



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 18 April 2007

Mercredi 18 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 18 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 18 avril 2007

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to welcome representatives of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, who join us in the House today.

For more than 75 years, OCSTA has safeguarded and promoted the interests of Catholic education in this province. Working on behalf of Ontario's 29 English-language Catholic school boards and five school authorities, the OCSTA represents the needs and perspectives of Catholic school boards to the provincial government and, when necessary, the federal government.

Over 600,000 Ontario students attend Catholic schools. Catholic school boards manage over 1,300 schools in the province and employ approximately 36,000 teachers.

The OCSTA is meeting with members today to update us on the many positive things happening in Ontario schools across the province to provide quality, faith-based education to one third of Ontario's elementary and secondary students.

Across the province, Catholic school boards are showing great gains in improving results in EQAO tests at all levels. They have improved literacy scores for high-risk students and are creating new and innovative secondary school programs to re-engage discouraged students and potential dropouts.

All members are invited to attend the reception that the association is hosting this evening from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230 of the main Legislative Building.

We're pleased to welcome OCSTA to the Legislature today. We're delighted to hear the stories of success from our Catholic school boards in the province. Welcome.

FESTIVAL FRANCO-ONTARIEN

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): Vendredi passé, j'ai eu le plaisir de me joindre à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, Madeleine Meilleur, pour une annonce très importante pour ma circonscription d'Ottawa–Orléans. Nous sommes allés au Rendez-vous des aînés francophones d'Ottawa, où la ministre a annoncé un octroi de 100 000 \$ au Festival

franco-ontarien de la part de la ministre de la Culture de l'Ontario, M^{me} Di Cocco.

Ce festival est une tradition annuelle qui est représentatif de la diversité retrouvée dans le grand secteur d'Ottawa. Tout le monde dans notre communauté peut en bénéficier.

Dans les dernières années notre gouvernement a initié des investissements clés dont bénéficient aujourd'hui les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes des quatre coins de la province. Dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa–Orléans, plusieurs organisations, telles que le MIFO, le RDEE et le Rendez-vous des aînés francophones d'Ottawa, accomplissent leurs missions respectives en français et œuvrent à promouvoir la francophonie dans notre communauté.

Le Festival franco-ontarien a pris jour en 1976 et continue d'épanouir son public depuis plus de 30 ans. Donc, bientôt des gens de partout se rassembleront pour célébrer la francophonie à la Place des festivals les 15, 16 et 17 juin prochain.

À M. Sébastien Lorquet, le président du festival, et à tous ceux qui travaillent comme bénévoles, je souhaite un bon succès, et merci pour votre bon travail dans notre communauté.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): Earlier this week, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock demonstrated real leadership on the environment by outlining a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By setting concrete medium- and long-term targets for reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 10% over the next 13 years and by 60% over the next 43 years, and marking our progress as we go, our caucus is showing the way. We must, because the government is internally divided on what to do and hasn't yet responded to the Environmental Commissioner's criticism of last fall that Ontario lacks a formal strategy on climate change. And who would believe them anyway, after their broken promise to close all of the coal-fired electricity generating plants?

As the MPP for Waterloo–Wellington, I've said many times that we have to get serious about energy conservation and energy efficiency. My own views on the environment are motivated by my belief that we have a moral obligation to leave our children and grandchildren a better world.

We know that the earth is warming. The vast majority of scientists who have studied climate change believe

that the burning of fossil fuels and the resultant release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are significant contributing factors to global warming. Many believe that we must dramatically reduce these greenhouse gas emissions or we will imperil future generations.

I believe it is prudent to conclude that humankind must adapt and attempt to minimize the ecological impacts of our activities. The problem will not be resolved overnight and our efforts will need to be sustained throughout the 21st century, but let us begin.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I want to say, we were quite fortunate today that not only did we get a visit from the Ontario Catholic trustees who were down here, but we also had the opportunity this morning to meet with the mayors of the five major municipalities in northern Ontario. They presented a report to all three parties, a report from the Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors, and it's called Northern Lights. What they're getting at is asking the three political parties to turn their attention to specific issues that are affecting us in northern Ontario.

I believe they have what is part of the blueprint that we need in order to resolve some of the long-standing problems we have in northern Ontario when it comes to not only sustaining our communities but developing the economies around northern Ontario to benefit not only the large municipalities but all municipalities and citizens in northern Ontario.

They talk about, for example, the ability to share in the money that our resources generate within our communities. They're saying that they need to have the ability, as the mining industry, the forest industry and others do well, to share the proceeds of those industries in their communities.

They talk about the need to have energy policies that speak to the realities of northern Ontario. We know that northern Ontario has the largest utility consumers in the province in the paper and mining industries. They call for a northern Ontario regional electricity pricing system.

They talk about the need to have good infrastructure funding that is predictable so that we can build our communities into the future.

I support this report.

PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR AGRI-FOOD INNOVATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): Last week I was pleased to present the first Premier's Awards for Agri-Food Innovation for our region on behalf of Premier McGuinty.

Our government established these awards to recognize and foster innovation in the agri-food industry. The five-year, \$2.5-million Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation excellence recognizes that innovative ideas are what make our rural communities strong.

A total of 55 awards will be given out this year. The winners from the Guelph–Wellington area were Animal-Pro Products for developing a natural food additive; Beef Improvement Ontario for their work on traceability of products from farm to fork; Everdale Organic Farm and Environmental Learning Centre for their extensive farm internship program in organic farming; Kraayenbrink Farms for developing a loading system for swine which improves biosecurity; and Mapleton's Organic Dairy, or Triangle Farm, for their on-farm retail operation.

I am proud of these award winners. Recognizing and encouraging innovation on the farm will help Ontario's agri-food sector get ahead in a challenging marketplace.

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DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I rise today to bring to the attention of all members of this House and all Ontarians the irony of the McGuinty government's supposed democratic reforms.

Earlier this week, we saw Premier McGuinty ram through Bill 155, the referendum bill, using a guillotine motion to cut off debate in this Legislature. Bill 155 is the bill which calls for a referendum on the citizens' assembly recommendation for reform of our electoral system. Of course, the bill doesn't include a provision to allow the Legislature of Ontario to approve the question put before the electors. The Liberal cabinet will be making that decision.

Another trick the McGuinty government has been using to get its so-called democratic reforms through the Legislature without proper debate by our democratically elected officials is burying them in the budget. Do you know that in schedule 11 of the budget bill appears Bill 62, legislative reform to change the system to register parties in the province of Ontario? Are we going to have a debate on it? I doubt it, when you consider all of the matters that are to be dealt with in this budget bill.

I think all Ontarians recognize that democratic reform in the hands of the Liberal government and what they promised before the last election is a complete farce.

MEMBER FOR LONDON NORTH CENTRE

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): It's a great pleasure to inform this assembly that the Social Work Doctors' Colloquium, founded in 2001, which represents the social work profession in Ontario, has today awarded the 2007 Political Award of Merit to Deb Matthews, MPP for London North Centre. Dr. Dan Andreae, co-founder and co-chair of the colloquium, said at noon hour today, "This honour is bestowed annually to an elected official who, in his or her political, professional and personal life, practises and exemplifies the values of the social work profession, including the fight for social justice."

The social work profession believes it is important to publicly recognize the commitment and achievements of dedicated individuals who strive to enhance the quality of

life in Ontario. Today, Deb Matthews received this prestigious honour. Through her tireless efforts on behalf of low-income families and most recently her outstanding work on the Ontario child benefit, for which she was mentioned in the 2007 budget, I can think of no one more deserving to accept this award.

Thank you to the Social Work Doctors' Colloquium for recognizing such a worthy recipient, and thank you, Deb, for your work on behalf of some of the most vulnerable in our community. Your work in your constituency, London North Centre, as well as throughout the province, has proven you to be a valuable member of this caucus and your profession.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): I rise in the House today to talk about the McGuinty government's commitment to delivering public health care and to providing real results for Ontario's health care system.

I also want to talk about some of the leader of the official opposition's policy plans for our health care system. The member opposite's first policy was to take \$2.5 billion from the health care system, with little explanation as to how he would do this or the devastating impact this would have on the health of Ontarians. The second policy the member opposite discussed was to privatize health care.

The McGuinty Liberals value Ontario's health care workers and recognize the results of their incredible work, like reducing wait times for many different procedures. Through relying on the not-for-profit model, the McGuinty Liberal government is dedicated to bringing quality of service, better results and lower wait times to all Ontarians.

While the members of the official opposition offer aggressive alternatives that are reminiscent of the days of Harris and Eves, the McGuinty government continues to move forward with progressive and innovative new ways to address the health needs of Ontarians.

We know there is always more to be done. We will continue to work with Ontarians to make sure that not-for-profit public health care remains in Ontario and that we don't ever move to a private, for-profit system.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise today to join the member for Timmins–James Bay in welcoming the mayors from our five large urban northern communities. I think it's a great opportunity to discuss the McGuinty government's commitment to northern Ontario and our efforts to turn around the years of damage, cuts and neglect from the previous governments.

When the previous government came to office, they cut northern highway spending by \$20 million, a 17.2% cut. Then they downloaded northern roads and bridges onto local municipalities.

This year, the McGuinty Liberals are investing \$468 million into northern Ontario highways, which is an all-time record high for northern Ontario and a 127% increase. This funding will ensure the timely completion of Highway 11 four-laning by 2012.

The McGuinty Liberals are also doubling the rural and northern infrastructure investment initiative to \$140 million in the 2007 budget, as opposed to what we saw from the previous government of downloading on cash-strapped municipalities. Eight of my smaller communities in Nipissing are benefiting from this initiative to the tune of \$4.2 million.

This government is listening to the concerns of northern Ontarians, and this can be seen through our investment of \$20.4 million into public transit in northeastern Ontario. As well, in Nipissing the long-awaited shovels are in the ground for two hospital projects in Mattawa and North Bay, and we are creating a children's treatment centre. These are vital investments for the riding. It helps to renew the faith of our citizens in our public health care system.

We know that there's more work to do, and we are working with community leaders and stakeholders to ensure that the north gets the changes it wants and needs. The McGuinty Liberals are on the right track—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Members, we have with us in the Speaker's gallery the select committee on public participation and petitions and improvement of quality of life and status of women, children, and people with disabilities from Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature, Republic of South Africa. The delegation includes the Deputy Speaker of the Legislature, the Honourable Johannes Boy Nobunga, and the delegation is led by the Honourable Nomsa Sanniflora Mtsweni. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests.

As well, I draw your attention to the members' west gallery, where with us today is Dan Newman, member of provincial Parliament for Scarborough Centre in the 36th Parliament and Scarborough Southwest in the 37th Parliament.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Pursuant to standing orders 59(a) and 60(a), I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Hudak from the standing committee on estimates presented the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 59, your committee has selected the estimates (2007-08) of the following ministries and offices for consideration:

Office of the Premier, eight hours;

Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, seven hours;

Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, seven hours and 30 minutes;

Ministry of Natural Resources, seven hours and 30 minutes;

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, seven hours and 30 minutes;

Ministry of Children and Youth Services, seven hours and 30 minutes—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I heard "Dispense." Dispense?

Pursuant to standing order 60(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

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VISITORS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would also like to recognize two very, very distinguished northerners who are in the audience today: Lynn Peterson, the mayor of Thunder Bay, and Tom Laughren, the mayor of Timmins.

We welcome both of you.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm delighted to welcome a constituent of mine from Ottawa West-Nepean and a trustee with the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board. Betty-Ann Kealey is with us. Welcome, Betty-Ann.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to have everyone join me in welcoming all the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association members who are here, including their president, Bernard Murray.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There are so many northerners here today. There's Mr. Delgeduice, Mr. Laughren—I want to welcome them all and let them know that there are too many of us here; I'm going home today.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We have already welcomed the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. I would like to extend a special welcome to Paula Peroni, the vice-presi-

dent; Paul Whitehead, the past president; and John Stunt, the executive director.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I hesitate to ask if there's anybody we've missed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BLIND PERSONS' RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES DROITS DES AVEUGLES

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 215, An Act to amend the Blind Persons' Rights Act / Projet de loi 215, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits des aveugles.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I'm pleased to reintroduce my private member's bill, an amendment to the Blind Persons' Rights Act, today in the Legislature. This bill was first introduced in this Legislature in 2004 and received second reading, but unfortunately the government did not let it proceed to third reading.

My bill would give the same rights of access to public places to physically disabled, hearing impaired and autistic persons with assistance dogs that the visually impaired presently have. I ask all of you in the Legislature to support my private member's bill and give the same rights to all physically disabled persons with assistance dogs that the visually impaired presently benefit from.

BUY IN CANADA FOR MASS TRANSIT VEHICLES ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 FAVORISANT L'ACHAT DE VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN AU CANADA

Mr. Mauro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 216, An Act to promote the purchase of mass transit vehicles that are made in Canada / Projet de loi 216, Loi favorisant l'achat de véhicules de transport en commun fabriqués au Canada.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): This bill would give a 30% preference for the purchase of mass transit vehicles that are made in Canada if the municipality making the purchase receives funds from the province for the purchase.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I ask for unanimous consent to put forth a motion without notice regarding the membership of certain committees.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I understand this is a debatable motion. I'd invite the government to call the motion at Orders of the Day, if it wishes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Do we have consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: The member for Niagara Centre always wants to give me heart failure in this House.

I move that the following change be made to the membership of the following committee: On the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Fonseca replaces Mr. Peterson.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

VISITEURS

VISITORS

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): M. le Président, j'aimerais présenter M. Robert Tremblay, président de l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques de langue française, qui est avec nous aujourd'hui, et M^{me} Carole Drouin, directrice générale.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): Mr. Speaker on a point of order: I'd like to welcome all the trustees and certainly all the teachers, but I'd also like to extend a warm welcome to someone from my riding who is a past president of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, Louise Irwin. Hello, Louise.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My question is for the Premier, and once again it deals with the lottery scandal. When we've asked you to refer this matter to a legislative committee or for you to appear personally before the estimates committee, you have rejected those democratic opportunities. You fall back on the phony defence that the issues have been or are being adequately reviewed by others. But you personally know that is not accurate. No one has looked at the involvement of your office, of your senior Liberal campaign advisers or your minister and his staff. No one is looking

at those issues, and with your stonewalling efforts and the use of majority muscle, you want to hide the truth or, at the very least, contain it. Is that your real strategy here?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I just don't understand how the honourable member can make the assertion that we're not being transparent. If we weren't being transparent, we would not have embraced the Ombudsman's report, welcomed his intervention, and agreed to act on each and every one of his recommendations. Beyond that, we would hardly have turned over these materials to the Ontario Provincial Police for them to conduct the appropriate investigation and to take it from there to wherever they think is also appropriate. So I say to the member opposite, he can make the assertion that we're not being transparent, but the Ombudsman has looked at all those things that are important in this matter. We have also said to the OPP, "You are welcome to take a look at this as well."

Mr. Runciman: Premier, I will try and jog your memory. In the last election, you promised to give backbenchers and legislative committees more power and influence. What you've done instead is ignored your backbenchers, used them as mindless robots in committee and in question period as the askers of dumb and embarrassing, pre-planned, lob-ball questions in order to kill the time available for legitimate questions.

You purposely hide legislation in a budget bill, while the original legislation, Bill 62, sits on the order paper, supposedly going nowhere. You force closure on a democratic renewal bill.

Premier, this is just a partial list, but it's a clear indictment of you and your spurious promises designed to lure voters in the last election. Once again, I ask you, Premier, to make a modest effort to uphold your promise of democratic renewal and refer the lottery scandal issue to a standing committee.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I will remind the honourable member that for eight years the standing committee on government agencies was prohibited, under the Conservative government, from calling government agencies. That standing committee on government agencies, on our watch, has now been given full authority to call upon government agencies; they have looked at a number, so far, including the OLG.

1400

So, again, I'd ask the honourable member to carefully consider the difference in terms of the approach that we're bringing to these matters. They prohibited the calling of government agencies before a government committee. We said that prohibition was nonsense; we refused to accept that. We've changed the rules so that now that committee, which is chaired by a member of the Conservative Party, has the right and in fact has exercised that right, I believe, at least six times, including calling upon the OLG.

Mr. Runciman: If the Premier is going to re-read anything, it should be his election platform from 2003.

It's truly regrettable that the Premier refuses to appear before the estimates committee and answer questions about his own office; that he frequently refuses to answer questions in this House about the lottery scandal, referring them to a stained minister who simply repeats inane and offensive spin lines written by some Liberal hack at \$1,000 an hour.

This is not democratic renewal. This is democratic dictatorship.

I ask the Premier once again, will he appear before the estimates committee, and will he refer the lottery scandal to a standing committee? Will he do that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the honourable member says that he doesn't like the way that I handle questions. That's not an unusual complaint coming from opposition members. But I can say with pride that I've been here 68% of the time. Mike Harris was here 50% of the time. Ernie Eves was here 18% of the time.

I can also say, with respect to accountability, that we have put into place a sunshine law which has been expanded to include OPG and Hydro One. That's something that was opposed by the Conservatives. We've asked the Auditor General to take on new powers to audit hospitals, school boards, children's aid societies; he has agreed to take that on. We've expanded the ambit of the freedom-of-information legislation to include Hydro One, OPG and universities.

In terms of fiscal accountability, we've asked the Auditor General to take on a new responsibility: to take a look at the budget, to ensure that nobody ever again can hide a \$5.5-billion deficit.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is also for the Premier. Premier, we see today that it appears your Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is running a political slush fund with taxpayer dollars that appears to be used to further the aims of the Ontario Liberal Party. I know that you might take some exception to that description, so I want to give you the opportunity to explain the process which one would use to apply for these millions of dollars that the minister has rushed out the door at the end of the fiscal year. Just give us the process. How would you apply?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to take the question. It's an important opportunity to strike the contrast between the approach that we on this side of the House bring to diversity and embracing our diversity in this province and the approach brought by the former government.

All you need to know about the former government's approach to immigration is that that particular subject matter was found under the section called "Crime" in their platform; that's where it was found.

We believe that we have the responsibility in government to ensure that we embrace our immigrants; that

we put in place the necessary investments that support immigration services so that new Canadians can, as quickly as possible, become integrated into both our economy and their communities.

That is the purpose of the funding that we put in place. That is exactly why we will continue to fund important immigration services on behalf of new Canadians.

Mrs. Witmer: Once again, just as in Lottogate, you have refused to answer the question.

By the way, our leader, John Tory, has always embraced diversity and so have we.

I would say to you today it appears that a number of these—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I need to hear the question, and I would like the co-operation of the government side.

Member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Mrs. Witmer: It appears that a number of these grants have come out of something called the YER. I have a list of the grants here, totalling some \$20 million. It's certainly more than the \$3 million or \$4 million that the minister reported in the Star today.

That begs the question of how there would be a discrepancy between what the minister is reported to have said in the Star and the facts.

As you know, just this past December the Auditor General criticized your government for this kind of last-minute spending spree. Will the Premier explain to the House today what YER is, if it's not a political slush fund, and will you, again, answer my question: What is the process? How would you apply for these funds? How do you—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Just to clarify that one point, when asked yesterday about the number of dollars that went out this year, I was referring to the ones that were announced officially, and there were others to be announced. The largest one there that wasn't announced yet—it was going to be announced later this year in conjunction with the federal government—was \$15 million for United Jewish Appeal. So that wasn't announced yet.

Mrs. Witmer: This has to do with how the grants were allocated, not who they were allocated to. I would say to you, Premier, would you answer the question, which I've now asked twice? What was the process, how does one apply for these funds, and how were you advertising this process so that everybody in the province could apply for this money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, being the first stand-alone ministry, we've established a full-time focus on helping newcomers, on diversity, on honouring our heritage groups. We've done that. So over the course of the last two years, many groups who were left out in the cold by your government for nine years have been coming to us, say-

ing, "Could you make up this deficit, helping us to build our community centres, helping us to build our services?" We built up many connections with many organizations that have had a dearth of funding from you, and therefore, when they come to us, and if they meet those needs of diversity, helping newcomers, building communities, increasing tolerance and understanding, we provide funding for those organizations.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Today I had the opportunity to meet with mayors from across northern Ontario: John Rodriguez from Sudbury, Lynn Peterson from Thunder Bay, Tom Laughren from Timmins, Vic Fedeli from North Bay, and Susan Myers from Sault Ste. Marie. They are here to fight for a fair deal for working people and for their communities, many of which are struggling under a job crisis that the McGuinty government is largely responsible for.

Premier, my question is this. What is more important: ensuring that northern Ontario communities receive a fair deal, or giving yourself two pay increases since Christmas?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Those would be the pay increases that you accepted on both counts, as I understand.

I want to take the opportunity to welcome the five mayors to Toronto, and particularly to Queen's Park, from Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and North Bay. I also want to thank them for the work that they do, the responsibilities that they've assumed on behalf of their constituents, and I want to thank them for the thoughtful position paper that they have collaborated on and put forward to us.

At the same time, I also want to acknowledge the continuing efforts made by my caucus colleagues Minister Bartolucci, Minister Ramsay, Monique Smith, Mike Gravelle, David Oraziotti and Bill Mauro, who are relentless in terms of advancing the cause of northerners in our caucus and in terms of ensuring that it manifests itself in government policy. We hold a very special place in our hearts for northern Ontario and the people of the north. We ensure that our policies reflect that, whether it's the funding of special supports for forestry, electricity, education—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Supplementary.

1410

Mr. Hampton: I want to be clear: You're taking the pay increases; I'm giving them away to community groups and charities. The mayors are equally clear, Premier. They're clear about the challenges, they're clear about—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Minister of Economic Development and Trade, order.

The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: The mayors are clear about the challenges, they're clear about the strategic investments that are needed, they're clear about the action that needs to be taken to sustain jobs, which hasn't happened. But they're also clear about something: The Premier who promised to end the downloading has, in fact, continued the downloading. The only uploading you've done is to upload taxpayers' dollars into your own pay increase. Premier, how is that fair?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: There's no doubt whatsoever that there's always more work to be done, but I think it's equally important to acknowledge that we are, together, making real progress.

With respect to downloading, we can't upload all that was downloaded by the former Conservative and NDP governments, but we've started with public health and land ambulances. More than that, we have also put our shoulder to the wheel to help our northern colleagues. We've got a billion-dollar forest sector strategy in place. We've had \$1.8 billion over five years for a northern Ontario highway strategy, the first commitment of its kind for northern highways. We've also had over \$1 billion invested in hospitals and health capital in communities like Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay, Timmins, Ottawa, Thunder Bay and Sudbury.

Again, I say there is most certainly more work to be done, but I think by any objective measure we are, together, making real progress.

Mr. Hampton: It is interesting that the Premier would mention land ambulance. Land ambulance is one of the specific issues that the mayors raise because of its gross unfairness. But they also point out that your government has failed to fix the other downloading problems, that your government has failed and now needs to share natural resource revenue with those communities that are resource based. They recognize that your government needs to implement a regional hydroelectricity rate system which is fair to northern Ontario jobs and industries. These are all good, sensible things that your government has failed to do.

Premier, at Christmastime you showed people that it took you all of eight days to ramp up your own pay. Why are these northern Ontario communities still awaiting some action from your government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: That would be the same pay hike that the leader of the NDP took, just to remind Ontarians of that.

Let me list some of the other things we've been able to do, working together with our colleagues, members of the Ontario family who happen to live in northern Ontario. We have \$140 million in rebates for the northern electricity pulp and paper transition program, which means energy savings as much as 15% over three years. We've created a new Northern Ontario Medical School, the first new medical school to open in Canada in over 30 years.

One of the most important priorities that I've heard from all of our mayors in northern Ontario is that it's

absolutely essential that they have the necessary number of doctors practising up there. We learned long ago that it's essential to have a strong connection between your medical training and northern Ontario, so I think one of the single most important things we've been able to do for northerners over the long term is to put in place their very own medical school.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, you might want to be accurate: The medical school was actually started by the former government. I recognize that you want to take the credit.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Minister of Health, I need to hear the questions.

The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Today the respected Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition issued a report called *Lives Still in the Balance*. It pulls no punches. It says, "Heading into an election year, the McGuinty government's record could only be described as disappointing."

Premier, once again, in four short months, you've been able to raise your own pay by in excess of \$40,000 a year. Tell me, why are the lowest-income people in Ontario now actually worse off—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Again, yes, I did raise Mr. Hampton's pay, and he did accept that increase.

I want to thank the members of the interfaith community for their report. I welcome their advice. There is always more to be done, but I think it's important to acknowledge the progress that we've made together. It's important to recognize, as well, where we actually started from. Remember, when we got this job in the first place, the minimum wage had been frozen, social assistance rates had been cut, and the poor had been scapegoated. That's the foundation on which we had to build.

When it comes to children alone now, we have the Ontario child benefit, which is being recognized nationally as some of the most progressive, far-reaching, even revolutionary public policy, which is going to ensure that 1.3 million children growing up in poverty in the province of Ontario eventually have access to a \$1,100 benefit, which is going to cost taxpayers \$2.1 billion, but we believe that is a very sound investment.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, the report makes clear why—

The Deputy Speaker: I don't mind showing that once to see where it came from, but let's not hold it up. It is a prop. Please, put it down.

Mr. Hampton: The report makes clear, Premier, what's happening here. You promised to end the claw-

back of the national child benefit, which takes \$1,500 a year from the lowest-income kids. In fact, you're going to continue that clawback this year, next year, the year after and the year after that. You promised to build affordable housing, yet the report makes clear your record there is a serious failure. And the minimum wage is still not a living wage under the McGuinty government.

I say again, Premier, you had no trouble raising your own pay twice in four months. Why are the lowest-income Ontarians still waiting for action from the McGuinty government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, we're not as far as we'd like to be, but I think it's important to recognize that we've made some real progress. We have 15,000 new affordable housing units; 35,000 housing allowances; we have in place a rent bank which has helped almost 8,000 families stay in their homes. The Ontario child benefit—and I don't think the leader of the NDP truly understands the significance of this public policy and what it means to our families, but especially to single moms and their children. We're saying that you don't have to stay on welfare in order to access this benefit. We're saying that you can get off social assistance, you can take that job, and this particular benefit is going to accompany you when you go along. That OCB, that Ontario child benefit, costs us three times as much as eliminating the clawback and it's going help twice as many children in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, those of us who have looked at it understand it all too well. After all of your chest-thumping, the McGuinty government is going to continue to claw back money from the lowest-income children for the next four years. We've looked at the affordable housing. Only a few hundred of the units that have been built are truly affordable for low-income families. We've looked at the issues of child care. You promised provincial money for new child care spaces. There has been no new provincial money for child care spaces.

I say again, Premier, you had no trouble raising your own pay twice in four months. How long do the lowest-income Ontarians have to wait before they see meaningful action from the McGuinty government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: In our recent budget, we invested another \$25 million in child care spaces. We've also invested in 10,000 more spaces for children's mental health. We're funding insulin pumps for 1,000 children suffering from diabetes. We have 1.5 million children so far who have received free vaccines. That saves a family \$600 per child. We've got a newborn screening program. We used to be the worst in the country; we are now first in the country. We used to test for two genetic disorders; we are now testing for 29. Some 84,000 more children in Ontario are receiving nutrition support, and we've nearly tripled the funding for children who are affected by autism.

There's always more work to be done, but I think we should acknowledge that we are making real progress on behalf of Ontario families.

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MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm going to go to the Premier again, and it again concerns the political slush fund. So far you have not answered the question as to what the application process is. We've don't have any application forms. We don't have a list of the people who applied, who was accepted and who was denied. All we know is that some \$16 million in secret was paid out, with no announcements made.

The minister says they have to meet some criteria, but he won't tell us what the criteria are. All we have is what appears to be a shady process reminiscent of Gomery, where it appears somebody can call up a Liberal MP or a Liberal MPP or maybe Don Guy or Jim Warren or some other member of the team, and a few days later you get a cheque and there's a photo op.

Can you tell me, Premier, what is the application process and how can people in this province apply?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I think it would be worth our while to consider some specific funding we've provided, because it's not as helpful to consider it in the abstract. There are a number of news releases that I have here. We've been very transparent on this. We have provided \$50,000 to support the Afghan Women's Counselling and Integration Community Support Organization, which is doing wonderful work here in Ontario. We are investing \$50,000 to support the Korean Family and Social Services Organization. They too are doing fabulous work on behalf of the Korean community. We have also invested \$100,000 to support North York Community House, which is also doing very important work for settlement programs in their community. We are investing \$300,000 to support the St. George Arab Cultural Centre, which also provides important services to new Canadians. We are also providing \$250,000—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you, Premier. Supplementary?

Mrs. Witmer: The issue is not about who received the money. I am convinced they are all good causes. The question is, what is the application process? There are others in Ontario who would like access to these funds, but what is the process? And give us a list of the people who were applicants. Give us a list of those who were denied. Right now we have no criteria for eligibility. We have no requirements for program delivery capacity. We have no measurement and reporting on program results. This looks and smells like a political slush fund.

If it's not, can you tell us, Premier, how one can apply for this funding, and what advertising you did to make sure everyone in the province had access to these funds?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: There are a number of groups that come to us with specific proposals, and there is a full listing on the ministry website.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know they didn't hear this, because they weren't listening, but I'll say it again: There is a full ministry on the website.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think it's important to understand what this is really all about. The Conservative Party and the former Conservative government never had any appreciation for something we're doing here in Ontario that distinguishes us from the rest of the world. Twenty-six per cent of the people living in this province were born outside of the country; 52% of the people living in Toronto were born outside of the country. This is nothing short of magnificent, and we feel we have a responsibility here in government to reach out to our new Canadians, to make sure they've got access to all the opportunities they need to succeed.

We will not apologize for investing in those programs that help to enrich the lives of people who are coming to this province to ensure that they become integrated as quickly as possible into both our economy and our society. They put immigration under the "Crime" section of their platform; we truly embrace immigration in our government.

The Deputy Speaker: New question. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, can you explain what process the Bengali Cultural Society underwent in order to qualify for a \$250-million cheque you issued on March 26? Specifically, what forms did they complete, what due diligence did your ministry undertake and what line item did the funds come from?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): First, to correct the record, the member is a few hundred million dollars off. It's \$250,000, not \$250 million.

The member opposite obviously doesn't like the allocation of \$250,000 into a high-need area of Crescent Town in his community. He doesn't like that. He doesn't like the group who's delivering the services. He's saying he has a better group. Our interest here is to provide the funding—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: We are having trouble hearing the questions here today and the responses—at least, I am. I need your co-operation, please. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member for Beaches–East York is basically saying that he doesn't like the group who got the money and that he has a better group that he likes. Our interest is to invest the money in one of the 13 high-need areas in Toronto, which is Crescent Town, where there is a high number of newcomers who are unemployed, who need these services—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been answered. Supplementary.

Mr. Prue: It appears that Adscam has now turned into Slushgate. Multicultural organizations in my riding and across this province are desperate for funding. You can

imagine their frustration when the Bengali Cultural Society, an organization many had never heard of in my riding, received a quarter of a million dollars. Then they see that this organization is headed by Liberal Party loyalists. Then, they hear the incumbent Liberal MP say that they were excluded in my riding because they chose to openly ally themselves with the NDP, and their frustration turns to anger.

My question is very clear to you: Can you explain why your Liberal-friendly group qualified for a quarter of a million dollars when no specific program was accessed?

Hon. Mr. Colle: He is again referring back that he doesn't like some group because it doesn't meet his purposes. This money is going to a high-need area in Toronto in Crescent Town that has a high number of newcomers who are out of work and living on the edge of poverty. The organization that he doesn't like, for whatever his reasons are, is teamed up with an organization that has been around for 54 years—COSTI. It has the highest reputation. It has set up organizations to meet newcomers' needs for over half a century. He doesn't like COSTI; he doesn't like this other group. What do you want?

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Right now I'm hearing from both sides. From this point on, I'm going to be very careful about stopping the clock. I can stand for the rest of the hour of question period if you like. I need your cooperation.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'll attempt to add a tad of civility and courtesy and politeness to the conversation. My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, every year 400 children in Ontario are diagnosed with cancer. With us today in the House are members of the Paediatric Oncology Group of Ontario, euphemistically called POGO. POGO works closely with the Ministry of Health, health care providers and children's hospitals such as Sick Kids and CHEO in my hometown of Ottawa to develop a coordinated system to help children battle this terrible disease.

I'd like to personally welcome to the House Brian Henney and Jocelyn Lamont, executive director of the Candlelighters childhood cancer program of Ottawa. Thank you very much for coming.

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Minister, in the year 2005, POGO submitted a plan to the Ministry of Health on the future development of the childhood cancer system. In their plan they identified gaps in the system that lead to delays in treatment at a time when every moment counts. Could you please tell us—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like to hear from the minister.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to thank the honourable member for his question, and I want to join him in welcoming representatives from POGO. The Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario is renowned in our province and beyond for the great work they do in bringing together all of those players to do the best possible job for kids in our communities who have cancer. I can think of no higher calling or purpose than that, and we welcome you and thank you so much for the work you do.

The Ministry of Health has been working with POGO as a partner and has been providing resources. It's my privilege, on behalf of all members of the Legislature, to announce a further \$625,000 worth of funding so that POGO's work can go on apace and continue to deliver good results for kids.

I also want to say that we're all really excited that Childhood Cancer Awareness Week has been declared for September 17. We'll be celebrating that. I want to say one more time that for all the work that's done on behalf of those kids we're really grateful for the great work POGO does in coordinating our activities.

Mr. Patten: Thank you, Minister. I know that POGO will be delighted with your announcement today.

Actually, 125 children across Canada will be diagnosed with cancer during awareness month. They join the 10,000 children who are already in treatment. The impact on these young people and their families, of course, is a traumatic experience.

Many of my constituents are looking for a sense of what kind of plan is really in place to support many of these families and their youngsters in their battle with cancer. Can you help elaborate on this for many of these families?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: POGO is a group that helps to coordinate the work among oncologists, children's hospitals, family members and others who are interested in the subject. Through their great work, survival rates have increased quite dramatically. But of course, we know there's more that must be done. Accordingly, we will be investing \$5 million this year in an expansion of our wait times commitment to cover paediatric surgeries and the like. It shall be part and parcel of even better results, something that POGO has driven us toward.

The model of coordinated care that POGO has developed has been replicated by other provinces, and indeed jurisdictions including places like Costa Rica and Italy. I think it's very exciting that in the member's own community, in the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, the kind of work POGO has done is now influencing the kind of care we can deliver for adult cancer sufferers.

We seek to build a system to give real life and meaning to the word "system," and POGO has been a group that really makes sure that the investment we make in trying to provide for our kids is well invested and produces really great results. One more time: We applaud their great initiatives.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question to the Premier: In your recent budget, seniors and working families got nothing while you found room for a \$50-million gift to Magna corporation—I remind you that this gift is a result of taxpayers, small businesses and seniors—on the eve that they were about to make a multi-billion dollar bid for Chrysler. They ain't exactly crying poor at the head office at Magna.

Premier, help me understand this \$50-million grant. What was the program application? How many other businesses applied and were refused as part of this program, the \$50 million for Magna?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I can say that we're very pleased to have become a partner with the Stronach Centre, as it's going to be called. I'm not in a position to make public the final announcement, but I can say that Magna corporation had contemplated making a very significant investment in Ontario, Austria or, I believe, North Carolina. We competed for that.

What I can tell you, by way of understanding where we're going to go with this, is that I'd ask Ontarians to keep in mind that our \$500-million auto sector investment strategy landed seven billion new dollars in investment and 7,000 jobs.

There's more to come, but this is going to lead to very significant and substantial new investment in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Hudak: When it comes to Dalton McGuinty's promises, I'm not exactly going to hold my breath.

During the budget speech, the finance minister actually ad libbed this announcement. It wasn't even recorded in his budget speech. When asked the next day by reporters, the finance minister could not provide a single detail about the \$50-million gift to the Stronach Centre at Magna corporation. Not a single new job has been created by this \$50 million, and 60 grads over the next five years at the Stronach Centre means a remarkable subsidy of \$830,000 per student—mind you, all the students already employed at the Magna corporation.

Working families and seniors got nothing. Grape growers who have lost their contracts got zippo, yet \$50 million to the Stronach Centre at Magna corporation.

Premier, exactly how many jobs is this grant going to create, because, so far, you've announced not a one?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's good to have at least some passing commentary, for the very first time, on our budget, although I think it's off message, because when the leader for Conservative Party was first asked about this in the budget lock-up and was asked specifically what he would change in our budget, he said he couldn't think of a single thing that he would change.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Number one, heckling is not allowed and, number two, when you yell, it's even worse because I can't hear. Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I can understand the honourable members' impatience.

But I can say that, again, we were in a very competitive process here. This investment, which has yet to be fully announced could have gone to Austria or North Carolina. I'm pleased to say that it's coming to Ontario. This \$50 million will leverage very considerable new investment here in the province, and it will be very much in keeping with our plan to ensure that Ontario becomes the world's centre of excellence for development of the next generation clean car and more to come.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Let me see if we got this right. An organization run by the Liberal Party activists gets a grant for \$250,000. Members of the Bengali community in Beaches–East York say that they have never heard of your organization. No one can find out about an application. We call your office, and Mr. Grimes tells us that no application was made, and the partnership with COSTI that you use to justify this is totally irrelevant, because when we called COSTI, they've never heard of your organization either. How can you credibly claim that partisan politics had nothing to do with the granting of this money?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): First of all, COSTI is a full partner in the delivery of this program in Crescent Town. In fact, COSTI brought forward the proposal, together with the group, so how can you say that?

Secondly, the organization that you don't like, that doesn't suit your purposes, is basically filling the need of providing settlement services and diversity enhancement in that area of Crescent Town, working together under the auspices of COSTI, which has a 54-year track record, and that's how it's structured.

Mr. Prue: A Liberal-run cultural group gets \$250,000 while other organizations that are in the field, on the scene, get nothing. A Liberal member of Parliament claims that she helped the Liberal organization get the grant because other more prominent organizations who are there decided to openly ally themselves with the NDP. Read Maria Minna's letter; read it. And you expect us to believe that partisan politics has nothing to do with it at all. My question to you is very simple: If it has nothing to do with it at all, will you table in this House all internal memos related to this grant, including the grant application itself, so we can see for ourselves?

1440

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, if I can repeat, this service is badly needed in Crescent Town. It's going to be delivered now in a way that is very professional because COSTI is involved. I know you don't like that, but that's the reality.

Then you talk about Liberal organizations. We are funding organizations like the Afghan Women's Counselling and Integration Community Support Organization, the African Community Services of Peel, AWIC, Bloor Information services, the Brampton Multicultural services, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, the Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society, Catholic Community Services of York Region, Catholic Cross-Cultural Services. Are you going to label them by party too? You've checked the party membership for each one?

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. In the past two weeks, we have seen more than lacklustre so-called climate change plans from both the Tories and the NDP. Simply put, their plans are nothing more than platitudes. The Tories have no concrete measures on paper. They have no plan to shut down Ontario's coal plants, just like the NDP, who can't tell you what their plan will cost and think a plan to build a subway to York University is a bad idea.

Fortunately, on this side of the House, we are taking action to reduce emission gases here and now, improving the quality of life for every Ontarian. In three short years, we have reduced greenhouse gas emissions from our coal plants to below 1990 levels, unlike the Tories who increased their reliance on coal by 127% and saw greenhouse gases increase by 120%.

Just this morning, Minister, you made a historic announcement that Ontario is banning the sale of inefficient light bulbs. When will the ban take effect and what are we doing to ensure that low-income Ontarians are not adversely affected?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I know that my friend the Minister of Energy has a lot to say about the exciting announcement that he and I made at the home show today. Let me say to the member for Guelph, who has been a big advocate for strengthening the environment in her community, that today we announced the banning of the sale of inefficient lighting, because that's an important part of a comprehensive strategy on climate change that will reduce one million tonnes of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. It's a proud day for Ontario, a big day for the environment, and I know the Minister of Energy looks forward to giving more details with respect to this important announcement.

Mrs. Sandals: It's good to know that you're doing such great work for the province. To both ministers: It's a shame that the previous government didn't see the need for and the importance of conservation. I'm glad that our government does.

As you mentioned, if we all change just one light we can make an enormous difference. I hear from my constituents that they want to do their part. In fact, the Porchlight program was tremendously well received in Guelph where we handed out free fluorescent bulbs to

replace incandescents. Along with the ban on inefficient light bulbs, you also launched five province-wide conservation initiatives. What opportunities do these initiatives provide for the people of my riding and how can they participate and do their part to conserve energy?

Hon. Ms. Broten: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): Unlike the leader of the NDP who thinks that inefficient lights are just a photo op, we think they're important. We think the project in Guelph was an excellent example. Project Porchlight is reaching across Ontario. Our announcement today puts Ontario at a leadership position, not only in Canada, but indeed in the world.

This government's commitment to energy efficiency and this government's commitment to eliminating greenhouse gases shows a positive plan that will move not only Ontario but Canada forward in a way that will keep us in compliance with Kyoto, that will ensure that average people in this province can do their part to help eliminate greenhouse gases. Yes, we're ensuring, through projects like Project Porchlight, that all Ontarians can share in this great project, this great greening of our environment and the greening of our energy sector.

SPORT AND RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Health Promotion. Minister, communities in Oxford wanted money for recreational projects under the economic stimulus package, but they never received an application. When we asked on behalf of His Worship Steve Molnar, the mayor of Tillsonburg, your office said, "There are no applications. There is no open process."

Minister, we were told that projects were selected because they were known to your office. Minister, what do municipalities have to do to be considered? Go the Liberal fundraiser? Volunteer for your party? Is this how your political slush fund works?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I want to thank the honourable member. I also want to remind him that the very first infrastructure announcement that I made was in the municipality of Orillia, represented by Garfield Dunlop. It was a \$4-million contribution to the multi-purpose recreational facility.

I might also add that there has been only one riding that has received two sport and recreation infrastructure programs. Those are projects in Wilmot and Woolwich in the riding of Ted Arnott, your colleague. I'd suggest you get some pointers from Mr. Arnott and Mr. Dunlop on how to apply for these—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister. Minister, hello.

Point of order, member for York North.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to remind the House that I believe the Speaker has ruled on the process of referring to individuals by their riding names.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for the reminder, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I thank the member for the intervention. The two ridings that I pointed out are opposition-held ridings. This is a very worthwhile project that I have been trying to convince the federal government to come to the table to create these kinds of arenas and recreation centres and swimming pools to create the culture of wellness that we need in the province of Ontario. So I would suggest to the honourable member that he get on the phone and call his federal counterpart so we can double the number of sport and recreation projects in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I don't know how many times I've said it today, but the yelling is just getting a bit much. Heckling isn't allowed, but yelling really makes it worse. Supplementary.

Mr. Hardeman: I guess the minister has just said that we should blame the mayor for not having applied because the minister didn't send out applications. It's not where the money went; it's that applications never went out.

Minister, you handed out \$26.4 million with no transparency and no accountability. Most municipalities weren't even considered because they never got a chance to apply. And it hasn't stopped. My staff was told, "The best way to make sure that your communities are considered for future funding is to make sure that our office is aware of them." How is this a fair and open process? Will you just admit that you are running a political slush fund to try and keep this promise-breaking government afloat?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I'm not blaming the mayor; I'm blaming the member for Oxford for not doing his job and standing up and finding out about the economic stimulus program that the finance minister announced in a press release on the website: \$26 million to go into sport and recreation infrastructure. This is a worthy investment. I'm proud of this program. It's very regrettable that the Conservative Party is saying no to those hundreds of municipalities that want sport and recreation infrastructure. The honourable member should do his job. Send me a letter, tell me what the project is, and stop complaining.

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MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question, again, is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. On March 26, you announced a quarter-of-a-million-dollar grant to an organization that is not known at all in my riding; you did not notify me or the residents of Beaches–East York that you were going to do it. When I asked you why we were not invited, in the halls of this Legislature the next day, you said that you had only found out about it 15 minutes before the actual announcement was made and that you didn't even know who the

organization was. You can imagine my surprise when today's Toronto Star reported that you had met with this very organization that you had claimed not to even know some two weeks before.

My question to you is a simple one: Why did you forget about this organization?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Again, he's got something with this organization.

That day was Bangladesh National Day, and we were being invited to have a Bangladesh flag-raising; we were going to do it either here at Queen's Park, like we sometimes do, or somewhere else. Anyway, that was supposed to be the day. Then it was decided, in an urgent way, that we were going to perhaps use that occasion to make the funding announcement. We were rushing it because we hadn't anticipated that it would be done on the same day as Bangladesh National Day. That's the reason.

Mr. Prue: I'm not sure what kind of answer that was, but I'm going to try again.

You came to my riding to give a quarter of a million dollars to an organization that we, in our community, had never heard of. You claimed you didn't know anything about the organization, but in fact you had met with them just two weeks before. You claimed you were too busy to invite me and the people of our community, but you found time to invite the incumbent Liberal MP who, we now know, orchestrated the grant and has close links and is Liberal-friendly.

Will you table in this House your briefing materials for the announcement and your briefing in March so that we can sort the whole matter out and see what really, really happened that day?

Hon. Mr. Colle: What really happened there and what is happening all across Ontario is that high-needs communities in the immigrant community that have been ignored for the last 15 years are getting the support they've asked for and needed for decades.

Yesterday I was in Kitchener–Waterloo, where we made an investment of \$1.5 million with the Kitchener–Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, the University of Waterloo, the WRIEN program in Waterloo.

Those are the types of investments we're making. You don't like those investments. That's the bottom line. This is a positive investment in a high-needs community that you've got a problem with.

HEALTHIER SCHOOLS STRATEGY STRATÉGIE VISANT DES ÉCOLES PLUS SAINES

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): Ma question est pour le ministre de la Promotion de la santé. Ministre, la semaine dernière, vous nous avez donné une mise à jour au sujet de la stratégie visant des écoles plus saines pour les élèves de l'Ontario.

On sait que l'obésité devient de plus en plus commune parmi les enfants, et il est très important d'aider les gens

à faire les bons choix, qui seront positifs quant à une alimentation saine et une vie active.

Monsieur le Ministre, vous avez dit dans votre déclaration qu'il y a quelques écoles dans la province qui ont introduit des initiatives pour encourager les jeunes à manger des repas plus sains et à intégrer plus d'exercice.

Pouvez-vous partager avec nous de plus amples détails au sujet du soutien qu'on donne à de telles écoles pour les encourager à maintenir une école plus saine?

L'hon. Jim Watson (ministre de la Promotion de la santé): Je veux dire un grand merci au député d'Ottawa-Orléans, grand défenseur de l'éducation publique dans sa circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans. Je veux féliciter chaque école qui a répondu au défi pour son engagement envers la santé des étudiants.

The honourable member mentioned there has been a 300% increase in obesity rates among children in the last 15 years, as was reported in Dr. Sheela Basrur's report *Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives*.

I am very pleased to report that one of the recommendations we have implemented from Dr. Basrur's report is to bring a recognition program to those schools that are going above and beyond the call of duty to create a healthy environment in their schools. I'm pleased to report that almost 1,000 schools across the province have signed up for the healthy school challenge in the province of Ontario. We look forward to letting all members know which schools in their ridings are taking part so they can say "Thank you; job well done," to the students, to the parent councils and, of course, to the teachers and principals.

Mr. McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for your response and the good work that you've been doing in making our schools healthier.

Minister, I recall that on the day that you reported to the House about the healthier schools strategy, the member for Lanark-Carleton responded and asked why we were not building new gymnasiums for elementary schools—a strange question from people who didn't believe in gymnasiums.

Through the Good Places to Learn strategy, our government is ensuring that schools are in a state of good repair by leveraging \$4 billion for badly needed repairs, renovations and school construction across the whole province. There are currently almost 6,800 school building improvement projects completed or under way.

Minister, could you correct the member for Lanark-Carleton and advise him how our investments have benefited the schools in his riding, unlike the government that preceded us?

Hon. Mr. Watson: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I have to say I always find it interesting when members opposite compare their record on education to ours. I know that's what the member for Ottawa-Orléans was referring to: the member for Lanark-Carleton. So I just want to remind the member from Lanark-Carleton that, through our Good Places to Learn strategy, the four

English school boards in his riding have benefited immensely. There have been 336 repair projects as a result of \$24 million from Good Places to Learn. Through the improvement to the funding formula—that's the Liberal funding formula—there have been 126 million new dollars, about \$409,000 more per school, in that riding, and \$5 million of that new money is for capital repairs, renovations and additions. That's about \$16,000 more per school for these repairs and renovations and additions. The Tory—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition delivered to me by Mr. Michael Orr of Toronto. I read it into the record.

"Petition to Ontario Legislature to End Discrimination

"Whereas the Ontario government already fully funds 93% of faith-based schools in Ontario, but the remaining 7% receive no funding, solely because they are not Catholic;

"Whereas the United Nations Human Rights Committee ruled in 1999 and again in 2005 that this arrangement is discriminatory and violates basic international human rights law that Ontario formally agreed to uphold;

"Whereas all three parties represented in the Legislature support Catholic separate school funding, as guaranteed by the Constitution of Canada, so that the only fair and viable solution to the discrimination is to extend funding to the small religious minorities that are currently excluded;

"Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that Ontario has the constitutional power to provide funding to non-Catholic faith-based schools;

"Whereas Ontario is the only Western democracy that fully funds faith-based schools of one religion to the total exclusion of all other religions, while all other provinces except the Atlantic provinces fund faith-based schools and have thriving public school systems;

"Whereas the cultural survival of the affected minority groups is at stake;

"Whereas faith-based schools produce responsible and productive citizens; and

"Whereas the Multi-Faith Coalition for Equal Funding of Religious Schools in December 2004 submitted to the Minister of Education a detailed proposal for the funding of non-Catholic faith-based schools in a manner that is fair and accountable and protects and enhances the public interest;

"We call on the Ontario Legislature to pass legislation to provide equitable funding in respect of all faith-based schools in Ontario, without religious discrimination and without any reduction in funding for the public education

system, with accountability requirements and standards in place to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition because I believe in it wholeheartedly. I pass it on to page Alanna to deliver it to the table.

1500

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I have here a petition signed by a number of Ontarians concerned about the minimum wage. It reads as follows:

“Whereas more than 1.2 million Ontarians work at jobs that pay them less than \$10 an hour;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has failed to ensure a living wage for working families;

“Whereas people who work hard and play by the rules should be rewarded with the opportunity to earn a decent living and the chance to get ahead;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals were able to increase their own pay by 31%;

“Whereas an increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour would help Ontario's working families earn a living wage;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to pass Bill 150, the NDP's living wage bill, which would immediately increase the Ontario minimum wage to \$10 an hour.”

I agree, proudly affix my signature and pass the petition on to page Jacob.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions from the residents near that bridge on Old Weston Road and Keele Street. It's to the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing;

“Whereas TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue–Old Weston Road bridge;

“Whereas this bridge (underpass) will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides, creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge”—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): On a point of order, the member for Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I'd like to introduce our page Alanna's parents. Karen and Dan Newman are in the audience today. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Please, there are times when you can do that. But you are welcome.

Member for Davenport.

Mr. Ruprecht: I'd like to applaud you as well, but this came at a very appropriate time, because I'm talking about a special bridge, Mr. Speaker. So I was interrupted, and now, unfortunately, I don't know—I think I was at the point where this was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses. I think that was it. But now the area has 900 new homes.

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for listening to this petition, and I'm delighted to sign it.

The Deputy Speaker: I remind members that you can shorten petitions out of courtesy to your fellow members.

LAKEVIEW GENERATING STATION

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I have a petition for the House.

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

“Whereas there should be no decisions on the future development of the Lakeview generating station grounds until:

“A full, independent environmental assessment, including air, water, soil samples and a health study of long-term residents, is completed to determine the historical, current and accumulative impact of industrial pollutants on the existing environment of Lakeview, southeast Mississauga, and its citizens; and

“Government includes this assessment and gives its findings equal weight in all mandatory environmental reports regarding future development of the Lakeview generating grounds.”

I am pleased to present this petition and affix my signature to it.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): I will shorten mine. It says:

“That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and

demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my name thereto and will give it to the page, Thomas.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): Thank you for giving me a second opportunity.

This petition is signed by a number of Ontarians as to grant the Ombudsman oversight of children’s aid societies. To share my time with other members, I shall only read the “Therefore, be it resolved” clause, which is as follows:

“Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province’s children’s aid societies (CAS).”

I agree and affix my signature and hand it over to page David.

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Liberals are moving forward with a subway extension to benefit Toronto and York;

“Whereas Howard Hampton and the NDP wants to kill it despite the fact that it will help the environment, students and the fight against gridlock;

“Whereas we want to keep moving forward, not backwards;

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

“We support the Liberal plans for the York subway expansion and reject Howard Hampton and the NDP’s desire to kill it.”

I support this petition and I affix my signature to it.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

“Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston.”

I agree with this petition. I have signed it, and 220 people from Alliston are coming down tomorrow to debate a motion in this regard.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on Highway 35 four-laning:

“Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario’s economy; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

“Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

“Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

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

“That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation.”

I’m going to hand it to page Jordan.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 1999; and

“Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe–Grey;

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

“That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe–Grey.”

Of course, I agree with that petition. I’ve signed it, and I’m going to give it to page Emma to bring to the table.

1510

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Right on, Mr. Speaker. This petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas York region and the city of Toronto have witnessed a substantial increase in traffic gridlock over the last several years; and

“Whereas these two regions continue to face traffic gridlock, which is an overwhelming economic and environmental problem; and

“Whereas we are significantly disappointed with the position of the leader of the NDP who wants to cancel the Spadina-York subway extension;

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

“That all York region and Toronto MPPs do their utmost to have the Spadina-York subway extension construction start during the year 2007.”

I am pleased to support this petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to do with the Day Nurseries Act. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government enacted regulation 505/06 under the Day Nurseries Act; and

“Whereas regulation 505/06 came into force on January 1, 2007, changing the cost-sharing formula between the district of Parry Sound social services and administration board, the government of Ontario, and child care service users; and

“Whereas regulation 505/06 has resulted in disqualification of child care subsidies for working and single-parent families; and

“Whereas the regulation has resulted in fee increases of up to 96.5%; and

“Whereas adequate time should be provided to allow families time to make alternative arrangements and for non-profit daycare spaces to be developed in the communities served by the” district social services administration board;

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

“That the McGuinty government repeal regulation 505/06 in the district of Parry Sound until such time as adequate non-profit child care spaces can be created to provide an alternative for working families.”

I support this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless

long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

“Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

“Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

“Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member’s motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

“Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds.”

I have signed this petition.

VISITOR

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I would ask all members to welcome Ruth Reid of my riding to the assembly. She is here to watch her grandson, page David Patterson from Brampton West–Mississauga, perform his duties—admirably, I might add.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFEGUARDING AND SUSTAINING
ONTARIO’S WATER ACT, 2007LOI DE 2007 SUR LA SAUVEGARDE ET LA
DURABILITÉ DES EAUX DE L’ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 17, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 198, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to safeguard and sustain Ontario’s water, to make related amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and to repeal the Water Transfer Control Act / Projet de loi 198, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l’Ontario afin d’assurer la sauvegarde et la durabilité des eaux de l’Ontario, à apporter des modifications connexes à la Loi de 2002 sur la salubrité de l’eau potable et à abroger la Loi sur le contrôle des transferts d’eau.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for London–Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to participate in the second part of the debate about the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. We listened a lot yesterday in the House to many different members from the opposition and the government sides.

It's an interesting bill because it's very important, especially while we're talking about climate change, which puts all of our natural resources at risk. I was listening to the members opposite yesterday talking about how important it is to sign this agreement, that this agreement's not good for Ontario, that this agreement will take advantage of Ontario and the water which we enjoy in the province. I want to tell the members opposite—I especially remember the member from James Bay when he was talking yesterday about how this agreement's not good for the province of Ontario, not good for the north, not good for the natives and not good for many different companies. I disagree with the member because I think this agreement is a safeguard to water in Ontario. It's important for all of us. As you know, in this province we enjoy clean water, we enjoy the amount of water we have, so it's our duty as stewards of this land at the present time.

I was meeting with trustees from the Catholic board a few minutes ago before I came to this House and they're talking about how important it is that we are stewards of so many different resources at the present time. We have to make sure to pass on these resources in good shape to future generations and not to abuse them, whether it's water, trees, roads—any resources that we have. At the present time, with new technology and many different factories opening in the different parts of Ontario, it's our duty to make sure all these companies and those factories and institutions, municipalities, groups and agencies perform according to law and regulations and also protect water sources. As you know, many factories in the past used to discharge unclean water into rivers, which ran into and polluted lakes. We strongly believe these lakes have come back to us as a form of drinking water and to water plants and to be used for farming. It's our duty as a province, by creating a safeguard, to make sure all the water discharged into rivers and going to the lakes be clean and not polluted.

I was astonished one time in my riding of London–Fanshawe when I was invited to Corey Auto Wreckers. I went there and they started to explain to me what they do on a daily basis, how they can protect the environment. I didn't know before that in the trunk of every car, when you open it, is a small ball of mercury. When you open the trunk of the car, it turns the light on, and when you close it, it turns the light off. If that small ball of mercury for some reason went into a lake, it would pollute almost 10 acres of lake for one year. It's just incredible because in so many different places they don't pay attention to this issue. If that mercury went into the water, it would kill the life in those lakes, kill the fish and all the species which live in those waters.

It's our responsibility, as a province and as a government, to make sure all of these safety mechanisms are in place. It's our duty to protect the water, not just in our area watersheds but in many different jurisdictions. The five lakes are shared by many different states and the province of Ontario. That's why this agreement was signed in December 2005. It's important for Ontario and Ontarians. It's important for the future of this province.

I also had the chance to sit with a group from London. They've come to Queen's Park many different times to lobby governments, whether it's the provincial or the federal, to create some kind of infrastructure to link all the cities around London, Ontario, with the same water sources coming from Lake Erie and Lake Huron because they want to make sure this water is protected and well organized. So many mistakes happened in the past that they want to make sure that clean water comes to the cities and that a big authority looks after it. I would say that 7,000 to 8,000 square kilometres—all the cities and municipalities, whether urban or rural areas, will participate in it, with great support from both the provincial and federal governments, and also the municipalities, because it's very important to make sure that clean water comes to everyone.

1520

In the minds of our region, the Walkerton issue is still alive. I learned that when my committee went to Walkerton. We went to many different municipalities dealing with the Clean Water Act. There are still people disturbed about that issue, about that incident that happened and took many lives. Back then, they blamed the government. That's why we are in power right now. We don't want to abuse the system or abuse our power. We want to utilize it and benefit the people we represent on a daily basis. That's why it's our responsibility to make sure all these issues are in place.

Also, we know that with climate change, water levels are dropping on a yearly basis. We know that if we don't protect our water in this province, we're going to create some kind of shortage of water that is going to affect not just the province of Ontario but the whole region. That's why we want to make sure that all the states around the lakes surrounding the province of Ontario respect the law and respect the agreement, because we, naturally, share the water with them. They should also respect the agreement which states clearly that whatever water you take from that lake, you should send back the same amount after you clean it, whether it's sewer system water, municipal water or farming water. We have to create a mechanism to make sure that whatever we take from the lake, we send back in the same fashion, in the same way, as clean as we took it.

I was listening yesterday to the member from James Bay when he was talking about a company in the north, and how, if we implement this act, it is going to affect that company in the north badly because they won't be able to perform in the system.

We are committed to protecting nature. We are committed to protecting our clean water in this province of Ontario. Any company that wants to open in Ontario, any

factory that wants to open in Ontario and any institution that wants to open in Ontario has to respect our rules and regulations. They have to also make sure that whatever they do on a daily basis, they do according to our environmental assessment, rules and regulations. We don't want to open a factory for the sake of employing five, six or 10 people—whatever number—if we have to pollute our rivers and our lakes. That's not our intent. Whatever we do, we have to make sure that environmental issues are being protected and respected.

We in this province can now continue to work with all the groups who want to help us protect our water. I'm proud to be part of a government that has a ministry that respects these rules and makes sure our fish are protected. As I mentioned many different times, we're only here on a temporary basis. We are here today. We have the ability, we have the capacity to control the water, to control the road and to control the factory. We have to make sure that when we leave this life, we pass it to our children and grandchildren in good shape. Our responsibility in this House as stewards of the land is to make sure all of this water is protected.

When I was a part of the standing committee on social policy, dealing with the Clean Water Act, I got the chance, with my colleagues from the opposition parties and the government, to visit many places. It was a great eye-opener. When I went to my own area, they were talking about how important clean water was to them and how important it was to them to have clean water to feed the cattle, to water plants and to do farming on a daily basis. They were also worried about many municipalities that don't respect rules and regulations, and ship water to the lake and pollute the lake. In the end, we also talked last week about a different bill on endangered species. We had a reception yesterday—so many people came to that reception—about endangered species. We as human beings and stewards of the land, by not protecting the environment and not protecting the water, are affecting many different species. We're trying to kill those species which have existed for many years in the past because we're not paying attention to whatever we do. We discharge chemicals sometimes, we discharge a sewer system into the river without cleaning it, and it goes to the lake. Indirectly, we're killing so many species.

That's why this bill is very important, vitally important, for the province of Ontario, vitally important for many species that exist in the province, vitally important to our climate change. We are entrusted and we should protect the climate. We should create all the mechanisms to lower emissions, to lower whatever possible, to make sure our environment is protected. If it's not protected, well, we can end up like many nations, countries: We'll have no trees, we'll have no clean water, and also the water is going to go dry and we'll have no ability to do farming and no ability to have clean water. That's why this bill is important.

When I listen to my colleagues from the opposite side, they have some kind of cynicism about the implementation; they have doubts all the time. I don't know why. It's just a very clear bill, a very clear statement

from the minister, from the government. We want to work together, not just as a party and a government. We want to work with all the opposition groups to make sure to send one message to all the states around the five lakes. We care about the environment. We have to continue to work to protect our resources. We have to work collectively to make sure we have clean water, not just for the present time but also for the future because, as I mentioned—I said it many times—we're the stewards of the land for a certain period of time. We have to make sure we pass these great resources to our generations to come, to our future, to our grandchildren. We have the ability at the present time to do that. It's our obligation, our duty, to make sure the generation that is going to come after us gets the land, the environment, the lakes, the water, the trees even better.

That's why we on this side of the House believe strongly in the importance of this bill. This bill is important for the future generations. That's why I would invite all the members opposite to join us and vote in support of this great bill. It's the only way we can protect the environment, the only way we can protect our clean water. That's why we're debating this bill.

I want to thank you very much for allowing me to speak. Hopefully, the people listening to us agree. I have a great hope that they will support us. I hope also the members opposite will support us because of great things, not just for us but for the province of Ontario, for the generations to come.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have a few questions to the member for London-Fanshawe. He may have an opportunity to answer them, I don't know.

I wonder whether the government or the ministry has done an assessment of the aggregate impact of taking 19 million litres per day in withdrawals from one lake system and transferring them to another. We're talking 19 million litres a day transferring from one lake to another. Cumulatively, in the aggregate, how many billions of litres of water are we talking about? If you are the stewards of water, have you assessed the impact of that which you permit in this bill?

The other question: You're now saying to the corporations, "We're going to come after you. We're going to make you pay for the water you extract from the ground." As stewards of the water, you're saying you'll now charge \$3.71 per million litres. That's a lot of litres of water. You say you're going to generate about \$18 million just to deal with the cost of the administration. Is that what you mean by being tough on the corporations for making millions or billions of dollars by taking water out of the earth? Is that what you mean by being stewards of the water?

The final question is, you get to announce in 2007 that they get to pay the \$3.71 per million litres, but this doesn't come into effect in until 2009, and I wonder what the political logic or ecological logic is for you to do that. I would appreciate any response you might have to those questions.

1530

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): This bill reminds me very much of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Here we are just a slight five-something months before an election and all of a sudden we're getting a Clean Water Act, notwithstanding that there was a promise during the last election that we were going to look after our water; we were going to be very protective of our water. Yet here it is, at the 11th hour—

Interjection.

Mr. Chudleigh: The member from downtown Toronto there is getting excited about it. At the 11th hour we're bringing in a water bill and all of a sudden we're really green. We're really going to be green from now until election time.

This bill doesn't take effect until 2009. That's six years, six long years after the 2003 election. The Liberals promised during the election that they were going to stop allowing companies to raid our precious water supplies. Now what are they going to do to protect Ontarians from these companies that are going to raid their water supplies? Water supplies come out of wells, and the wells of this province of course supply a huge number of rural properties, mine included. Once they start protecting our precious water supplies, does that mean there's going to be metering on residential wells? Does that mean there are going to be taxes collected on our metered water coming out of our wells? You give a Liberal an opportunity to tax, and he'll tax forever and a day. The Liberals are the party that believe that your take-home pay is unused tax room. That's where this party is coming from, and this will be a new resource that the Liberal government can add to the coffers of Ontario so they can pass it on to their Liberal friends.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): First let me say how delighted I am to comment on some of the points that my seatmate here, the member from London-Fanshawe, made. Not only does he have a right, I think he understands what we're trying to do, what this bill is supposed to do.

We're very fortunate. We're on the shores of the Great Lakes, with about 25% of the world's water resources. Yes, we have an abundance of those resources, and through no fault of anybody we've been taking, I guess, for granted that we have these unlimited resources. But I think as we move forward we see, day in and day out, that we have to take more care of our environment. So, yes, this probably is not going to fix all our water woes to come, because we don't know what they're going to be, but we are taking great steps to identify them and try to protect them. We're making a huge investment to our conservation authorities to identify those water resources we have across the province, and this will just enhance that so that we can start protecting it. Not for today; frankly, we have an abundance of water today, and I think that's been our thought all along, but it's about time we started talking about the future.

I'm just going to make a comment on one of the comments the member opposite made about water meters

and private water wells. I've been into private water wells for well over 30 years, and I think they're getting those speaking points from Mr. Hillier. I think that's where they're getting them, because that's the rumour he's spreading. There's no intent, there's never any mention, so I guess they're just making up comments as they go. They're just making up stuff to trip on. I know that Mr. Hillier has been a big help to that side and they keep on listening to him.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I know the member from Northumberland has brought up the notion of taxing wells, and I would certainly oppose 100% any plan by Dalton McGuinty to tax private wells in the province of Ontario. I know that landowners in my riding have expressed their concern about this with good reason. If it lives, breathes, moves or thinks, Dalton McGuinty has put a tax on it since he came into office, despite a campaign promise to the contrary.

I know individual landowners in my riding, through Toby Barrett's riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, have seen an incredible enforcement on gas wells, for example, where staff from the Ministry of Natural Resources have come down hard on landowners, have imposed fines, have demanded significant down payments of tens of thousands of dollars on private gas wells and have come on property without even calling the property owner. They have just shown up on the site. That's in southwestern Ontario, on the north shore of Lake Erie. I don't think it spreads out across the province, but it's alarming. Mr. Barrett, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, and I attended a meeting with over 100 property owners impacted by this.

The McGuinty government is also installing, by legislation, meters in all of our homes for our electricity charges so that they can charge higher prices to seniors who operate their appliances during the day.

So it's certainly not a stretch for the McGuinty government, which has imposed all kinds of fees and taxes—already doubling drivers' licence fees, delisting OHIP services like physiotherapy and chiropractic and charging for them now—to go after individual wells on top of that.

I will note that in the budget bill, which will be before a committee next week, there's a grand new power given to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to charge fees for services, for anything the ministry desires. I don't know if the member from Northumberland has read that part of the budget bill, but it basically says the minister can charge fees for any services in that ministry, which gives great concern about the next plan for wells.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm told that that concludes our time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member from London-Fanshawe.

Mr. Ramal: I want to thank the members from Trinity-Spadina, Halton, Northumberland and Erie-Lincoln for their comments.

First, I want to start with the member from Trinity-Spadina, who was talking about the percentage of water we're taking from one lake to another lake. Part of the agreement that exists in Ontario right now, I believe, is

that if you take a certain amount of clean and purified water from one lake, you have to return the same amount back to that lake. It's our commitment, as a province. Also, we're not just acting alone in this province. We have our partners, the states surrounding the five lakes, which exist around the province of Ontario; we have to consult with them—and I think we're in agreement with them—to make sure that whatever we take from the lakes, we send back in the same fashion, in the same way.

Also, the member from Halton was talking about why the government is rushing this bill, fast and quick. I want to tell him that since we came to this House in October 2003, we have gone through many bills concerning many issues, and we're going to continue all the way, until we finish our agenda and finish our mandate. We're not going to stop tomorrow because the election's coming on October 10, 2007.

Mr. Hudak: It keeps changing, I know.

Mr. Ramal: No, it's still fixed, and we're not going to change it.

We're going to continue to work until the last minute of our mandate to implement all of our agenda.

I also want to thank the member from Northumberland for speaking on this bill and supporting this bill, on very important issues.

I listened to Mr. Hillier who in many different fashions, in different ways, is against the government interfering with anything, as if he thinks he's in charge forever in certain areas, but he doesn't know he's a temporary steward of the land.

We, as a government, are responsible for making sure this land and this water are protected, because the water on our land is not ours; it may be coming from different streams. So it's our responsibility to protect those streams, to protect those wells. That's why we act as a government.

The member for Erie–Lincoln didn't speak about this bill; he spoke about different issues concerning different things.

We are here to serve, and I'm happy to be a part of a government that's going to work until the last minute to serve the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? I'm very pleased to recognize the member for Burlington for her maiden speech in this Legislature.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to address you and my colleagues here at Queen's Park as the member from Burlington. I'm especially honoured because the people of Burlington have placed their trust and confidence in me and chosen me to represent them as their MPP. They have sent me here to this prestigious House to speak on issues that matter to them, and I will proudly do so on their behalf.

I believe that our history and our experiences shape us and shape how we move forward into the future. As Winston Churchill said, "The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see." So when considering what I wanted to say today, I naturally

reflected on the events of my life that have brought me here to this day.

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This is a continuation of events that began for my family and me many years ago. Like so many Canadians, I was not born here in Canada; my birthplace is Shanghai, China. My mother's heritage is Greek Orthodox Russian. She was born and raised in Harbin, Manchuria, of Russian parents who left their homeland just prior to the revolution to seek a more democratic life. My father, whose heritage can be traced to the Spanish Jews, was born in Hilla, Iraq. My paternal grandmother moved with her young children to Hong Kong after my grandfather's death because she had a close relative there and he was going to help her raise the children. Many years later, my mother and father met in Shanghai and, from the stories I've heard told by my parents, family and friends, it was a comfortable life.

There was much unrest leading up to the Chinese revolution, and the life they had enjoyed no longer existed. My parents feared for our family's personal safety, and in December 1949, after many meetings and negotiations with Chinese officials, we were finally allowed to leave China. We did so on a freighter travelling with a circus on the deck. We travelled from Shanghai to Israel, where I lived in a refugee camp with my family for over three years waiting for government processes to run their course before we were able to find our new home here in Canada.

There were many hardships, I'm sure, but my sister and I remember very few of them. I suppose this is because, as parents will do, we were protected and simply allowed to lead a child's life.

My parents chose Canada to be our permanent home because of the opportunities that exist here. My mother told us in later years that it was her choice to make Canada our home because everything she had known about Canada was that it was charitable and tolerant, solidly founded on two languages and two cultures, and it was this diversity that attracted her. She knew we would be safe here and her daughters would have many opportunities to succeed. So my sister, Rita, and I grew up in Toronto—our new, safe home.

Following my marriage to Ron, we chose Burlington as our home and we raised our children, Robb and Natasha, in Burlington. Burlington is founded on a history of agriculture. It was a major port—Port Nelson, in fact—and apples were the main export. As the townships and hamlets amalgamated, the proud, sophisticated city of Burlington evolved. Burlington still boasts about her agricultural heritage, and even though my riding represents just the urban area, more than half of the land mass of our great city is rural and agricultural. We enjoy the natural treasures of Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment.

Chief Thayendanega, or Joseph Brant, a proud chief and Empire Loyalist, built his home on the shores of Lake Ontario just a stone's throw away from Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital. Burlington is a community that offers diverse, successful business opportunities, recrea-

tion and safe communities. Burlington is a great place to live, work and play.

In many ways, my political career evolved from my volunteer work, where I learned that through listening and taking action, positive change can happen. Communication, transparency, accountability and integrity have always been important to me in both my personal and public lives. That is why it was critical to me that the position of the regional chairman be directly elected by the people, chosen by the residents of Halton democratically, and it is with pride that I look back on that accomplishment.

I was a proud member of team Halton. Regional council, our CAO, Brent Marshall, and his staff worked tirelessly to create a great quality of life for our residents. I've always been fortunate to work alongside very talented and committed people—people who bring passion, commitment and vision to the workplace every day.

My decision to leave municipal politics was not an easy one. I had made myself a promise years ago that I would leave when I still enjoyed the job and I felt like I was still making a contribution. But the time was right for me to not seek re-election to the position of regional chairman in 2006. I was then encouraged to consider putting my name forward to stand for MPP in Burlington. After careful consideration, I decided to seek the PC nomination, a decision that has brought me new and exciting experiences.

There are many issues that concern the proud people of Burlington, and I will briefly draw your attention to some of those today. We have great concern about the time this current government has taken to respond to the proposal of the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital renewal plan. The renewal plan has been under review by the Ministry of Health for three and a half years, the entire time this government has been in power.

I suppose it was by coincidence that right after I publicly and repetitively raised this issue during the recent by-election, the government announced \$1.5 million in design funding.

We, the people of Burlington, believed that the McGuinty health tax would be an answer to the government's funding shortfalls for the critical projects that exist in our communities. Burlington taxpayers will have paid over \$100 million in health tax and yet the project for our hospital does not even appear on the government's list of priority projects for hospitals.

In that same time period, it was a disappointment that 60 beds were forced to close as a result of McGuinty government policies and that Burlington residents are currently waiting an average of more than eight hours in emergency rooms. On any day of the week, the hospital has an average of 20 admitted patients waiting 24 hours or more for a bed. In addition, this purposeful avoidance has tied the hands of the dedicated volunteers who are ready to start raising half the cost of this project.

Burlington residents deserve better, and Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital should receive the money for their renewal project. This is the right thing to do.

In addition, Burlington residents and I share a concern that in the 2003 election Mr. McGuinty promised the parents of autistic children increased funding. Instead, parents of autistic children cruelly found themselves in court fighting for the very promise that had been made to them just months earlier. The programs for autistic children should be funded as promised because that is the right thing to do.

Throughout my career, I have been an advocate for the need for transparency in government processes and a seamless access to government as well as accountability for all elected officials and their staffs. We should be held accountable for the promises we make and the actions we take. So I cannot express to you more strongly the disappointment that I feel that Premier McGuinty and Minister Caplan do not feel the same need for transparency, access to government and accountability of elected officials. That is why I support John Tory's suggestion that a standing committee of the Legislature be struck to probe beyond the mandate of the Ombudsman and the OPP investigation to deal with who in the Premier's office and the minister's office knew what, when they knew it, and what were their actions. This is the right thing to do.

I was disappointed yet again that in the most recent budget, in spite of a \$3-billion surplus, the delivery dates of funding for many of the programs are so far into the future that they are beyond the mandate of the McGuinty government. That money belongs to the taxpayers of Burlington and of Ontario, and it should be used now to benefit people. That is the right thing to do.

Finally, I look forward to working with my colleagues to create good policies and programs for all Ontarians. Having been in politics since 1982, having seen seven Premiers in three different governments, I know the characteristics of a good leader. Leadership is defined by vision and integrity. Vision is knowing which road to take and integrity is having the courage to take it. It is a privilege to be part of a team whose leader exemplifies those characteristics and who will act on his promises because that is the right thing to do.

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I am proud to be part of the John Tory team, the PC team of the future, the team that will make promises that will be kept because that is the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Marchese: I wanted to thank the member from Burlington on her remarks. It was a very useful history to have, in fact. I just want to thank her for the speech that she made. I learned a great deal.

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): I too want to congratulate and thank the member from Burlington for her comments. I want to also welcome her to this great place, the Ontario Legislature.

The bill we're speaking about this evening deals with something that I think is very important to your constituents in Burlington, and that has to do with safeguarding and sustaining Ontario's water. That is a tremendous need that we have in this province and a tremendous

responsibility that we have, because this act is going to strengthen Ontario's ability to protect and conserve the water of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.

I certainly hope that the member, who knows that it's very important to her constituents, will support this bill in the interest of clean water and protecting our water.

I come from an area called Sarnia-Lambton. That area happens to be at the tip of Lake Huron, and we have the St. Clair River. It's very important to us that we prohibit in this legislation transfers out of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. I think it's important because we have to protect our most vital resource.

I remember—and, Speaker, you remember—we had a time, unfortunately, when the Conservatives were in power, that we had the worst record in the context of hazardous waste in this province. We were the only jurisdiction in North America that used to landfill untreated hazardous waste, and that changed. We're really pleased that we brought in the rules that we now have to treat hazardous waste before we landfill it.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I want to say thank you and congratulations to our colleague from Burlington, Joyce Savoline. I'm sure your experience and background have brought you to be the excellent candidate that you were in our by-election, and the excellent member that you are and will be for Burlington, here in the Legislative Assembly.

On behalf of the John Tory team and the PC caucus, and I'm sure all members, welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you very much for not quitting public life, even though you've been in public life since 1982. Thank you for offering yourself here on behalf of the province and the people of Burlington.

You mentioned some of your local issues, and you've done that from the heart, not because you were just elected to the Ontario Legislature, but for years as regional chair and for years serving on council. You've always stood up for Joseph Brant Hospital and for those facilities, and you certainly put them on the map in the by-election. I know you'll continue to do so here, and we wish you well.

I toured those facilities back in the mid-1990s, when I was Minister of Health, and was always very, very proud of the work that the doctors, nurses, staff and health care professionals did at Joseph Brant.

Autistic children: I know that comes from the heart too. When many of us were encouraged, actually—and I'm sure many people in Ontario believed the Premier, when he was running to be Premier of this province—and believed the Liberal candidates when they were going to do far more than Mike Harris's or Ernie Eves's government ever did for autistic children, it turns out that they've had those children and those parents in court as recently as last week. We saw the court case again and it's been a disgrace, frankly, the way they've handled that issue.

So I want to say to you and your family, Joyce, thank you to your husband, thank you to your family for allowing you and supporting you here in your endeavours

at Queen's Park. We wish you well. I can't believe that you're so thoughtful about your childhood. What you and Rita went through must have been something that I couldn't even imagine. But you've made a new home—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I do want to welcome the new member for Burlington. She follows in some very distinguished footsteps. I think of George Kerr, who played such a significant role in the Robarts and Davis administrations, followed by Cam Jackson, who's now the mayor of Burlington, and now the new member for Burlington, who has, I know, a very distinguished and long career in municipal politics in the region of Halton. It's interesting she noted having spent time in Israel in 1948 and 1949, which from a historical perspective would have been very interesting, because the state of Israel came into being, of course, in 1948 as a result of the very tragic circumstances surrounding the Holocaust in Europe from 1930 to 1945.

I know she touched briefly on Bill 198, and it's interesting, of course, that Burlington is so dependent—its commerce and activities—on protecting Great Lakes waters. When you think about it, the Great Lakes contain 95% of North America's fresh water supply; 70% of Ontario's urban residents take their drinking water from the Great Lakes proper, and 95% of Ontarians take their drinking water from the Great Lakes basin. The Great Lakes, we know, are significant in powering Canada's economic engine. They support 45% of Canada's industrial activity and 25% of Canada's agricultural production. I think of such businesses as Maple Leaf Foods, which I think is headquartered in Burlington, and of course Wallace McCain, who runs that organization, has very extensive exports throughout the world and uses the Great Lakes as a way to ship those products ultimately to their end markets, so—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Member for Burlington has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Savoline: It has been a pleasure in the last four weeks to be here and to learn and to watch, and I look forward to the next few months as we move into government.

The bill that we have before us today deals with a very critical issue. The entire world cannot live without water. We can live without food, but we can't live without water. What a resource that's been given to us to pass on as a legacy to future generations. I want the House to know that in Halton we have the best record of water treatment, and have had for some 20 years, before it was ever popular to use new regulations and further treatment processes, the best record of purifying water when it comes in from the lake and for treating water before it's discharged into the lake. We stand proud with that record. We did that by developing our own processes and initiatives that we have proudly shared with other communities so that safe water can also be part of their community's benefit.

Water is, as I said, something that we can't live without, and I think that it behooves us all, regardless of party politics—it's one of these "park your politics at the door" issues—to come to grips with the issue and deal with the water in a way that's safe for all Ontarians, because it doesn't matter which party you belong to, the water needs to be a priority issue.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

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Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure and privilege this afternoon to make some remarks on the government's initiative that purports to deal with water taking in the province of Ontario. I say it's my privilege, because recently the Polaris Institute came out with a significant critique of the bill, so I'm warning members and viewers now that much of my remarks are going to rely on that very august group's analysis of the bill and their concerns with it.

I think that members of activist communities across Ontario—certainly the ones in the city I come from, as well as other people who are active on environmental and justice issues—are very aware of the work of the Polaris Institute. Some people are not, so I thought it would be appropriate to preface my remarks by describing briefly from their website exactly what the mandate of this particular organization is, because I will be relying so heavily on their extremely thorough review of the bill and the implications of the direction the government has chosen to take. If I may say, it's a direction they have chosen to take when the tide is going out on the mandate of this government—a bit of a water pun here.

Interjections.

Ms. Horwath: Everybody here is very excited about my puns, I can see. Nonetheless, it's not a laughing matter. As members would know, it's not a laughing matter. It's a very serious issue.

The Polaris Institute is an organization whose stated objective is "to enable citizen movements to re-skill and retool themselves to fight for democratic social change in an age of corporate-driven globalization. Essentially, the institute works with citizen movements in developing the kinds of strategies and tactics required to unmask and challenge the corporate power that is the driving force behind governments concerning public policy-making on economic, social and environmental issues." It goes on to say, "In so doing, the institute serves as a catalyst with constituency-based social movements, increasing their capacity to do their own strategic campaign planning on issues of vital concern to their members and allies."

For people who haven't seen what their logo looks like, it's quite interesting. I was kind of interested myself in exactly what the symbolism of the logo on their letterhead meant, so I went to try to find that. Of course, their website talks about that symbol. It says, "The Polaris logo is meant to symbolize this *raison d'être*. The term 'Polaris' itself refers to original Greek word for the North Star. Just as ships lost at sea have often turned to the North Star to guide them home, the Polaris Institute tries

to provide a compass for social movements in this new age of corporate-driven globalization."

If you go on the website or if you receive correspondence from the Polaris Institute, you'll note that a part of their letterhead and of their logo is this star that shines. The whole point of that star—I think this is a term that's been coming up lately in this House—is that it's shining a light, but the light is actually a beacon of hope that there are some ways we can make not only the economy but decisions around environmental and social movements ones that are beneficial to the largest number of people as opposed to only the corporate bottom line.

Certainly it was with great interest that the letter came over my desk today, and I'm going to read it into the record because I think that, section by section and issue by issue as I go through it, those of you watching at home and those of you tuning in in this Legislature and perhaps in the building will find that the issues they raise in this letter are extremely thought-provoking. Certainly I hope that by reading this into the record, the government will take into consideration some of these very real concerns.

It's an open letter that was published on April 12, and it's titled, "Water Privatization by Permit: Open Letter on the proposed 'Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act.'

"Dear friends of water,

"Please consider the following and share your own comments with officials before the May 3 deadline.

"Last week, the province of Ontario released yet another piece of legislation that fails to adequately safeguard water. This most recent attempt is called the 'Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act' (SSOWA).

"Although there was much bravado around the revelation of this new legislation, it's not really anything new. It is Ontario's implementation of what started out as the Great Lakes Charter Annex a few years ago, renamed the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Compact and" Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources "Agreement, and signed by US Great Lakes governors and Ontario and Quebec Premiers in December 2005.

"Prior to and since the signing of this agreement, water activists have raised concerns largely because the agreement fails to protect our water resources from private interests and foreign expropriation. Unfortunately, Ontario's implementation version, released last week, does not appear to deal with many key concerns.

"The following are ways in which Ontario's SSOWA falls short of protecting Ontario water."

There are some—I've just given you the warning—seven points that they outline, as well as a conclusion. Again, I am going to continue reading this information into the record.

"(1) Although eliminating the diversion of water from the Great Lakes basin is a major concern for water activists, the SSOWA allows water in containers under 20 litres to be exempt from prohibitions on diversion. This includes most of the bottled water that is being extracted from the Great Lakes basin in Ontario by Coca-

Cola, Pepsi, Nestlé and Aquafarms 93 (which bottles for other retail outlets including Wal-Mart, Shoppers Drug Mart, and Loblaws). This industry is growing annually by 18% in Canada, and bottled water is transported outside the province and outside of Canada.

“(2) The SSOWA gives ultimate decision-making power on bulk water diversions to a tribunal with no assurance that the people of Ontario or the public interest are adequately represented. While the makeup of the tribunal is not clarified in the SSOWA, it may very well be a tribunal appointed by the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Resources Regional Body, made up primarily of the US Great Lakes governors, thus compromising the people of Ontario’s final say in the management of our water resources.

“(3) The SSOWA, in keeping with the annex agreement, allows straddling US counties to divert water from the Great Lakes basin. As well, SSOWA continues to allow the major Chicago diversion of Great Lakes water to the Mississippi basin and to the water-hungry US southern and western states. The pressure for increasing the volume of these diversions will only increase in coming years.

“(4) The SSOWA allows water to be transferred ‘by the operating authority of a municipal drinking water system ... or by any other person’—that’s right in the bill, subclause 34.6(2)2(ii)—‘in and around the Great Lakes basin, including to the US side. Once this water reaches the US side, it likely’—

Mr. Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I don’t believe there’s a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker: I don’t believe there is either. Would the table check?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: Quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I’ll return to the member for Hamilton East.

Ms. Horwath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, this is the fourth point on the critique by the Polaris Institute on the government’s water-taking bill.

“Once this water reaches the US side, it likely falls under article 1.8.3 of the US Constitution (the commerce clause), which can be used to challenge a state’s limitation on interstate water exports. It’s also important that we clarify how this proposed legislation could leave Ontario’s water resources open to NAFTA investor state challenges. What is clear is that loosening legislation around transfers and diversions increases the susceptibility of our water resources to NAFTA and the US commerce clause. As such, we need to develop stronger prohibitions on water transfers and diversions.

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“A return flow provision is included in article 34.6(3)1. Essentially this means that a permit holder could be required to return a portion of the water it takes

from the Great Lakes watershed. While some organizations have argued that this provision will function as a deterrent to would-be diverters, private water companies that operate water and sewage systems have argued that their ‘sewage returns’ are acceptable forms of water return.

“(5) The proposed the bill allows for the transfer of water-taking permits between different parties, as long as they get the approval of an appointed Ministry of the Environment director. The director’s signature will allow companies running water, hydro and other industrial and commercial enterprises to buy and sell their water-taking permits. This could occur even between public water systems and the private sector. This opens the door to permit speculation, increasing the value of permits as corporate assets in mergers and acquisitions.” Talk to me about that, coming from the city of Hamilton, where our waste water system was run by a private company for many years, far too long. “The solution is not just to require ministry approval on permit transfers, as proposed, but a complete prohibition on permit transfers altogether. New permit holders and ‘related transferors’ should be required to obtain new permits when changes in company ownership occur.

“(6) The SSOWA also fails to name water as a public trust. Instead, it refers to water as a public ‘treasure.’ The legal distinctions here are critical. There is a long history of public trust and common law principles pertaining to water in Canada that limits appropriation of water for private profit. Calling water a ‘treasure’ purposefully detours around these legal principles so that historical traditions upholding water as a commons and public trust can be disregarded. We need to retain the term ‘public trust’ within SSOWA in order to establish the direct application of these laws in protecting Ontario’s water from privatization.

“(7) The SSOWA shifts water use priorities. In Ontario’s earlier water-taking regulations, domestic users were given priority in water use, followed by farming, with industrial and commercial interests considered last. Under the SSOWA, water-taking and diversion permits may be approved simply because the permit seeker’s other options for accessing water are not deemed to be ‘cost effective.’ ‘Cost’ is not defined in the SSOWA, and appears to be strictly limited to profit rather than a more realistic assessment that includes costs to environment, human health, and the public costs associated with diversion and trade in our water.” Very short-sighted, if I might add that as an aside.

“Further, the SSOWA in its first statement identifies ‘economic’ uses of water as a top priority.” So again as an aside, the government members like to wax on about how important this water bill is, but if you look at the details, you’ll find that they’re really not looking after our interests; they’re looking after interests that are more corporately driven.

“In short, the current draft of the SSOWA needs to be reformed to ensure it does not serve to hand the public

trust in water over to private interests and further open up our water resources to foreign expropriation.”

I missed part of a paragraph which says, “Further, the SSOWA in its first statement identifies ‘economic’ uses of water as a top priority.” They go on to say, “Without stating that water is a human and ecosystem right, and a public trust, the SSOWA paves the way for ‘economic rights’ to carry the field, particularly in the context of NAFTA and other trade legislation....”

“The SSOWA is particularly disconcerting when we review it in the context of other recent draft regulations tabled by the government of Ontario.

“For example, this past winter the province of Ontario released its first discussion paper on the new Clean Water Act. The paper detailed the proposed makeup of the regional source protection committees ... which will be responsible for watershed planning under the new act. The province has proposed that industrial and commercial stakeholders make up one third of the committees. This is the first time industry representatives and companies operating—but not necessarily residing—in a region will be formally involved in the watershed planning: defining what activities constitute water ‘threats,’ or not; deciding who should get water-taking and water pollution permits; and developing long-term water management plans for each watershed in this province.

“Given the proposed structure, some residents are also concerned that the SPCs”—the source protection committees—“will likely find it necessary to contract comprehensive planning services out to external private consulting corporations, further privatizing water resource management in Ontario.

“In another example last week—at the same time that the provincial government released the SSOWA—the Minister of the Environment announced a new charge on water takings.” This has been raised by my colleagues and others in the House already. “The amount proposed for water bottlers—a whole \$3.71 per million litres—is so minimal it will neither reduce water takings nor return any significant funds to pursue our social and environmental goals. Instead the funds will be diverted to the above-mentioned SPCs, co-managed by private interests. The deadline for comments on that proposal is in June. We will be providing a more detailed analysis of this proposal in time for you”—people interested in water—“to submit comments” to the government.

Again, this is straight from the Polaris Institute’s letter. They’re soliciting for people to get engaged in this issue because it’s an extremely important one.

“What we are witnessing in Ontario”—I think this is extremely succinct in terms of their conclusion here, and it’s really important that people take the time to hear the perspective of this very well-respected organization in regards to the government’s activities—“is the quiet restructuring of water resource management. This includes: (1) giving private interests an equal footing with the government and the community in defining watershed risk and the basis for granting water taking and water pollution permits; (2) allowing for the diversion of Great Lakes water for bottled water companies and others;

(3) opening the door for foreign diversion of Ontario water, used by private interests for profit; and finally (4) defining water in ways that give private interests the legal right to exploit it.

“While the Minister of the Environment is proudly introducing so-called environmental legislation in time for November’s election, the actual implications of these policies are the secession of water resources to domestic and foreign water privateers and the erosion of public management and control. The problematic elements in Ontario’s draft SSOWA need to be changed to uphold water as a public trust, a right of humans and ecosystems, and a sacred source of life.”

They go on to then encourage people to write in to the Minister of the Environment in order to put on the record some of the concerns that are coming forward from themselves and from others who are interested in the water issue.

I have to say, I had been through our researcher’s notes and the leadoff speech from our critic and looked at some of the other information that was available on various websites and from various sources, but I could not find a more succinct and articulate description of what the risks are if the government continues on the path that it’s currently on in terms of water taking.

It’s funny; when I was first given the privilege and the honour of coming to this place and representing the residents of Hamilton East, a very vigorous community in terms of the rights of individuals and workers and people to enjoy a decent environment and a decent standard of living, one of the things that was on the top of the agenda was some of these kinds of environmental initiatives. I can remember my colleague Marilyn Churley, a woman who was here for quite some time as our environmental critic and who was at that time the member for Toronto–Danforth, was quite critical of the government at that time—and that was, Jeez, some three years ago now—because they were dragging their feet on the whole water-taking permit issue.

So here we are—and I’m going to repeat it again—at the ebbing tide of this government. We’ve used a lot of phrases to describe where we are in terms of this government’s rule or power over the province. So this is the ebbing tide—

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): That was a good one, “ebbing tide.”

Ms. Horwath: Thank you. That’s my friend from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot.

Anyway, it’s the ebbing tide of the government’s mandate, and at the last minute, they throw on this piece of legislation, trying to pretend that it’s some great, wonderful piece of legislation that’s going to do so many great things in terms of protecting our water and making sure that there’s real, strong enforcement of water-taking rights and permits. And you know what? It’s just not that.

I think the Polaris Institute’s description is very clear. I agree with it completely. The government needs to make sure they do the right thing here, not just the expedient, political thing.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Leal: I listened to the speech by the member from Hamilton East, but I'd certainly like to remind her—I just happen to have my copy of the report of the Walkerton inquiry by Justice O'Connor and I would like to refer to chapter 11, if I could:

“Beginning in 1992-93 and continuing until 1997-98, the budget of the Ministry of the Environment ... underwent very substantial reductions. The first series of reductions occurred in the early to mid-1990s. Between 1991-92 to 1995-96, the MOE's annual budget estimates fell by approximately 30% and total annual expenditures decreased by about \$210 million.” Well, we know the member from Hamilton East and five of the members are still sitting across the aisle from that train wreck of 1990 to 1995.

Let's look at what Bill 198 is all about. Bill 198 is about enshrining the Great Lakes agreement, which commits Great Lakes states and provinces to manage and regulate water withdrawals, consumptive uses and diversions in order to protect and conserve the waters of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River basin. Consumptive use is the portion of water taken that is lost and not returned to the water basin due to evaporation, incorporation into products or crops, consumption by livestock or humans and other processes. This position varies for different types of water uses. To assist in estimating the consumptive use of the Great Lakes, coefficients have been defined for each sector based on the work of the Great Lakes Commission, the United States Geological Survey, individual jurisdictions and other research.

Bill 198 goes a long way to safeguarding and sustaining the water, particularly in the Great Lakes basin and the surrounding watersheds that are so dependent on the Great Lakes. Bill 198 is an important initiative that this government feels is important to bring forward at this time. I think all members of this House should get on board and pass this legislation.

I can tell you, I take no lectures from the member from Hamilton East when you look at their dismal record with the Ministry of the Environment from 1990 to 1995.

Mr. Chudleigh: You can try to spin this bill any way you like, but this is just another tax, and this time it's a tax on water, which is rather sad in this province of Ontario. In our history, going back to the first settlements in—I guess we're talking about the 1560s when they first settled in LaSalle. I think LaSalle was the first European settlement in Ontario, on the shores of the Detroit River. Since that time, there has never been a charge for water coming out of Ontario's freshwater resource. We do pay for water. We have a water bill. Everybody knows you pay for water. You pay for its transportation, you pay for its cleaning, you pay for its purification and you pay for its disposal, but there has never been a charge for the water itself.

This bill will change that. This bill will inherently change the way Ontarians are treated when it comes to their use of the water resources of this province. That's a pretty serious issue when you consider that for 400 years,

the people of this province have never been charged for their water.

You can spin this any way you want, but it's going to be a tax, a new Liberal tax, on water. That's a fundamental difference to the way we have always operated in Ontario when it comes to the most precious resource we have: fresh, clean, pure water, which Ontario has a huge abundance of. But when it comes to taxes, you know that Liberals cannot resist a new tax. After all, this is the party that understands that the take-home pay of the average Ontarian is just unused tax room.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment briefly on the fine speech by the member for Hamilton East and to say a few words regarding the bill before us today.

I think we need to be clear about one thing: The regulatory charge that the government is placing on the transfer of water is a charge; it's not a tax. The revenue collected from the charge would be used to cover a portion of the province's costs of managing water resources. We're talking here about moving water between the different lakes in the Great Lakes region and in the St. Lawrence basin. There is a cost associated with that. The government—the taxpayers—should not bear that cost. If an industry or commercial user is going to be moving some of that water, they should pay that cost, not the taxpayer. By placing this regulatory charge, the government is saying that industries and commercial users have to pay if they want to use quantities of water for their business, not the taxpayer. I think that's got to be made clear. Some of the people who have spoken here today have said it's another tax. We're not going to see a tax bill on our individual home water. What we're going to see is industry paying for what industry is doing: taking water out of the Great Lakes or transferring that water.

The proposed changes are in line with what other jurisdictions in North America charge per million litres, because we see this happening in other parts of North America and in the United States as well. So this bill, which I spoke to the other day, is innovative and important, and I support it as I stand here today and speak in favour of it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

I'll return to the member from Hamilton East for her reply.

Ms. Horwath: I want to thank the member from Peterborough, the member from Halton and the member from Scarborough Southwest for their comments, although I don't recall that much of anything anybody said had to do with the really important critique I read into the record from the Polaris Institute. That saddens me, quite frankly, because it seems like the government is already closing its ears to some really important issues that are being brought before it in regard to this bill.

I think it's really important that everybody around here is at least on the same page around the importance of protecting our water and preventing it from being abused and depleted to the point where it is no longer sustaining our communities. Certainly it's a goal that I

believe every one of us shares quite well. But it's not good enough to put a bill forward, close your ears to criticism and wave around political platitudes and political rhetoric on something of such import.

I would certainly say that it's not appropriate to bring this bill forward at such a late date, in the dying days of the government; in fact I think it's reprehensible. The member from Scarborough Southwest talked about how every other jurisdiction puts fees on water taking. Well, lo and behold, this government has been promising it for three years. When they finally say they're going to maybe do it, if in fact the bill gets through the process of the House because they waited till the last minute, the bottom line is, it's a paltry amount of some \$3.17 for some gazillion litres of water. And then, to add insult to injury, it's not even implemented till 2009. So don't tell me, Liberal government, that you really give a darn about this issue. You waited until the last minute, and now you're not even listening to the real, serious criticisms that are out there, and that is shameful when this is such a very important issue.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): At this time, I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario's electoral system / Projet de loi, Loi prévoyant un référendum sur le système électoral de l'Ontario.

Bill 188, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 / projet de loi, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2007.

1630

SAFEGUARDING AND SUSTAINING ONTARIO'S WATER ACT, 2007 (continued)

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA SAUVEGARDE ET LA DURABILITÉ DES EAUX DE L'ONTARIO (suite)

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): This is a very significant issue, a very significant bill, and I wasn't aware I was going to be speaking this afternoon. I would have liked to have more time to speak on this bill, as it has such a wide impact on all of us and it's so important; it's great. The Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act would amend the Ontario Water Resources Act. It's a major step forward to protect our waters.

Just read the preamble: "The conservation, protection and management of Ontario's waters and their efficient and sustainable use are matters of vital importance to the people of Ontario. The people of other jurisdictions that depend on the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin share similar concerns. With this in mind, the Premiers of Ontario and Quebec and the governors of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin signed the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement in December 2005."

So it's recognized not only by ourselves in Canada, Ontario and Quebec; it's recognized by eight states which surround the Great Lakes as being so important. With climate change coming, these resources will be put under further impacts.

I'd just like to read from Plan B 2.0: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble, by Lester Brown. It's just something that I'd read in the last few weeks, and I thought I would refer to it today to get across some of the issues across the world that are similar to the ones we have here.

I'll just read from this: "Africa's Lake Chad, once a landmark for astronauts circling the earth, is now difficult for them to locate. Surrounded by Chad, Niger, and Nigeria—three countries with some of the world's fastest-growing populations—the lake has shrunk by 95% since the 1960s." This is a major lake, and it's down to that size. "The soaring demand for irrigation water in that area is draining dry the rivers and streams the lake depends on for its existence. As a result, Lake Chad may soon disappear entirely...."

We have huge, huge water resources in the Great Lakes. When you think of it, from Kingston up to Thunder Bay I think we're talking about something like 2,000 kilometres of waterway. So it's easy to think, as was mentioned, that has Canada abundant resources, and my concern is that under the present direction of our federal government, we might want to give those away because we think we have too much of them. I think that is really important.

The link between water and food is very strong. Just to get to the comparison, "We each drink on average nearly four liters of water per day in one form or another, while the water required to produce our daily food totals at least 2,000 liters—500 times as much." That's where the water resources are being compromised very quickly. "This helps explain why 70% of all water use is for one purpose—irrigation. Another 20% is used by industry, and 10% goes for residential purposes." So what we consume and what we use in our daily lives is 10%. What we're looking at as the major problem of water resources is the irrigation water.

Countries that are over-pumping their aquifers now—Canada's not included—include China, India, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, the United States and Yemen, a total of 3.2 billion people. I think that's approximately half of the world's population, so there are major concerns around the world.

In our own area, in our own bailiwick, the US Ogallala aquifer is being over-pumped a great deal. We're getting into situations where, is it food production we want, or will the cities be getting the water? I think that is a very serious situation for Canada to be concerned with in the future. How much demand will there be for our abundant water? We must be very conscious of the fact that in other parts of the world, rivers are running dry.

The Colorado River often doesn't reach the sea. The Yellow River in China often doesn't reach the sea. These are things that are happening as we slowly take the forest cover off our lands. The retention of water is not there, and the uses of water continue all the time.

Overall, China's grain production has fallen from its historic peak of 392 million tonnes in 1998 to an estimated 358 million tonnes in 2005. For perspective, this drop of 34 million tonnes exceeds the annual Canadian wheat harvest. Their production of wheat is dropping because of the lack of irrigation water. This is something that's happening right across the world.

I was born along the Ottawa River, which is a river that has a major watershed right up into Quebec. Some of the things that we saw along the Ottawa River in the last 40 or 50 years that I've been around—you used to be able to swim in the Ottawa River. Then there was a great length of time when the pollution was too great and you couldn't swim in the Ottawa River. Then we started getting better laws in and respecting our water more, and we were seeing that the water quality improved again.

I'll just speak about the beach on Petrie Island in my own community of Orléans. Petrie Island Beach is a new beach; it's a beautiful beach in Orléans. But last year, because of significant short-term storms, because of water temperatures going up and because of lower flows generally, something happened to the water. The beach often gets closed, as all Ottawa beaches do—

Mrs. Savoline: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We have a visitor who can't stay long and will be with us only a short while, so I beg indulgence for the interruption. We have with us the former MPP for Burlington, Cam Jackson, and the current mayor.

The Acting Speaker: Welcome. It's not a point of order, but an interesting point of information.

Mr. McNeely: I think I recognize the gentleman.

So things have changed. Last year, our beach, rather than being closed the average 15 days a year, was closed something like 46 days of the year. There are local scientists, river keepers who are looking at it and thinking maybe the closings were part of climate change: the warmer water, the more intense storms. A lot of the city of Ottawa's sanitary and storm sewers are combined, and when you get a major event, you get flushing of raw sewage into the Ottawa River. That impacts us downstream. So I think the people of central Ottawa will have to look at cleaning up their act a bit. While they do, we're repositioning our beach for sailboats, kayaking and canoeing so that the water use will continue, but the activity of swimming at our beach is not the same as it was before.

So we have to protect our environment a lot more than we have in the past. That's what this piece of legislation is doing. It's a major step forward. It's certainly a major step forward from what the two previous governments did.

John Tory is really good at saying one thing in urban Ontario and singing a different tune to rural Ontarians. The Conservatives are the party of Walkerton and the party of environmental cuts and neglect. Under John Tory, the Conservatives repeatedly refused to take a firm stand on our environment. Instead, they are racing backwards with Randy Hillier, a poster boy for those who oppose a cleaner, greener future for Ontario. That is very scary here because we have to protect our water. It's scaremongering, because the member for Erie-Lincoln said when he was up something about, "This is going to impact farmers." Farmers are exempt from this. They're exempted from the charge. This is certainly not that, so don't get rural Ontario—it's just as important to protect their interests, because with over-pumping of aquifers, in the end all the people run out of water. So you can't get to that.

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I'd just like to say that in my own community of Orléans on Saturday, April 21, which is Climate Change Awareness Day—it's not recognized legally yet, but it's certainly that—we have a climate change challenge. We have 10 high schools, and seven of them are participating. There's a poster contest. It's trying to get the young people to see where they can play their part in doing something very important for our environment. These are great posters that are coming in. The judging has already been done. I haven't seen the posters—I wasn't back—but we had very eminent judges to do it. So we'll have an occasion on Saturday at 1 o'clock in Orléans in the shopping centre, the Orléans plaza, where they will be getting Polar Bear awards. I think the Polar Bear award is a good indication of one of our species that's in very much trouble. So I'm looking forward to that. I'm really pleased that the school kids seem to be ahead of their parents on many of these issues. They are going to be the leaders and they are going to change all these things.

The worst thing we can think about our Great Lakes is an abundance of water. "Abundance" suggests that we should sell it; "abundance" suggests there will be a lot of people who will want to take it. So we have to be very careful with the "abundance" bit. I heard that twice from the opposition today, and it's a scary word because when you see rivers that don't flow to the sea anymore and you see huge lakes that have disappeared, you have to consider that abundance has to be looked at very carefully. We have to protect our water for the uses that we need in the future. The water levels are under stress because of climate change. They are showing that there will be major reductions in the water levels. This will impact property owners all along.

I'd just like to finish by looking at some of the costs. This is just a comparison that this author, Lester R. Brown, does:

To reforest the earth, bring it back to where it's sustainable, would be \$6 billion a year. To protect the topsoil on croplands would cost \$24 billion a year. Restoring the rangelands would be \$9 billion a year. Stabilizing water tables: \$10 billion a year—and of course, that's reforestation; that's reduced pumping. Restoring fisheries: \$13 billion a year. Protecting biological diversity: \$31 billion a year.

This government is proactive. We had the bill for biological diversity through here, the Endangered Species Act. So we're working in the right direction on this. But that would all cost \$93 billion a year. I'd just like to let you know that the United States spends \$500 billion on defence, and the world spends \$975 billion on defence. So for 10% to 15% of those dollars that are being wasted to kill people, we could restore this great earth.

This bill, which is in the right direction, is taking us to the stage where we're protecting these great resources of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence and making sure we don't get into the situation where we have insufficient water, because "abundance of water" has to be taken in the context of who wants it and how much of it they want. I'd just like to make sure that we support this bill and we move forward in protecting our water.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to rise and respond to the member for Ottawa—Orléans' comments with respect to the bill before the assembly this evening. The member spoke of a number of environmental issues, and obviously he is very concerned about a number of those issues, so I commend him for that.

I don't think he meant to go so far as to say that defence spending is wasteful. Maybe he did. Maybe he thought that it was all wasted, or just a cut in the defence budget—as part of questions and comments, I'll ask the question. Your last comments had indicated that—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: No, he talked about how all the spending—the American budget as well as other countries' spending on defence—was wasteful. I'm just curious if he means that it's all wasteful or if he just wants to see it reduced substantially or altogether to put into the Ministry of the Environment. I'd ask for some clarification from the member in that respect.

The other question I'd ask the member to respond to is, there have been a number of Liberal members who have talked about potentially metering or taxing wells in the province.

Mr. McMeekin: Name names.

Mr. Hudak: There were a number of speeches today.

Mr. McMeekin: Names. Who?

Mr. Hudak: The member from Northumberland was talking about it in his speech.

Mr. McMeekin: He said he wouldn't do it.

Mr. Hudak: If he said he wouldn't do it, hopefully he will oppose that plan within the Liberal caucus and stand behind his words. I want assurances from the member that there is no secret plan by Dalton McGuinty to im-

pose meters or new taxes on private water wells in the province of Ontario as part of this legislation.

My other question, as part of questions and comments, is how the particular tax that the government has talked about was brought about. I forget the exact—\$3.71 per million litres is the proposal that the McGuinty government has spoken about. It was obviously not a number picked out of a hat, so I was wondering what the justification was for that particular value.

Ms. Horwath: I'm pleased to make a few remarks on the member from Ottawa—Orléans's remarks today. It's interesting, because some of the things he was raising absolutely reflect a recent article that has come out of the UN, out of a bit of a conference that they had: "Climate change could diminish North American water supplies and trigger disputes between the United States and Canada over water reserves already stressed by industry and agriculture, UN experts said on Wednesday." That's April 12.

"More heat waves like those that killed more than 100 people in the United States in 2006, storms like the killer hurricanes that struck the Gulf of Mexico in 2005, and wildfires are likely in North America as temperatures rise, according to a new report that provided regional details on a UN climate panel study on global warming issued in Brussels on April 6."

So I think you're on the right track in terms of some of you reflecting on some of the natural conditions that are occurring around the world and the fact that that has a lot to do with the way we're depleting our resources, like water. But what does this government choose to do? I'm taking this from another article, that was published in the Toronto Star. This is a quote from the Canadian Environmental Law Association: "It's not going to have a huge impact in terms of actually resulting in water conservation." That's what the Canadian Environmental Law Association's executive director, Ramani Nadarajah, said, adding that "the United Kingdom charges \$250 for a million litres of water"—way different than your \$3.17. This article goes on to say: "In the 2003 election, the Liberals promised to 'stop allowing companies to raid our precious water supplies,' and now they are scrambling to get something in place before the next election campaign."

All that we on this side of the House are asking, at least in the NDP caucus, is: Make sure you don't make a big, huge mistake with this legislation. It's far too important for you to shortchange the people of Ontario in protecting their water.

Mr. Leal: The member from Ottawa—Orléans, of course, is not only here as the MPP for that riding. Certainly his great work as a city councillor in Ottawa over many years has been in the vanguard of advocating policies, both municipally and here at the provincial level, dealing with issues like climate change and protection of our water resources. I know he had a private member's resolution about declaring a climate change day to heighten awareness. His speech articulated his

desire to see Bill 198 pass so that we can move forcefully to protect water in the Great Lakes basin.

I'd just like to get a couple of quotes in from third party endorsements of Bill 198:

"As the provider of safe drinking water, cities have a great interest in preserving, protecting and restoring the ecosystem health of the Great Lakes. This binational agreement is an important first step in ensuring that all governments around the Great Lakes basin work together to protect this invaluable resource."

The author of that quote was a former member of the New Democratic Party, the mayor of the city of Toronto, David Miller, who has obviously seen the light in supporting profound initiatives like Bill 198. I applaud him for his support of Bill 198.

1650

Secondly, I'll get a quote in from Robert Wright, senior counsel for the Sierra Legal Defence Fund: "With these legislative amendments, our Premier and Minister Ramsay are continuing Ontario's leadership role in protecting the Great Lakes for future generations."

Rick Findlay, the director of the water program for Pollution Probe: "This proposed legislation is a good step forward for Ontario and for all who live in the Great Lakes basin. It demonstrates positive leadership by the province and reflects the importance of protecting Ontario's water resources sustainably for future generations."

There are many more third parties that are coming on board to support this very important piece of legislation.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I appreciate the talk given by my colleague, but there are a few recommendations that were made by Justice Dennis O'Connor in the report of the Walkerton inquiry in May 2002 that he didn't mention.

Unfortunately, though this government, the McGuinty government, has said to the public that they were going to accept and adopt all of the recommendations, there seem to be a fair number that they haven't adopted, even though the report was out in May 2002.

Let's take recommendation 35, which says, "As part of an asset management program, lead service lines should be located and replaced over time with safer materials." Well, there's been no program established to date, and I don't think we're going to see one before the next election. There are no requirements from the province for this from municipalities.

Okay, they must've done 46, because that's really an important one. Recommendation 46 says, "The provincial government should provide guidance and technical advice to support municipal reviews of water systems." It's not an onerous one, and no program is in place. It seems they're not even thinking about it.

How about recommendation 65? "The provincial government should develop a comprehensive 'source to tap' drinking water policy covering all elements of the provision of drinking water, from source protection to standards development, treatment, distribution, and emergency response." No guidelines as to target or acceptable

leakage rates have yet been adopted by this government over the past four years.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Ottawa-Orléans for his two-minute reply.

Mr. McNeely: I'd like to thank the member for Erie-Lincoln, but we're not taxing private wells, we're not taxing farm uses, we're not taxing municipal water supplies, so I think we have to keep that out.

This is a great bill, but think about Walkerton. Think about your past. Come out and support it. We'd really like that.

The member from Hamilton East, I thank you for your comments and I believe that this bill will do what we wish. It will take us forward and protect the Great Lakes waters. It is another step in what this government has been doing to improve the environment, to make sure our system is sustainable—that we are not using up all the resources and leaving our kids with nothing, and that seems often to be the philosophy out there.

The member for Peterborough, thank you for your nice words. I think it's really important that we all work together on this very important subject of water. We have great challenges that are going to come to us. Borders: Transport or shipment of water is always an important aspect. I am very pleased to see that the Minister of Natural Resources has been keeping tight with the eight states that surround the Great Lakes and with Quebec, and that we are working together to make sure that we're going in the right direction.

The member for Cambridge brought up Walkerton. I'm surprised that he would, with the record of Walkerton and the former government and the cutting of the environmental inspectors, etc. We heard the word "abundance." I hope you don't try to Hillierize this important legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I welcome the opportunity this afternoon to make a few remarks on Bill 198, Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act.

In the few minutes that I have to speak, I'd like to cover a couple of particular areas about this bill and about the kinds of implications the bill raises for people in my riding and in neighbouring communities, as well as deal with a couple of the specific issues raised by the bill itself.

To begin with, I think it's necessary to comment on the fact that this is, by anyone's judgment, close to the end of this government's mandate, and it seems to me passing strange that a bill that requires and in fact has a whole history of the necessity for something like this has not been addressed prior to now, that it has taken almost four years for this government to come up with something.

I have to say also, along with that fact is the other part of this bill which says that these rules wouldn't come into effect until 2009. So six years after the election promise was made is the very first opportunity that this government contemplates actually fulfilling that particular part

of its election platform. Even the government's own information refers to this as the first of several steps. I think we would probably all agree with that; we would just express surprise at the fact that it's taken the government so long to do so.

I don't think there's anyone who would dispute the importance of the question of safeguarding and sustaining Ontario's water. In fact, it made me think for a moment that if we look at issues of air and water, obviously we can only last a few minutes without air and a few hours without water. So clearly, these are very important things to be examining.

But I think it's important to recognize that there are some significant limitations about this bill. One of them is that while it talks about safeguarding and sustaining our water resources, while it proposes a ban on diversions out of the Great Lakes basin, it will still allow for large-scale diversions within the basin. This is something that needs to have a very fulsome understanding and debate, because people are becoming aware to a greater degree of the dangers of diverting water and the potential this could have, the further damaging effects to areas in the lower Great Lakes, particularly in terms of climate change.

So just in an overall general way, there are some specific issues that come out of this bill besides the two that I've mentioned.

I want to look at this issue of the question of diversions, because what the bill is suggesting in fact is that essentially Ontario, by its geographic relationship to the Great Lakes, would have some ability, if you like, to rearrange, interfere or certainly divert water from the Great Lakes in terms of its intra-diversion proposal, and I think that the importance of that is the fact that it then opens up the potential for the Americans to look at this as an advantage, if you like, or an opportunity that they wouldn't have, and I think this could create problems in the future.

1700

The bill does allow for Quebec and the eight Great Lakes states to appeal to the Environmental Review Tribunal or to seek judicial review of Ontario decisions on water withdrawals and diversions, but this section would not come into force until the other Great Lakes jurisdictions provide Ontario with the right to bring an application for judicial review in their courts. So you can see here that even in its drafting there's the recognition that this could be somewhat problematic.

I think that obviously the question, then, of the bill in relation to the basin agreements—by the way, this bill implements the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement that was signed in December 2005 by Ontario, Quebec and the eight US Great Lakes states.

The amendments to the Ontario Water Resources Act in this bill include section 34.3, which talks about the prohibition of inter-basin transfers, elevating a ban on diversions out of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin from being a regulation to being part of this act, but

Ontario already prohibits the diversion of water out of its three major water basins.

It was actually the previous government that implemented the policy which banned the transfer of water out of the basin in 1999. This proposed bill simply changes this ban from regulation into statute.

Obviously, the transformation from regulation to statute is important, but it's hardly the kind of initiative that would allow this minister and the government to talk about how it was groundbreaking.

One of the major problems with this is that we're still suggesting the opportunity for large-scale water transfers among watersheds within the basin—and these are the intra-basin diversions that I suggested. So the details, then, of the proposed amendments to the act which prohibit the diversion of water from one lake to another one certainly are subject to strictly regulated exceptions.

An exceptions standard sets out the criteria that must be met by applicants before these proposals will be approved. In terms of the exceptions standard, although water taken from the basin must be returned to the basin, as transfers from the basin are prohibited, there are no guidelines in this bill that stipulate the quality of water that must be returned to the basin. This is a glaring omission from a government that spends so much time touting their so-called leadership on the issue of water quality.

Subsection 34.6(3) enshrines in the OWRA the exceptions standard set out in article 201 of the Great Lakes agreement. The exceptions standard sets out seven criteria that must be met by applicants for proposals for new or increased transfers from one Great Lakes watershed to another.

The bill states that there must be no "significant ... adverse impacts" to water quantity or quality. The phrase "significant ... adverse impacts" is both vague and unclear and does not ensure Ontarians that the quality of their water will be protected.

So the issue of intra-basin transfers is a very significant concern for many stakeholders and groups concerned with this legislation. The potential is, of course, that it would have an impact on Ontario, degrading ecosystems and destroying fish, bird and wildlife habitat.

So the question, then, of the intra-basin issue is certainly one that is going to require a great deal of negotiation, work and I think recognition, as I mentioned a moment ago—the fact that it's only by the accident of geography that Ontario can claim this kind of exception when, obviously, the intent is that water will stay within the watershed.

I want to take a moment too, in terms of my own riding and the areas surrounding south Simcoe, for the kinds of problems we see there in relation to the question of protecting Lake Simcoe and providing the kinds of resources the lake needs in order to be able to continue to sustain itself. It's estimated that the lake provides about \$200 million worth of economic activity, primarily as a destination. We certainly look to this government to provide the kind of support it needs.

I was rather disappointed a few months ago when the Ministry of the Environment had given funds to the Lake Simcoe conservation authority to undertake an assimilative study. This was designed to provide governments of all levels with an understanding of the capacity of the lake and the kind of growth it could sustain in the least damaging way. Through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and its intergovernmental action plan, in fact they ignored the advice. This tends to create amongst our citizens a complete sense of frustration and lack of recognition of the good work that's done, when you have one ministry of government that sends people out, to the tune, by the way, of \$1.5 million, to provide advice to another level of government—and in this case, another provincial ministry that spent \$3 million—and they don't take the advice of the conservation authority and its best science.

Those kinds of issues become very serious issues for the people whom I have the privilege to represent. While they would recognize the importance of a water strategy for the entire Great Lakes, they naturally tend to think of themselves as people who live around the next Great Lake, the other Great Lake. Their disappointment, then, is in terms of this government's lack of initiatives that would give them confidence that they haven't forgotten the other Great Lake.

I also am reminded of the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy plan, which has been supported over the years by governments of all political stripes. This government looked at the date of the current agreement, which expired at the end of March, and has simply signed for another year to maintain the status quo. Many of us were looking for some increased interest from the government in the lake and recognition of some of the most important issues it faces, one of which is an understanding of the phosphorus loading. This is one of the most critical monitors of the health of the lake. Just to give you an idea of how vital this issue is and the remediation that is required, the average cost of reducing one kilo of phosphorous in the urban parts of the watershed is \$5,000—one kilo. In the rural area, it is \$250. So when we're looking at the kinds of growth demands in the watershed, it's those kinds of figures that stand out as ones that need to be addressed and understood and, frankly, fall into the category of looking at water.

1710

I think this government has also missed a tremendous opportunity in not proclaiming Bill 175. If Bill 175 had been proclaimed, this would mean that more of the kinds of things that were in the O'Connor recommendations would actually be addressed. It's astonishing to me, for instance, that we still have municipalities that have lead service lines. In our own homes lead pipes have been gone for more than a generation. The notion that the water could be delivered in lead pipes by municipalities into our modern systems in our own homes is shocking. In recommendation 46, the provincial government was required to "provide guidance and technical advice to support municipal reviews of water systems." This government has done nothing in that area.

We have nothing that provides the notion of people conserving water. There are many people in this province who pay a flat fee for water. Well, I can tell you, as someone who lives on a well, I'm very conscious. If we've been six weeks without rain, I know that's going to make a difference in the water supply in my house. If you are paying a flat fee, you have no idea how much water you use. You have no idea how much is being wasted. The notion that you would pay according to your usage for your hydro but not for your water, this doesn't seem to me to be in any way conducive to conservation.

In Bill 175, municipalities would have to deal with the loss, the leakage that they have. This is something that costs all of us money. When we're talking about the importance, as the government itself has certainly demonstrated in its materials on this bill—everybody understands the importance of water, its conservation and its care, if you like, the need to continue to have a fresh supply of water.

I would suggest that there are a number of areas that this government is coming late to the table with this piece of legislation, ignoring the proclamation of Bill 175, ignoring part of the recommendations of O'Connor's report and, in my own area, not recognizing its commitments and the importance of the other Great Lake. I think you can see here that there's quite a bit more that this government should be undertaking than coming late to the table with a bill, Bill 198.

The only thing I could offer in terms of where we are in this bill is the fact that although we have only begun second reading, it is certainly a piece of legislation that I, for one, would support some significant public hearings on, if for no other reason than to broaden the public understanding of some of the challenges, some of the limitations of this bill and, frankly, some of the most important omissions in government water policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: I want to congratulate the member from York North on her remarks regarding this extremely important bill, Bill 198, which I think the member indicated in her remarks the government promised back in 2003. If you read the contents of the bill, you will discover that the implementation of it won't even come until 2009. So that's six years between promise and implementation, if in fact the government actually gets to the point of passing this bill through third reading and it receiving royal assent.

I say that because, once again, in their last-scramble attempt, as they watch the opinion polls do this, they're scrambling to get some of those promises fulfilled, and in that mad scramble they're throwing out these bills left, right and centre, bills that could have been far more effectively and appropriately dealt with with a proper amount of time and effort by the government. Instead, they thought, like Liberals always do, that they could coast along, breaking promises, disappointing community after community in this province. And now, guess what? The clock is ticking. As I said in my remarks, the tide is

almost all the way out on this government and, lo and behold, all of a sudden they're scrambling around to try to find out what else they can throw on the table to try to make people believe they're actually doing something on some of the really important issues that they promised the people of Ontario they were going to take care of in their mandate, and they simply have not delivered time and time again. So here we are at the 11th hour with a really important piece of legislation on water taking that needs to be dealt with in this province—one that I recall having the previous environment critic from our party deal with years ago when she was still here—and it's a shadow of what it should be.

Mr. Ramal: I've been listening for the last 20 minutes to the member from York North giving us a lecture about what we're supposed to do. I was wondering where that member was when she was part of a party that was the government of Ontario for eight years, neglecting all the rules and regulations that protect the people of Ontario. Look what happened in the Walkerton tragedy. I couldn't understand what she was talking about, but you know what? I was outraged and stunned by her remarks, giving us a lecture.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you something very important. It's a great bill. Whether it was introduced yesterday or a year before or today, when it comes to the people of Ontario, we promise to work very hard to pass that bill—hopefully if all members will support it—because it's an important bill. It's been talked about a lot, especially by my different colleagues here, about how important this bill is. I had the chance to speak for about 14 minutes about it and I explained what is important about it.

We are not alone in the province of Ontario. We have partners: the states around the lakes which surround the province of Ontario. We have to work with them. They promised us, and most of them came forward and signed the agreement. They're willing to work alongside Ontario to make sure that all of the water that goes into the lakes is clean and protected, because it's important to all of us.

Hopefully, the honourable member from York North will support the bill and stop giving us lectures. I wish she'd had the energy back when she was part of the government to lecture them to at least avoid the tragedy of Walkerton.

I'm honoured and privileged to be part of the government, taking everything seriously and working very hard to make sure that all of our elements, before our mandate is finished, are being looked after and tackled in a professional manner. That's what we promised the people of Ontario in 2003. That's what we're doing for them. It's never too late. We're going to work all the way to the end of our mandate to make sure everything's protected.

Mr. Chudleigh: In the days before election dates were known, we would look at a bill like this and say, "Yep, there's an election coming," because this bill doesn't do a thing in Ontario until after the election. In fact, this bill doesn't come into force until—what is it?—2009.

Dalton McGuinty made promises back in 2003, four long years ago, about what he was going to do to protect water, and then just before the date of the election comes in, he brings in a piece of legislation that adds another two years to doing nothing to protect Ontario's water, our greatest resource.

1720

The member for York North talked about a number of ways in which the government could have protected water, could have done more positive things to protect Ontario's water now—immediately—particularly those waters in the Great Lakes basin, which are the vast majority of the water that Ontario influences or that is our responsibility to protect. And yet, Dalton McGuinty's Liberals have continued to make promises and put off until after the election anything of substance: basically say anything to get elected, do anything to get elected, but do very little for the province of Ontario during their mandate, whether that be in the area of water or natural resources or endangered species.

The endangered species regulations are equally weak. The concept of protecting endangered species is a good one. The bill that was brought in just doesn't do the job, because it doesn't do anything about habitat, which is the only thing that's going to save endangered species.

This bill is very thin on doing things that are necessary to protect Ontario's water.

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to rise and comment on my colleague the member for York North on Bill 198. She, of course, has a command of not only the issue as a whole in the province of Ontario, but of the impact on her riding in the Lake Simcoe area.

As an MPP who has two Great Lakes in his riding, I don't know if we're willing to grant Lake Simcoe official Great Lake status quite yet. We guard that title very jealously. They argue on the American side that even Lake Champlain should be a Great Lake, but I don't know if I agree with that. I don't know if you've taken a position on the Lake Champlain issue or not, Mr. Speaker, but I'm going to stick with the Great Lakes we have. Lake Simcoe, if not a Great Lake, is a very good lake and should be protected.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: There are only so many lakes that deserve that. They've worked hard for millennia to achieve the status of Great Lake. Lake Simcoe is a very good lake but not quite a Lake Erie or a Lake Ontario.

Interjection: Take a stand.

Mr. Hudak: I have taken a stand in favour of the existing Great Lakes.

I have talked about an associated issue, as well, with the recent government actions against gas wells in the province of Ontario, which has caused my concern about wells and well water in Ontario and this government's potential action.

I don't have much time—maybe I'll get to it in debate later—but one example is a letter from Jack and Sue Den Besten of Wellandport, Ontario. They talk about a surprise visit to their gas well that they had from a

ministry inspector. They drilled a gas well to benefit their home and their two grain storage bins and dryer bins. It cost \$145,000. Six months after the well was drilled, Fernando, from the Ministry of Natural Resources, called and said that he had made a surprise inspection of the property. I'll get into this in debate, but after long and tortuous interaction with the ministry—they've been torn back and forth between whether it's a commercial well or a private well, all kinds of fees and regulations and such that seem to be administered in a very haphazard manner. I'll have more time later to address those issues.

The Acting Speaker: The member for York North has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Munro: I appreciate the comments by the members for Hamilton East, London–Fanshawe, Halton and Erie–Lincoln.

I found it interesting that the member for London–Fanshawe has very selective hearing in terms of the fact that I raised the issue of his government's reluctance to proclaim Bill 175. The remarks that were made by him suggested that we had never done anything on the issue of water. He clearly missed the point when I mentioned that there was a regulation that is now coming into this bill as a statute. Also, I just want to reiterate the question to the government: Why have you not proclaimed Bill 175? Why have you not done the questions around the Walkerton report that are not done? Why do we still have municipalities that can deliver water in lead pipes? Those are things that you have chosen, as I say, in suggesting that we, as members of the former government, had done nothing. In fact, much was done. I would ask the government, why not proclaim Bill 175? Those are important steps in continuing to make sure that we do have the best drinking water.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Marchese: I welcome the citizens watching this political channel—at least those who can, because as you know, Rogers has—

Mr. Hudak: Channel 105.

Mr. Marchese: For those of you who can get it, it's Channel 105 if you have Rogers. I don't know whether next year you'll have to start paying, some of you, \$8, \$9, \$10 to be able to watch this parliamentary channel. It should be free, but at some point you're going to be paying, so I am hoping that you are still able to watch this political forum here, because it's the best show around, I think, in terms of the great speakers we have in this place.

I am happy to speak to Bill 198, and I refer the citizens who are interested in greater detail to the remarks of my colleague the member for Toronto–Danforth, Peter Tabuns, our environmental critic, who spoke on April 12. So those of you who want to get into Hansard and check out what he said, I refer you to him because he had a lot more to say and a lot more detailed remarks to make on this bill than I can or will.

We're talking about water. The member from Toronto–Danforth pointed out what a precious resource that is, and not just for today, but for the future. In fact, I

dare say that we will fight wars over water in the near future. It's hard to predict when that will be, but it will come. And in the same way that we've got superpowers fighting for oil, in the same way that we've had superpowers in the Middle East for so long trying to—of course, under the guise of protecting, building, defending freedoms and helping those poor people there, because you know how bad they are—protect their oil interests, they will be around the globe looking for water one day, fighting for water. It's hard to predict when that time will come, but it is coming.

Mr. Hudak: In 2015.

Mr. Marchese: That's too soon, but you never know, you never know.

We know that the Americans are thirsty for water. The North American free trade agreement is about not just everything else that deals with trade; they'd love to get water and access to water. It's about having access to water, and this is something we should be protecting very much. They would love to start building water pipes to be able to get some of our water from our Great Lakes. So I say with some interest that this bill goes some way in protecting our interest from the great appetite that the Americans have for so many things, including and especially water. That day will come.

In this bill we talk about the ability of various people and organizations—groups of people—to use water, to draw water for important usages that I, quite frankly, support. The taking of water for domestic purposes by a municipal drinking water system or public utility—I believe that most people think it's a good thing to be able to do that. Most people, I suspect, would support that. We need to have water for municipal drinking water. So that isn't the problem, and we agree with that.

Taking water for the watering of livestock or poultry is, I suspect, something that all members of this Legislature agree with. So within the bill we protect the use of water for that purpose, and I obviously support that.

The taking of water for firefighting and other emergency purposes we think is good, and I suspect all members of all three political parties in the Legislature support that.

1730

There are some issues of concern we have that the member for Toronto–Danforth raised that I want to raise. There is the possibility of taking—not “taking”; I'll rephrase it. What this bill does is to ban diversion out of basins but still permit large diversions between individual Great Lakes within the basin. Although some of the members think this is a not a problemo, a lot of us believe that it is a problem that needs to be addressed by us, by the Liberal government. I don't believe you Liberals have done an assessment of the implications of this. Taking 379,000 litres a day, and 19 million litres a day for this diversion purpose, intra-basin transfer, we believe is going to cause a great deal of problems for us all. If we're talking 19 million litres a day, multiplied by 50, 100 or more days, we're getting into billions of litres of water. That's a whole lot of water. I can barely count past

a million. I don't know how many of you are able to count past that. We're talking billions of litres of water being drawn. Can you, Doctor? Some of you guys are good mathematically.

The whiz kids, the mathematical types, have to respond to the problem of what it means to take 19 million litres a day times, I don't know, 50, 100, 200 days, that much water out from one lake and allow it to be diverted from another lake, and what it means to so many ecological consequences that I suspect that would have. Have we assessed the ecological effect of doing that? My sense is that we haven't looked at the consequences or what it may do to the hydro-electric production at Niagara, the effect it might have on the wetlands surrounding any one of these lakes or all of those lakes.

The question that the member from Toronto–Danforth asked, and that I ask all of you, is, have you done an assessment of the ecological implications of doing that or do you simply assume that there are none? There may be no political implications—possibly. On the other hand, there may be with the US states. But I suspect that there are ecological implications that you should be speaking to. That's why the member from Toronto–Danforth raises that question. I believe it is an important question. What is the aggregate impact of taking 19 million litres per day times 100 days?

I want to move on to another question that is raised in your bill, and that is that you say you want to protect your water sources and you have to have a source of income to protect them. You want to charge \$3.71 per million litres to generate, we are told, \$18 million a year, essentially the cost of administration. Not the cost of water conservation programs, not the cost of water quality protection, not the cost of water quality surveillance—just the cost of administration. You made it appear in your ministerial announcement that you were finally going to go after the corporate sector that's raiding our water for free at the moment, that you were finally going to stop that from happening by charging \$3.71 per million litres. How are you going to do that? How, Minister, have you frightened these corporations that are sucking the water out of the ground by charging a fee of \$3.71? They must be trembling in their boots. I just don't know how you're going to stop their quivering, for God's sake. Surely you must be having consultations with them on a regular basis to say, "Please, please, hold on. Don't be so afraid. It's not going to hurt you so badly. Don't wage a war against us Liberals on this basis. It's not going to bankrupt you." I suspect you're having regular consultation meetings with these folks to stop the quivering, because they must be trembling in fear—\$3.71. That's your plan to scare the water-bottling corporations from taking the water out of the ground? I don't know how you can stand up there as a minister and as a government, defend that and say, "We are finally going to go after the corporate sector that's draining our water from the ground." It's almost laughable. You shouldn't even say that; you should simply say, "Okay, we're going to charge a minimal fee to just cover some of our administrative costs." But please, you're embarrassing

yourself and the public's intelligence when you're saying, "We're going to stop the corporate sector from raiding our water through this charge." Do you understand what I'm saying, Minister? Surely you're on my side in this. If I had to defend that, I would be quivering with shame. I don't understand how some of you could stand up proudly and say, "This is how we're going to do it." Surely there's got to be a better way.

In Britain I understand the fee is incredibly higher, much higher. Here, the minister is reported to be saying, "Oh, no, we don't own the water. Therefore, we can't do much more than this." I don't understand that. Surely you've got to have a better plan. Man, how strong you are, Minister. I'm glad you're standing there, strong in your place, defending our water and saying to them, "This is how we're going to do it: \$3.71 per million litres." This is a whole lot of water they're taking, at \$3.71 per million litres. Do you know how much they sell this bottled water for, most of which comes from the tap?

Mr. Hudak: A buck eighty-nine.

Mr. Marchese: Sometimes a buck, sometimes a buck fifty, sometimes two bucks, sometimes \$1.89, depending on where you are. Sometimes, depending on the event you're at, if you don't have access to water, they can charge \$2.50. We're talking little bottles of water, half of which come from the tap. How do we do that? How do we accept the fact that we're drinking bottled water that they suck out, some of which comes from the tap, they're charging us an incredible fee, and then you go slap them with \$3.71 for the million litres of water? Man, you guys are really tough, I'm telling you. I don't know how you brave the corporate sector and the people out there, who obviously must be incredibly supportive of your initiative. I don't know how you brave them, and I don't know how you defend yourself, with them or against them.

Mr. Leal: How much would you charge?

Mr. Marchese: How much would I charge? You get the limousine and then you get to ask the opposition, "How much would you charge?" Why don't you give up your limousine, come over here, and then decide what you would charge for the water?

Mr. Leal: You had one. I remember when you came to Peterborough. I thought you were the Premier.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, yeah. You guys are good. That's why you guys are so much loved by the public these days. It's great to see it. Then here's the other thing.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Marchese: Yes, you've got to be in your own seat. Remind them; otherwise, he can't shout so much. Besides, I prefer it when you're here, closer to me, than so far away. I like you here, member from Peterborough.

Then there's the other thing that I found very—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. The member from Peterborough, if you want to speak, go to your seat.

Mr. Marchese: No, I don't mind it, really. I like him. Here or there, it doesn't really matter.

The other great announcement—and this we learned at the press conference—is that this incredible charge that's going to be slapped against the corporate sector is not going to happen immediately, because I presume the effect of the \$3.71 is going to be so onerous on them that they need time to adjust to that incredible cost that is being imposed on them. So you said, "No, we can't have them pay today. We're going to slap this cost on the corporate sector in 2009," because presumably they need an adjustment.

Everything the Liberal government does is rolled out over an incredibly long period—everything. Every announcement has a date that extends itself into the future. Some of those dates go beyond their second mandate, should the public be unintelligent enough to re-elect them. Everything they do has to do with announcing something in the future. Two examples: The minister for post-secondary education says, "We are making a \$6.2-billion contribution to post-secondary education."

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Mr. Leal: Reaching higher.

Mr. Marchese: Peterborough got it: the reaching higher plan. The \$6.2 billion is rolled out until 2010. They made this announcement two years ago. Do you understand? The roll-out is a long carpet. By the time you get there, you're dead. Some of you are not going to survive it: 2010, and \$4 billion of that \$6 billion won't come until 2010. Four billion dollars comes after you get un-elected. As for the \$2 billion that you claim you've given, we can't find all of the numbers for your \$2-billion claim.

Then there's the other announcement, by the Minister of Education, on capital projects. She says, and the Liberals claim, that they're spending \$4 billion on capital projects. The problem is that that money is never to be seen, and it never flows. They were going to spend \$275 million. I know the Minister of Culture is squinting in her attempt to comprehend what I'm saying, but try. They were going to spend \$275 million to generate \$4 billion worth of money, and the first phase of that money, in four years, was to be \$75 million. Of the \$75 million, they've only spent about \$20 million. But if you hear the Liberals, including my good friend from Peterborough, he'll say, "We're spending \$4 billion for capital projects." They keep saying that. The minister for universities is saying the same thing: "Our commitment is \$6 billion," as if he spent it yesterday.

There's a rollout of these things over six years, four years, and in this particular bill the rollout is 2009: \$3.71 per million litres of water. Imagine this charge and how it's going to crush the corporations. It's going to prevent them from raiding our water.

Mr. Leal: For sure.

Mr. Marchese: The member for Peterborough just likes to play the game. He said, "For sure." It's too laughable to even talk about it. I want the Liberals to take their time to defend this and refute the arguments; and not just in the two minutes, but when we go around, if we have time, take some time. Defend yourselves and hopefully intelligently, if you can. You know how embar-

assing it is when you have to hear certain arguments and the defence is so weak that people like me weep, holding my head in my hands, saying, "Oh, my God, what am I doing here?" You don't want to do that to me.

So we've got water that is a precious resource. We need to protect it. The bill goes some way into solving some of these questions and dealing with the problems we have with the US states and our own lakes. You have a big problem in terms of allowing the diversion of water from one lake to the other. This diversion of water could be in the billions of litres. It will have ecological implications, and you need to speak to that. You can't simply say, "We're diverting, but it will all go back somehow." I don't see it. That simple explanation simply won't do it. You divert water from one basin to the other, and you say that, miraculously, it will simply go back. There are implications and you should speak to them.

The problem of cost: Please deal with the laughable number. If I'm laughing at you, I'm assuming that the regular citizen is going to laugh at you as well. And please deal with the fact that if you're going to impose this minimal cost, you can do it today. You should change that. Do it today and say, "As of tomorrow, we're going to crush you with \$3.71 per million litres of water." I think you can do it today. I hope you will do that today. I hope the hearings will allow people to tell you that. I suspect that you good, reasonable Liberals will change your minds on a number of these things.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: I must say that the member for Trinity-Spadina if he was an actor in his previous life.

Interjection: He's a singer.

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: I know he's a singer. I have to say that he adds great colour to the Legislature just by his acting abilities. They're quite remarkable.

I do want to say that this act takes some significant steps forward. It's moving forward progressive steps to protect our water. In the Great Lakes we have the largest freshwater system in the world, and it's important that we take some of these steps.

One of the things that concerns me—sometimes I see that the federal government isn't coming to bat—has to do with foreign species that are in the Great Lakes. I understand that there are now about 68 of them. If we really want to talk about some action—I know we've taken various steps to try to deal the jurisdiction of the province when it comes to what we have to do for the Great Lakes—there is this issue of the species. I don't know exactly where the federal government is on this, but they seem to be missing in action. It's playing havoc with the ecosystem in the Great Lakes. They know this, and they know exactly what they have to do to prevent more of this. It's really endangering the ecosystem in the Great Lakes. I don't know if anybody here understands the significance of what's happening with these foreign species coming in through ballast water and in other ways from ships. As I said, I couldn't believe it is 68 species.

We have a lot of steps that we have taken. There is more that has to be done, but I think we've made some progressive moves to protect our Great Lakes.

Mr. Hudak: I always enjoy the comments of my colleague for Trinity–Spadina. He's right that bottled water can be expensive. If you go to see a ball game, for example, it's \$2.50. I guess they put a little bit of extra salt in the peanuts or popcorn or whatever so they can make you pay those prices or more. Whether it's baseball or hockey, or even when you go to the movie theatre, right? At movie theatres, bottled water is extremely expensive. Those massive things of pop aren't exactly cheap either, and who would want that much of a beverage, no matter how tasty that beverage could possibly be?

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Not as much as I used to, let me tell you. That's for sure. I don't see as many movies as I used to.

My colleague talks about Bill 198 and expresses some of his concerns. I know that he, among others, has talked about some unfinished business. The McGuinty government, we recall, made a number of commitments; for example, to make good on all the O'Connor recommendations. We are now three and a half years into the McGuinty mandate, and likely not much more time that the House will sit before the election, planned for October 10 this year. We will see if those promises do occur or if they will be broken, like many other promises.

One that I would certainly hope to see the government fulfill—and I know my colleague the minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal is here this evening—is to see the regulations come forward for Bill 175.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): It's the Ministry of the Environment.

Mr. Hudak: I know the Minister of the Environment will be responsible for proclamation of the regulations, but the minister will play a role in the infrastructure funding to back that up for our municipalities. In my riding, for example, Wainfleet has been turned down three times for COMRIF funding. It's simply unaffordable for people along the shore of Lake Erie to pay bills up to \$30,000 for water and sewer along the lakeshore, and I hope there will be an opportunity for the minister to fund that, and that we'll see Bill 175 proclaimed.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate and make some comments on some of the statements previously made by the member for Trinity–Spadina.

My riding is Oakville, which is on the shores of Lake Ontario. We're an old community that has two harbours, and the links between the community and the lake are something you just can't ignore. In fact, the only reason Oakville is there is because of the lake and the creeks that flow into it. I think that here in southern Ontario, and in northern Ontario when you get around Superior—some of the north shores of some of the states that surround some of the lakes—we've got a natural resource that we take for granted.

When I'm talking to the younger people, as I often do, they ask me why they can't swim in the lake anymore.

The answer is quite simple: Previous generations have mucked it up. It's that simple. Now this generation is starting to realize that it needs to do something about it.

1750

I heard some of the comments today that were going all over the place. I think we need to get back to what the basic premise of the bill is, and that is, if this is passed, it's going to implement an agreement that has been signed already. The agreement was signed 16 months ago. What the government is asking the Legislature for is to give it approval for some legislation that would enact the bill.

I don't know how anybody could argue with the premise of this bill. Is there more work to be done? Absolutely. We have to undo generations of damage to that lake. Lake Ontario specifically is the one I'm most familiar with. So it's a good first step. Is it everything? No, I don't think anybody is saying it's everything, but it's something that is worthy of support. My friend from Trinity–Spadina is intent, when they talk about job losses, on crushing corporations. Why would you want to crush corporations in Ontario? You want to charge them fairly, but why would you want to crush them?

Mrs. Savoline: Water is one of our most precious resources. Having led a municipality that took its responsibility in providing clean, safe water very seriously, long before stringent rules came along, I understand the importance of protecting and safeguarding our clean, safe water. It is a right, I think, of everyone who lives in the world to have clean, safe water. In Ontario, we are probably one of the most fortunate provinces in that we have an abundance of it. It's how we look after it, how we treat it and how we deal with it.

I guess my concern here—as with a lot of the initiatives that have been begun in the last three and a half years—is process and the lack of process that I think is extensive enough that it allows laymen to get a grasp of the importance of the issue and be able to speak on it. I think the timeliness of this bill coming forward so late in the mandate gives it at least the perception, if not the reality, of being rushed through. The due public process that I think this bill should be given is obviously not going to happen.

So I believe that the bill lacks process. The subject lacks the ability in time in a process. I feel that the people of Ontario ought to have the opportunity to understand the issue in a more fulsome way and to be able to speak on it. In order for that to happen, I think this just needs more time.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Trinity–Spadina has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Marchese: I do thank the members for their two-minute responses, including the Liberals.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: That's very kind. You're a generous man.

Mr. Marchese: My pleasure. I agree with much of what the member from Oakville said except his conclusion, where he says, "Why do you want to crush the corporations by charging a fee higher than the \$3.71?"

I'm sorry, it was your minister who said, "We're going to prevent the corporations from raiding our water." How are you doing that? How? I assume that the way you are going to do that is through your fee, but your fee doesn't do it. I scramble in my mind to find what other measures you may have to prevent them from raiding our water, and there's nothing else. That's my problem that I have in relation to the issue of cost, I've got to tell you.

In relation to that, there is a fear that we are commodifying water, but we already are. We already permit corporations to take water out of our ground. They are permitted to take it for free, and they're charging incredible prices for that precious water, including using the clean tap water—however clean it can be when you include all of the chemicals that we're ingesting—but

40% of that water comes from the tap. So we are already permitting corporations to take the water out, and if we're going to do that, we've got to say to them: "Sorry, you've got to pay for that."

Why should we be paying close to \$1—and in some cases \$2—for a bottle of water? Why would that be? Why would we allow that? Why would you allow the diversion of water between lakes—intra-basin—which, when you multiply the billions of litres, is going to have ecological questions? Why haven't you considered the ecological cost of that?

The Acting Speaker: The time now being nearly 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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