty airy-fairy kinds of words to be using when the goal apparently was to minimize—I want to take the government at its word that the goal was to minimize—the use of private or secret meetings by elected officials.

One other—and there will be a number that I want to touch on in talking about consultation. I think it's appropriate again to mention the recent situation with the city of London and the fact that the city of London apparently was not apprised or consulted. We've heard members of the government here go on at some length in glowing terms about consultation between their government and the folks in various municipalities across the province and AMO. Here's a situation where the government has six elected representatives, MPPs, in London and the surrounding area. The application was made, as we know, for expansion of that site, which was a key determinant with respect to the decision of the city to purchase the site and to make the decision to move their waste into that area; apparently no consultation, no effort at consultation or even giving a heads-up. Whether members of the government caucus, especially the executive council, were aware of what was transpiring here is a question unanswered to this point in time. But I think it speaks to this whole issue of saying, "We are so consultative," when here's a situation which has a dramatic impact on that municipality—it has certainly upset the residents and the elected officials to a significant extent, and I think justifiably so—where apparently no effort whatsoever was made to consult.

There's some reference in the legislation to the question of having an investigator. If somebody has a complaint, theoretically the municipality can appoint an investigator. As I read this, I gather that if an investigator is not appointed, there's still recourse to the provincial Ombudsman.

1710

I may have to stand corrected on that, but I note the comments of the current provincial Ombudsman in terms of his critique of the legislation, and it's a pretty scathing critique in terms of this particular component of the legislation. It's probably been quoted earlier by one of our members, but I'm going to put it on the record again. This is a quote from Ombudsman André Marin in June of this year: "While purporting to introduce a degree of accountability into municipal administration, this bill will result in an unfair, inequitable and unsustainable patchwork of quasi-oversight measures throughout Ontario."

I think the word the Ombudsman used, "purporting" to introduce a degree of accountability, is one that's sort of a signature of this government. They are great with smoke and mirrors, having press conferences and suggesting that all is well and good and that we're moving in very positive directions, "purporting" to do certain things. This is another case in point which has been pointed out and attention drawn to it by a neutral observer, the Ombudsman of the province of Ontario. So hopefully people will take note of that.

I'll give you another direct quote from the Ombudsman: "It is a piece of legislation that exploits the goodwill associated with the term 'Ombudsman,' yet doesn't deliver on any of the basic tenets. They are making it appear as a very credible, substantial step forward when it borders on fraud." Now, that is extremely strong language. This is an officer of the assembly—the provincial Ombudsman—who is giving this neutral, objective advice on this legislation in scathingly critical terms and using language that this government is being exploitive with respect to the messages they're delivering here that somehow this is going to be some panacea that's going to allow residents of Ontario recourse when they have legitimate complaints regarding the actions or inactions—I would suggest actions—of their municipally elected officials.

They're exploiting the goodwill associated with the term "Ombudsman," and he's saying that this actually borders on fraud. I'm not saying that, Mr. Speaker. This is the Ombudsman of the province of Ontario saying that this bill, Bill 130, and the provisions dealing with an Ombudsman/investigator border on fraud.

It would be nice to hear one of the members of the government side make an effort to rebut that and rebut the words of a very respected individual who has served as the head of the special investigations unit for this province, who has served as the Ombudsman for the military forces of the country and now serves as the Ombudsman for the province of Ontario. He's the individual who's using this kind of language, and I think it should cause significant concern. I'm not sure the press

gallery or members of the public have noted these concerns, but hopefully through the course of this debate, and committee hearings which will follow second reading, we can draw more attention to this.

Perhaps, as the government House leader has now entered the chamber, he might be receptive to calling the provincial Ombudsman to testify before whatever committee of the assembly deals with this legislation. Perhaps, when I'm finished my contribution to the debate, he could stand up and indicate if that's some position we could all agree on. I think other members should feel it's important when he's using language—and I'll revisit this for the benefit of the government House leader. The Ombudsman of the province of Ontario, with respect to these particular provisions of Bill 130, the ombudsman/investigator provisions, has said—this is a direct quote: “It is a piece of legislation that exploits the goodwill associated with the term ‘Ombudsman’.... They are making it appear as a very credible, substantial step forward when it borders on fraud.”

That should be of concern. This is an officer of the assembly, an independent observer, someone who has a track record nationally and provincially, someone who speaks his mind and takes strong positions on a whole range of issues which are of concern to people in this province and across the country. So I would hope that that's one thing we'll consider as we go forward into committee hearings on this legislation.

I wanted to talk a bit about business licences as well. This is another element of this legislation. We've already heard from some stakeholders who are concerned that industry's businesses are already highly regulated by the province and will now have another layer of regulation and red tape. I can understand that concern.

I get these e-mails every week. I am not in a position to assess the merits of whether this is right or wrong, and I guess we have to operate on the basis that it is right, that they're doing the right things. I'm sure the government members would stand up and say, “Are you suggesting that we should not enforce our labour laws?” But I see these huge fines every week. The Ministry of Labour takes great joy in sending out these e-mails: “We fined X small business in Napanee \$75,000 for not putting a cover on something. We fined X medium-sized business \$150,000 for not having a cover over a belt,” or whatever. We don't know the rationale in terms of, were warnings given earlier?—those kinds of issues. Just on the surface, it concerns me that there is this assault on especially small and medium-sized business. We got the predictable retort from across the floor, “You're talking about safety.” Who can argue against that? I've dealt with this in municipal councils, provincial councils. This is always the throwback. They say, “Well, you're talking about safety.”

We don't want to jeopardize any employer's or worker's safety in this province, but there's also the question of dealing with business people in a fair manner—if they do make a mistake and there has been no harm in terms of an injury to an employee—and ensuring that they are

given adequate warnings and checked upon. I agree with that completely. But I'm being given the view from a number of people that that's not happening. There are no warnings being issued. This is an opportunity to levy significant fines on businesses that in many respects are having a real struggle to keep their head above water in certain parts of this province.

I put that on the record with respect to the provisions here for business licences. The part of the act that deals with this defines a business as “any business wholly or partly carried on within a municipality even if the business is being carried on from a location outside the municipality.” That means that a business that delivers outside the municipality where it's located could need a business licence for more than one municipality to operate. Again, the way this is written, you could suggest that I might need, or you might need, Mr. Speaker, a licence to have a garage sale on your front lawn. So I think this is another area that's probably going to require some amendment. I think at best this is a tax grab and, in a worst-case scenario, it's another layer of bureaucracy that's going to stifle business and jobs in this province.

1720

We talk about communication with the government. Again, I go back to a comment made by, I believe, the member from York West in talking about communication and opening up the lines of communication. From an eastern Ontario perspective, municipalities, especially small and medium-sized municipalities in eastern Ontario, feel that the lines of communication with this government are limited at best and that they are not having an opportunity to get the ear of government or find a way into government, get access to government to make sure that their views are being represented and heard.

One of the things that I personally proposed earlier this year was an eastern Ontario secretariat. This is a modest step forward which has been supported by virtually every municipality in eastern Ontario. What it would do is establish a small secretariat within the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade to provide that window into government, that access to government and that representative around the cabinet table for the interests of a very important part of the province which, in terms of manufacturing job losses, has perhaps suffered as significantly as any region, if you look at what's happened in Cornwall with respect to the Domtar closure, Chesterville with respect to the Nestlé closure, Prescott with the Hathaway plant closure, and Gananoque, which lost a significant Mahle operation. We can go right up the list in eastern Ontario, where, from the manufacturing perspective, there have been significant job losses. So I think the concern is there for a whole range of issues, but certainly this is one that I believe the government could address.

We're not talking about establishing some new bureaucracy; we're looking at seconding people who could carry on these responsibilities. We're not looking at the establishment of an eastern Ontario ministry, with all of the costs and bureaucracy associated with that.

We're looking at a relatively small office that would provide that communications window for residents and elected officials from a very important part of this province, especially small-town, small-village, rural eastern Ontario, which to a significant degree feels shut out: shut out of the processes, not being listened to, not being heard, and their concerns not being appropriately discussed in this place, or, perhaps more importantly, around the executive council table.

When this bill does get to committee—in the not-too-distant future, hopefully—we will have a significant number of amendments to put forward in our role as the official opposition in an effort to provide constructive opposition, positive opposition that will indeed enhance the impact of this bill in terms of the way the municipalities in this province operate and serve the people who put them in office.

Thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bisson: I'm going to get an opportunity in a few minutes to speak to this in a little bit more detail, but I appreciate the comments from my friend Mr. Runciman, the member from Leeds–Grenville. Sorry; I should have called him by his riding name, Speaker. I appreciate the comments, although I don't agree with him entirely on where he's going. But I think the basis of what he's trying to say and what we're trying to say from the opposition is that we all recognize that municipalities are having a difficult time trying to basically meet the needs of their communities. The province mandates those municipalities to provide services such as ambulance, housing, social services, etc., and they're finding themselves further and further behind the eight ball every year in trying to have the monies necessary to provide the mandated services plus the services that they regularly have to provide to their municipalities.

The real conundrum is, how do we make sure that municipalities have the capacity to be able to meet that? We're sort of skirting around the issue with this debate in the sense that the government has introduced a piece of legislation that purports to deal with this issue, but I would submit that once this bill is passed, if in this form, we're not going to be any further ahead in closing the funding gap, the \$3 billion that exists between the municipal services that are needed and the services we tell them they need to provide. So what do we do? I think that's the basic question, and nobody's getting to that issue.

There are different approaches, and I can get into that a little later in debate, but the fundamental question that we have to ask ourselves, ask every member, is that if we all agree that municipalities are not receiving what they should when it comes to having the wherewithal to meet those mandated services, what can we do in order to assist them? Do we want to make sure that we close the funding gap? If the answer is yes, then what do you do to close the gap?

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'll just take a couple of minutes to reflect on this piece of legislation that we're

having second reading on, that is being debated in principle.

I came from the municipal sector, as many of you know, and the fact that this bill is an attempt to recognize that municipalities in this province are mature and responsible is something that I like. I was a bit surprised when I first got here some years ago, when there was a government that didn't seem to respect municipalities that way. It even got to the point where the provincial government was telling municipalities what kind of wording they had to have on certain forms. I think this goes a long way to giving that responsibility back to municipalities, and I'm in favour of that.

The member from Leeds–Grenville talked about a number of issues with regard to the bill and made good points. Some of the comments were about a municipal ombudsman. Well, in the private sector, insurance companies have ombudsmen to deal with customers' complaints. Banks have ombudsmen. When it comes to the province of Ontario, we have an Ombudsman, who's been quoted here at some length. But what happens in a municipality when a citizen is not happy with what the municipality's doing? Where do they go? Right now, if it's just the municipality they're dealing with, the only place they can go to is court.

Once we get used to this idea of having an ombudsman we can go to, who can stand back and take a good look at the issue, I think municipalities will embrace them and the citizens of our towns and cities will embrace that concept as a way that they can be heard.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): We've heard a good analysis from the member from Leeds–Grenville with respect to these amendments to the proposed municipal legislation. Oftentimes, new provincial legislation sets in place directives from the province telling municipalities to do this and don't do that with very little thought to how that would be delivered or how that would be paid for, in particular in the long run once the short-term, ad hoc funding flows. For that reason, we feel that there should be an overall review of how municipal services are delivered and how they're paid for.

Earlier this afternoon, the member for Leeds–Grenville made mention of Caledonia. That's a community in the municipality, the county of Haldimand. Municipalities like Haldimand county, Brant county and, for that matter, Six Nations territory are caught up in issues far beyond municipal issues. They're caught up in a provincial and federal direction with respect to land claims and discussions of the rule of law and, in many people's perception, the unequal application of the rule of law.

We have a situation where municipal entities, solely because of their location, their geography, are caught up in this. The mayors—Mayor Trainer of Haldimand county, Mayor Ron Eddy of Brant county—are not at the negotiation table. I feel that they're being kept in the dark and essentially have no say in the matter. They see their electrical services going to residents of this occupied site.

They have no control over that. Again, whether that legislation is going to deal with that, I highly doubt.

1730

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to join once again in this debate. What we're talking about here is a total change in the relationship between the province of Ontario and municipalities across the province—a change, I would argue, that is beyond question for the better, a change that recognizes that municipalities are mature levels of government. This piece of legislation, innocuous as it is to some—the Municipal Act, I think, often doesn't get a lot of publicity when it's changed, and through the history of the Municipal Act every so often it's reviewed. But it does have a very important impact on how municipalities govern themselves.

What this particular change to this Municipal Act, this new Municipal Act, does is it gives municipalities permissive powers. So no longer do they have to come to the province for a number of important decisions; it recognizes them as mature levels of government capable of making those decisions. But we've gone beyond this. This is one piece to the puzzle in improving and building stronger communities. We've also increased funding for public transit, both capital and operating—something that many municipalities across the province needed. We've invested heavily in infrastructure across the province. We're uploading costs for public health, uploading costs for land ambulance. They're dedicating a good proportion of the gas tax to public transit across the province on an ongoing basis.

The relationship now between the province and municipalities has gone from a relationship of downloading to a relationship of fair cost sharing, a relationship where a number of these costs are being uploaded back to the province. We're not doing everything we would love to do. Financially, we can't do everything we'd like to do in terms of uploading, but in three short years we've come a very, very long way to fixing some of the problems created by the previous government.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. The member for Leeds–Grenville has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Runciman: I appreciate the input of all members who responded to my comments. It was interesting that the last speaker talked about municipalities and the fact that there's very little attention paid, and I referenced that in my comments as well. You're not reading about this legislation, it's not being editorialized about, but there are components to this such that I suspect if citizen groups were aware of some of the implications, they might be somewhat alarmed.

I know that one of the components of this in terms of giving councils carte blanche is bar hours. If you're looking at a municipality, especially one where the officials are elected at large—it's not a ward system approach—where, because a neighbouring municipality's bar hours are now 24 hours a day, or to 4 or 5 a.m., they're going to have pressure in terms of a competitive

nature—we saw that happen with Hull and Ottawa a few years ago, where Hull was staying open until 2 or 3, and of course we had to match those hours because the businesses who were competing in Ottawa were suffering badly. I think that we see neighbourhoods—as I can see in my own community—where you have a fairly large residential component, especially elderly residents, in these areas where the bars are now open until 2 o'clock. We get all kinds of complaints about fights going on at 2:30 in the morning. This is just another element where I don't think people have been drawn into this equation, where the government has really adequately measured all of the implications of moving in this direction. This is just another weakness that I've had the opportunity to point out thanks to you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Bisson: Thank you, thank you, thank you, Speaker. I've been waiting for this moment with bated breath. We were rudely interrupted by a large break this summer when we were speaking in this House last spring. I'm glad to be back in order to raise some of the issues that I think matter not only to me but many constituents in not only my riding but, I would argue, probably across this province.

I just want to say at the outset that this particular bill attempts to fix what is a problem. I give you credit for that. I'm not going to argue for a second that the bill is not at least an attempt. But in its present form it's not going to do anything, I would argue, to really offset the problem that exists when it comes to the funding gap between the services municipalities must provide, and in some cases mandated services, and the money they receive from the province.

I think it's very ironic. This is a funny, ironic situation we find ourselves in. The Premier, Mr. McGuinty, rightfully so, argues that the federal government, now with a \$13-billion surplus, can't find its way to offset the funding imbalance between the federal government and the provinces. We know that Ontario and Quebec and all the other provinces have been calling on the federal government to deal with the funding gap, and we agree that it's there.

I remember a former Premier of this province who went on—quite frankly, every Premier in the last three governments has gone on about this issue. Equally so, and I think rightfully so, the province of Ontario is saying to the federal government, “You've basically balanced your budget on the backs of the provincial governments.” I accept that argument. I know exactly what happened in 1990—je me souviens—and I was here through the successive governments after. But it's kind of hard for Ontario to argue that to Stephen Harper if we're doing the exact same things to municipalities. I find it ironic. I find it a bit of an ironic argument. If we say the feds are doing it to us, we should at least be honest with the municipalities that we are downloading onto them because the federal government is putting it to us, or, if we're not prepared to say that, find a way to offset what

it's costing municipalities to provide services as a result of the downloading.

We've seen what's happened. There's a funding gap of over \$3 billion between what municipalities need to provide when it comes to mandated services from the province and the money they receive both from taxation at the local level and the dollars we transfer to municipalities. There's probably not a member in this assembly who has not gone to a cabinet minister in this government or in the previous government and said, "Hey, I've got a real problem in our municipality." In some cases, you may only have one municipality; in other cases, like me and others, you have multiple municipalities and reserves, if you happen to have those as well, which is a whole other debate.

I look at the communities in the riding I represent. There is not a community, from Timmins to Highway 11, from Smooth Rock Falls to Hearst to Moosonee, and reserves from Constance Lake on the James Bay and on the Fort Albany River, that doesn't have this problem, and it's a chronic problem. Moosonee is probably the best example in the province of Ontario. They have a very finite amount of money that they can raise by way of municipal assessment because it's not a very big community; it's about 5,000 people. But the problem they have is, most of the buildings in the community are owned by provincial government or federal government agencies or directly by the crown itself, and they're exempt from paying municipal taxes. Northern College, all of the soft social services that provide services in the community, the school boards, the Timmins housing units and other non-profit housing units are exempt from paying municipal taxes.

I understand, talking to Mayor Wayne Taipale and his council and to Shannon, who is the administrator, the CEO of the community, that that's \$176 million worth of assessment in that community that they can't tax. So we're saying as a province, "You've got to provide water services to a certain standard. You have to provide certain social services to your community, such as welfare and other services that are mandated by the province." There's a public health component that is mandated, etc. And we're saying to them, "Not only are we not going to transfer you enough money; we're going to exempt our own buildings from being taxed," and if the majority of assessment you've got in your community is not privately owned, you're caught in a conundrum. They can't tax to make up the difference and they're not getting the money from the province. So what happens? You can't fix the roads.

Go into Moosonee on any sunny afternoon in the summertime. It is a dustbowl. Why? Because there are no paved roads. There's one paved road that comes down from the train station, but that was paved some years ago and it would be hard to see that there was actually pavement there. So the tourist comes off the train and sees the dusty environment. Kids play in that environment, adults and seniors walk in that environment, and we all know dust leads to lung problems. Just what it

means to the aesthetics of the community is fairly difficult. They need to pave roads. They don't have the dollars to do it, and the municipal council is doing backflips trying to figure out what they're going to do to meet the needs of that community. The province says, "No, we're not going to give you any money to pave because we don't have programs for that. You have to go to COMRIF." COMRIF—forget it. If you can get money through COMRIF, you're pretty darn lucky. Number two, they don't have the assessment to do it. The water system, the sewer system—it goes on and on.

1740

A perfect example is the town of Moosonee as to the funding inequities between what we say municipalities should provide, what citizens think they should receive as a basic right of living in a municipality and what we pay. I look at this legislation, I look at Bill 51, and I say, what does Bill 51 do for the Moosonees of this world? It does absolutely nothing. Maybe you can go and have a private meeting with your council and go off-camera to discuss an issue that's not going to make a difference to people. It gives you a few abilities to make bylaws, but it doesn't do anything—my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound knows what I'm talking about because he represents similar communities. It does absolutely squat to deal with the issue of how you are going to provide basic services to your citizens.

The worst part is, it's not getting better. A lot of municipal politicians now sit in this chamber, so they know. They sat at municipal councils across this province, and in some cases they were mayors. They know that if you don't pay for the infrastructure repair today, it gets more and more expensive as time marches on, to the point that it becomes very difficult to meet even at the best of times. What is scary is, we're doing hardly anything to deal with the funding shortfall when it comes to even maintaining the infrastructure we've got now.

I've heard members from the government side get up in the House saying, "This doesn't do everything we'd like it to do, but at least it's a step in the right direction." Go tell that to the citizens of Moosonee. Go to the communities in Grey-Owen Sound and say that to the citizens in those communities and see what that's going to buy you. I know that when I walk into Moosonee, I'm asked the same question every time I go in: "When are they going to pave roads here?" I've got to look them square in the face and I've got to tell them that the province doesn't have a program to provide dollars to the municipality to fix roads. So they go out and get mad at their municipal council. They say, "Well, it's got to be Wayne Taipale's fault. He's the mayor of Moosonee." I'm here to say it's not Wayne's fault. He doesn't have the money. And I say it lies squarely on the shoulders of the provincial government to deal with.

I recognize there's a price tag attached to that and that it means we've got to put our money where our mouth is. It's going to cost money. So I think we need to challenge ourselves and say that if we all agree—and I don't think there's a member in this chamber who disagrees that we

need to maintain infrastructure in our communities such as Moosonee or provide services that are mandated by the province to those communities—we've got to figure out how the heck we're going to pay for them.

There are different models. Some people argue, and I would disagree, that what we need to do is give municipalities broader taxing powers. I'm going to argue for Moosonee, and I would argue for any other member who represents small communities, what are additional taxing powers going to give you in a community like Moosonee? First of all, there's a large unemployment rate. The unemployment rate there is probably 50% or 60%. There is business assessment, but it's hardly large enough to go after, and if you tax that business assessment more, it's going to have a negative impact when it comes to the local economy, I would argue. Can you go after the homeowners? There aren't a lot of those. A lot of our homes in Moosonee are basically Timmins Housing or other not-for-profit housing. There's some private ownership, but people will have a limited ability to pay, as they do in any other community. If you did give them municipal taxing powers, what would Moosonee do with them? About half of their assessments are buildings they can't tax because they're provincially or federally owned or operated by some of the crown agencies.

The other problem with the argument that we give municipalities greater taxing power is that that would be great for Toronto. Downtown Toronto would do great. Imagine you give the city of Toronto—this is not bashing Toronto, but the reality is, if I give Mayor Miller the ability to say you're going to charge more money on whatever kind of new tax you want to create at the grocery store, the cinema, the restaurant or whatever it is, heck, there are millions of people living here and millions of people coming to visit, so it's going to generate a large amount of money. But in communities that most of us here represent, it's going to get you hardly anything. It's not going to do anything to close the gap. What it's going to do is further move towards the urbanization of Ontario, and that's one of the big crises, I think, that faces us today in this province.

We have a failing infrastructure and a failing social safety net in many of our communities outside of our major urban centres. Our policies are fixated on responding to problems in our major urban centres such as Toronto, Hamilton and others. I just say, great for Toronto; I applaud that. It's wonderful. But what does it mean to the citizen living in Moosonee who's saying, "I just want one paved road. Give me one paved road. Show me that there's progress"? It doesn't do anything for them.

I think the answer is that we've got to put our money where our mouth is. We've got to do some funding. Can we fix the infrastructure in one year? Obviously not. The province doesn't have that kind of money. I can't fathom how much money that would be. It would probably be a lot more money than our general budget has overall. Our budget last year was somewhere over \$80 billion for the

operation of the services that we provide here in the province of Ontario, and the lion's share of that has to go toward paying our doctors, our nurses, our teachers, the people who maintain our highways. There's not a lot of money left over to be able to deal with infrastructure. So I think we've got to be creative.

I think one of the things that we need to do, first of all, is take a look at ourselves and determine what ability we have to raise revenue to be able to have the dollars to provide to those municipalities, in co-operation with our federal and provincial governments. The other side of it is that we also have to look at our costs. We have to say to ourselves, are we spending money some places in our budget that could be diverted on to capital or on to mandated services? I'm sure that if we looked at it, there would be some. I don't think there's a whack of money there. I don't think there's \$5 billion a year. But certainly we can go get some of it. We have to say to ourselves, what's the priority? Is having a particular program that responds to a few people more important than providing basic infrastructure to many? I think those are the kinds of questions we have to ask ourselves.

Then we have to say to ourselves, what about our taxation system? Somebody said something to me the other day—I was arguing on the con side of this one—and the more I started to think about it, the more I started to think maybe the person was right. He argues that Stephen Harper is going to give you two cents on the GST, so if the provinces want to close the funding gap, basically increase the PST by an equal amount. There would be no additional dollars paid by taxpayers, because we're already paying it. The only difference is that the provinces would get hit for having moved in and taken over a tax cut that the federal government has given, and there's a risk in that; I understand that. But the argument is—does anybody in the House know? I think it's about \$1.4 billion to \$1.5 billion that we raise with one cent on the GST. I stand to be corrected. I don't have the budget documents with me. The point is, imagine what we can do with \$1.4 billion or \$2.8 billion toward infrastructure in the province. You can go a long way and you can say that over a period of time we're going to be able to try to start funding the inequities when it comes to infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

I look at the things that we need to do. Water plants are in desperate need of repair across this province. We have roads that need to be fixed. We've got bridges that have to be fixed. We've got arenas with rooms that have to be repaired. We have community halls, municipal complexes; the list goes on.

The other thing that I think we've got to do is go back and do what we did with the federal government under the old Jobs Ontario program. COMRIF, in fairness to previous governments, tried to address this with this one-third, one-third cost-shared basis with the federal government. But the problem with COMRIF—my God, there's so little money in it, right? It's like having a glass of water and you say, "Here's a glass of water," when the need that you have in the province is about this big, and

here's the amount of money you've got in the actual glass. So everybody is disappointed in the end.

I've got to say to my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Mr. Levac and all other members here, how many municipalities in your ridings were disappointed after the last two or three rounds of COMRIF? My God, only one community per riding gets funded. So in a riding like mine, where I've got multiple communities, or Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, you get one, maybe two municipalities, if you're really lucky, that get a project funded in their municipality, and nobody gets nothin' else. So in the last round, Smooth Rock Falls got money. Great for Smooth Rock Falls. But I'll tell you, Timmins and Kapuskasing and Hearst and Moosonee and all other municipalities were up in arms. It creates "us against them." The municipalities that didn't get are mad at the municipalities that did get, and I think it creates a rift where we don't need to be creating one.

If you had a program that basically said, "Listen, we're going to create an infrastructure program where we will put in \$1.5 billion or \$2 billion per year as our one-third share and the municipalities put in their one third"—we need to have some mechanism to close that one third for smaller municipalities, I would argue, which don't have the reserves to do it, and get the federal government on the hook. They've got a \$13-billion surplus, saying, "Oh, well, Jeez. We've got a \$13-billion surplus and we're going to go out and pay the debt." Never mind paying the debt; help us with our deficits, for God's sake.

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I just think it's unbelievable. It's something that we need to deal with. Yes, pay down the debt. Some of that money could be put towards the debt; I don't think anybody would argue that. But imagine if we could at least get \$6 billion, \$7 billion or \$8 billion across this country towards infrastructure, how far that would go. I'll tell you. What would happen is that at least municipalities would be able to plan. A municipality could say, "You know what? I live in the community of Moosonee and I'm Wayne Taipale, the mayor. I know that every year, because I put my matching share up, I'm able to get a certain amount of money towards infrastructure." So Wayne and his council can say, "Okay, we can afford \$300,000 or \$400,000 a year out of our annual budget towards infrastructure," and each and every year they get \$300,000 or \$400,000, the province puts in \$300,000 or \$400,000 and the feds put in—whoa, now we're talking \$1 million-plus; we're talking about \$1.2 million, \$1.8 million, depending on how much money they can put in. Imagine what they can do in Moosonee with that. The citizens of that community can all of a sudden say, "Wow, look at that. They're paving the road. Isn't that something? There's a sidewalk. They're finally fixing the leaky water line."

I've got to tell you about the LSB in Moose Factory. The water line leaks. Do you know what they've got to do? They've got to shut the water system down at 2 o'clock in the morning to refill the tanks in order to have water the next day for people to use the water system.

That means if there's a fire after 2 o'clock in the morning, the firemen can't plug into the hydrants. That's because there's a rusted old water line. It's the story across Ontario; we all have the same stories. There's a rusted water line in the Moose Factory LSB, which is basically the Mocrebec lands, that leaks all the time. They've had an application with COMRIF since Jesus Christ was a choir boy and they can't get anywhere when it comes to funding. They're saying, "We thought the priorities that the province put forward were water and crises in water. What's a better crisis than what we've got? We can't run our water system after 2 o'clock in the morning."

You go there and you stay at the Ecolodge. I encourage everybody to go and stay at the Ecolodge: 705-658-6400 is the number at reception, by the way. It's a great place to stay. But anyway, after 2 o'clock in the morning, don't try to take a shower. And I'm an early riser. I get up at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. It's a habit of mine. I've got to wait until—

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): That's when I come home.

Mr. Bisson: That's when you get home. Jim works all night writing notes to his staff, that's why.

Anyway, what happens is they're not able to maintain water.

I say that the bill may in its title and in some of the speeches actually try to do something, but I would argue this is going absolutely nowhere when it comes to actually meeting municipal needs. I would like for once to get off at the airport or the train station when going into Moosonee and have people see that there's a road being paved in that community and something is happening in order to assist those citizens to know that yes, they are part of this province we call Ontario, and yes, they see progress being made. Those councils, such as the council of Mayor Wayne Taipale, will have a very hard time trying to maintain the current infrastructure they've got if this bill passes in its current form.

I look forward to this bill going to committee. I would argue we need to travel this bill to municipalities, not just the city of Toronto. It's got to go to the Peterboroughs of this world, the Kenoras of this world, the Hearsts or Moosonees or wherever, in order to give people in this Legislature an opportunity to see how desperate the situation is and how we, as legislators, can try to look at how we respond to the crisis that exists now in municipalities so we can finally start to address it. If we can do that for our municipalities, we are in a much stronger position to say to the federal government, "You're the one causing the funding inequity. We're doing what we have to do as a province. It's time for you to cough up."

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I'm pleased to speak on the second reading of Bill 130, the Municipal Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006. I want to say that certainly this bill is going to assist in making the municipalities in Ontario happier because of the changes

that the bill is proposing. This is another McGuinty government initiative to support our municipal partners, that will give municipal governments the respect they deserve and the tools they need to meet the challenge of today in a competitive economy.

There are a number of benefits that this bill will do. But most importantly, I want to concentrate on one item, and that is open council meetings. I say that because as a municipal politician for 18 years, I have seen that question in a number of cases, when members of council were not clear whether an item should or should not be in camera. What's happening lately in my municipality of Vaughan in this case is members of council are trying to do their job, but they're unclear. It makes me feel comfortable that the change that the bill is proposing will certainly give a little more clarity to these items and of course will make not only the members of council happier but also the ratepayers, who sometimes feel that their rights may not have been respected. I suspect that both parties have good intentions in doing what is best for the people of Vaughan in this case, or the people of Ontario. This bill, as I said, will assist people, elected or non-elected, to have an opportunity to discuss items in an open forum where the best for Ontarians will take place.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): Once again, we have a bill being brought forward that shows the complete lack of respect that this government has for the voters of Ontario. We hear a lot of talk about transparency in government, about the need for the government to be more open, more accessible, more inclusive, yet what do we see in this bill? We see more in camera meetings being allowed. How can that possibly be conducive to more transparent government: more in camera meetings, where decisions are going to be made behind closed doors that people are not going to have any input into or know anything about the reasons why certain decisions are going to be made? Not only that, but this bill then provides for the appointment of an ombudsman by the very people they're going to be investigating. This seems to be not only inherently wrong but certainly self-defeating.

The bill goes on to allow for the delegation of powers to unelected and unaccountable people. That might be okay in certain situations, but in this particular instance, when you're dealing with the delegation of legislative and quasi-judicial powers, it seems to me that's something that's irresponsible to introduce, to be able to do that.

What we have here is a bill that's not only lacking in the very transparency that it professes to allow, but it certainly denies the people of Ontario having real input into the decisions that are going to be made at the municipal level.

Mr. Levac: I'll come back to the member from Whitby–Ajax in a moment, but I wanted to thank the member from Timmins–James Bay for starting off his talk by indicating that he acknowledged that this is a step in the right direction, if I heard him properly.

Let me be very clear about this. Let me come back now to the member who wants to profess that this

government is evil and has done bad things to municipalities. Let's be reminded of the downloads. Let's be reminded of forced amalgamations, with 70% of populations saying, "Don't do it." Let's talk about some of the things that were downloaded that were claimed to be revenue neutral when they found a \$200-million difference, and what did they say? They went down a list and said, "Hmm, ambulances, that will do. That will work, because the numbers work." Guess what? It didn't work.

If we're going to get lectures from people who are going to tell us about how bad we're governing the province of Ontario, let's be reminded of the things that got you thrown out of office in the first place. You weren't listening to the people of Ontario in the next term. Holy mackerel, the nerve to say that this government is not consulting and is not transparent and is not trying to work with the municipal partners is the joke of all jokes.

You know what? If the people read the comments that the member's saying, you just keep standing up and saying it over and over again, you're going to help our cause because they'll be reminded about how they were smacked with downloading and smacked with amalgamations and smacked with all the things that we're doing to try to correct the problem.

Let's be a little bit fairer here. Oops, sorry, I said the wrong thing. Let's be a little fair here.

What I'm talking about is listening to the mayors and listening to the populations of those municipalities that told us, "We have a problem here. Let's try to work towards helping us." Are we helping them? Absolutely. The comments I'm getting are that public health was wonderful, ambulance upload is wonderful and there's more to come. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): We've just heard an uttering from somebody over there on the other side who hasn't got a clue what he's talking about. He's been in here for three years as a government, and you're still blaming the other government for your problems. When are you ever going to stand up on your own two feet on that side and start to govern Ontario? You certainly aren't listening to anybody. We just heard a good speech from the member from Timmins to tell you that you're not listening to anybody out there, and you're not. I can't believe what we just heard over there. Three years you've been around here, and you haven't learned anything. Where have you been? And you're telling us what we got thrown out for? Boy, you haven't even got a chance of getting to first base in this next election, the way you're carrying on. You listen to nobody—nobody—out there.

You've got this Clean Water Act you're bringing in. You're going to break rural Ontario, and you've never done anything about it. "Oh, we came up with \$7 million," all of a sudden, after being told. You did listen there. Seven million dollars may help out Grey county, but the rest of Ontario—there's nothing left for them.

This is total, utter incompetence in the government of the day, to not listen. Talk about listening: You people haven't listened to anybody. And to get up here and still

blame the past governments, when you've been around for three years. Where have you been those three years? Sitting on your duffs over there, not listening to anybody, going out and saying, "Oh, we're going to do this, and we're going to do that." But then you come up with something like this that doesn't even help anybody.

You just heard the member, and that's what we're here to talk about, his speech. But of course, maybe, you wouldn't want to talk about that, because he was right on. When are the people of Moosonee ever going to get any money from this government? Probably never. When are the small towns that I have in my riding of Bruce and Grey? Nothing. You're lucky, as we said, to get one COMRIF.

But you have no plans. This is your problem. You have no plans of where you're going. Then you get in trouble, and how do you find that money, all of a sudden, to help out other things? Where did you find the \$12

million to buy the land down in Caledonia? Where did that money all of sudden come from?

Mr. Barrett: Good question.

Mr. Murdoch: Whose pocket was that sitting in?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Timmins—James Bay has two minutes to reply if he chooses to do so.

Mr. Bisson: I'm going to reply very quickly and say ditto on everything that's been said. Thanks for all the comments. Let's get to work and try to figure out how we can meet the crumbling infrastructure in this province. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: It being past 6 of the o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 p.m..

The House adjourned at 1803.

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