



No. 179A

N° 179A

ISSN 1180-2987

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 30 May 2007

Mercredi 30 mai 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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Des exemplaires du Journal sont en vente à Publications Ontario : 880, rue Bay Toronto (Ontario), M7A 1N8 courriel : webpubont@gov.on.ca

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 30 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 mai 2007

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MEMBER FOR NIPISSING

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): What is the member from Nipissing saying that has North Bay councillors so riled up? The May 29 edition of the North Bay Nugget reads, “Council Lashes Out at MPP; Won’t ‘Tolerate’ Misleading Statements.” The article goes on to explain that city councillors let loose a stream of criticisms against the Nipissing MPP demanding a public retraction of what is referred to as “false information” in the member’s latest newsletter. Mayor Vic Fedeli was quoted as saying, “We won’t stand by any longer without correcting these misleading statements. This is an election year and this council will not tolerate her continued false statements and will now publicly challenge every one that’s made.” Municipal council is obviously very disturbed with the member’s claim that an additional \$1.175 million in provincial funding was provided to the city this year—funding that the city claims is actually federal dollars announced by Ottawa in 2006 that simply flows through the province.

This is the most recent blow-up in a lengthy battle between councillors and the member from Nipissing. North Bay councillors are frustrated with continually having to set the record straight when it comes to funding. The member does not mention that the funds are federal dollars, provoking harsh words from North Bay councillors who describe the newsletter as “irresponsible” and “propaganda.” The member from Nipissing not surprisingly responded to local disapproval by completely denying any falsehood, despite admitting that the funding was in fact previously announced federal dollars. Well, in the words of Mayor Fedeli, the member from Nipissing “simply doesn’t get it.”

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Traditionally, in this place we don’t use some of the language that was quoted. I understand that even if you quote it, it’s still not an appropriate thing to do in this House in order to say certain things that would normally not be allowed to be said, and I would ask if there’s a situation that happened just now, as to whether or not it should be withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I was listening carefully also. I was concerned with the language.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka would know that you cannot do indirectly what you can’t do directly, and I’m sure that he will withdraw the offending word.

Mr. Miller: Mr. Speaker, I’d be happy to withdraw the offending word that was in the North Bay Nugget.

The Speaker: Maybe you could just withdraw.

Mr. Miller: I’m happy to just withdraw.

ASPER FOUNDATION PROGRAM

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): “First they came for the Communists, but I was not a Communist, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the socialists, and the trade unionists, but I was neither, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew, so I did not speak out. And when they came for me, there was no one left to speak out for me.”

I was privileged, along with many other community leaders, to on Sunday evening attend the Asper Foundation human rights and Holocaust studies graduation program at Temple Anshe Sholom, where 57 Hamilton high school students in a cross-cultural program stood to pledge to envision a world without racism and imagine a world without hate. I want to say thanks to the UJA Federation of Hamilton, to the Asper Foundation, and to Madeleine Levy, the inspirational chair of this exciting studies program.

It’s important that our young people learn about the atrocities of the past and also the importance of standing up for human rights. When I watched the 57 people on Sunday evening, I looked out at them and I knew they were the very best reason for hope that our world knows.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): Dalton McGuinty went to court to legalize the land occupation at Caledonia, and now school safety is in jeopardy.

In the most recent editions of the Turtle Island News and the Tekawennake native weeklies, we read about an AK-47 assault rifle beside Caledonia’s Notre Dame School. I’ll quote the Turtle Island News: “The incident began with an exchange at the land reclamation site near the Thistlemoor Street entrance early Thursday afternoon during which VanEvery threatened another man in his late twenties with an AK-47 rifle.” The Thistlemoor barricade is right beside Notre Dame School. Just minutes away, from provincial Highway 6, the AK-47 was let loose. And I’ll quote the Tekawennake: “The

bullet entered his upper arm at the biceps tearing a seven-inch exit wound in the back of his arm, but missed the bone and the ... artery.”

The Tekawennake also indicates the AK-47 was previously seen near the school, and I quote: “[T]he shooter did somehow manage to bring the weapon onto the site undetected by site security who were busy dealing with another incident at the time.” A further quote: “[T]he incident caused great concern in Caledonia and especially among parents of students at Notre Dame School which abuts the reclamation site.”

An AK-47 assault rifle right beside an elementary school in Caledonia: Will Dalton McGuinty deal with this or cover it up?

CHAMINADE COLLEGE SCHOOL

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I rise today to salute the fine young men, their parents and the staff at Chaminade College School in my riding for their accomplishments and enormous successes.

This past Saturday, I joined the Chaminade community for their eighth annual duck race and sixth annual stocking of brown trout into Black Creek. This terrific event draws not just Chaminade students, parents and staff, but also local residents and business owners who work tirelessly to clean the creek and rehabilitate it to a pristine state where native fish species can once again become abundant. The initiative started as a small idea put forward by the school’s then-fledgling environment club, led by Bob Giza, a model educator. Since then, it has been integrated into the curriculum and has received numerous accolades, including more than \$66,000 in public and private grants.

As perhaps the greatest symbol of success, graduates of the program have gone on to pursue studies in environmental conservation and are already making invaluable contributions in the field.

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However, this isn’t the only good news emanating from Chaminade. On Monday, I was back at the school to watch the award-winning concert band, under the passionate guidance of Alex Voros, receive a \$10,000 grant from MusiCan, the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences’ music education program. The money will be used to ensure that the powerful sounds of music continue to fill the halls of Chaminade.

The students were thrilled to be joined by Billy Talent, the Juno Award-winning band, whose members talked about the start of their own musical journey to raucous applause.

To principal Mike Wallace and everyone else at Chaminade, well done and rock on.

PRIX DU PATRIMOINE ROGER-BERNARD

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): Je désire aujourd’hui partager avec vous ma grande fierté

quant au Prix du patrimoine Roger-Bernard, décerné cette année au Comité paroissial du patrimoine de Rockland et au Conseil municipal de la cité Clarence-Rockland pour les efforts qui ont mené à la désignation patrimoniale de l’église Très-Sainte-Trinité de Rockland et de son presbytère.

Ce prix, remis annuellement à une personne ou à une organisation qui contribue à la mise en valeur du patrimoine, constitue la plus haute distinction dans le secteur patrimonial de l’Ontario français. La désignation de l’église et du presbytère de ma paroisse a permis de faire reconnaître la valeur historique d’une des très belles églises paroissiales de l’Ontario français et d’un magnifique presbytère-château, érigés entre 1917 et 1920.

Le comité responsable de cette désignation est composé de Louis Aubry, Gilles Chartrand et Fernand Tittley, ainsi que M. le Curé Jean-François Morin. Je les félicite tous de leur travail ardu dans cet important projet.

L’église Très-Sainte-Trinité de Rockland et sa maison paroissiale ont une importance qui dépasse largement l’histoire locale ou régionale. Ces deux bâtiments, qui font partie du paysage du cœur de Rockland, sont considérés comme des joyaux du patrimoine religieux franco-ontarien et ils sont, pour les paroissiennes et les paroissiens, des éléments de fierté et d’appartenance.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The last presenter did run over his time a little bit. I know that I was cut off at my—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Your time was done. Sit down.

PREMIER’S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Today at Queen’s Park we witnessed the oddest pairing since Arnold Schwarzenegger appeared with Danny DeVito in the movie *Twins*. On one side of the stage we had the Governor and on the other side of the stage we had the Taxinator.

Hollywood Dalton is certainly familiar with the Hollywood lifestyle, jet-setting to exotic locales from the Toronto airport, going all the way to Hamilton and to St. Catharines on taxpayers’ dollars—in fact, \$1 million spent on private plane services since taking office.

Our Premier is certainly not afraid to spend like a Hollywood celebrity either. Two million dollars were spent on chartered flights and luxury hotels on a trip to India for himself and an entourage of 40 people; \$837 to ship ice from Toronto to Niagara-on-the-Lake for a ministers’ meeting; and a hotel bill, totalling \$16,000 for himself and 15 other staff, which was \$1,000 per person.

Mr. Schwarzenegger once played the Batman villain Mr. Freeze. I remember that Mr. McGuinty promised to freeze taxes, but that promise thawed just a few short weeks into his term in office, and the Taxinator imposed a \$4.4-billion tax hike.

Mr. Schwarzenegger once starred in *The Running Man*. We have our own running man, Dalton McGuinty, running from any responsibility to address the ongoing 15-month occupation in Caledonia.

We look forward to saying *hasta la vista* to Mr. McGuinty.

BYTOWN MUSEUM

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): As the world increasingly learns of the beauty and the impressive achievements of the Rideau Canal, celebrating its 175th anniversary this year, it should pause for a moment to note another gem perched on the banks of the Rideau River, the Bytown Museum.

The Bytown Museum represents the best of heritage preservation in Ottawa. It is in the heart of our city and at the heart of our history. For generations, the Bytown Museum has educated the nation on the special story of the founding and the early growth of Canada's unlikely capital. Opened in 1917 by the Women's Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa, the Bytown Museum celebrated its 90th anniversary this year.

Newly renovated, the museum explores Ottawa's past from the mid-1820s, when Bytown was founded, until the end of the First World War. Visitors can expect to learn about the construction of the Rideau Canal, Ottawa's role as a lumber boom town and the assassination of Father of Confederation Thomas D'Arcy McGee.

Thanks to funding from all levels of government, the Bytown Museum now includes many features that will appeal to families and students, from a 3D animation of the Rideau Canal to audio clips of important moments from the First World War. The museum has also installed a play space where children can try on costumes, play Victorian games and truly get their hands into history.

Finally, permit me to add my personal congratulations to Christina Tessier and her team for their heartfelt devotion to projecting onto the present, as well as the future, the images of past generations of Ottawans and valley folk who toiled, dreamed and dared to bring forth the modern joy that we today call Ottawa and that Canadians appreciate so much today.

GAINEY FOUNDATION

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I rise to speak about the Gainey Foundation. I have a personal interest in the creation of this very worthwhile foundation after having attended school with Cathy Gainey and knowing her family, who still live in my riding of Peterborough. My father-in-law, Bob McGarrity, taught Bob Gainey in Immaculate Conception Elementary School in Peterborough. We watched in horror the events of last year that surrounded Laura Gainey's death. Everyone was touched by the tragedy.

Out of bad comes good: Bob Gainey's strength during this time of overwhelming tragedy is an example to us all. The creation of the Gainey Foundation, announced on May 2, 2007, will honour Cathy and Laura Gainey's love for the arts, environment and education. The foundation will offer financial support to community-based charitable organizations that reflect the interests and commitments of Cathy and Laura Gainey's lives.

It is an honour for me to stand today and acknowledge this family and, in particular, Mr. Bob Gainey and the creation of the Gainey Foundation.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I rise in the House today to speak about the McGuinty government's commitment to creating an environment of prosperity.

What the leader of the official opposition fails to understand is that you just can't cut taxes and keep your fingers crossed that the economy will grow better on its own. We saw the devastating consequences of that approach from the member's own party. We are investing in the building blocks for a sustainable and prosperous society.

We have invested \$3.5 billion in our schools to date. For the first time in 16 years, students applying to post-secondary institutions have never experienced lost learning days due to labour action in our schools. We are creating a highly skilled workforce through our \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan for post-secondary education and through our investment in skills training programs. We have a comprehensive advanced manufacturing investment strategy that has generated \$370 million in new investments and anchored 3,000 high-value jobs.

The previous government left Ontario with a deficit of \$5.5 billion that they hid from us and denied existed. They were also unable to attract a single new auto plant in the previous eight years. Unlike the members opposite, the McGuinty government Liberals have a plan for Ontario and will continue to move forward with real results now and in the future.

VISITORS

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to welcome two wonderful people from Hamilton representing Habitat for Humanity: Sylvia Galli, director of fundraising, and Linda Barry, director of marketing. These people were the lucky bidders on an auction to have lunch at Queen's Park. So welcome today; we are happy to have you.

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): On a similar point of order, Mr. Speaker: Justin Stevenson is a page from the riding of Essex. With us today in the members' east gallery are mom and dad, Kim and Stewart Stevenson, sister Jacqueline and cousin Danielle Gloss, all from the Cottam area.

1350

ANNUAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2006 annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FAIR ACCESS TO VOTE ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'ACCÈS ÉQUITABLE AU SCRUTIN

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 231, An Act to provide fair access to vote for snowbirds, students, military personnel and other Ontarians abroad / Projet de loi 231, Loi visant à offrir un accès équitable au scrutin aux retraités migrants, aux étudiants, au personnel militaire et aux autres Ontariens et Ontariennes qui sont à l'étranger.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Surprisingly, Ontario is the only province that does not allow a mail-in ballot during provincial election campaigns. All the other provinces and territories, all 50 states in the USA, as well as Mexico allow a mail-in ballot.

Seniors fought in the war to help preserve our democratic rights. They built this province and made it strong. It is only appropriate that if they are taking some well-deserved time outside Ontario, they would have a chance to vote.

I wanted to thank, in the gallery today, Jerry Brissenden, president of the Canadian Snowbird Association; his wife, Joan Brissenden; and the director of research and communications, Mike “Macko” MacKenzie, who helped do research on this bill.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 30, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bentley has moved government notice of motion number 366. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All in favour will say “aye.”

All opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1353 to 1358.

The Speaker: Order. Members please take their seats. Order.

All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Kular, Kuldip	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Parsons, Ernie	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Peters, Steve	
Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Miller, Norm
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Yakubuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Martiniuk, Gerry	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 43; the nays are 11.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I rise in the House today to bring to the attention of all members that tomorrow marks the first anniversary of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which came into effect May 31, 2006.

This legislation marked the culmination of decades of work by committed volunteers and organizations who dedicated themselves to raising awareness of the dangers related to second-hand smoke. The Smoke-Free Ontario Act is a landmark piece of legislation that has made Ontario's enclosed public places and enclosed workplaces 100% smoke-free and placed restriction on the promotion and display of tobacco products.

Every year, tobacco claims 16,000 lives in the province of Ontario. That's 44 people every day, or almost one life every 30 minutes. These statistics are tragic when you consider that tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of death in Ontario.

Smoking also burdens the province and its citizens economically. Tobacco-related diseases cost the Ontario economy \$1.6 billion in health care annually, which results in \$4.4 billion in productivity losses and at least 500,000 hospital days each year.

Compte tenu de ce bilan, la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée a constitué une loi vraiment essentielle. Elle

s'inscrit dans le cadre de nos efforts plus ambitieux consistant à réduire la consommation.

Il est tout à fait indiqué que nous célébrions l'anniversaire de cette loi le jour même où l'Organisation mondiale de la santé marque la Journée mondiale sans tabac sur le thème « Des espaces sans tabac ».

It is fitting that we celebrate the anniversary of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act on the same day that the World Health Organization has declared World No Tobacco Day, on May 31, with this year's theme of smoke-free environments.

A year ago tomorrow, on the front lawns of the Legislature, I was joined by my colleague George Smitherman when we marked a turning point in this province's drive towards a smoke-free Ontario. Our partners, our volunteers, schoolchildren and youth, long-time advocates, government officials and legislators all joined together on this incredible day of change in Ontario.

Sadly, one of the driving forces behind the Smoke-Free Ontario Act was not at our side when the legislation came into effect. Our dear friend Heather Crowe, as many of you know, passed away on May 22, 2006, of lung cancer. Heather never smoked a day in her life. Her courageous battle to educate people about the dangers of second-hand smoke inspired this government to take action. We all owe her a tremendous debt. I'm reminded of that each time we recognize the leadership and the efforts of our health partners, such as a public health unit with the award that was created in Heather's honour. If only Heather could be with us and continue to see the progress being made.

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of renaming the Ministry of Health Promotion boardroom as the Heather Crowe boardroom, a small gesture to remind us all of this great tobacco-free hero.

When we ran for office in 2003, we made a promise to Ontario to reduce tobacco consumption by 20% and make all workplaces and public places smoke-free. The latest figures indicate that Ontario tobacco consumption has fallen by 18.7%, or more than 2.6 billion cigarettes, since 2003.

Le ministère de la Promotion de la santé et les 36 bureaux de santé publique dans la province, qui sont responsables de l'exécution de la loi, ont adopté une approche graduelle pour appliquer la loi, approche qui est concluante.

Because of you, one year after the act became law we are seeing real results. Let me share with you some of the statistics:

—In 2005, 67% of students in grades 7 to 12 had never taken a puff of a cigarette. That is a 10% reduction since 2003.

—The number of students in grades 7 to 12 who say they have smoked is the lowest since 1977.

—Restaurants and bars have had a 99.9% compliance rate with the prohibition on indoor smoking, according to the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit.

—As of March 31, there have been only 2,838 charges laid across the province. In a province of close to 13 million people, that is quite remarkable. Those charges

include selling to minors, as well as smoking in an enclosed public workplace.

A 99.9% compliance rate: Congratulations to the public, restaurateurs and bar owners. Because the bars, restaurants, hotels and a host of workplaces, and smokers themselves, have made the adjustment, there is virtually 100% compliance with the law's requirements for smoke-free environments.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): How about those smoking palaces—

Hon. Mr. Watson: Mr. Speaker, the member from Renfrew continuously interrupts. I know he does not support the Smoke-Free Ontario Act but—

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

Hon. Mr. Watson: —I know the people in his riding were disappointed when I handed his public health unit the Heather Crowe Award.

Since 2003, this government has increased its investment in tobacco control sixfold, to a total of \$60 million. Such investment is critical to the success of the entire smoke-free Ontario strategy, of which the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is the centrepiece. We know that the Smoke-Free Ontario Act goes a long way to making Ontario a healthier place to live, work and raise a family. But it is only one part of our strategy, which is among the toughest and most comprehensive tobacco control strategies in North America.

En collaboration étroite avec toute une série de partenaires, nous avons mis en œuvre une stratégie qui repose sur trois piliers :

—empêcher les jeunes de commencer à fumer;

—protéger tout le monde des effets nocifs du tabagisme passif; et

—aider les fumeurs qui veulent arrêter de fumer à réaliser leur objectif.

Our prevention strategy for youth involved an \$8.8-million investment in 2006-07 to support such initiatives as the youth action alliances, the Lungs are for Life school curriculum and our award-winning stupid.ca campaign.

We have also helped Ontarians quit through a \$10-million investment in cessation programs in 2006-07, such as:

—the Canadian Cancer Society's Driven to Quit Challenge; Smokers' Helpline, which is 1-877-513-5333; and Smokers' Helpline Online. On April 30, 2007, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Ministry of Health Promotion presented the 2007 Driven to Quit Challenge grand prizewinner with a brand new Acura CSX. Just before Krista Dwyer of Windsor drove away in her new car, she said, "After 20 years of smoking, I realized it was time to make my health a priority. After a number of unsuccessful attempts to quit smoking last year, I'm thrilled I was finally able to do it. I'm in my last year of nursing school and understand the need to set the right example as a health care professional."

Other cessation programs include the Leave the Pack Behind program, which reached 390,000 full-time students in 32 Ontario universities and colleges; and groundbreaking research on the optimal distribution

methods for nicotine replacement therapy carried out by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

It was my pleasure to announce at the today's Smoke-Free Ontario reception across the street at Hart House that this government is increasing help available to smokers who want to quit and may be in need of additional assistance accessing cessation services. It was announced today that the McGuinty government is providing free nicotine replacement therapy and cessation support via the 54 community health centres, like Pinecrest-Queensway community health centre and Carlington community health centre and many others across the province, and the 10 aboriginal health access centres.

Our task is not yet complete on many fronts. On May 31, 2008, the final phase of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act will take effect with the complete ban of the display of so-called tobacco product power walls.

In closing, I'd like to thank all of our partners, be they individuals, non-government organizations or private businesses, for the contribution they have made to the success of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

1410

GO TRANSIT

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I rise in the House today to tell you about our government's investment in GO Transit. Since we took office nearly four years ago, our government has invested \$1.8 billion in GO Transit to benefit the riders of the greater Toronto area and Hamilton, including \$457 million this year alone.

Exactly one week ago today was GO Transit's 40th anniversary, and it's been 40 years of phenomenal growth. It's hard to imagine that GO Transit started in 1967 as an experiment, with a single train running along a short stretch of Lake Ontario. As soon as the first trains began soaring across the tracks, they were filled with people looking for an alternative to the car.

In its first year, GO carried 2.5 million passengers, and its success hasn't stopped since. Today, GO Transit operates seven train lines and a bus system that covers more than 2,200 kilometres. It carries over 48 million passengers a year on a system of trains and buses that connect with each other and regional transit right across the greater Toronto area and Hamilton. GO has become one of the greatest transit system success stories in North America. Its triumphs have exceeded the wildest dreams of anyone who was involved in its creation, and there's more growth ahead.

Better service for Mississauga residents is only a few months away, as this fall we will open the new Lisgar station. It will be the first new GO station to be built in Mississauga in 25 years. We're working with the federal government and greater Toronto area municipalities on a \$1-billion infrastructure improvement plan that will see many new kilometres of track built on the Lakeshore and Georgetown lines, and hopefully, by the end of this year, GO rail service will be restored to Barrie, Ontario.

We are also constructing underpasses and overpasses so that GO train commuters will not be delayed by freight traffic on the Georgetown, Bradford and Stouffville lines, and we cannot forget about the heart of the GO expansive network: Union Station. GO Transit has also embarked on an extensive renewal program for Union Station and the tracks approaching the historic station. The improvements will double the station's capacity to more than 80 million passengers per year and will improve train operations and reduce operating costs.

We are making improvements to Union Station so that commuters can get around easily. We have opened a new platform and added new stairways to reduce bottlenecks and make it easier for riders to get to the GO concourse, transit connections and street-level walkways. The historic train shed roof, one of only two of its kind in Canada, will be rehabilitated, providing a cleaner, brighter platform area. A modernized signal system will improve reliability and allow trains to move quickly in and out of the station. More efficient use of trains means a better system for riders.

Mr. Howard was the first CEO of GO, and he indicated at the anniversary party that he didn't think they'd reach one million riders. This year they celebrated their one billionth rider. These improvements will also allow GO to expand routes, increase service and keep pace with the growth within the greater Toronto area and in Hamilton.

Our investments have provided GO riders with access to four new train stations: East Gwillimbury, Mount Pleasant, Kennedy and the relocated Milliken station. We have opened a new bus terminal at Square One in Mississauga and at McMaster University in Hamilton—and it's heated. We have also purchased 70 new bi-level rail cars, which carry seven million more passengers per year; 27 more powerful and fuel-efficient locomotives; and 144 new accessible buses and 12 double-decker buses. We've added 500 new bus trips per day and 6,000 new parking spaces right across the system.

Those investments are paying off. GO Transit ridership has increased by about 10%, from 44.3 million to 48.7 million, in the last three years. That's 4.4 million more passengers a year. Total GO Transit ridership in fiscal 2007-08 is expected to be around 51 million, and that means an average of more than 1.4 million fewer car trips each year in and around the greater Toronto area. Getting more people out of their cars and onto public transit means we're all breathing cleaner air, burning less fuel and reducing gridlock.

Improving public transit is a vital part of this government's plan to create a more sustainable transportation system, and we've taken steps with the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority. The GTTA will build a seamless transportation system and a network that will go across the GTA and Hamilton. We now know that we've made a difference in how we can provide service to the people who are commuting, not only in and out but right across the whole area. We've given riders convenience as well with the introduction of a new fare card.

I'm proud to say that our commitment to public transit is making a huge difference to the people of Ontario.

INJURED WORKERS' DAY

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I'm privileged to rise in recognition of injured workers in the province of Ontario. Friday is Injured Workers' Day in the province, and on that day I will address a rally here at Queen's Park. The rally is being organized by the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups, and I would encourage all members from all sides to join us there.

It's sad that this group has to exist because people have been killed or injured on the job. It should sadden all of us.

This day is a memorial to those who have been injured or killed on the job simply because they went to work. This should not happen. Every single workplace injury is preventable, and every member in this Legislature knows that to be true. There should be no excuse for a workplace injury or death.

Unfortunately, though, not everyone understands this. Regrettably, there are those who take workplace health and safety too lightly. Our government is committed to reducing the occurrence of workplace injuries. Nevertheless, workers continue to be injured; workers continue to be killed.

A month ago, our government presented its fourth budget. This budget is more than just numbers on a page, because this is the fourth part of our plan to invest in people and expand opportunities in Ontario to create new economic strength. These are the foundations of a successful, caring and compassionate society. We're investing in children, families, seniors and our most vulnerable.

One of the most significant steps we've taken as a result of that budget has been to address one of our most vulnerable groups: injured workers. Our government is committed to creating a brighter future for injured workers. One of the things we clearly understood is that when a worker is injured, it affects not only his or her working life but it affects family life. It can affect the ability to exercise and enjoy recreational activities. It affects social life and it affects self-worth.

While we may not be able to undo the injury that has been done, we can make life a little easier financially. And that's what we have done. On July 1, injured workers who are not 100% disabled will receive a 2.5% increase in benefits. That's being followed by another 2.5% increase on January 1, 2008, and another on January 1, 2009.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I hear the NDP heckling on the other side. I think it's incumbent on us to remember who sent our injured workers on a downward spiral in the province. It was the NDP in 1994 that created the Friedland formula. Don't ever forget that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Lanark-Carleton is attempting to raise a point of order.

The member for Lanark-Carleton.

Mr. Sterling: The Minister of Labour's most recent remarks are not contained in the statement given to the opposition. This is not a debate; this is about ministers' statements.

The Speaker: As members would know, the government does circulate copies of statements by the ministry to the appropriate critics in the opposition parties. It is incumbent upon ministers to stick to the remarks that are made in the—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Just wait. It's incumbent upon ministers to read the statement as presented to the opposition. Having said that, it is impossible for the Speaker to know that because the Speaker does not have a copy of the statements. I also would caution members that heckling is sometimes responded to.

Minister?

1420

Hon. Mr. Peters: Speaker, I apologize. Next time I'll make sure that I stay to the script and I will make sure that I include who introduced the Friedland formula.

Our government has done more to help injured workers, some of whom have not seen any meaningful increases in benefits in 12 years. I'm proud of that. We have listened to injured workers and their call for changes, and we are delivering.

One of our first steps as a government was to undertake an independent audit of the WSIB. Recommendations were made and significant changes were implemented to stabilize the WSIB. It was an essential step in moving forward to make improvements to benefits for injured workers. Because we're taking a fiscally responsible approach, it gives us an opportunity to regularly address the needs of injured workers.

As a result of the proposed changes in the budget, indexing increases in WSIB benefits for partially disabled workers would no longer require changes to the legislation that was created by the Friedland formula.

Further to those legislative changes, there is the addition of \$810,000 a year in ongoing funding for the Office of the Worker Adviser. This is in addition to funding that will allow the agency to improve and expand services to injured workers and their survivors. The Office of the Worker Adviser educates, advises and represents non-union workers on workplace safety and insurance matters.

I want to thank a number of groups: Bright Lights, Women of Inspiration, Injured Workers' Consultants, Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group and the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups.

These proposed changes represent the commitment of our government to assist and help vulnerable workers in

this province, some of the most vulnerable being injured workers.

If there is one more thing that we can all do for workers it is that we can prevent them from being injured in the first place.

We have committed to an impressive goal of reducing lost-time injuries to our workers by 20% over four years. We committed to hiring an additional 200 health and safety inspectors. We've done that. We have introduced a powerful new intervention strategy to deal with employers who are not doing what they must to care for the health and safety of their workers. We are committed to reducing those lost-time injuries by 20%, and I'm proud to say that we are succeeding.

Every one of us needs to work together. We need to change attitudes. We need to change behaviours. Every workplace injury, every workplace death can be prevented. When I meet with injured workers, I am inspired and saddened at the same time. I am aware and in awe of their courage and resilience but I am saddened that they are injured; it didn't have to happen. I think we all need to do what we can to reduce workplace injuries.

VISITORS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to introduce the students from Queensway Christian College and their teacher Joni Allardyce, sitting up in the gallery.

Also sitting in the gallery today is my daughter Sarah Witmer.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I can't top having a child in the House, but I do want to introduce very good constituents of mine, Mr. Bob McConkey and his son Sean, who is a former page, to visit their daughter and sister. Sean has thrown the gauntlet down and said he's absolutely sure he can be a better page than she is. I think there's some sibling rivalry here.

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses? The member for Lanark–Carleton.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): As you know, in 1985 I introduced the first bill to control smoking in the workplace and public places in Canada, let alone in the province of Ontario. Therefore, I am very much against smoking—this terrible addiction—and we celebrate each cessation of that habit. We also celebrate the life and contribution of Heather Crowe, who worked and grew up in the same area where I was raised.

But let us remember back to when this bill was before this Legislature. Let us remember that during the hearings on this bill, the minister responsible, who has spoken, refused to provide funding or accommodation to our seniors in nursing homes. Let us remember this past winter, when many thousands of seniors were forced out into the freezing cold in order to have a smoke because they were addicted to this terrible nicotine. Lastly, let us

remember senior Murray Miles Patterson, who froze to death in Gore Bay, on Manitoulin Island, in part due to this government's insensitive approach to this problem.

GO TRANSIT

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): I too want to offer my congratulations to GO Transit, to the dedication, professionalism and expertise of many staff, dating from 40 years ago to the present, and to the board members who knew to park their politics at the door and provide good service for the people of Ontario.

This service began in 1967. It was the prior Progressive Conservative government that had a vision for good public transit and invested in that public transit. The stats speak for themselves: 2.5 million people in its first year, rising to 51 million people a year riding transit in 2007-08.

Ridership, of course, is in and around the greater Toronto area at this point in time. In my riding of Burlington, people depend hugely on GO Transit. They use it to commute back and forth to work in the morning and to home at night. As we move forward in the next 40 years and we plan for GO to expand, it will still remain the best, the safest and the most economical commuter rail transit system in North America.

I want to thank the staff and the board members for their continued dedication. These people know that we have a jewel in public transit here in the Toronto area, a transit system that I feel should be kept on the right track.

INJURED WORKERS' DAY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): John Tory and all members of the Progressive Conservative caucus join with the many workers in remembrance of the victims who are unnecessarily injured or killed on the job in Ontario.

Yesterday, I met with Steve Mahoney, chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. There was no doubt in our minds that there is no such thing as an accident on the job. Too many workers have been injured or killed during the course of their employment. Every one of those injuries or deaths was preventable. We must do better.

I extend our condolences and sympathy to all injured workers, their families and the families of the deceased.

VISITOR

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today one of the newest members of the John Tory team, the nominated candidate for Prince Edward–Hastings, Eric DenOuden.

INJURED WORKERS' DAY

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Labour in terms of

the rally that's happening here on Friday, being put together by the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups. I have to start by saying how much New Democrats appreciate the work that the network does in communities across this province. I've had the pleasure of working with my own network of injured workers in Hamilton. They do some great work and are constantly pushing government to make sure that injured workers' issues are not forgotten.

I have to say, notwithstanding the fact that the minister is quite proud of the work that's been done, I have documentation of concerns that injured workers still have. They don't understand, and neither do I, why the government couldn't simply have indexed in some way the compensation rates. That's what injured workers have been calling for year after year, and they're not doing it. They need to have increases just based on inflation. What's wrong with putting together a system where those injured workers have their benefits indexed to inflation so that their ability to make ends meet is not eroded year after year? That's what they've asked for. That's not what this government delivered. Instead, the government delivered a little bit of something that will get them over the election and maybe into the next year or so. But the injured workers are saying loud and clear that they don't want to have to keep coming, cap in hand, to government to get increases to their pensions, and that's something that this government has failed miserably on.

1430

Members of this Legislature need to know as well that injured workers are really concerned about other pieces that this government refuses to look at. I'm talking about things like time limits on appeals, things like universal coverage. We are ashamed to know that 30% of workers in this province are not even covered by workers' compensation. That's something that your board chair, whom you are so proudly applauding, agrees with publicly: that we need to get all workers covered under the workers' compensation system in the province of Ontario.

Another issue is the experience rating system, which members will know is not working. It's a system that is basically bonusing employers for good health and safety records, but it really is just a management claims issue. Employers are not fully reporting accidents and injuries in the workplace, and this is causing significant problems for workers who are injured on the job.

There is so much more that this government needs to do for injured workers, but my other colleagues have to have some time to speak.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): There's clearly tremendous frustration and anger in the GTA about the lack of sustainable transportation, about the lack of a functioning transit system that we—

Interjections.

Mr. Tabuns: Speaker? Fine.

In any event, today there was an announcement about the 40th anniversary of GO Transit.

Last year, this government went through an exercise in passing legislation to create something called the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, which was supposed to be a centralizing body that would set forward regional transportation plans and deal with gridlock. Well, the simple reality—and that came through yesterday as well—is that this new GTTA board has simply been left out in the cold, been left out to dry, because they haven't been told how the government is going to spend its money, they haven't been consulted on HOV lanes, they haven't been consulted on the very framework within which they are supposed to operate, and, quite rightly, they are irritated.

So one has to ask on this celebration of the 40th anniversary of GO Transit, was the GTTA simply set up as a new, nice, fancy package essentially for GO Transit to continue on as always? Will GO Transit have the money it needs to deal with transit problems in the GTA? We don't see that. We see packed trains, we see late trains, and we see a government that is not covering the funding for expansion of the system, and that has left it with municipalities. It's no wonder that people in this region are angry about transit.

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to respond to the Minister of Health Promotion.

New Democrats, of course, recognize the incredible contribution of Heather Crowe, and we recognize that much more needs to be done to stop smoking in Ontario. But I want to remind the government of their own inconsistency on this measure. When it became apparent that stopping smoking was going to affect the government's own revenues at its casinos, what did the government do? They changed the law to provide smoking at casinos. They chose—

Interjections.

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

On a point of order, the member for Ottawa–Orléans.

VISITEUR

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): J'aimerais introduire un entrepreneur d'Orléans : M. Jean Hébert est ici à Queen's Park. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

DEFERRED VOTES

PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'INTERVENANT
PROVINCIAL EN FAVEUR DES ENFANTS
ET DES JEUNES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the

Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth / Projet de loi 165, Loi visant à créer la charge d'intervenant provincial en faveur des enfants et des jeunes et à y pourvoir.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1435 to 1440.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Ferreira, Paul	Patten, Richard
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John	Prue, Michael
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Horwath, Andrea	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Hudak, Tim	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Bryant, Michael	Kular, Kuldeep	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Savoline, Joyce
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Sergio, Mario
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Marsales, Judy	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Martiniuk, Gerry	Takhar, Harinder S.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
DiNovo, Cheri	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Munro, Julia	Zimmer, David
Elliott, Christine	Oraziotti, David	

The Speaker: Those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 77; the nays are 0.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

VISITORS

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask the members of the assembly to welcome to the assembly the grade 8 students from Deer Park Public School in Keswick. They're accompanied by their teacher, David Weir, and by Mary Watson and Leanne Straeche. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Today the Premier had the Governor of California in town to try to pump up his environmental image. While the Governor has given up acting, it is clear that the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We're going to start over. I need to be able to hear the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Other interventions are really not necessary.

Mr. Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Today the Premier had the Governor of California in town to try to pump up his environmental image. While the Governor has clearly given up acting, the Premier has clearly embraced it.

The only action we've seen from the McGuinty government on climate change over the past four years is a promise broken again and again to close the coal-fired power plants, all the while dismissing the need to reduce smog-causing emissions from those coal plants.

In 2002, the Premier said that dirty air causes 1,900 premature deaths, 13,000 emergency room visits, and costs \$1.1 billion in health care costs and lost work days each year. He said that he wouldn't stand idly by, but that's exactly what he's done.

My question for the minister is this: If he cared about reducing smog-emitting pollutants from the coal plants, he'd follow our lead and embrace technology that already exists that can all but eliminate those pollutants from the coal plants. Why won't you install that equipment in the coal plants, Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): We won't spend \$1.5 billion for unproven technology that's installed anywhere that would force you to keep the plants open for 40 years. That's not the right approach. I will remind the member opposite that the CO₂ also contributes to climate change and it contributes to smog.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: It does contribute to smog, with due respect. These technologies don't get CO₂; they don't get mercury; they don't get particulate. They won't be up and running until after we've closed the plants.

Final point: I remind the member opposite that under his government and his party, coal emissions went up 127%; under our government and our party, they're down 32%, a record that's unmatched anywhere in North America.

Mr. Yakabuski: Well, more emissions from the minister. But the simple fact is this: There is one member of this House who actually did close a coal plant, and that's the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, when she ordered Lakeview closed. All that this government has done is attend photo ops. They are far more interested in cutting ribbons than they are in cutting emissions.

My question is this: If they are serious about climate change and reducing smog-causing emissions, why have they taken no action over the past four years? Why have you wasted four years and allowed coal plants to continue spewing pollutants that could be dealt with under current technology—not new technology; current technology. Why have you sat back and done nothing while we continue to get smog day after smog day after smog day?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The question was devoid of fact. First of all, nitrous oxide is down; sulphur oxide is down; CO₂ is down; mercury is down. Under them, it was up.

I do remember the member opposite closing something in Ontario. It wasn't a coal plant, because the work hadn't been done; the wires hadn't been run. That member did close 28 hospitals.

What we have is a party that's endorsing coal-fired generation well into the future. We say no to you, we say no to Mr. Tory, and we say, "Hasta la vista, coal plants." That's what this government's about.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Final supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Energy: The one thing I can tell you that is up is the hot air coming from that minister. The reality is that we are the only government thus far that has signed a regulation to close a coal plant. All you've been is hot air, no action—talk, talk, talk.

We have a plan; John Tory has a plan: He's going to reduce emissions to 10% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 60% by 2050. He has a made-in-Ontario plan. We have seen nothing but hot air and talk from you and your government for four years. That's the difference between John Tory and Dalton McGuinty. Our leader is a leader who will do what he says he's going to do and not break his promises.

I ask you, why did you squander four years in office? Why did you —

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?
1450

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Well, I'm glad they'll reduce the emissions from coal plants to 10% below 1990 levels, because we've done that—with respect, job done. When we came to office, that regulation that they propagated left everything undone: no wires to close the plant; no replacement generation—we had just had a blackout; no green power. Your energy minister of the day said, "We don't need conservation."

We've gone from last to first in green power. We have windmills, bioenergy, every type of alternative source coming on stream in Ontario—the largest solar farm in the world coming in under this Premier and this government.

Mr. Tory is about more coal, about dirtier-fired power. They won't do the green power that we've done. They reject conservation. The people of Ontario rejected them in 2003; they'll reject them again in 2007, because they have no plans—

The Speaker: Thank you.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Education. A week ago, Jordan Manners was killed in a senseless act of violence in one of our schools. It's a crime that shocked us all, and today, parents, teachers and students alike try to come to grips

with that terrible event. Now we're hearing stories from current as well as former teachers at C.W. Jefferys high that that school is rife with concerns about student as well as teacher safety.

My question to the minister is simply this: Has the Premier, in light of these revelations, asked her to investigate the circumstances at this high school and deliver a full report on those circumstances with recommendations to rectify what is happening there?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I obviously take the whole situation extremely seriously. I was able to go to the visitation last night and speak with some members of the family, and it is a dreadful situation.

On the issue of the situation in the school, I spoke with the director of education of the Toronto District School Board this morning, and I know that the Toronto board is looking at the circumstances in the school. The important thing is that if the allegations are true, and I have no way of knowing specifically whether they are or not, then there are school climate issues that need to be addressed and there obviously needs to be, in every school in our province, an opportunity for teachers to talk about issues so that they can solve problems at the local level. The director of the school board is looking at the situation currently.

Mr. Klees: That's a disheartening response, for the Minister of Education to stand in her place and confirm that, in light of what we've all read—reports from teachers, both current as well as past—the best she can do is to talk to someone at the school board and see what's going to happen and if the allegations are true.

We are calling on the Minister of Education, without any further delay, to order an investigation that will deal not with platitudes, but will give her and in fact this House a comprehensive report on the circumstances in that school. Will she agree to order that investigation, not subject it to the school board?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: Here's the thing: There is a police investigation going on. I have talked to the director of education of this board. It is the director's responsibility to make sure she knows what's going on in her schools.

The member opposite doesn't have a clue how public education works. The member opposite and the leader of his party may be in the throes of some kind of epiphany around public education, but they are the people who stripped the system, they are the people who removed resources, and the gall of this member to stand up now and tell me how to deal with public education is beyond imagining.

We are responding to a complex problem with a complex response. The system is looking at what is going on in their schools. That is their responsibility, and we're providing the resources for them to do that.

Mr. Klees: What a pitiful response. In response to a question triggered by the death of a student, this Minister of Education can do nothing but hurl partisan barbs across the way. Shame on her.

Here is why I'm asking her to take action: Because a teacher is saying that the school board has failed, that the

administration has failed, that teachers have failed. If all of those levels in our education system have failed in this school—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Klees: These are not my words. These are the words of a teacher who was there, who said that the school board has—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, I will not warn you again.

Member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Klees: Sandra Fusco has said that we have all failed. She included herself as a teacher, she pointed to the administration, and I would say that if this minister does not take action, we in here have failed as well. I'm asking her to take the initiative and show leadership: Order an investigation and make sure that the appropriate steps are taken to clean this act up.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: Here's what I've done: I called the director of education this morning and I expressed my concerns. It is her responsibility, and I have faith in the director of education and in the teachers in our schools.

The teachers in our schools know that the members opposite have no confidence in them. They know that. They sat there for eight years, and every morning they would open the newspaper to see how they were going to be vilified. I am in conversation with the board of education on providing summer programs for students. There are complex responses needed to these issues. The member opposite and the Leader of the Opposition sat by idly for eight years while our system was stripped. They define "johnny-come-lately" with their compassion.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Almost 175,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost under the McGuinty government since August 2004. That represents almost 20% of the total manufacturing jobs in Ontario lost in less than three years under the McGuinty government. New Democrats have put forward a number of positive suggestions that would help to save and sustain manufacturing jobs in this province, but the McGuinty government has rejected virtually every one of them. My question is this: As the loss of manufacturing jobs continues and worsens, where is the McGuinty government's plan to save and sustain manufacturing jobs and to sustain the pensions of hard-working Ontarians who are losing their jobs?

1500

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for

women's issues): I'm very pleased to stand with the workers of this province and work with them and corporate Ontario to bring investment to Ontario. I find it very interesting, having been in the House with this particular member for a few years now. I remember the days that the gallery would be filled with union leaders and he would be quoting the union leaders right here in the House.

Unfortunately, the times have changed for him, because I'm going to quote a union leader now: "Dalton McGuinty is the only one who understands the automotive sector." Who said that? That was the CAW leader Buzz Hargrove. We were proud, even this past Sunday, to walk with Buzz in Windsor in support of manufacturing jobs in Windsor. Where was Howard, in fact? He was around the corner, but he wasn't walking with the workers in Windsor on Sunday.

So I ask the leader of this third party: Where are you when we have tabled measures to help the manufacturing sector? You have been on the No side every time.

Mr. Hampton: What workers across Ontario want to see is a plan and not more hot air from the McGuinty government. The reality is, Ontario's working families need a government that will put working families first, because the McGuinty government has refused to act: refused to establish an office of the jobs commissioner; refused to reduce sky-high hydro rates that are killing jobs, especially in the forest and steel sectors; refused to toughen the Employment Standards Act so that Ontario would not be one of the jurisdictions where it's cheap, quick and easy to lay off workers and shut down plants.

Today, the Workers' Action Centre put forward this plan with a number of suggestions on how workers in this province could be helped. My question: Is the McGuinty government going to reject the suggestions in this plan as well?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I do have to suggest that when I became the minister this past fall, I did look at what this third party leader was advancing in the notion of a jobs commissioner. We contacted the people in British Columbia. We also know that they cancelled that position in BC because they saw that it was too far removed from government to be effective. Our conversation was that, in fact, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade works directly with the companies; it is not an arm's-length agency, as the one that this member is advancing. We did look. Having been in opposition, I actually value the fact that a minister might consider an idea that comes from opposition.

You are tabling information today that I am very happy to look at, because the record of this government is clear. We have come forward to partner with the manufacturing sector and find every way. Despite a crushing high-dollar value, despite the fact that there is global influence in our manufacturing today, we are working with the manufacturing sector—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The McGuinty government and the minister refer to the Liberal government in British

Columbia that cut the office of the jobs commissioner after that office had sustained and saved 75,000 out of 100,000 jobs that were at risk of being destroyed. They say this is an improvement.

Minister, here's one of the suggestions from the Workers' Action Centre. It's to establish an employee wage protection fund. But guess what? The McGuinty government has already rejected that. New Democrats put forward a private member's bill to ensure that when a plant is closed, at least the vacation pay, at least the severance pay, at least the unpaid wages that were owed, would be covered. The McGuinty government rejected that.

So my question is this: How does the McGuinty government explain to the 175,000 working families who have lost their jobs that it's okay that they can't get their pension covered, it's okay if they lose—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I would like to put on record the ministers on this side of the House who have written, called, spoken and met with federal ministers after Bill C-55 was passed in the federal House and has yet to become proclaimed as law. I would ask the member opposite: Have you talked to your colleague in Ottawa, Mr. Layton? Has he once brought up this issue of better protection for workers? We have, on this side of the House. We will table the letters for you to see. Perhaps you'd like that as a version of a letter you could also forward.

We're doing our level best in the face of major global change. We have come forward with programs the likes of which Ontario has never seen. The reality is that your jobs commissioner proposal didn't work in BC. In fact, Ontario has a far better method of direct access to companies that may need our help.

We are looking feverishly for every new, good idea for us to partner with and we're prepared to accept any—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

CONSERVATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question again is to the Deputy Premier, but it's interesting that, as 175,000 jobs disappear, what's the real answer of the McGuinty government? "Blame somebody else."

The Premier has been only too happy to meet with the Governor of California. We know that California is a leader in meeting its target of reducing waste going to landfills by 50%. They met that target in September 2006. Dalton McGuinty promised to reach a 60% reduction target. Last year, New Democrats put forward a freedom of information request, and not only has the McGuinty government failed to reach the target but—what a surprise—we found out there isn't even a plan to reach the target.

Can the Deputy Premier tell us: Why did the Premier break his promise to reach 60% waste reduction? Why isn't there even a plan?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm so very pleased to have a chance to remind the leader of the third party what steps we as a government have taken to move our province from the dark ages under the former government, where municipalities planned in a mode of crisis. We are very proud to have negotiated an agreement with all municipalities that sent their waste to the United States and to have a concrete agreement in place to allow them to plan, year over year, to understand, to work with our neighbours to the south, so that we can plan waste management in a way that is not lurching from crisis to crisis, as was the history under the former Conservative government, which did absolutely nothing to move this province forward in a way to protect the environment.

Mr. Hampton: Here is the reality: The Republican Governor of California is flexing his environmental muscles. And what do we get from the McGuinty government on waste diversion? No waste diversion; not even a plan.

Deputy Premier, California has also been a leader in energy efficiency and energy conservation. Instead of wasting money and effort on expensive, unreliable and environmentally risky nuclear power plants, California invested aggressively in energy efficiency. The result: California has curbed electricity consumption while, in Ontario, electricity consumption continues to accelerate under Dalton McGuinty.

My question is this: When will the McGuinty government start investing aggressively in energy efficiency rather than putting \$40 billion into a mega nuclear scheme?

Hon. Ms. Broten: The Minister of Energy is anxious to respond to this question.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): Let's start with energy conservation: \$2 billion in investment, five province-wide programs, 490 programs administered by LDCs throughout Ontario. I would remind the leader of the third party that when he was given the opportunity to do conservation, when he had the chance, they cancelled all conservation programs.

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In terms of energy efficiency, Ontario meets or exceeds California in virtually every standard, and I suspect that's one of the reasons why Governor Schwarzenegger was proud to sign the deal that our Premier, Premier McGuinty, signed today. There is no government in North America that is more aggressively pursuing energy efficiency, more aggressive in pursuing energy conservation and, yes, more successful in dealing with the energy challenge and ensuring we have a cleaner, greener, reliable supply of electricity—

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

Mr. Hampton: The McGuinty government puts forward a strategy for \$40 billion in nuclear plants and

conducts superficial advertising campaigns about energy efficiency and calls that progress. I call it superficial photo ops.

California is also ahead of the McGuinty government in something else. California pioneered community-right-to-know legislation to crack down on toxins in our homes and in our communities. The Governor of California is a staunch supporter. How about Dalton McGuinty? The McGuinty Liberals refused to support a NDP bill, which leading environmental and public health groups want passed, to provide community-right-to-know legislation in Ontario.

My question: Why isn't the Premier willing to follow California's lead and support people's right of access to information in this province? Why is the Premier happy to pose for photo ops—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister of Energy?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Broten: Our Premier stood side by side with Governor Schwarzenegger today because those are two leaders, in the biggest jurisdiction in the US and the largest province in Canada, who are going to move us forward to protect our planet. Frankly, we need both of those leaders arm in arm, working collectively.

I answered this question yesterday in the House, and let me tell you, we've paid close attention to the private member's bill. We've attended the hearings and participated. But we will say over and over again that labelling products is the responsibility of the federal government. That's why Minister Phillips and I are pushing Minister Clement to take his responsibility and label those products.

At the same time, we are aggressively reducing the air pollutants and the other contaminants that Ontarians breathe in each and every day, and we are making great progress. That's why Governor Schwarzenegger was here today.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Recent articles in the Toronto Star and across this province have proved that there was a lapse in accountability and transparency in her department in the last two years and, further, that her ministry knew almost two years ago that children were being abused at some provincially licensed daycares. For two years, her ministry had the documentation, and for two years ministry officials ignored freedom of information legislation and withheld information for no good reason—two years, when the ministry had a maximum of 90 days to respond.

Will the minister stand here today and offer to request the privacy commissioner to undertake a full audit into the freedom of information practices of her ministry?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): Actually, the privacy

commissioner has issued her 2006 year-end report, and I'm pleased to say that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services has been reported to be in compliance at the 95.5% level, which is pretty good. It is, in fact, a very significant improvement over 2005, where the compliance level of my ministry was 84.3%. We will continue to work towards 100%, but certainly the commissioner's own report speaks very favourably of my ministry's compliance with FIPPA.

Ms. MacLeod: The minister can try to explain that to the parents who couldn't get access to information and to the reporters who had to go through a number of appeals to try to lessen the charges that they had to give for their information requests, and the time that they took.

The Toronto Star's articles on abuses occurring in Ontario's daycares made it crystal clear that the Minister of Children and Youth Services was aware of the abuses in certain daycares—this despite the challenges that reporters faced while trying to access information that should have been made public from the beginning. She has been aware for almost two years, yet only after the media revealed the abuses and embarrassed that government into acting did she even decide to begin to act on transparency and accountability.

Now that the cat's out of the bag, I'm going to ask her one more time: Will the minister bring in the privacy commissioner to undertake a full audit of her ministry's freedom of information practices, and furthermore, once it's complete, will she make it public?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I've actually been receiving very positive feedback on the steps that my ministry is taking to ensure that parents have access to the kind of information they need on child care centres, because we share a commitment to ensuring the health and safety of children in our child care centres.

I would like to provide parents with a telephone number which they can call to report concerns or complaints to my ministry or to request information on what has been transpiring at their particular centre. The number is 1-866-821-7770.

Within a few months, or sooner if possible, we will also have a website online which will detail serious occurrences associated with every licensed child care centre in this province, because the health and well-being of our children is absolutely—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Before the last election, the McGuinty Liberals said this: "We are committing \$300 million new provincial dollars to increase the affordability and quality of childhood education and care in Ontario."

Yesterday, the Minister of Children and Youth Services admitted to breaking this promise and forcing Ontario parents and families to choose between risky child care on one hand and no spaces at all on the other hand. What's more, the minister refused to put federal money for child care into regulated, not-for-profit care,

even though for-profit care centres have far worse safety records in this province.

My question is this: Hard-working families need to know, and they need to know today, when is the minister going to put the money where it belongs: in regulated, not-for-profit child care for all Ontario children?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I'm going to take the liberty of ignoring the incorrect information that the member from Hamilton East presented in her question. I think it's really unacceptable that she should be so creative.

Let me respond to the matter of for-profit and not-for-profit child care. At this point in time, more than 78% of licensed child care centres in Ontario are not-for-profit centres, and approximately 21% are for-profit centres. Those statistics have not changed since our government has taken office, in spite of the fact that we added almost 15,000 new spaces last year. That is also given the fact that the federal government—and the NDP never spoke up when those agreements were at risk. They never spoke up.

Ms. Horwath: The minister forgets to include the fact that they would not take for-profit child care centres off of the docket in terms of their Best Start plan. That's the fact that she won't admit to.

Nonetheless, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario called the McGuinty government's lack of quality, non-profit child care in Ontario a disgrace.

The minister tries to shift the blame, as she just did, to the federal government, but when the McGuinty Liberals promised \$300 million of new provincial money, they also promised, at the same time, to spend all federal child care money on actual child care.

Again, I quote: "We will also prioritize spending from the federal ECD funding on child care as well as partner with the federal government on a national child care strategy to spend those specific federal dollars on regulated, centre-based care."

Didn't anyone ever tell the minister that two wrongs don't make a right? When will this minister release the federal money that has been withheld for so long—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: We lost a federal-provincial agreement that basically deprived Ontario families of \$1.4 billion. But in spite of that, we created almost 15,000 new child care spaces last year, and our government has committed to sustain every single one of those spaces. That record is a far cry from the NDP record, where they closed child care spaces. In fact, we know the demand for spaces is well beyond even what we have been able to do so far. But they closed spaces. We have created almost 15,000 new spaces.

STUDENT LITERACY
COMPÉTENCES LINGUISTIQUES
CHEZ LES ÉLÈVES

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): My question is for the Minister of Education.

Today, the Education Quality and Accountability Office released the results of the 2006-07 Ontario secondary school literacy test. The test, administered to more than 146,000 grade 10 students this past March, measured whether students are meeting the minimum standards for literacy.

The McGuinty government has focused on helping all students improve their literacy skills. We created the literacy secretariat to support student achievement in schools across the province. We have provided funding for 6,800 more teachers in our schools, and we have invested more than \$3.5 billion in the education system.

Minister, the OSSLT is an important tool that teachers and schools use to help support students. Can you—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): We have raised student achievement to record levels, and we've held that progress. It's a very good good-news story. We've got more ESL students, more special-needs students, more girls and more francophones succeeding this year than were succeeding five years ago. We're at an 84% achievement rate. That's a very high rate. We've got almost 25,000 more students succeeding this year than five years ago.

Female students: 12,772 more girls succeeded than in 2002. We've got 1,000 more ESL students achieving, 4,500 more special-needs students have been successful this year than in 2002, and about 14,000 more students who are taking academic English reached the standard this year. In applied English, the rate of increase has been even more dramatic, at 24% more students. That's 11,000 more students since 2002. It's a very good good-news story for students in the province.

Mr. Lalonde: It's remarkable how much these test scores have improved since the McGuinty government took office in 2003. We have more ESL learners, more students with special needs and more students in applied-level courses succeeding at the literacy test. More students are also finding success through the Ontario secondary school literacy course. It is clear that your efforts to support students are working.

Notre gouvernement veut voir de bons résultats pour tous les élèves. Bien que ces résultats démontrent que les élèves de l'Ontario ont maintenu leur excellent niveau de succès, il y a encore du travail à faire pour assurer le succès académique de tous les élèves.

Minister, how will you continue to support our students' achievements?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: The test scores are one way of looking at the student success that we've experienced. But what's really important is that we've got more students graduating from high school: 6,000 more students a year are getting their secondary school diplomas, and that is because of programs we've put in place: our high-skills major, dual credits, more co-op programs. What that means is that more 16- and 17-year-olds are choosing to continue to stay in school and to go on to apprenticeship or to college or university.

That's what's really critical about these results, and that's because we've put student success teachers in schools. We've got more than 1,900 since we came to office in 2003. We've put \$25 million more into special education just this year, \$10 million for the aboriginal grant and \$7.5 million just this year for English as a second language. Every year we've been making those investments to help capture the kids who are struggling. They are succeeding. That's what the test results demonstrate.

NATIVE LAND CLAIMS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): To the minister of aboriginal affairs: Minister, you bought Douglas Creek Estates, the occupied land at Caledonia. You paid \$15.8 million, plus \$1.1 million in compensation, \$5.8 million for other builders—\$22.7 million all told. This does set a precedent. My question is, will you be buying other lands threatened with seizure? Will you be compensating other builders who have been intimidated with respect to their plans for development?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I'd like to inform the member—as I'm sure he is aware—that since November we've been working on a protocol for the future development of the Haldimand tract. We think it's very important that we reach some certainty and some predictability as to how growth and prosperity can accrue in that particular area. We've been working very hard to try to get that. We're not there at this time. These situations should be solved at the negotiating table, and we're determined to do that.

Mr. Barrett: You mentioned November. It has been 15 months, and we need to know whether Dalton McGuinty has a plan for native land seizures. Is he making this up as he goes along? Is the historic Haldimand tract, by any stretch of the imagination, a safe bet for development?

We know that Dalton McGuinty paid \$22.7 million at Caledonia. Last week in Hagersville, at the former Northview School, a developer, having invested \$2 million, was intimidated and was walking away from that site. The question is, what is the plan? It has been 15 months. Is there any compensation in order? Is there any thought to purchase this land? What about businesses in Hagersville? What about homeowners?

A precedent was set. Where are we now? What's the plan, after 15 months?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Where we are today is that we are working with Six Nations and Haudenosaunee to develop a protocol for development in the Haldimand tract. I agree with the member: We need predictability going forward. That's very important. This is a high-growth area. It's part of the growth plan, and developments need to proceed. We need to see these communities prosper. So we're working at the side table and the main table on this issue, and I would hope soon we'd have progress on this.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I have here over 100 letters from various electrical contractors across the province. These particular letters speak to a move by your ministry that allows air conditioning mechanics to perform work that is normally done by certified and trained electricians. Allowing air conditioning mechanics to do this type of work that they're not certified for can lead to a safety issue as far as injury and possibly death. I have a very simple question to you: Are you prepared today in this House to say that you will not allow that work to be hived off to an unskilled trade?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I thank the member for raising the issue. As he knows, the type of work that he's speaking of—and for those who may not be familiar, we're talking about residential air conditioning systems installed by a compulsory trade. The only issue is whether they are allowed to connect that system up to the panel—that's all we're talking about—work that has been done by members of that compulsory trade for decades.

We were asked by the Electrical Safety Authority to take a look at the issue. The first question is: Is there a safety issue? And if anybody has evidence of non-safety, give it to the Ministry of Labour, my ministry and the ESA. We discussed with both compulsory trades, the electricians and the HVAC trade, and we've gotten to the position now where they agree on a compromise for commercial systems. In residential systems, what the air conditioning trade will be able to do is simply connect up the system to the existing electrical panel—what they've been doing for decades.

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Mr. Bisson: I have in the gallery today Dan Racicot, who is one of the contractors out of Timmins who represents literally hundreds of contractors across this province.

I know something of this issue. I'm a certified electrician by trade and I can tell you it's not as simple as just running a wire from an air conditioning unit and bringing it into a panel. There are a number of things that you've got to take into consideration, and those are issues that you're trained for. You serve a 9,000-hour apprenticeship. You go to trade school in order to learn your trade for two reasons: one, that you can do it well, but two, that you do it safely and you never put the public at harm.

I ask you again. This is an unsafe move. We're asking you to say no and to not allow this particular part of the trade to be hived off to workers who are not trained or qualified to do the work, which can lead to a very unsafe condition.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Again, you have two compulsory trades. To be fair, not only are the electricians serving an apprenticeship of many thousands of hours and taking the required course, but the residential air conditioning

mechanics are serving an apprenticeship of many thousands of hours and taking the connection issue in their course. The Electrical Safety Authority, when we asked, did not have any safety issues. The two provincial advisory committees at first agreed and then disagreed on the approach.

I say to the member that if there is evidence of a safety issue, I, the Minister of Labour, and the ESA, the Electrical Safety Authority, want to know first. But there has to be evidence because, frankly, this work has been done for decades, and the contractors would know that.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): My question is to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Small and medium-size enterprises make up 99% of Ontario businesses and account for more than 50% of the jobs in Ontario. In May 2006, Premier McGuinty created Ontario's first ever ministry dedicated to small business and entrepreneurs.

Across the province, including my riding of Northumberland, there are many hard-working small business owners who contribute so much to our local communities but who, by unlocking this creative potential, contribute to innovation, investment and job creation in every part of the province.

Over the past year, we have been conducting outreach while visiting small business owners and organizations. Minister, can you please share with us what Ontario small businesses have identified as a top priority?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): First of all, I want to thank the member from Northumberland for asking the question, but I also want to thank him for his advocacy on behalf of small and medium-size businesses.

My ministry was created about a year ago. After that, I had the chance to go and visit and meet with a lot of business people in this whole province. My colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who is the chair of the Small Business Agency of Ontario, also did the outreach meetings. During these meetings it became very evident that there were three or four issues that were really bothering the business community. One was paperwork, because they were spending a terrible amount of time filling out government forms. The second was that they wanted easy and good access to information from the government ministries. The third issue was that they want to make sure that they have the ability to sell to the government as small businesses.

They also raised issues in regard to—

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

Mr. Rinaldi: Minister, small businesses give back to their local communities and make us stronger in so many ways. Ontario's small business sector is a principal contributor to innovation, investment and job creation in every part of the province. This important community makes up to 99% of Ontario's businesses and accounts for more than 50% of Ontario jobs. It is important that

our government makes every effort to take proactive steps in supporting these sectors and provide the kind of vibrant business environment that encourages success, prosperity and job creation, and we are delivering on these commitments.

Minister, as reducing the paper burden has been identified as a top issue among Ontario's small business community, can you please tell us what your ministry has been doing to address this issue?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: When we found out that paperwork was one of the major issues facing the business community, we went around, along with the Minister of Government Services, to find out how many business forms were out there. We found out that there were about 5,000 forms. Then we decided to tackle the issue of paper burden with about seven ministries. Our target was to reduce about 20% of the paper burden in the first year. I'm pleased to say that in the seven ministries in the first year, along with the help of the Minister of Government Services and the Small Business Agency of Ontario, we have been able to reduce it by 24%.

Not only have we done that but, along with the Minister of Labour, we have also bundled some of the rules and regulations by industry segment so that businesses can have easy access to all that information.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I have a question for the Premier. You have asked the Auditor General to look into the activities vis-à-vis your Ministers of Citizenship and Culture regarding the funds disbursed at the end of last fiscal year. Will you guarantee this Legislature that you will release the auditor's report—the unabridged copy of that report—immediately after you receive it from the Auditor General of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Yes, we will do that.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. Public education in Ontario is becoming a two-tier system. Public schools that are able to fundraise have it all, and other schools that can't have less.

Under this government, parents who have time, money and know-how get operational and capital improvements; those who don't, receive their education in conditions that are less than excellent.

Minister, do you think it's acceptable that schools in a wealthy neighbourhood get baseball and soccer fields, AstroTurf and cheering sections in their playgrounds while poorer schools get "unusable, mucky messes" instead?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): No, I don't, which is why we have provided money to the system in the amount of \$4 billion to make repairs, build and do renovations in schools. I don't think it's acceptable at all, and I take the issue of fundraising very

seriously. As I have said a number of times in the House, it is up to boards to make sure that resources are distributed equitably.

If we're talking about the overall state of the education system, I think that one of the groups the member opposite likes to quote from has said something today that would be of great interest to him. Annie Kidder, executive director of People for Education, said today, about some information that came out from the Canadian Council on Learning: "This new information shows that Ontario has much to be proud of. It's important that we remember that overall Ontario does an excellent job educating its students.... It is vital that we frame our calls for improvement in an understanding that the system itself is essentially healthy and worthy of our support."

Mr. Marchese: Minister, I think you should ponder the following. I have here a copy of a fundraising pamphlet distributed in your riding. This school is asking each family for at least a \$250 donation, for which they will get a charitable tax receipt, to build their field of dreams, because their playground is "an unusable, muddy mess." Parents will have to raise \$430,000 for this playground. I believe that in your riding of Don Valley West, children in Thorncliffe deserve the same quality playground as students in Leaside, not unusable, muddy messes.

Minister, what is happening to many, many schools that can't afford to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars under your watch?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: I'm not going to focus on my riding, although one of the schools that is getting a new playground is actually in Flemington Park. It's got a new playground.

I understand that the member opposite is talking about fundraising that's being done by a particular area. There have been dollars raised for decades for computers, for playground equipment, for various items. It is not acceptable to me that there would be a two-tier system. It is not acceptable to me that there would be inequitable allocation of resources. It is up to the school boards and it is up to trustees to make sure that resources are allocated equitably.

The member opposite was a school trustee. He knows that this is an issue that school boards have been dealing with for years. They will continue to deal with it. We have put \$4 billion into the system that boards can access for repairs and capital improvements. That's more than boards have had to deal with for many, many years.

1540

BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Honey bees not only provide honey but also the pollination services for many fruits and vegetables throughout agriculture in Ontario. Honey bees are important pollinators of agricultural crops, particularly in my riding of Essex, where our main farm commodities need honey bees, including our greenhouses that benefit from the help of these bees.

As you are aware, this past winter the mortality rates of bees were unusually high in Ontario. Estimates have shown they are as high as 35% province-wide. In fact, I have a beekeeper who started out with 122 colonies and has only one left. The price of bee nucleus is going up to \$210 a colony, and it would cost this person \$25,000 to replace their bees. We also have 37 other beekeepers in my riding, for a total of 2,210 registered hives.

What is our government doing to help the beekeeping industry address some of these losses?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): This is a very important issue, and I want to share with the members of this Legislature that this is something that I have been asked about by the media on a rather regular basis.

There is no question that bees are very important to the agriculture economy in the province of Ontario and, as has been identified, they do play an essential role in the fruit and vegetable industry. Often, people think that bees produce honey and that is their only role in this industry. That is not so. In fact, their value in helping to pollinate crops is in the neighbourhood of \$171 million.

So my ministry has certainly been watching this situation very closely. I have asked folks at the University of Guelph as well as staff at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to define a study to look into this issue. As well, my ministry and the university are working with the Ontario Beekeepers' Association to define this study so we can ensure that the effects are—

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

Mr. Crozier: I know the beekeepers in my riding will be pleased to know that our government is working to address this issue head-on. I note that you mentioned the Ontario Beekeepers' Association in your response, and I understand you met with them recently to discuss a number of issues, such as the impact of winter losses, pollination of Ontario crops this season, honey prices and support programs for their industry.

Specifically, I gather the issue of compensation for winter losses was raised by the Ontario Beekeepers' Association. This is an important issue to beekeepers in my riding and across the province, who have reported significant financial loss as a result of honey bees dying off. The beekeepers of Essex and the rest of Ontario need help in rebuilding their industry. Minister, what government supports currently exist to assist the beekeeping industry financially during this difficult period?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: This is a very important issue, and I also want to comment that I have been approached by members on all sides of the House, because you have been approached by constituents in your riding. I do want to say that this is an issue that we are taking very seriously.

I have met with the Ontario Beekeepers' Association. I have certainly given them my commitment that we will do all we can to see what we can do to address the concerns and the issues they have raised with me. In addition to that, OMAFRA also already spends \$115,000

to conduct research in this area and \$149,000 has been spent over the last three years to investigate parasite control. I also want to remind folks in this Legislature that our Premier awarded the very first Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence to a beekeeper in the riding of Prince Edward–Hastings. That was Mr. VanderDussen. This man was on the cutting edge of developing a very environmentally friendly technology that goes in the hive to prevent the varroa mite. So our ministry, our government is committed to ensuring this industry is—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, over the last few weeks, we have heard a lot about all the money this government has wasted on political slush funds, and I'm sure your ministry had one of those hidden somewhere. Municipalities that actually filled out the paperwork and spent a lot of money completing their application were shut out of COMRIF funding by this government without any rhyme or reason.

Middlesex county says they don't understand how applications were evaluated or approved. Their MPPs—your colleagues—haven't been able to help them. Minister, what are you going to do for communities like Middlesex county, Brantford, Callander and many others that have spent money on applications and were shut out of your infrastructure lottery?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I think that it truly is unfortunate that the member opposite doesn't appreciate the partnership the McGuinty government has entered into. Over the last three years, there was over \$900 million in investment in rural infrastructure. I would offer that that's \$900 million more than you invested when you were in government.

This is a partnership with municipalities, with the federal government and with the province. The honourable member is shaking his head. He obviously hasn't got a clue what he has asked a question about. This is a partnership. There is a secretariat where federal representatives and provincial representatives adjudicate the applications that come forward. There is a plethora; there certainly are more applications than we have dollars for. We have begun to invest in rural infrastructure. That is something the previous government neglected for eight years. We have made \$900 million of investment, and it has been money well spent.

PETITIONS

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I have a petition here for the Legislative Assembly of

Ontario. I want to thank the parishioners of St. Lawrence O'Toole's church in Barry's Bay as well as St. Hedwig's, and also the staff of St. Casimir's Catholic School in Round Lake.

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I enthusiastically support this petition and send it down with Liam.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today to the Ontario Legislative Assembly to regulate zoos to protect animals and communities.

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Joel.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I have about 186 signatures here.

1550

HYDRO SERVICES

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the city of Ottawa was amalgamated in 2001;

“Whereas, since that time, residents from Cumberland ward and Orléans ward have been receiving dissimilar hydroelectricity services and paying different rates from either Hydro One or Hydro Ottawa, depending only on their mailing address;

“Whereas Orléans ward Councillor Bob Monette and Cumberland ward Councillor Rob Jellett have received numerous complaints towards hydro services and rates from Hydro One;

“Whereas the remainder of the amalgamated city of Ottawa is receiving their hydroelectricity services from a single provider and paying identical rates from Hydro Ottawa;

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

“That the Ontario Legislative Assembly ask the minister responsible for hydroelectricity services to end this injustice to Orléans and Cumberland wards and take the necessary actions so that those residents are treated fairly and equally by being serviced by the same single hydroelectricity provider for the city of Ottawa, Hydro Ottawa.”

I am pleased to say that the government has taken action. It has accepted the 33% transfer tax and has permitted the sale of hydro utilities between one utility and another. I’m very pleased to sign this petition.

PARENTING EDUCATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): “Whereas effective parenting practices do not come instinctively and parenting is our most crucial social role, parenting and human development courses need to be taught to all secondary school students. Parenting education will: reduce teen pregnancies; reduce the rate of costly fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and increase the number of healthy pregnancies; reduce the number of costly social problems related to ineffective parenting practices; and improve the ‘social fabric’ of Ontario to create a more civil society. Parenting education for students is considered to be socially valuable by a majority of adults of voting age and should be included as a mandatory credit course within the Ontario curriculum;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the requirements for the Ontario

secondary school diploma to include one senior level ... as a compulsory credit.”

I agree with this and will sign it.

ANTI-IDLING BYLAWS

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I have a petition from the SAVE group, Students Against Violating the Environment. It reads as follows:

“To the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the fact that idling of cars is a major contributor to climate change, poor air quality and a waste of valuable resources—action should be taken by the Parliament of Ontario against it;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“Be it resolved that the provincial government, through the Ministry of the Environment, immediately initiate discussion with its municipal partners, ideally through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, so as to move beyond the patchwork quilt of existing and important municipal anti-idling bylaws to a provincially generic piece of legislation with enforcement mechanisms that can be universally applied across the entire province.”

I give this to page Rebecca.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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.”

It’s signed by many members of the Kawartha Lakes Chamber of Commerce. I’ll hand it over to page Colin.

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I have a petition signed by a number of members from the London and Middlesex County branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society. It reads as follows.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premiers of Ontario have made enormous contributions over the years in shaping the Ontario of today; and

"Whereas, as a result, the final resting places of the 18 deceased Premiers are among the most historically significant sites in the province, but have yet to be officially recognized; and

"Whereas, were these gravesites to be properly maintained and marked with an historical plaque and a flag of Ontario, these locations would be a source of pride to the communities where these former Premiers lie buried, and provide potential points of interest for visitors;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 25, An Act that will preserve the gravesites of the former Premiers of Ontario."

As I agree with this, I shall sign it and send it with Spencer.

CONSENT TO TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I have a petition to the government of Ontario in Parliament assembled, and it reads as follows.

"We, the undersigned, draw the attention of the House to the following:

"Whereas the Health Care Consent Act of Ontario gives to all health practitioners, indiscriminately, the sole authority to determine whether or not a child of any age has the capacity to give or refuse consent to treatment proposed for him or her; and

"Whereas many of the health care practitioners who are required to make such judgments have neither the training nor the knowledge of child development such that their judgments could be considered informed; and

"Whereas health care practitioners in the family planning industry are notoriously biased in their approach to supplying abortions and chemical contraceptives/abortifacients to minors; and

"Whereas the HCCA is unconstitutional as it provides no opportunity for parents to prevent health care practitioners from providing inappropriate treatment to their child before it is administered, nor any mechanism for redress afterwards;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Health Care Consent Act to prohibit health care practitioners from administering a plan of treatment proposed for a child who lives under the care and control of a custodial parent without the prior consent of the custodial parent, whether or not the health care practitioner is of the opinion that the child is capable with respect to the plan of treatment."

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I'm pleased to present a very thick petition from people in the London area and across Ontario.

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I will give this to Elizabeth to take to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 15, 2007, on the motion for third reading of Bill 140, An Act respecting long-term care homes / Projet de loi 140, Loi concernant les foyers de soins de longue durée.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 16, 2007, I'm now required to put the question. On March 29, 2007, Mr. Smitherman moved third reading of Bill 140. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1559 to 1609.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Order, please.

All those in favour will please rise to be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise to be recorded.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Savoline, Joyce
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Witmer, Elizabeth
DiNovo, Cheri	Martiniuk, Gerry	Yakabuski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	
Ferreira, Paul	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 51; the nays are 19.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I think I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the great people in our gallery today who worked so hard on Bill 140 to make this a reality.

Today, we have with us from Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: Bella Fox, Karyn Wasserstein, Scott MacEachern, Peggy Mackenzie, John Gross, Debbie Latter, Margaret Allore, Jean McCartney, Neil VanderKooy, Connie Berg, Irene Medcof, Mary Marafioti, Jane Sager, Joan Belford, Vahe Kehyayan, Susan Picarello, Tim Burns, David Clarke, Lynn Richardson, and missing but very much with us in spirit are Louise Edmonds, Gail Ure, Pritti Sachdeva. I want to thank each and every one of them on behalf of everyone here.

SAFEGUARDING AND SUSTAINING
ONTARIO'S WATER ACT, 2007

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

Ms. Broten moved third reading of the following act:

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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Ms. Broten.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm so pleased to have the opportunity to rise today and speak about Bill 198. I can tell you that I will be sharing my time with my colleague Minister Ramsay, who I know also wants to talk about this critical and important act.

Since the beginning of our mandate, protecting and preserving our water resources has been an absolute key priority of our government, and I am so very proud of the

progress that we've made. I'm also proud to be part of a government that is committed to environmental protection and that continues to take the necessary steps to sustain our province's very rich and abundant natural resources.

Safe and sustainable water is fundamental to life itself. It is vital in maintaining our quality of life. This is true for each and every one of us living in this great province. It's as true for our children as it will be for many future generations of Ontarians to come.

Je suis si fière des progrès que nous avons accomplis. Je suis fière également de faire partie d'un gouvernement qui est résolu à protéger l'environnement et qui continue à prendre les mesures requises pour sauvegarder les riches ressources naturelles de notre province.

Il est capital pour la vie même d'assurer la pérennité et la sûreté des ressources en eau. Cela est capital pour maintenir notre qualité de vie et c'est vrai pour nous tous qui vivons aujourd'hui dans notre merveilleuse province.

The passage of Bill 198 will allow us to implement the historic Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement, which we signed in December 2005 with Quebec and eight US Great Lakes states. The agreement is historic because for the first time it provides a framework for all 10 participating jurisdictions to better manage, protect and conserve the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. Through this agreement, participating governments have pledged to adopt shared management principles and to use a common basis for decision-making. This will allow us to take a more integrated approach to managing the quantity and quality of our water. It will help us understand where our water is being taken from, where it's going and how it's being used. The agreement also provides for a ban on water transfers out of the Great Lakes.

We know that we cannot work alone in protecting these shared waters. What is new is that the agreement would extend this ban to all 10 Great Lakes jurisdictions. By passing Bill 198, we would be giving our ban the full effect of Ontario provincial law.

Under the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin agreement, Ontario is committed to working with its Great Lakes neighbours to reinforce basin-wide environmental standards, increase water conservation efforts and improve science-based decision-making. The bill is building on the critical work that is already under way to protect and sustain Ontario's water resources.

We know that there is more to do, but we are on the right path. Today I had the pleasure of hearing California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger talk about our shared responsibility when it comes to protecting our environment and fighting climate change. I'm so very proud of Premier McGuinty for entering into a memorandum of understanding between the province of Ontario and the state of California for collaboration on climate change and energy efficiency.

Responding to the impacts of climate change is one of the driving forces behind the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence

River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. I'm so pleased that Ontario has allies on both sides of the border when it comes to fighting climate change, improving our air, and protecting our great shared resources like the Great Lakes. Ontario pushed very hard to include recognition of climate change and the need for precaution in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement, and we succeeded. One of the most progressive aspects of the proposed Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act is that we are including provisions for addressing the effects of global climate change on the Great Lakes region.

We already know about some of the effects of climate change in the region. We're seeing shorter winters, increasing annual average temperatures, more frequent extreme heat events, shorter duration of the lake ice cover, and more frequent heavy precipitation, both rain and snow. These effects can have major consequences in a region that is home to 60 million people and has varied topography and ecosystems, immense bodies of water, large wetland areas, fertile southern soils, forests and rugged lands to the north.

1620

We need to stay at the forefront of knowledge on how climate change will affect the region, and we need to be able to use this knowledge to strengthen our collective protection of the Great Lakes. This act will enable us to do exactly that. For example, the effects of climate change would be taken into account when changes are made to the standards that will be applied when approving withdrawals from the Great Lakes basin and transfers between the Great Lakes watersheds.

Managing our valuable water resources is absolutely vital to ensuring the future success, health and sustainability of Ontario. That is why Bill 198 would give the government the authority to introduce a new water regulatory charge on industrial and commercial users of water to help recover some of the costs of managing Ontario's water resources. Businesses across our province rely on safe, clean, secure, abundant supplies of water. Currently, however, large commercial and industrial water users pay absolutely nothing toward the province's cost of managing the water that they use. It is time to end the endless giveaway of Ontario's water, right now. Accordingly, Bill 198 would allow us to introduce regulatory charges for these high-volume users. But I want to remind the House and Ontarians right across the province that the new charges will not apply to water taken for hydro power, agriculture, private domestic wells, or domestic and other non-commercial uses on municipal supplies. Charges will not apply to institutions such as schools and health care facilities, or to environmental uses such as wetland projects.

I want to take a moment to thank the numerous individuals who appeared before the standing committee to express their thoughts and concerns about Bill 198. I can tell you that we listened to Ontarians and have responded by proposing a number of amendments.

I want to pause for a moment to thank my parliamentary assistant, the member for Peterborough, Jeff

Leal, who listened to and worked with the groups that came before us to talk about this most important and historic piece of legislation, Bill 198. We received their advice and we listened carefully.

We received advice that the proposed legislation covering water transfers between watersheds did not go far enough. Bill 198's water conservation provisions have been strengthened, and they have been strengthened because we listened to those experts, like the Sierra Club of Canada, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and the Georgian Bay Association. I want to take a moment to thank them for their advice and input. This is the way that good legislation is made even better: when we talk to those experts around this province and we collectively work together to ensure that we will have a safe and sustainable supply of water for many, many years to come.

One of the amendments that we made would allow us to make regulations requiring that water transfers between Great Lakes watersheds of less than 19 million litres a day be returned to the watersheds from which they were taken. Nineteen million litres is the amount stipulated in the agreement between all 10 Great Lakes jurisdictions.

Another proposed amendment would introduce a regulation-making authority to require water users who do not have a permit to take water to prepare and implement water conservation plans.

A third amendment would require the Minister of the Environment to seek comment from the public on what actions the government should take in response to assessments of cumulative impacts on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin, including the impact of climate change.

Our proposed Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act is further proof of our government's commitment to protecting and preserving Ontario's water resources. For our government, water protection is an absolute priority.

La Loi sur la sauvegarde et la durabilité des eaux de l'Ontario que nous proposons d'adopter est encore une autre preuve de la détermination avec laquelle notre gouvernement agit pour protéger et préserver les ressources en eau de l'Ontario. Pour notre gouvernement, la protection des eaux est une priorité.

In 2005 we introduced the historic Clean Water Act, which recognizes that prevention must be the first barrier in protecting Ontario's drinking water resources, and that source water protection must be planned and managed on a shared local watershed basis. We can never forget what happened in Walkerton, where seven people died and hundreds were made ill from contaminated water. That is why we are absolutely committed to implementing all of Justice O'Connor's Walkerton recommendations.

Over the past four years, we've introduced more rigorous requirements for those who own and operate water treatment plants. We've increased the inspection requirements for water treatment plants and drinking

water testing labs. We've hired more water treatment inspectors and enforcement specialists. All of these measures are designed to protect and maintain the quality of Ontario's water resources and to ensure the good health of our people and a high quality of life for them to enjoy for years to come.

I had a chance, when we had constituency week, to spend some time in my great riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore; I'm privileged to represent that community here in the Legislature. As I talked to my community about the work that was under way—the work I was doing on their behalf at Queen's Park—I talked to them about our fight to protect the Great Lakes, because the great riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore is on the shore of Lake Ontario, one of those Great Lakes. It is so critical to the quality of life and well-being of my community that we continue to work for all Ontarians. Absolutely, we must work to improve their health care, and we've done that across the province as well as in my home community with investments in our Trillium Health Centre, the Dorothy Ley Hospice, a commitment to family health teams and more resources for our community health centres. We've done that in terms of education: historic investments at Humber College, again on the shore of the Lake Ontario, where we announced \$9 million in investments last week.

But most importantly, I talked to them about how we were going make the Great Lakes accessible and part of our community once again with the construction of the new Mimico Waterfront Linear Park as part of Etobicoke–Lakeshore to bring the residents of our community back down to the shore of Lake Ontario, for them to remember each and every day why we are undertaking these new protections for the Great Lakes.

I'm pleased to represent the people of Etobicoke–Lakeshore and to serve in this House as their representative and as Minister of the Environment. But I'm also pleased to be a mom and to walk along the shore of the great Lake Ontario with my boys and know that we in this Legislature, when we hopefully pass this legislation, will collectively have done something to ensure that future generations will have sustainable, clean drinking water—that that resource will be available.

Bill 198 furthers the tremendous progress we've made in water protection and reinforces our efforts to provide strong leadership and environmental stewardship on behalf of all the people of Ontario. By protecting our water resources, managing them wisely, we're building stronger, healthier communities and ensuring a brighter, better, more prosperous future for people right across this great province. I'm confident that that is the goal of all members of this House; that it is a goal we all share. I look forward to swift passage of Bill 198, when we in Ontario will all be able to celebrate sustained and safeguarded water for many years to come.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add a few comments this afternoon on third reading of Bill 198. I note that we have a number of

members who wish to speak to this bill this afternoon, so I'm not going to go over the whole bill but will allow time for our environment critic, the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, and also the member from Leeds–Grenville, who have some concerns that they would like to get on the record and, I believe, the member from Waterloo–Wellington as well.

With Bill 198, the McGuinty government has promised to strengthen the management, protection and conservation of the Great Lakes and all of Ontario's water resources. However, as has already been mentioned, this bill has a troubling loophole that has caused significant concern for many stakeholders and will inevitably limit the bill's ability to effectively protect our water resources.

1630

Even though the proposed legislation bans diversions out of the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence basin, it still permits diversions between individual Great Lakes watersheds within the basin.

At the committee level, the PC Party put forward some 20 amendments to the bill, which came out of the comments of the groups that came before the committee. They were all constructive on a variety of different issues. The one that was of greatest interest to me, as the member who represents the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka and Georgian Bay, was the one that would affect water levels in the Great Lakes. I hope the Minister of Natural Resources, who is going to speak shortly, will address this issue as well. I know he's very familiar with the Georgian Bay area, because he enjoys getting out on his sailboat in the summer season, and I'm sure he would be very much aware of water levels, going in and out of harbours in that sailboat.

One of the amendments that was made at committee by the PC Party would have basically required that if you take water out of a watershed—example, Georgian Bay or Lake Huron—and use the water for, say, municipal purposes, that the water be put back into the same watershed. It's fairly straightforward: If you take it out of Georgian Bay, it goes back into Georgian Bay. It comes out as drinking water and goes back in as treated sewage. It goes back into the same watershed. That is a real concern.

What I don't want to see is water going out of Georgian Bay or Lake Huron and ending up in Lake Erie or Lake Ontario, because we have a significant challenge with water levels in Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. That's been pointed out by the Georgian Bay Association; Mary Muter has done a lot of work on that. They've spent \$250,000 on the Baird report, looking at the drain of Georgian Bay, and have identified that too much water is flowing out and we need to do work on that problem.

Also, we brought forward an amendment at the committee level, and I'll just read it:

“Return of transferred water

“(4) Despite any other provision of this act, a person who transfers water between Great Lakes watersheds

shall ensure that the water is returned to the Great Lakes watershed from which it was taken.”

A fairly straightforward concept; no grey area about it. You take it out of Georgian Bay or Lake Huron, and you put it back into Lake Huron. I think that's a rational approach, especially when we have communities to the south that would like to put in big pipes, and the easiest thing to do is take water out and let it drain into one of the lower watersheds. That is a real concern to the people who use Georgian Bay—the people in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka—and I know that the members for Simcoe–Grey and Simcoe North are very concerned about this as well. I think it's a real concern for people who worry about the effect that lower water levels will have on environmental issues, like the wetlands along the coast of Georgian Bay. I wanted to speak to that point only, because I know that we have many other members who would like to speak to other parts of this bill and we have limited time to do so.

I see this bill as being a first step. It could have been stronger if some of those 20 amendments that were put forward by the PC Party had been passed. I will be supporting the bill, despite its shortcomings, and, if necessary, fix it once we're in government. It's a first step, and we support the first step. I look forward to hearing the Minister of Natural Resources address the concern I have raised.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I'm hoping I can leave the bulk of the time for my benchmate, Mr. Bisson, to speak to this bill.

First of all, I want to comment on the time allocation aspect of it. Of course, this is a government that, when they were in opposition, were very opposed to time allocation—a limiting of debate. Now that they're on the other side of the aisle, they're all about time allocation.

Certainly, we in the New Democratic Party like to see debate, like to see a chance to discuss bills, and don't like to see debate cut short, which is happening here tonight. For those who are watching from home, that's point number one.

Point number two: There's a rather delicious irony that we just discovered there is lead in the water here at Queen's Park. This is news on CBC today. This is a government that's supposed to be protecting our natural resources, this is a bill about water and water quality, and yet here we have lead in the water. It's actually a kind of wonderful metaphor for what's problematic about those who are sitting across the aisle from me, don't you think? Perhaps it explains some of the poor legislation that comes out of them, if they've been drinking it for a long time; I don't know. At any rate, there you go: lead in the water right here at Queen's Park. It will be rather interesting to see what the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of the Environment and others have to say about that. I'm a little reticent even to pick up my glass right now, quite frankly, and I gather there are warnings even

for those who have coffee makers in their offices about boiling the water.

More to the point, I think what is ironic about this government—particularly after today, as we saw Dalton McGuinty standing there next to Schwarzenegger from California—is the difference between, for example, California and Ontario. Right off the bat, California has had a moratorium on nuclear reactors since 1976. This government is barreling ahead, spending \$40 billion to \$45 billion on nuclear reactors, and claims to be a green government. This is the government, we remember, that the Environmental Commissioner said was neglecting their obligations. The report was *Neglecting Our Obligations*, with a damning indictment of the McGuinty Liberals and their stay in power in terms of the environment.

Of course, first and foremost, when we think of the environment and we think of the McGuinty Liberals, we think of broken promises, and predominantly the broken promise about the coal-fired plants. What was it back in 2003? We were going to close them immediately. Where are we? Nowhere close; not even a date now, no real commitment there. Certainly we know that Nanticoke is one of the major polluters, if not the major polluter, in all of Canada. So there you go. This is a government that claims they're green and they can't even close one coal-fired plant, and that was an election promise.

Then we see some very weak-kneed legislation that comes forward. We're going to support this because, hey, it's a baby step in the right direction, but this is another piece of weak-kneed Liberal legislation around the environment.

If anybody has seen Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth*, and I'm sure we all have, we are looking at a serious challenge. We are looking at the possibility of an uninhabitable world for our children and our grandchildren. We're already looking at huge levels of asthma in our own communities, smog days already, and we're not even into the heat of the summer. And yet what does this government do? Again, it brings forth things that sound good, photo op moments, but nothing with teeth, nothing real, nothing that we can really say will protect the future for our children.

Here we have a situation—and, again, I'm going to leave most of the time for my benchmate, Mr. Bisson—talking about water. What are they going to do? I'm going to quote to you from Mr. Tabuns, who is our environment critic. He said, and I'm quoting from Hansard here:

“So we do need to protect our water sources and we need to have a source of income to protect them. And \$3.71 per million litres is going to generate, we've been told, \$18 million a year, essentially the cost of administration—not the cost of a water conservation program, not the cost of water quality protection, not the cost of water quality surveillance. It is not going to make a financial difference at that end and, frankly, at the other end it's not going to change anyone's practices when it comes to taking water. It's just too little”—and one can say just too little, way too late—“\$3.71 per million litres.

I think it's a fabulous deal," says he, ironically, "if you can get it, but it ain't going to change what needs to be changed."

Many of us have seen the movie *Chinatown*, about a fictitious but real situation which that movie is based on. And we have a kind of *Chinatown* in the making right here at Queen's Park.

With that, I think I'll take a break, but suffice to say to anybody watching from home that this is a government that pretends to be green but isn't at all. And today was an example of a classic McGuinty manoeuvre: the photo op with somebody who is actually doing something in another jurisdiction while we here are doing less than nothing.

1640

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): It's a pleasure for me to rise in the House today with my colleague the Minister of the Environment to move third reading of the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act, 2007.

This proposed legislation to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act is another major step forward in conserving and protecting the waters of the Great Lakes basin for the future generations of Ontarians. If passed, the legislation would implement the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement, an agreement signed in late 2005 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, by Premier McGuinty and representatives from Quebec and the eight neighbouring Great Lakes states.

In the Great Lakes agreement, the 10 jurisdictions in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin agreed to protect one of the continent's most precious natural resources. And they agreed to do that by prohibiting water transfers out of the basin subject to rare, strictly regulated exceptions; promoting water conservation; reinforcing basin-wide environmental standards for water-takings; and improving science-based decision-making.

We all know the Great Lakes and the rivers and underground waters that flow into them are vital to Ontario's economy, environment and culture. At the same time, we face a number of challenges in sustainably managing our Ontario waters. Climate change is resulting in unpredictable shifts in temperature and weather. Next door in the United States, more people are moving to arid southwestern states, making it more likely that these states will be seeking new sources of water. And the global population continues to grow, increasing the demand for water worldwide. More than one commentator has predicted that water will become the oil of the 21st century.

Ontario's strong controls on water use, including a ban on transfers out of Ontario's water basins, have already made it a leader in water management in the Great Lakes region. But Ontario's laws only apply to the water within its borders, and the water doesn't respect political boundaries. Effective protection for the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin requires action from all 10 jurisdictions. That's why Ontario has been deeply

committed to negotiating a set of rules on water use and transfer for all provinces and states in the basin.

When it became clear that other jurisdictions were willing to negotiate a basin-wide agreement, this province recognized it as a rare and even a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to achieve regional co-operation in managing these interconnected waters.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the team from the Ministries of Natural Resources and Intergovernmental Affairs who negotiated the agreement on behalf of Ontario. Many of them are in the House today. They're in the members' gallery on the east side, and I would like to certainly acknowledge their very hard work. They did an outstanding job during some very tough negotiations over several years, and I want to thank them for their hard work.

Shortly after I was sworn in as Minister of Natural Resources, in October 2003, I was presented with a briefing as to what had already been agreed to. When I saw that, I really thought we could do better. After consultation with the people of Ontario, it was agreed by the government of Ontario that we would basically tell our negotiators to go back and to really see if we could raise the bar when it came to that. So our negotiators need to be congratulated for doing that, because they thought they had a deal, and we said "Well, you can blame it on the new government." I think all the neighbouring states and Quebec are very happy with what we've all accomplished together as jurisdictions, because we all have the same values and respect for our Great Lakes water basin. So we're very happy with this agreement.

The agreement we have commits each of the provinces and states to seek, adopt and implement the terms of this agreement as the law within their borders. I would like to take a moment to outline some of the strong new protections in the final Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. Maybe I should just explain for a second what I just said about what this agreement compels us to do as jurisdictions. We don't have the powers as states and provinces to enter into international agreements, but we can come together and agree to form laws in our own jurisdictions. So we formed a mechanism to do that and to have some standing in a court, if necessary, down the road if we are not implementing into our own specific laws what we have agreed to do.

In the agreement, the 10 provinces and states have agreed to ban transfers of water with rare, strictly regulated exceptions, such as for communities that straddle the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin boundary or the boundaries between the Great Lakes watersheds. They agreed to strengthen water conservation through programs in each state and province. We've agreed to establish a stronger new environmental standard for regulating water uses across all the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin states and provinces and to build the information and science needed to support sound decision-making.

We also agreed to build regional collaboration—for example, in the review of water management and conser-

vation programs. To oversee water uses across the basin, the 10 provinces and states agreed to create a regional body made up of representatives from each jurisdiction. They agreed to provide a stronger voice for Ontario, its citizens and First Nations in the regional review of water use resources by other jurisdictions that are expected to prohibit other transfers.

Finally, they agreed to recognize the principles of precaution, ecosystem protection and the consideration of the cumulative impacts of climate change uncertainties. These are significant commitments that will protect the integrity of the Great Lakes basin for future generations.

In the 18 months since I informed the House that Premier McGuinty had signed this historic agreement, we have been working hard to develop the legislation that, if passed, will enable the implementation of this agreement in Ontario. This proposed legislation is now before the House and is the critical next step in conserving and protecting the waters of the Great Lakes basin and all of our water resources for the long-term environmental, social and economic well-being of Ontario.

If passed, Bill 198 would elevate Ontario's ban on transfers of water out of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin and Ontario's other water basins from a regulation to be part of the act to emphasize the importance of the prohibition.

Bill 198 would also introduce a ban on new and increased transfers of water from one Great Lakes watershed to another—known as intra-basin transfers—unless strict environmental criteria are met. To give the government more latitude to control intra-basin transfers, the proposed legislation would enable the government to further restrict such transfers beyond what is required by the Great Lakes agreement. Bill 198 would allow Ontario to pass regulations that, for example, could lower the threshold at which water transferred between two Great Lakes watersheds must be returned to the source watershed or introduce additional environmental criteria to respond to cumulative impacts and the effects of climate change.

In addition to these measures, Bill 198 will permit Quebec and the eight Great Lakes states to seek an appeal to the Environmental Review Tribunal or seek judicial review of Ontario's decisions on water withdrawals and the transfers subject to the agreement. This section would not come into force until the other Great Lakes jurisdictions provide Ontario with similar rights to access to their courts.

Bill 198 would create the authority to pass regulations to further support the implementation of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. For example, an additional regulation would require measures to promote water conservation and water use efficiency and introduce an environmental decision-making standard for the review of proposed water withdrawals.

Bill 198 would create the authority to prescribe additional criteria to respond to periodic assessments of cumulative impacts, including criteria relating to climate

change or other significant threats to the Great Lakes basin.

As my colleague the Minister of the Environment has said, this bill would also enable Ontario, for the first time, to introduce a regulatory charge for water taken or used for industrial or commercial purposes and extend the requirements for permits to take water.

During consideration of this bill, the government introduced amendments to Bill 198 that have gone beyond the requirements of the Great Lakes agreement in other ways. One such amendment would enable the province to require water users to prepare and implement water conservation plans. Another amendment to Bill 198 would require the environment minister to seek public comment on what actions the government should take in response to periodic basin-wide assessments of cumulative impacts, including climate change, and make a statement summarizing the actions that the government intends to take in response to that assessment. This amendment was prompted by our changing climate, which has heightened the need for more precautionary and adaptive measures.

Some parts of Bill 198 would come into effect immediately and others would be phased in gradually. If Bill 198 is passed, the government therefore proposes to hold discussions with stakeholders on interim control measures as the legislative framework is put into place. Any such measures would require full public consultation.

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As the House considers this bill, I would like to remind the members that in December 2006, Premier McGuinty became the chairman of the Great Lakes regional body. He will hold that position until December of this year, making this a highly appropriate time for us to pass the legislation.

I would also like to inform the House that on March 27, I signed a memorandum of understanding with Grand Council Chief John Beaucage on behalf of 42 Anishinabek nations.

Throughout the process of negotiating the Great Lakes agreement, we have been diligent in working with First Nations—including the Anishinabek nation—the public, and representatives of different interest groups.

As we move ahead with this important initiative, we need to build stronger relationships with First Nations and their political organizations, and the memorandum of understanding will help to make that a reality. This memorandum will build on the momentum we have already achieved, ensure that traditional Anishinabek principles and perspectives are considered, and enhance the implementation process.

In closing, I want to say that Bill 198, the proposed Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act, 2007, will continue Ontario's leadership role in protecting the Great Lakes water basin. If passed, it will represent significant progress towards the implementation of Ontario's commitments under the Great Lakes agreement.

But there is more to do. This government will continue to engage the annex advisory panel and Ontario's First

Nations and consult with the public as we develop the regulations and policies to support this bill.

Throughout it all, we will remain diligent in protecting Ontario's interests in the waters of the Great Lakes basin and all the waters across the province. It's a task that promises to remain a significant challenge in the years ahead, but by passing this legislation that would implement the historic Great Lakes agreement, we will continue to move forward to meet that challenge and to protect the waters that are central to the history and to the future of all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I have some brief comments: Our party, the Progressive Conservative Party, will be supporting the legislation, but not without some concerns and an indication of commitment, if we do form the government, that those concerns will be addressed.

Certainly, there was no indication when I appeared before the justice committee a few weeks ago—on Wednesday, May 16, to be precise—and raised an issue that is of significant concern in a number of jurisdictions. I was specifically raising a concern brought to my attention by a company called Invista, between Brockville and Prescott—formerly the DuPont plant in Maitland—about a component of this legislation. I want to put those concerns on the record again. This is dealing with the definition of “consumptive use.” I'm going to quote from a letter that Invista sent to the Minister of the Environment:

“Given the potential trade implications, the need to promote a strong economy in Ontario and the importance of being competitive with other jurisdictions, the charges have the potential”—we're talking about these consumptive use charges—“to further reduce the hospitable nature of Ontario's business environment relative to other sites in which Invista is located around the globe. An appreciating Canadian dollar, high energy prices and low-cost labour in some parts of the world result in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. It is with this premise, along with the fact that Invista returns virtually all of the water it uses in as good or better condition, that it would only be fair and reasonable for there to be an exemption for water charges for water that is returned to the environment in this manner.

“While we recognize the need for the government ... to protect the natural resources ... and for Ontario to meet its obligations under the Great Lakes water agreement, Invista believes that Ontario must do so in a responsible manner that does not unfairly penalize companies that borrow and return water for manufacturing processes, particularly when such water is returned with a net benefit....

“One of the primary reasons Invista manufacturing operations were established in eastern Ontario was the access to large volumes of deep, cold water. The vast majority of this water is ‘borrowed’ from the source and used as a cooling agent for our manufacturing processes. For example”—I'll skip some of this.

“Invista seeks the following recognition in the development of ... regulations:”

To “recognize the difference between consumptive and non-consumptive use in terms of the water-taking fees such that the non-consumptive users are not unfairly charged” and that it does not become “a significant cost burden. This is a significant concern for Invista, which borrows large volumes of water for cooling purposes.... The addition of a water charge levied against Invista Canada's operations is counter to” the position of promoting a strong economy in Ontario and remaining competitive with other jurisdictions. “Invista operates in a fiercely competitive global marketplace, and a charge on Invista's non-consumptive water use for manufacturing purposes would weaken our ability to compete in the global marketplace.”

That really sums it up. There was cold comfort given during the committee hearings when I raised this issue and looked for assurances from the government members. Instead of responding in a positive way, the parliamentary assistant—a good individual, but he performed the role that is sort of a signature piece of government members in committee, where they simply read from a text provided to them by the Premier's office or the minister responsible. That's what happened in this situation.

We know what's happening to manufacturing in this province: a hollowing out. We're losing significant numbers—there's some debate whether it's 137,000 or 175,000 jobs in terms of the manufacturing sector. I think we're using the figure of 137,000 jobs lost in Ontario over the last two and a half years. This is the indication of a lack of appreciation and understanding of the implications of some of the initiatives undertaken by this government.

This is a company that is a solid corporate citizen, and has been for many years under previous ownership with DuPont, very much involved and very environmentally responsible. Here's water that they are using for cooling purposes in their plant returned to the water body and no assurance is given to them that they will not be facing significant costs as a result of this legislation and the regulation to follow.

I raised the issue of the signatories to the Great Lakes agreement and how many are going down this road in sync with Ontario. I have not received the information. I've asked the legislative library to give me this information: How many other signatories have proceeded down this path? They tend to be major competitors of ours, and we're going to be ahead of the curve in terms of additional costs in the manufacturing sector when we're already losing our competitive edge. We did not get a satisfactory answer in that regard either. When you look at the process that's followed in the US states, where the state has to endorse it, then they require the approval of Congress—then we'll look and see whether specific sections are going to be implemented and whether they will apply the same kinds of interpretations that Ontario is applying in this respect to the definition of “consumptive use.”

This is a significant concern. A lot of areas of this legislation were not adequately addressed by the govern-

ment. This is one of them. If John Tory and the progressive Conservative Party are fortunate enough to form the government come October 10, I want to assure those who are concerned about issues like this that we will address them.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased to be able to make a few comments on the third reading of Bill 198, and I do want to thank my colleague the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock for her leadership on this particular piece of legislation. I really enjoyed my time sitting on some of the committee hearings with her and listening to the comments coming from individuals who made presentations to the standing committee.

I have a couple of strong concerns that I want to put on the record. Both people whom I know and respect very much, Judith Grant from the Tiny Township Shoreline Association—a number of cottage associations in Tiny township that made a presentation, as well as Mary Muter, whom I talked to earlier today about the Georgian Bay Association's concerns about Bill 198. I want to read this into the record:

1700

“The government has indicated an interest in bringing in regulations to restrict intra-basin transfers, but it's my understanding that we are likely two years away from implementing regulations, at a time when the middle Great Lakes have been at near-record low levels for over six years. It is inappropriate to allow any intra-basin transfers that have the potential to cumulatively further lower lake levels.”

In my riding, the lake levels of Georgian Bay and Lake Huron are huge concerns to the municipalities, cottage associations and environmentalists, who see declining areas of environmental issues as well.

“In light of the lack of knowledge and understanding of the amount of surface and groundwater supply in Ontario, and in light of the impact of climate change on ground and surface water, the government needs to take a precautionary approach and impose an immediate moratorium for two years on intra-basin transfers in Ontario until regulations can be put in place to limit these transfers.

“The language allowing consumptive use”—and I think Mr. Runciman spoke on this as well a couple of minutes ago—“to lower the amount of intra-basin transfers could mean that amounts greater than 19 megalitres a day could be transferred out of the middle Great Lakes. An intra-basin transfer should be declared 100% consumptive use, with no exceptions.”

I go back to my comments, and an area where most of my concerns have come from as the MPP for Simcoe North has been from organizations, like the Georgian Bay Association, that have done phenomenal work in this area across the province and in fact in helping our federal government in federal jurisdictions as well in some of their concerns around the Baird report. They've helped to identify some problems with the declining water levels in the Great Lakes.

It is a serious issue in my riding. I hope the government is listening to these concerns and will take them very, very seriously, because we are seeing record low water levels and there's nothing in sight that would indicate that we'll see any kind of increase in those water levels. It's affecting wetlands. As I mentioned earlier, we're seeing wetlands dry up around Georgian Bay and Lake Huron, and this is completely unacceptable. We have to make sure that these transfers of water are done in a very proper manner so that we will keep the beautiful parts of our province and this great supply of water that we call the Great Lakes intact for many years to come.

Speaker, I just want to thank you for this opportunity. I know my colleague Laurie Scott will be cleaning up the comments in a little while.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Wow, I've got a whole 24 minutes. I was looking forward to this all afternoon.

I not only want to take this opportunity to speak to this particular motion, but I also want to talk about water in general in regard to policies of the province of Ontario and in regard to permitting around water and water quality as it affects communities across Ontario.

I want to say, first of all, on this particular bill, that what we're attempting to do here, as I said in second reading debate, is not a bad concept. I just want to say up front that I believe a number of concerns I had raised initially in second reading debate are being met. I'm going to have to go back and take a look, for sure, at all of the amendments that came in, but from what I can understand, some of the concerns I had in regard to water that's being drawn from one watershed and then pumped into another, the intermingling of that water—we needed to make sure we had some safeguards, that you don't contaminate other water bodies with what might be various invertebrates or bacteria or whatever might be in the water that would be harmful.

We all know the instances in the Great Lakes, for example, of the issue of ships coming into the St. Lawrence River after we opened up the sea locks on the upper part of the St. Lawrence River past Montreal, which allowed sea-going ships to finally, at one point in the 1960s, come into the Great Lakes. That has had a very disastrous effect on the environment of those Great Lakes because it has allowed various crustaceans and others—I forget what they call them.

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): Foreign species.

Mr. Bisson: Yes, foreign species, but I'm trying remember the particular one.

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: Zebra mussels.

Mr. Bisson: Zebra mussels. That's right. It allowed zebra mussels and others to cling to the bottom of ships, come across the locks and come into our Great Lakes. It has contaminated our Great Lakes and changed entirely the water system, the environment of the Great Lakes. It has gone beyond that, because now we have the residual effect of having boaters bring their boats into the Great

Lakes—the same type of thing happens on the smaller boats, and we're finding those particular infestations or infiltrations or whatever you want to call them in lakes across Ontario. In fact, we're starting to see them in lakes in northern Ontario.

So that was a concern that I had in debate: I didn't want us to get into a situation where you draw the water from one particular aquifer or one particular water body and then utilize it in order to transfer it into another, unknowingly transferring some sort of micro-organism or whatever that might affect the water overall.

I was listening to the minister earlier, and from what I understand, some of the concerns that I have were raised at committee and apparently there were some amendments done. Again, I want to say for the record that I'll go back and double-check before we actually get to a vote on that particular issue. So that was my concern up front.

The other thing I want to speak to is the whole issue of water itself. Today we just found out, for example, that the water in this building is contaminated by lead. I'm standing here in the Legislature with a glass of water, and I don't know if I should be drinking it, but I figure that I've been drinking it for the last 17 years and I'm still here, so one more glass today is not going to make all that much of a difference. My point is this: We never know when we're at risk. Here we are in the capital of Ontario, in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, a building that was built, yes, over 100 years ago, but which I have always understood to be very well maintained, and because of what we saw happen a couple of weeks ago in a number of communities around Ontario when it comes to lead contamination, the people who look out for the maintenance of this building did testing and they found that the lead levels are a lot higher than what is allowed for consumption. So they're now in a situation of having to ban the use of water for everything from making coffee to drinking, and they're talking about bringing special filtration systems in as an interim measure until we figure out what's going on. My point is that you never know when you could be at risk, and that's why we really need to take our time to do this right.

The other big problem—and we learned this through Walkerton. The system failed in the case of Walkerton, and unfortunately a number of people died. What we learned coming out of that, by way of the inquiry that was held afterwards, was that we needed to do a better job of ensuring that drinking water is handled with special care, because such a fundamental, essential part of the infrastructure of municipalities is to provide water. And we do everything with it. We bathe with it, we wash our clothes in it, we cook with it, we drink it. It's consumed in all kinds of forms. What we've learned is that we need to have laws and we need to have regulations and we need to have policies in place that make sure that water is safe to drink.

The unfortunate reality is that neither the previous government nor this government, quite frankly, allowed the type of funding to happen that would help municipi-

palities meet those particular new standards. There are municipalities across this province that are under a huge financial burden trying to meet the new regulations. I don't believe there's a municipal alderman or mayor or reeve anywhere in this province who is saying, "We don't want to make sure that the drinking water for our families and friends and members of our community is not at risk." But what I'm definitely hearing from a lot of mayors and aldermen and others across the province is that they're okay with the province upping the standard, but if the province is going to up the standard, it has to up the funding.

In fact, the city of Timmins was fined \$80,000 just recently by the Ministry of the Environment for supposedly not being able to follow the water standards. I'm not going to get into all of the details, but part of it is that the city of Timmins has already spent huge amounts of money to upgrade its water plant to meet previous water regulations. We brought in new water regulations, and it was a little bit for naught: They had to go back and re-spend money that they don't have in order to be able to meet the new standards. It's the same story across northern Ontario, as it is across southern Ontario.

I think it's incumbent upon us, as legislators, to say that if, by way of an act of this House or by way of a regulation through cabinet, we're going to up the regulations or the legislation in order to ensure that there's safe drinking water, we need to put our money where our mouth is and we need to provide adequate funding for municipalities to be able to meet those requirements. Yes, there is a fiduciary responsibility on the part of the municipality because it is municipal infrastructure, but I think we need to take a look at what's practical from the perspective of what they can afford. I think the province needs to step in and fill the gap, because what it comes down to—if a municipality has to spend an additional \$2 million or \$5 million or \$10 million to up the standards in its water plant or its sewage treatment plant, you're in a situation where you can't use that capital money to fix streets, fix arenas, fix roofs, fix windows and doors on municipal buildings.

1710

I was in Kapuskasing last Friday, and that was one of the questions in the schools that I spoke to. I spoke to two different schools, morning and afternoon. That was one of the first questions asked by the students. I thought it was rather interesting. They're saying, "When is the municipality going to fix the roads in Kapuskasing?" I said, "Listen, don't blame Mayor Al Spacek and his council." The problem they have is that they are faced with the burden of having to foot the bill to bring water infrastructure up. When they spend money on water infrastructure, they don't have the money to spend on road infrastructure and they don't have the money to do the kind of repairs that they would like to do to their municipal buildings, such as the pool or the arena.

Municipal councils, in this particular case the town of Kapuskasing, are undergoing a huge investment. I thank the provincial government for having listened to us and

provided some money to assist us with the rebuilding of a water tower and a water main. Still, it's a huge expense on the part of the municipality because the money that the province gives doesn't equal the amount of money that that project is going to cost. As a result, the municipality has to spend money that they would normally use for other projects in order to deal with the water situation in Kapuskasing. It's a story across the north.

I'm just saying to the members of the Legislature today: I really think that as we move legislative initiatives through the House, we need to take a look at the financial consequences for both municipalities, the taxpayer—being us, the people who pay the taxes, and whomever else—so that we're at least in a position of being responsible about what we're asking people to do.

The other thing I want to talk about, and again, this is something you've heard me talk about on a number of occasions, is the issue of infrastructure in First Nations. There's this great game that's played, and the game is called "Pass the buck," when it comes to the responsibility for infrastructure in First Nations. We always hear it's the same.

When we had the tragedy in Kashechewan two years ago, unfortunately it took children becoming ill and having their pictures taken and coming here to Queen's Park and holding a press conference showing the pictures of those kids before governments took action. As a result of that, first of all, this provincial government, as requested by myself and Chief Leo Friday and Charlie Angus, declared a state of emergency that allowed other things to happen, which was not only to evacuate the community but force the federal government to start to deal with the water situation in Kashechewan. Because for months—I would say, for years—the community of Kashechewan has been complaining both to the federal and provincial governments that the water quality in their community was substandard. Nothing was happening. Every now and then, somebody went up to do some testing. There may have been some money spent on the water plant, but clearly the type of training that was needed to train the water plant operators to make sure that they could properly run the water plant and to make sure that the basic infrastructure worked properly wasn't being done. As a result, people got sick.

My point is this: We end up in a situation always with First Nations where the province says, "We did our bit. We declared the state of emergency and we forced the federal government to fix the water plant." In fact, the federal government did fix the water plant in Kashechewan, and today you can drink the water out of the taps. But the point is this: These people are Ontario citizens. I don't think it's good enough for us as Ontario legislators and for the province of Ontario to say, "They're a federal responsibility."

We do a lot when it comes to services in First Nations communities. In most of the communities, we're responsible for health care. It's a provincial responsibility. The only place that it's not is in my riding. We have the last federal hospital that is currently being transferred to the

province of Ontario, and sometime soon we will have the entire health system of First Nations under provincial control. We're responsible for all of the welfare costs, all of the social assistance costs within those communities. We're responsible for daycare. We're responsible for a number of services that we provide in First Nations communities.

All I'm saying is this: We've got to stop passing the buck and saying that water infrastructure, housing, roads are strictly a federal responsibility, because as long as we continue to do that, First Nations will never get a fair shake. I'll say it here and I'll say it loud and I've said it publicly: The federal government is incompetent when it comes to its responsibility towards First Nations. I know that my good friend Mr. Bartolucci and others have had an opportunity to travel into those First Nations communities only have to look at the condition of those communities to find out to what degree this federal government is irresponsible and, quite frankly, has dropped the ball when it comes to the health and safety of those communities.

If you go into a community like Pikangikum, a community like Big Trout Lake, into Kashechewan, into Attawapiskat, Fort Albany—it doesn't matter which community you go into; Moose Factory, Moosonee even, which is a municipality but that's a whole other story—people are having to live 20 to 25 people per house. How does a child study in that situation? We ask ourselves, why is there such a high dropout rate with the kids within the primary and secondary systems on First Nations reserves? Well, how do you study with 20 to 25 people in a house? You can't. So the kid drops out. And the dropout rate in some communities at the primary school level is as high as 60% by the end of the year. How do you build capacity in those communities to develop the leadership that we're going to need in those communities to take over the responsibility of running those communities? Where do you find the water plant operator, where do you find the person who is responsible for services within the schools and within the band offices if we don't have kids rising to their potential through the school system?

I want to say, there are a lot of kids out there in First Nations communities who are doing quite well and a lot of parents are really trying hard. But it's pretty hard when you've got bad infrastructure. My point is that we need to, as a province, take the responsibility of saying, "We will, as the provincial government, sit down with First Nations and with the federal government and enter into an agreement that we're going to accelerate the construction of housing and other infrastructure in First Nations communities. And we, the province, are prepared to put our money where our mouth is."

I tell you that if I were the government tomorrow, that's one of the things that I would do, because I think it's unconscionable to allow people to live in the squalor and condition that we see in those First Nations communities.

The other thing I would talk about—I would be sitting down with First Nations and with the federal government

to say, "Let's put in place the type of funding that we need in order to not only rebuild housing that exists, but to build new housing over a period that's reasonable so that people can have some hope of knowing they're going to be in their own house and they're not going to have to live 20 to 25 people per house."

But then you've got to go beyond there. We need to make sure that the water plants, the sewage treatment plants and the distribution systems in all those communities work. You know as well as I do, my good friend Mr. Bartolucci, that most of the communities, 60% of them, don't have adequate water. In Ontario, 60% of aboriginal communities don't have adequate water. Their plants don't meet the minimum requirement that we have in the province of Ontario, and you don't have to go far. You just go north of Highway of 11 and south of Highway 11, and 60% of the communities basically don't have water to the standard that's required in the province of Ontario. The same holds true for reserves in southern Ontario.

I just say, they're Ontario citizens, and for us to say, "Oh, well, we don't have jurisdiction so we can't go in there and do anything"—I think we have a responsibility to say to the federal government, and I'll say it again, "You're incompetent. You're not doing a good job. You've been responsible for reserves for 100 years. You've dropped the ball; 60% of communities don't have drinking water."

We want to be part of the solution, and we propose that they fall under provincial jurisdiction when it comes to water quality. We will enter into negotiations with the federal government and First Nations in order to develop the kind of funding that we need over a period that's responsible, both for the communities and for us as governments, to put in place the water systems that we need and the sewage systems that we need, and to make sure that the roads are working and all other infrastructure is in place.

You walk into any First Nation community, I would say almost all, and you walk into a band office—normally a band office, just for people to understand, is a local government. In the city of Timmins or Sudbury, we have municipal town halls or city halls. If you go into Sudbury city hall or Timmins city hall, or you go into Thunder Bay or Toronto, they've got pretty good digs. They have offices that function. They've got toilets that work. They've got winter doors that keep the cold out. They've got windows that keep the cold out and roofs that keep the water out when it rains. You've got computer systems. You have that in all those communities. You go into a band office and, I've got to tell you, it's disgraceful that we in the province of Ontario allow those civil workers, who are band employees, to work in the conditions they do: phone systems that don't work; doors that don't work; windows that leak air in the winter; roofs that leak; band offices that are condemned and contaminated with mould. It's horrendous. I say this because we cannot allow the federal government to continue doing what it's doing to those First Nations communities.

So I say that one of the things we need to do is sit down with First Nations leadership, we need to sit down with the federal government, and we have to work out a plan on infrastructure renewal that will accelerate the reconstruction of those communities. I want to say this on that point: There are those, such as Mr. Pope in his report, who would argue that the simple solution is to move all those First Nations community members into communities like Timmins or Thunder Bay. And you know what? I'll tell you, it probably would be cheaper. I'm the first to admit it. But it would be total assimilation of a people, and on that basis, we can't allow it to happen.

1720

I said to people in Kashechewan, as I said to people across northern Ontario who talked to me about it when the issue was raised—because with Kashechewan, it would cost about \$400 million to relocate that community. That's just one community of around 1,200 people. That's a lot of money. The suggestion was made by the Pope report that we basically say to those community members, "We'll provide you a house somewhere in Timmins or Smooth Rock Falls, provided everybody moves, and we'll pay your moving costs."

I said to them, "Well, you know what? There's probably around 50% of the community, if you're lucky, who might take that as an option. But what do you do if 50% or 60% or 20% decide to stay? Do you send in the army? Do you forcibly evict the rest of the people there?" It's totally impractical. You cannot evict people from where they've been living all their lives, because (a) that's where they live, and (b) it's their traditional territory. Yes, some people may want to leave, and you allow that to happen. That's everybody's choice. One of the basic, fundamental principles of our Constitution is the freedom of movement, to live where we want. If somebody in Kashechewan, or anywhere, wants to live outside of their community, that's their choice and we should respect that. But for those who stay, we need to make sure that those communities are whole.

I would say that we need to be very serious about sitting down and making this a top priority for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and First Nations and that we don't just pay lip service to it, that the Ontario government takes a clear stand. Basically, we should pass a motion in this House to that effect: that we, along with First Nations, will sit down over a five- or 10-year period to renew the entire infrastructure of those First Nations communities. That will be a big-ticket item, but I see it as a human rights issue.

I would just ask anybody who's watching today, or in replay, or any member of this Legislature who thinks I'm wrong, to pack up your bags and go live in a First Nations community, one of those remote communities, for a week. Bring your families with you. I want you to live in the conditions that these people have to live in. Send your kids to the schools that are contaminated, full of mould. Go up to Fort Severn. Go into Attawapiskat. Find out what the condition is. Live in a house with 20 or

25 people. Go buy food at the Northern Store that's three and four times the price that you pay anywhere else. Be in a situation where there's no employment and all you can live on is welfare. Then come back and look me in the face and say, "Oh, well, we don't need to do this." I'm convinced that for anybody who goes there and lives there for a week with their family, their kids are going to be screaming at mom and dad, saying, "How can you allow this to happen?"

I just say this is something that we should undertake. So my basic point that I make on that, as I move on to another issue, is that it's a question of fairness. I think it's a question of recognizing, as Ontarians, that First Nations are, first of all, a nation unto themselves, but they are also members of this provincial home that we call the province of Ontario. As such, I think we need to give them the respect that they deserve and to help them to fulfill what needs to be done in those communities so they at least can have basic infrastructure.

I want to end on one last point in regard to this issue, in regard to the First Nations, and that is the issue of education, and just very quickly put it out there. Again, it's one of those things where the federal government is probably trying to do the right thing but is not succeeding very well at running the school systems on those reserves. One of the things that I would be very interested in is if we were seriously to look at, over a period of time, developing legislation in this province that would allow First Nations to create their own school boards that would fall under provincial jurisdiction. They would have to meet provincial guidelines as far as the school curriculum and all that, based on the Cree language or the Ojibway language or whatever language it is that they use, but the idea would be that they be given the time and they be given the resources to develop their own school boards that would fall under the provincial Ministry of Education.

The basic problem we have is that those schools are isolate schools in each of the communities. The federal government does not have the capacity to run the school system. Ontario and all provinces are responsible for education. We don't only have school boards, but we also have the Ministry of Education that has all of the expertise needed to run schools. Our kids, by and large, succeed in our school system. Why? Because we have competent people at the board level who run those schools and run them according to provincial guidelines.

The problem we have in First Nations communities is that you have competent people running schools, but you don't have a federal government that really knows what needs to be done in education. They look at each community individually; they don't look at the education system in First Nations communities as a whole. So I say what we should be doing is developing legislation that allows First Nations to choose to develop their own school boards under provincial jurisdiction so that they can teach the kids in their own language.

Why should a young Cree child be taught English in kindergarten or spoken to in English in kindergarten

when that child is Cree or Ojibwa? Allow them to do as we do as francophones: to develop their school system within their own language. If that child feels comfortable and is learning in an environment that he or she understands, nurtured by their own language and nurtured by their own cultural identities and values, those children will stand tall and proud, more so than even today, and they will be able to function much better in the future. That would be the long-term solution. It's not going to change things for us today in our generation, but at least the next generation would have a chance of being able to break the cycle that we've created.

I end on that particular point. I appreciate the opportunity to have spoken, and I know that members have taken to heart some of the comments that I made. I look forward to the day that we finally do get some fairness and respect for those people who live in our First Nations communities.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I just want to comment. I have great respect for the member from Leeds–Grenville. We were together in committee on May 16. One of the things he raised today is the issue of consumptive use. I want to note that I did call upon legal counsel. Mr. Flagal was there at committee that morning. He was legal counsel to the Ministry of the Environment. He responded that the definition of consumptive use was something that was consistent between the agreements that we've entered into with the eight Great Lakes states and the two Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec. I just want to note that I specifically asked Mr. Flagal the question, and I will give his response:

"When we were given instructions to develop this particular legislation, the instructions were to make sure to enshrine in the legislation the commitments of the province and the commitments of the parties to the agreement"—i.e. the province of Quebec and the eight Great Lakes states—"and that's why you see this definition of consumptive use."

That's why it tracks very closely to what was agreed upon by the eight Great Lakes states and the other provinces. He continues on to clearly articulate why this definition of consumptive use was placed in this piece of legislation.

I also called upon Ms. Leith Hunter, the deputy director of legal services for the branch in the Ministry of Natural Resources. She acted as counsel to the government of Ontario during the negotiations of the agreement. The Minister of Natural Resources did mention in his remarks the context of the agreement. Ms. Hunter did go on to say that, again, the definition of consumptive use had to be consistent with what was agreed to by the eight Great Lakes states and the province of Quebec and did go on to clearly define it.

I'm pleased that the member from Leeds–Grenville raised the issue. I took it, at committee that morning, on May 16, to be a very important point, so I did refer that issue to both the counsel for the Ministry of the Environment and the counsel for the Ministry of Natural Resources. In the natural resources case, Ms. Hunter was

eminently qualified to comment, because she had been the key counsel at the negotiation table when the accord was put together in 2005 between the eight Great Lakes states and the two provinces.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I'm pleased to have a moment to speak to this bill at third reading, Bill 198. Unfortunately, because of the fact that this bill has been time-allocated by this government, which promised never to time-allocate legislation—in opposition, they used to complain about time allocation motions all the time. I recall those days quite vividly. Yet this bill, Bill 198, is time-allocated, so there is limited time for those of us in opposition who are concerned about this issue. So I will be brief.

1730

I want to say that I believe it's incumbent upon the government and all of us to protect our groundwater for future generations, and I believe the Ministry of the Environment must take its responsibility for approving water-taking permits very seriously. In my opinion, no water-taking permit should be approved unless hydro-geological and scientific studies prove that groundwater resources will not be depleted as a result of the approval of the application and neighbouring wells will not be negatively impacted. The Ministry of the Environment, in my view, should carefully monitor large-volume water users to ensure that they are not exceeding the quantity of water that they're permitted to draw because of their permit, and if they are taking more water than they are allowed, their permits should be revoked.

The government should examine the feasibility and practicality of designating plastic water bottles under the waste diversion program if recycling rates do not improve significantly. Making the bottles refillable should even be considered, in my view. As well, the government should consult with the industry on setting a royalty fee which would be paid to municipalities that have water-bottling plants within their boundaries, similar to what exists for the extraction of gravel.

In my area, in Wellington county, there are at least two large water-bottling plants, one in the town of Erin and one in the township of Puslinch, and there is a great deal of community concern about whether or not water-taking permits should be extended and approved. Certainly I'm interested in this issue and want to do what I can to ensure that the public interest is upheld with respect to this issue.

I will be supporting the bill, but I'm also hoping that the Minister of the Environment will arrange a briefing for me very soon so that I can make sure that I'm completely brought up to speed on all of the issues surrounding these water-taking permit applications. I look forward to the minister arranging that briefing as soon as possible.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): We've had many members today from our side of the House who have wanted to speak to Bill 198. As was mentioned by the member from Waterloo–Wellington, there was a time allocation, so we only have such a

limited amount of time. I was happy that they all participated and that I'm doing the cleanup on Bill 198, Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act, 2007.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): They saved the best for the last.

Ms. Scott: I'll take that as a compliment from the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

It's been brought up that we intend to support the bill, but we certainly have some reservations and some amendments that we brought forward to committee that did not get passed. This act does provide for the "conservation, protection and management of Ontario's waters" and for their "efficient and sustainable use" in order to promote Ontario's long-term social, economic and environmental well-being.

We all want to protect our water sources. We had many people come before committee who knew about the bill. The problem again was that not a lot of people knew about the bill. The hearings were just held in Toronto here. Certainly the bill affects all of Ontario. It would have been nicer to see a little more time taken, especially on the water-taking aspect of the bill.

There were two parts to the bill. The Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Natural Resources both spoke here this afternoon. We had even said in committee that really there should be two parts to the bill, because we heard from quite a few stakeholders that they hadn't been consulted—the water-taking permit being the Ministry of the Environment and the protection of the water basin aspect being the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Tim Morris from the Sierra Club pointed this out when he said that "there is still a lot of work to be done in regulations following this legislation to further define and implement the wording of the legislation." This would be much better served in two pieces of legislation, which we thought should go on.

Consumptive use has been brought up a lot this afternoon. The member from Leeds–Grenville was quite concerned for the company in his riding, Invista. I know the member from Peterborough and I had lengthy conversations in committee about the definition of "consumptive use." We stand to have philosophical differences, which I appreciate. I know that we had some clarification. The fact that some of the states may interpret the definition differently and lead to an uneven playing field and competition is still a concern, but something we could possibly, hopefully, work out in regulation. But we appreciate the two sides of the argument that did occur there.

Some other concerns that were brought up, not just at committee but by the Environmental Commissioner before the committee, were that the MOE and the MNR said that funding for both ministries is inadequate for them to fully operate and fulfill their obligations and their functions. I know that Premier McGuinty campaigned on making the environment a major priority, but we had the Environmental Commissioner say that there's not enough

funding. We had several stakeholders say, "Well, that's all nice. You're doing this bill, and if there's no money to go with it to make it work, it's not going to work." So there's quite the dichotomy between what the government says and what's actually going to happen. That was brought up by several stakeholders.

Rick Findlay, the director of Pollution Probe, said with respect to Bill 198—and this goes in line with the concerns of the Environmental Commissioner—"Another important requirement is to be able to make the case for the resources necessary to implement this legislation over time, and the Environmental Commissioner has recently noted the chronic underfunding of the ministries responsible for managing and cleaning up the Great Lakes, the ministries of the environment and natural resources, in particular." Even properly intended legislation cannot be implemented without adequate resources.

There's no escaping those facts. We brought forward amendments from several groups. The Georgian Bay Association was spoken about at great length by the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka and Simcoe North. We're pleased that the government did listen to some of their concerns and made some amendments to that bill. They've done a great job, standing up for the Georgian Bay Association, working with Mary Muter and her group and the concerns with transfer within water basins, not just watersheds. So I appreciate that the government has listened to that. There's always the devil in the details with many of the regulations that were brought forward. So I thank all the members for voicing their concerns about that, and the Georgian Bay Association has done great work too.

The federation of agriculture is certainly one of the voices of Ontario farmers and is very important to my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, which is very dependent on a strong and successful agriculture sector, as is all of Ontario. Mr. Don McCabe, who's an executive member of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, stated in the committee: "We are pleased that this bill recognizes the substantial stewardship role Ontario's agricultural producers take to minimize their water use and ensure an efficient use of water by recognizing that conservation charges will not apply to primary production."

I certainly agree that Ontario farmers are leading examples of land stewardship in the province of Ontario. The Farmers Feed Cities campaign was launched to educate everyone why we need to keep a strong agriculture sector that can provide safe, sure, high-quality foods to us and also that they are great stewards of the land. I thank them for that campaign. They were also concerned—again, back to the "consumptive use" definition—and felt that significant public research needs to be conducted on that. I say that again as a reminder to the government that that definition is going to be coming up a lot as regulations to this bill go through.

Another point I'd like to put forward on the record pertains to the absolute need for our farmers to have uninterrupted access to water for the very life of crops.

Many farmers use storage ponds to alleviate the stress on other water sources during irrigation. The OFA's recommendation, which the PC Party brought forward in a proposed amendment, would see that the bill recognized the beneficial management practices of the OFA. Unfortunately, it was rejected by the government. But let me quote Mr. McCabe again:

"If you're going to make that kind of an investment into that crop, you need to be able to ensure that the water's going to be there to nurture that crop to its fullest potential.... We get one shot a year to do it right, and if that crop dies on the vine, that's a long time to come back around."

We wanted the government to take what the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has said. They didn't. I don't want them to throw any more stumbling blocks at our farmers in our agriculture communities than are already out there for the agricultural sector. I hope that, as this wasn't addressed in legislation, it will be addressed in the regulations as they come down.

The government did allow one of our amendments to pass. I want to thank the members of the justice policy committee for seeing that that was removed, and that was the provision that the permits expire, even if applied for on time, if a year passes by. That was in respect to farmers who have followed the rules, have applied on time for water-taking permits, and who should not be hurt because they have not had an answer back, the government being too slow to respond to that. So we were pleased that the government said that amendment could go through.

1740

I spoke before about the Georgian Bay Association and the good work they have done. They themselves actually raised a significant amount of money, undertook a study and found that 2.5 billion gallons per day, which was a previously unknown diversion, had been taken out of the St. Clair River, leading to the current low water levels in Lake Huron, Lake Michigan and Georgian Bay. I think it's just astounding that they took that task on themselves, raised the money and found that diversion that had been unaccounted for before. That is certainly why that amendment—we brought through a similar amendment, but the Liberals passed their own amendment. It dealt with the watersheds and returning the water to the same watershed. So we appreciate the work done by them.

The member from Leeds–Grenville brought forward his concerns on the consumptive use and the loss of jobs in his riding that could occur because of the definition of that, and the company that's willing to pay for the use of water but not for the water they're returning right to the same source for their business. Again, it's not an incentive for industry to move to the province if they don't know the rules and if they're scared they are going to change before them, and we certainly don't need any more loss of manufacturing jobs.

The Canadian Bottled Water Association, another provider of many jobs in our province, stated in public

hearings, “We were not consulted by the Ministry of the Environment as they developed the \$3.71 fee level.... We believe that this bill has more to do with politics than environmental science or stewardship. The timing and handling of the bill through the legislative process does not invite proper scrutiny or analysis.” So another major association contradicts any attempt made by the minister for proper consultation to take place on this bill.

Mr. Anthony van Heyningen of Refreshments Canada says, “I know that neither Refreshments Canada nor our members were consulted prior to the introduction of this bill.... We are further disappointed that the government has moved time allocation on this bill.”

Again, that section of the bill was rammed through without the consultation to take place that should have allowed citizens to come forward and more study to be done, because a lot of people didn’t know about Bill 198, and it takes a lot of energy, time and work to get into the details of what it would actually mean to you.

This is another group of people coming forward saying that it should have been split in two. There could be a constitutional challenge on this. I guess we’re going to have to wait and see.

Bill 198 also has the obligation to report; the agreement was every five years. Pollution Probe brought forward a suggestion that there needs to be more transparency and better monitoring, and reporting annually. Unfortunately, that amendment did not get through.

The Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association also provided an amendment that we brought forward that dealt with safety from electrical dangers in working underground with the water and the water level in the ditches. The government said it was not a concern and they didn’t pass that amendment, but I just wanted to put on the record that they had brought forward a concern that they saw within the bill, and we’re disappointed the government did not act on that.

Unfortunately, I’m running out of time, but we’ve had as much debate as we’re allotted here.

Interjection.

Ms. Scott: There’s unanimous consent for an extension, I hear in the background? There’s a limited amount of time for debate, and I appreciate the opportunity that I’ve had. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 24, 2007, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. Broten has moved third 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. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1745 to 1746.

The Acting Speaker: I’ve just received this:

“To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

“Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Minister Broten for third 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, be deferred until the time of deferred votes on May 31, 2007.”

It is signed by the chief government whip.

In view of this, it will be deferred.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands recessed until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1747.

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