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of Ontario**

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 14 June 2000

Mercredi 14 juin 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 14 June 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 14 juin 2000

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): This weekend, Saturday, June 17, marks a very ominous anniversary for Ontario's tenants. It was two years ago that the so-called Tenant Protection Act came into force in this province.

This act was brought in with much fanfare, but let me tell members of this House what it has really meant for Ontario's tenants:

Evictions are up by 15%, and according to a recent study of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, it has turned into little more than an eviction machine for landlords. While eviction orders are being churned out by the dozen, however, tenant concerns are being sent to the back of the line. Tenants' rights have significantly eroded under the act, although Minister Clement refuses to acknowledge all of the evidence.

Vacancy rates are declining at an unprecedented rate and the availability of affordable rental accommodation is at an all-time low. One in four Ontario tenants are vulnerable to becoming homeless because they spend over half of their household income on rent, and existing tenants are virtually prisoners in their own home.

Former Minister Al Leach declared at the time that within two years of this act coming into force, there would be 10,000 new rental accommodation units created here in Ontario. Well, here we are, two years later, and only a handful have been created.

In typical Harris government fashion, Minister Clement has tried to blame developers, municipalities, even tenants themselves, for this government's and his own failings. When will the Harris government wake up and realize the horrific impact that their actions have had on tenants in Ontario?

I will be joining tenants from across Toronto this Saturday here on the lawns at Queen's Park to mourn the proclamation of this act. I hope that this rally and the many other petitions, protests, letters and phone calls that the minister receives will be a signal that this act requires some real and meaningful changes. After a disastrous two years, tenants deserve nothing less.

RCMP MUSICAL RIDE

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I am pleased to inform the members of this House about a must-see event in the prosperous riding of Cambridge, North Dumfries and South Kitchener.

On August 13, 2000, Cambridge will proudly host the popular RCMP Musical Ride. This is a Canadian spectacle. I encourage my colleagues and friends to take time out and enjoy the festivities of music, demonstrations and entertainment.

I would personally like to acknowledge the committee and dedicated volunteers who have been working for over three years to present this great show to our community. This is all in celebration of the millennium. Leadership of this remarkable event is being provided by Chairperson John Housser, who was awarded the Cambridge Tourism Ambassador of the Year award, and Vice-Chair Paul Larocque, who received the Tourism Industry Booster of the Year award. Both individuals, and their committee, have created unique and memorable partnerships between corporations, government and the community.

The musical ride is being referred to as "A Coming Together Event." This is a perfect opportunity for children, family and friends to enjoy a safe and fun day while taking advantage of the many attractions and shopping facilities in Cambridge.

For tickets and more information to the RCMP Musical Ride, go to the Web site, www.cambridge-tourism.com.

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Today I'm renewing my call to four-lane Highway 69 from Sudbury to Parry Sound.

In 1996, 12,000 Sudburians filled out postcards that said, "Highway 69, worth the investment." To date, all they've received is lip service.

Last week I sent an open letter to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines demanding answers. To date, no response, but let's see what's happened over the course of the last three years: 1997, 1998 and 1999 saw 22 fatalities along that stretch of highway between Sudbury and Parry Sound—22 lives snuffed out because this government will not accept the responsibility that they have to ensure that my residents have a safe highway between Sudbury and Parry Sound.

How many more people have to die before this government understands it has a responsibility to the people in northern Ontario?

Let's look at the 40-mile stretch from Sudbury to Parry Sound. This year alone, there have been 26 accidents and 14 people injured. Broken bones, lives in ruin, incredible carnage—all because this government refuses to act. For safety reasons, for political reasons or for whatever other reasons, this government will not accept the responsibility.

Today, I demand on behalf of my constituents that you begin four-laning Highway 69 from Sudbury immediately.

JUNIOR FIRE DEPARTMENT PROGRAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to rise today and advise the Legislature that the junior fire department program in my riding of Durham is well underway. Young people aged 11 to 12 from the municipality of Clarington get the opportunity to learn basic first aid, CPR, tying ropes and knots, proper fire extinguisher use and a number of other safety-related items.

Through the month of August, 20 new children will each receive, on a weekly basis, a fun, safety-oriented training program with valuable hands-on experience from the Clarington Fire Department. Each week wraps up with a skill-related competition, demonstrations for parents and, of course, graduation certificates.

I commend the program coordinators for their active involvement with the youth of our community, especially the program supervisor, Divisional Chief Gord Weir, as well as Fire Prevention Officer Randy Reinert.

The program is also supported by outside organizations such as Ontario Power Generation, Durham Regional Police Services, the fire investigator from the office of the fire marshal, the RCMP, Bowmanville ambulance services, and many citizens at large; for instance, the Darlington generating station.

I'd like to thank the organizers for providing the safety and learning demonstration for our youth in the community.

VISITOR

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'd also like to take this last couple of moments to welcome to the Legislature a very good friend of mine, Wayne Dawson from the Canadian Portland Cement Association, who's in the visitors' gallery today.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I rise today to talk about the underfunding of services for people with developmental disabilities. I'll be sending the Minister of Community and Social Services, very shortly, hundreds of postcards which confirm this fact. Each of this is signed and says the following:

"Citizens with physical and mental disabilities need care and support. That takes resources. Please act to improve our clients' quality of life.

"Serve more than their basic needs.

"Increase the staffing ratios.

"Make more services available to eliminate waiting lists.

"Address the evolving needs of clients.

"Deal with staff turnover and burnout.

"Staff and families" in this province "are stretched to the breaking point. The needs a real. Please act now."

Everyone recognizes that the developmental services sector is chronically underfunded and has been for years. The workers in the dozens of agencies that serve the mentally and physically disabled are deeply concerned that they can do little more than serve their clients' basic needs. The resources that are needed to do more just do not exist.

The government recently announced some additional funding for developmental services. This is only a start; much more needs to be done.

I would like to join my voice to the many others being raised in Ontario and ask that the minister provide the necessary funding to move developmental services beyond the basics. People with developmental disabilities may not in all cases be taxpayers but they are in all cases citizens. They deserve better.

1340

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's been almost six months since the Harris government rammed through legislation to force restructuring in my community. At the time Bill 25 was introduced, the Minister of Municipal Affairs would not say who would pay the transition costs associated with this forced amalgamation. He told the Sudbury media, "The government is still deliberating on the best way to approach these costs." Six months later, apparently these deliberations still continue.

Compare this to the Harris government's approach to the city of Toronto amalgamation. On June 5, 1998, the former Minister of Municipal Affairs announced a \$100-million interest-free loan for the city for 1998, and another \$100-million interest-free loan would be provided if requested by Toronto in 1999. Further, a grant of \$50 million was provided to restructure transportation and communication costs. The city of Toronto will begin to repay this \$200-million loan this fiscal year.

Secondly, under section 27 of Bill 25, the regional municipality of Sudbury is forced to pick up all the costs associated with the transition team, including salaries, expenses, the hiring of experts and the fees to use any facilities. Compare that to the memorandum of understanding signed by the Harris government with the city of Toronto in August 1997. The Harris government agreed to pick up all the costs associated with the transition team and financial advisory group, and that cost in the end was \$3.8 million.

This is discrimination too. It's no different from the discrimination this government practises against northern cancer patients.

CONNAUGHT STUDENT BIOTECHNOLOGY EXHIBITION

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): On May 10, St Elizabeth Catholic high school in Thornhill was declared the first-place winner in the Connaught Student Biotechnology Exhibition. The students who won the competition are Joy Lero, Rosanna Dolcetti, Bernadette Ilagan and Valerie Tam. These students, inspired and coached by Sydney Smith, their biology teacher, competed against 60 other projects which had been submitted for competition. This event is particularly significant because it centred around the discovery that genistein, a biochemical product of soybeans, can kill breast cancer cells.

The students realized that they were on to something several months ago when they read a graph that showed a correlation between soy consumption and decreased incidence of breast cancer. With the support and encouragement of Dr Evelyn Voura, a scientist with the world-renowned Ontario Cancer Institute, the students conducted their research at the institute after school and on weekends. The implications of this research and the combined efforts of these students, their teacher Sydney Smith and Dr Voura are particularly significant when one considers that according to the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, an estimated 5,500 women throughout Canada died from the disease in 1999.

It is my privilege to present Rosanna Dolcetti, Joy Lero, Bernadette Ilagan, Valerie Tam, their teacher Sydney Smith and Patrick Black, trustee for the York Catholic District School Board. I would ask you to join me in congratulating all of them for their outstanding achievement.

EDUCATION ISSUES

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the efforts of one of the Elgin county trustees to the Thames Valley District School Board, Cynthia Nurse. Out of a sense of total frustration with the Harris government and their refusal to hold meaningful consultation on Bill 74, Ms Nurse designed a Web site seeking input from the citizens of Ontario. The results have been overwhelming. Less than one half of 1% agree with your government's attack on teachers, the education system and democracy in this province. This seriously casts doubt on the numbers we have been hearing from the government side of the House.

One of the comments states: "Bill 74 is an insult.... I voted Tory ... I regret this and apologize to the teachers of Ontario for my mistake.... For the first time in my life, I'm ashamed to be a Conservative."

I'd also like to draw to the attention of the Legislature a letter sent to the Minister of Education last week by the

Thames Valley District School Board. In regards to Bill 74, the Thames Valley District School Board writes to the Minister of Education: "[T]he government has created an environment that will further demoralize the educators. This will not improve the quality of education. ...[T]he proposed legislation ... endangers the principles of democracy." In reference to forcing school board compliance they say it "suspends the rights of natural justice ... an affront to the democratic process."

It is incumbent on every member of this Legislature to heed these warning bells that are ringing across the province.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr David Young (Willowdale): Not long ago, I stood in this House and spoke about a very disturbing trend. The increase of crime across the province, and particularly violent crime, is of great concern to my constituents and undoubtedly to all the residents of this province.

At the time I last spoke about this issue, a 13-year-old boy had been shot in the head during a gun battle between two groups of youths. Fortunately, he survived. Only a week before that incident, a stray bullet passed through an empty crib during a gunfight in which 26—and I say it again, 26—rounds were fired indiscriminately. Two days ago, a stray bullet hit a six-year-old boy playing in a park in north Toronto. The tragic irony of this is that the park in question is dedicated to Breanna Davy, a three-year-old who was shot dead almost exactly one year ago.

This has to stop. While I am aware of the fact that criminal law is within the federal purview, within their jurisdiction, we as elected representatives within this Legislature must take action. I have with me today a petition that has been circulating throughout my riding over the past short while. I am inviting the other members of this Legislative Assembly to sign this petition to add their name to the plea we make to the Minister of Justice, the Honourable Anne McLellan, to amend the Criminal Code to ensure that there are meaningful penalties for those who use firearms in the commission of offences.

ANNUAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 1999 annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS' EXPENDITURES REPORT

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I also beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the individual members' expenditures for the fiscal year 1999-2000.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr21, An Act to revive 1264030 Ontario Inc.

Bill Pr24, An Act respecting Huron University College.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000

MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Mr Turnbull moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to require the mandatory reporting of severely damaged vehicles to counter motor vehicle fraud and theft / Projet de loi 91, Loi exigeant la déclaration obligatoire des véhicules gravement endommagés afin de lutter contre la fraude et le vol des véhicules automobiles.

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

The minister for a short statement.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): I will be making a ministerial statement.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE PREMIER ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE CODE DE CONDUITE POUR LE PREMIER MINISTRE

Mr Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to establish a Code of Conduct for the Premier of Ontario with respect to the Legislative Assembly / Projet de loi 92, Loi visant à établir un code de conduite pour le premier ministre de l'Ontario à l'égard de l'Assemblée législative.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

The Speaker: Would the members kindly take their seats.

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

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Bartolucci, Rick	Cordiano, Joseph	Lankin, Frances
Bisson, Gilles	Crozier, Bruce	Levac, David
Bountrogianni, Marie	Curling, Alvin	Marchese, Rosario
Boyer, Claudette	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martel, Shelley
Bradley, James J.	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martin, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie
Bryant, Michael	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Caplan, David	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Christopherson, David	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony

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

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 39; the nays are 0.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The member for a short statement.

Interjections.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I didn't hear you, Speaker, there were so many people talking around me.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Please, don't you want to listen to the explanation? This bill would make Ontario's Premier subject to the same code of conduct that the Conservative government is demanding of students in Bill 81 and would curtail insults, personal attacks and damaging practices that are now routine with Mike Harris in the Legislature.

The Speaker: Introduction of bills?

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to go to second reading on this bill.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

PRIVACY ENFORCEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (INFORMATION AND PRIVACY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT), 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE RESPECT DE LA VIE PRIVÉE ET SUR L'OBLIGATION DE RENDRE DES COMPTES À CET ÉGARD (MODIFICATION DE LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'ACCÈS À L'INFORMATION ET LA PROTECTION DE LA VIE PRIVÉE)

Mr Christopherson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 93, An Act to enhance privacy enforcement and accountability by amending the Freedom of Information

and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act with respect to the Commissioner's powers / *Projet de loi 93, Loi visant à accroître le respect de la vie privée et l'obligation de rendre des comptes à cet égard en modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée et la Loi sur l'accès à l'information municipale et la protection de la vie privée en ce qui concerne les pouvoirs du commissaire.*

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

The member for Hamilton West for a short statement.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): The bill I've tabled today would give the powers to the privacy commissioner that she sought in her report, where she outlined the obstruction she received at the hands of this government while she searched the Province of Ontario Savings Office issue. You will know, Speaker, that you found a case of prima facie contempt in that regard.

The government claims they want to give the commissioner the powers. The commissioner is concerned that this review that's currently underway could take years and that we'll never really get back to the crucial issues, the really important issues that remain in that investigation. My bill would give the commissioner the powers she sought and would allow her to complete the investigation and get answers to the questions she raises in that very dramatic report she tabled with this House.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

VEHICLE BRANDING LEGISLATION

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Today I have introduced legislation that, if passed, will amend the Highway Traffic Act to improve customer protection against auto theft and vehicle fraud in Ontario.

Each year tens of thousands of vehicles are written off in Ontario by insurance companies. Many of these vehicles find their way back on to Ontario roads through black market operations.

Clearly, auto fraud and theft impact everyone, both in terms of road safety and higher insurance premiums. The amendments I'm introducing will require the reporting—or branding—of severely damaged vehicles. Branding involves putting vehicle status information on registration documents and other information products, including vehicle abstracts and used vehicle information packages.

Vehicles that are written off and branded as irreparable or salvage will not be licensed for Ontario roads. Vehicles that are damaged beyond repair will not be allowed to return to our roadways. Vehicles that can be rebuilt to their original structural integrity will only be allowed back on our roads after they meet prescribed requirements and are re-inspected. These measures are

built on the existing stolen and salvage vehicle program introduced in 1998 to deter automobile registration fraud and vehicle theft in this province.

The Ontario Crime Control Commission has indicated that mandatory branding is an effective tool against auto theft and fraud. There is also widespread commitment and support from the insurance industry under the existing voluntary program. All interested parties have told me that for this program to be truly effective in promoting road safety and consumer protection, it must be mandatory. In addition to the insurance industry, we have worked with many stakeholders, including the enforcement community, the collision repair industry, the vehicle sales industry and auto recyclers. All are highly supportive of this program.

I would also like to thank the members for Thunder Bay-Superior North and Timmins-James Bay for their support of this legislation. I hope we can work together on future initiatives that will further crack down on crime in our communities.

This legislation, if agreed upon by the Legislature, will allow further development of regulations that will give effect to this program. Our government has made a commitment to introduce tough measures that will tackle crime and build safer communities for our families. This is another positive initiative introduced by our government that supports law enforcement officials in their fight against crime. We are confident that the mandatory reporting of severely damaged vehicles will promote road user safety and provide greater protection for consumers in Ontario.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I'm glad to have an opportunity to respond to the minister's statement. I must say off the top that the Liberal caucus supports this legislation. It's something we have been calling for for some time. Many of my colleagues have written the minister. There's quite a history with this particular issue. The mandatory branding of vehicles will make a real difference; there's no question about it.

If I may say in passing, though, it does seem rather strange that while the government is keen to follow through on this legislation which makes it mandatory to brand vehicles, they're not as keen to make mandatory the reporting of unsafe water in our province. One would think they would treat that as being as much of a priority.

This is a bill that was tried on a voluntary basis two years ago. It was perhaps well intentioned but it was destined not to work and did not work. The government introduced legislation similar to this back in April 1999, before the election was called, and I think knew full well it would not pass. One of our regrets is that this was not brought forward this past fall. There seemed to be no reason to have any further delay because it is something that needs to be done. We need to protect consumers and we certainly need to protect the used car dealers and others who were put in a bad position about this. Our caucus will support this. I just hope there's an oppor-

tunity to have a full debate before the Legislature rises before the session ends in June.

Having said all that, that we support it, I want to use this opportunity—it's so rare for the minister to get up and make a statement in the House, let alone bring forward stuff. There was some disappointment that he did not bring up some of the other issues that we consider pretty important, such as the sale of Highway 407, one of the greatest cash grabs in Canadian history, a real scam, one that has absolutely devastated drivers, across the GTA in particular, one that really is forcing motorists into 99 years of tolls, one that basically allows them to act as a Cadillac collection agency.

The issue is still a secret deal that this government will not reveal to the public. It would have been nice if the minister had stood up today and said he was going to release the details on the 407. In 1994 the minister himself spoke about the fact that it should be a public issue. That's one thing we're disappointed about, and we hope the minister will stand up and make the details of the 407 scam deal available to the people of this province.

Another issue that's really important is that driver's licence information, personal information, is being sold right now to 570 companies in this province, which we think the minister needs to deal with. The privacy commissioner, Ms Cavoukian, has made reference to it. This is banned in the United States and in many other provinces, and it's banned because it's dangerous. That is something the minister needs to do something about. There are certain circumstances under which it's necessary to have access to that information, but I'll tell you, Minister, when you've got 51 private investigation firms getting this information, we want to know how much revenue you're getting from that. We want you to really protect people. This is about public safety as well.

There are so many other issues that I wish I had more time. The condition of our roads in this province: 56% of our roads are in absolute disrepair. The auditor has told us that. What does this government do? They download thousands of kilometres to municipalities. They give them a little chunk of change and then say, "You look after them." It's unbelievable. They download it and then what do they do? They privatize all the road maintenance in this province; they privatized every bit of it. Not only is privatization going to cost taxpayers a lot more money in this province, it's costing lives. We know that. The auditor has told you that as well, sir. You should listen to this. The privatization of road maintenance is costing more money and it's costing lives.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): What about GO Transit?

Mr Gravelle: That's an issue I will try and get to, and that is the government's absolute lack of vision.

Let me make one more point. We are very concerned about the increase in truck traffic in this province. We are very concerned about the increase in hours of service that drivers are allowed to drive in this province. Negotiations are going on right now between your government and the

federal government. I'll tell you something: This needs to be done in public. One of the proposals on the table will allow drivers to drive a longer amount of time in a given day. Minister, I think you need to recognize we should have public consultations. I came up with that last week, and I hope you will.

Speaking to my colleague from St Catharines, there is the lack of vision. We have air pollution; we have congestion and gridlock in this province. We need public transit to be supported. What does this government do? They remove themselves and download public transit to the municipalities, which is a disgrace.

If you have any vision for the future at all, you'll recognize that we need to support public transit in this province. You're not doing that. It would be nice to have you recognize that municipalities cannot be left alone on this. If you really want the province to function as it should, bring back public transit supported by the province of Ontario. You can do it now. That's all I have to say.

Applause.

Mr Bradley: The Speaker is standing now.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That actually worked. The member for Timmins-James Bay.

1410

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): After that, I wonder what would happen if the minister really did come in with bad news. My Lord, that was quite the statement.

I don't want to take up five minutes and go into the litany of the issues of this government on transportation. Simply put, the government is coming forward with a piece of legislation that we're prepared to support. We think it is important as a protection for consumers. I think the minister covered it well in his statement, and what we're trying to do here is to take out of circulation those vehicles that are deemed irreparable to make sure that when people decide to do this on the side, rebuild cars and resell them, their cars don't end up in the hands of consumers, cars that quite frankly shouldn't be there. I see this as a safety issue. It's something that our caucus, the NDP, are prepared to support. We're prepared to give this quick passage.

However, I have to say something. I was prepared to stop at this point, but two things happened in this statement. One is that unfortunately the Minister of Transportation tried to tie this into a law-and-order issue. Talk about the wrong time to be doing such a thing. I just have to say, Minister—and I'm not going to go the whole five minutes—how can you try to tie this to law and order when you're the government that has now been in a position where we have less police on the beat than we had back in 1994? We have fewer cops out doing the work, patrolling our neighbourhoods, making our communities safer than there were prior to 1994. This government, to try to tie this to law and order, I think makes it a stretch.

Then I read with interest, as many members of the assembly did, when we looked at the discussion and

comments of Justice Day in regard to the Victims' Bill of Rights. They said that this government talked a good line when it came to giving victims' rights; passed legislation even in this Legislature. But it was toothless, said Justice Day; the bill did nothing, not one iota, to protect victims' rights, and he wondered what the government was all about. Again it's one of those issues where the government likes to talk one issue and speak a good line, but when it comes to delivering, they don't.

So we will support this legislation but, Minister, I warn you: Don't come into this Legislature trying to tie this in as law and order, because it ain't. It's a safety issue, and we shouldn't play with people's safety.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I, with great anticipation, came into the Legislature this afternoon knowing the Minister of Transportation was going to make a statement. I was hopeful that it was going to be a comment on his predecessor's, Mr Clement's, promise that he made just slightly more than a year ago.

During the election campaign of 1999, Mr Clement came to Niagara, campaigning for a former Conservative member of the Legislature, and promised the people of Niagara that the 406 would be four-laned in anticipation of the extension southward into Port Colborne.

I'm hopeful that the member representing Port Colborne has enough clout with his cabinet colleagues to deliver on this commitment to the people of Port Colborne and the very southern tier of Niagara. I was hoping that this minister would have been advised of his predecessor's election promise. The promise wasn't successful in terms of achieving its goal, but a promise is a promise, Minister. A promise made should be kept, don't you think? You promised the four-laning and extension of the 406 down to my colleague Mr Hudak's riding. Mr Hudak may not want to speak out on behalf of it, but I'll take the opportunity to address the minister on behalf of not only the people of Niagara Centre but the people of Port Colborne and Wainfleet and Fort Erie who want that 406 extension developed southbound.

Quite frankly, it's not necessary to do a whole lot of developmental work, because the highway, when it was built so many years ago, was designed to be a four-lane highway. Don't talk to us about studies and engineering reports. I'm confident, and I'll come over and help you look for them—we'll bring a video cam if we have to. I'm confident that the plans are already there. We could do it at 6 in the morning, 7 in the morning or 7 at night, at your pleasure.

I'm convinced, Minister, that the plans—

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Can I come? I would like to go with you.

Mr Kormos: Ms Martel wishes to accompany me. I'm confident that the plans are already there. It's a simple matter of you keeping the ministry's promise. Promises made, Minister, should be kept. Your predecessor promised an extension of the 406 and its four-laning. Keep the ministry's promise, Minister: Four-lane the 406 like you promised the people of Welland, Thorold, Port

Colborne, Wainfleet and any other number of ridings along the Lake Erie shore.

DEFERRED VOTES

SAFE SCHOOLS ACT, 2000 LOI DE 2000 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES ÉCOLES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 81, An Act to increase respect and responsibility, to set standards for safe learning and safe teaching in schools and to amend the Teaching Profession Act/ Projet de loi 81, Loi visant à accroître le respect et le sens des responsabilités, à fixer des normes pour garantir la sécurité des conditions d'apprentissage et d'enseignement dans les écoles et à modifier la Loi sur la profession enseignante.

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

The division bells rang from 1415 to 1420.

The Speaker: Mrs Ecker has moved third reading of Bill 81, An Act to increase respect and responsibility, to set standards for safe learning and safe teaching in schools and to amend the Teaching Profession Act.

All those in favour of the motion by Mrs Ecker relating to school safety, please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Palladini, Al
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Johns, Helen	Snobelen, John
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Eves, Ernie L.	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Mazzilli, Frank	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Munro, Julia	Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed?

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	Lankin, Frances
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Levac, David
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley
Bountrogianni, Marie	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martin, Tony
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	McGuinty, Dalton
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Caplan, David	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The eyes are 48; the nays are 41.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

VISITORS

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like all of us to welcome a group of grade 8 students from l'école publique de la Rivière Castor d'Embrun who are here to visit us today at Queen's Park. Bienvenue à l'Assemblée législative.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm pleased to announce the presence in the Legislature today, in the members' gallery, of Anna Hucajluk and Catherine Tirpko of St Catharines, accompanied by Hellen Markowski of Buffalo, the great-great-niece of the great Bulgarian socialist leader Dimitri Blagoeff.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Welcome from all the members.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Today I want to know why it is that you've done so little to prevent another Walkerton-type tragedy. It has been several days now—in fact, nearly a month—since the outbreak of E coli in Walkerton's water. It has been 22 days since E coli claimed its first victim who lost her life. People across the province who work to protect our water know that you are doing nothing to prevent a recurrence of this kind of tragedy.

I have in my hands a copy of a water conservation report produced by the Kettle Creek Conservation Authority. I want to quote a passage from it: "As of June 2000, there is no comprehensive monitoring, evaluation, management or protection of either ground- or surface water quality in the province of Ontario." That is devastating indictment of your refusal to act after the Walkerton tragedy. Can you tell us today why you are still failing to act to protect our water?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of the Environment could outline many things that we've done and changes in procedures since Walkerton. I'll give him an opportunity to do so in just a second, but let me repeat some of the initiatives we've taken. Our immediate concern was Walkerton, the people of Walkerton. The response there from the people of Walkerton has been overwhelming. They're grateful for the response of the various ministries, including the Ministry of the Environment in particular. This has been relayed in

a number of forums, public and private, as well as with the mayor.

In addition, we announced a number of processes and inquiries to get to the bottom of what happened in Walkerton and how we could ensure that we prevent that from ever happening again. At the same time, the Ministry of the Environment announced, within a few days, a reaffirmation of the procedures that should have been followed. The ministry insisted they must be followed to prevent this kind of situation in the future. That was within a matter of days. At the same time, the minister and the ministry are responding to thousands of FOI requests, doing the estimates. So it's been a very busy ministry.

Mr McGuinty: The only thing that you have done since Walkerton that has been of any value to Ontario is the result of us dragging you into those things kicking and screaming. We dragged you kicking and screaming into a public inquiry. We dragged you kicking and screaming into providing reasonable compensation for the people of Walkerton. We dragged you kicking and screaming into producing whistle-blower legislation. Those things came from this side of the House; they didn't come from that side of the House. There has been a complete dearth of leadership when it comes to a response to the Walkerton tragedy.

Let's come back to the same said report. It goes on to say that when it comes to responsibility and accountability for water in Ontario, these matters were either eliminated or transferred to the local municipal level. In particular, it says the following, "Provincial leadership in assisting municipalities to coordinate and implement their new responsibilities has yet to materialize." This conservation authority is saying what we've been saying, it's saying what the people of Ontario have been saying: You are not demonstrating any leadership when it comes to making sure that Walkerton-type tragedies don't recur in Ontario. Again, Premier, why are you not demonstrating any leadership on this issue?

Hon Mr Harris: I appreciate the member reminding us of the pats on the back for the marvellous role he's played in being constructive and positive in this whole affair. Let me say that on May 25 I offered immediate assistance to the town of Walkerton. The Ontario Clean Water Agency was sent to Walkerton to ensure the water supply was made safe as soon as possible. On May 31, the Attorney General announced a commission of inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act. Mr Dennis O'Connor of the Ontario Court of Appeal was appointed as commissioner on June 9. On June 2, we announced our initial seed money of \$100,000 for the Brockton Response Centre, which got them through the first week, the initial week, as it was intended to do. On June 6, Minister of Education Janet Ecker announced \$300,000 in special funding to ensure that students could continue their school year in a number of other areas. On June 8, the government announced an immediate aid package for the residents of Walkerton and there was a standing ovation for the ministers who were there by the 200 or 300

residents, who appreciated the response. On June 12, Minister Flaherty introduced amendments to the Public Inquiries Act to ensure that the whistle-blowing-type protection called for by the member, and let me congratulate you for being on the same—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the Premier's time is up.

1430

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you are continuing to gamble that this won't happen again. If you are sincerely committed to ensuring that you draw whatever lessons you can from the terrible mistakes you made in the past, then you will immediately hire, on a permanent basis, 100 inspectors and enforcement officers over at the Ministry of the Environment.

This morning we were amazed to learn that you are not considering hiring those inspectors. You said, "I don't think it makes sense to staff up for that bulge on a permanent basis." Is that what you think this is, some kind of a blip, some kind of a bulge? This is a permanent crisis, created by things you did, that calls for a permanent solution. Premier, will agree to hire, on a permanent basis, those 100 inspectors?

Hon Mr Harris: I appreciate that already the leader of the Liberal Party knows more than Justice O'Connor, more than the reviews we've initiated, more than the coroner, more than others. The fact of the matter is that we do not know yet whether 100, 500 or 1,000 new employees need to be added. We don't know whether it's for a short period of time, a medium period of time or a long period of time.

What I can tell you is that the Minister of the Environment has carte blanche to hire who, and however many people, he needs to ensure and protect the integrity of the water for all residents of this province. There can be no more far-reaching response than that from a government that is dealing with having to do estimates, dealing with FOI requests, dealing with a number of other—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Sorry to interrupt, Premier. The Premier will take his seat. I can't hear that. We'll just wait until people stop shouting. Yesterday we got to the Liberal question way down the list. More questions get on, but if you're yelling, we'll just stand here.

Sorry for the interruption, Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: There are a number of areas that are being looked at both in the short-term, the medium-term and the long-term, as they should be. I think it's a little presumptuous for the member to prejudge precisely how many, if any, are required to meet all of these requests. This is a matter that we are all taking a look at, that we are all treating very seriously.

As you know, immediately following Walkerton we reconfirmed the procedures that were to be followed, which I'm sure will be a matter of investigation. We're very confident that we not only have in this province the safest water in North America, but that we will continue to have in the future. If there's more we can do to give

those assurances, by golly, we're going to get in there and do it.

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Back to the Premier: It's funny, you know, that the Premier had complete conviction and certainty and no doubt whatsoever when he decided to let 900 staff go. Apparently that was the number. I don't know, Premier, if 100 will do the job but I can say that when it comes to the safety of Ontario drinking water, I'd rather err on the side of caution; I'd rather do the hiring. If the commission concludes it's too many at a later date, then we can deal with that, but at the present time surely what we should do in the public interest is make that higher.

Do you know what else we know, Premier? Not only did you let 900 staff people go, but you cut the number of inspections by two thirds. There was a time in Ontario when we had our inspections once a year. Now it's happening once every three years. I don't know for certain, but I have a feeling that if we were to ask the people of Ontario today, they would say they want their water to be checked by the provincial government regularly and frequently and without fail. They expect that our provincial government will keep its hand in water safety in Ontario. So I ask you, Premier, on behalf of all Ontarians, to rise to the occasion, exercise leadership and commit to hiring 100 inspectors on a permanent basis.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think we've heard loud and clear from the public that they would like their water tested and checked and inspected regularly and frequently and without fail. If more people are required, we will hire whatever it takes to do just that.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, this is as good an opportunity as any to get you on the record when it comes to this issue. Are you maintaining now that your cuts to the Ministry of the Environment—40% of the funding, one third of the staff—together with the changes in procedures and policies contributed in no way whatsoever to the Walkerton tragedy? I want to know that answer.

Hon Mr Harris: I know the member opposite and other members have been quick to lay blame and assess blame and point fingers. I have made it very clear in any of those responses that I didn't believe that today, or the day I was asked, was the day to lay or assess any blame. There is a factual record of information that's there of what happened and when. That is the reason why we have a full commission of inquiry and why we will have a coroner's inquest to answer those very questions. They're all on the table. Everything is there to be looked at that should be there.

I repeat again, I have assessed or blamed no one today, and I have made that very clear on numerous occasions. Others have interpreted it in other ways. The member who has pointed the most fingers shakes his head. That's the Leader of the Opposition, the member who has all the answers, right down to the actual number of employees who should be hired. I tell you, would that leadership

were quite that easy. You may think it is, in opposition, but I tell you, it is not quite that easy in practice.

Mr McGuinty: Now we have it. It is now out in the open for the first time. The reason that this Premier is failing to take and show leadership on this issue in terms of making sure that Walkerton doesn't recur in any other community in Ontario is because he's refusing to admit that, to whatever minimal degree possible, his government and his policies contributed to Walkerton.

The Ministry of the Environment produced its own memos warning us about this. The Provincial Auditor warned about these cuts. The Environmental Commissioner warned about these cuts. A variety of environmental groups warned about these cuts. These cuts and what you did, Premier, when taken all together, constitute a road map that took us directly to Walkerton. That's what they tell us. We're never going to resolve this, we're never going to get to the bottom of this, to use your language, until you admit some responsibility.

Premier, tell us again. Tell us that your cuts, your reductions in funding, the fact that you let so many staff members go, the changes to your procedures and policies when it comes to reporting and testing in Ontario, had nothing whatsoever to do with what happened in Walkerton.

Hon Mr Harris: Let me repeat that rather than assess blame and point fingers, we have put independent inquiries in place to do just that. I know that's what you want to do but we are not here to play that game. We thought it was far more important to immediately—and we have made no denials. We've said, "Let's have a full inquiry to look at it." I know in opposition you have the luxury to blame anybody and everybody every day of the week. We, rather, felt that how we help the people of Walkerton was more important. How do we immediately get up there and meet with them? How do we respond to their needs? How do we give assurances to the people of Walkerton and, indeed, once we've dealt with their crisis and their emergency and their tragedy, how then do we give assurances to the rest of the people of the province? We have put our action and our efforts into that, at the same time as you have put your efforts into blaming.

1440

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, when I questioned your Minister of the Environment in the estimates committee about protecting the quality of drinking water for Ontario citizens, he looked like he'd been hit by a truck. Surprisingly, incredibly, he admitted he had not been consulted or briefed on your government's proposal to force municipalities to privatize their waterworks. He did admit that he thought any such proposal should wait until after the Walkerton inquiry, but your Minister of Municipal Affairs says it's full speed ahead as if the Walkerton inquiry doesn't matter. He says: "Oh, no, we're going

to do this. The Walkerton inquiry, that's not really relevant."

Premier, will you give the people of Ontario some peace of mind? Will you categorically, here and now, deep-six your government's proposal to force the municipalities to sell off their drinking water delivery systems?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No such policy exists, so there's nothing to deep-six. It is not the intention of this government and never has been. There's no proposal before us to force municipalities to do anything—in fact just the opposite. What has been under discussion, I understand, in municipal affairs are concerns that municipalities may look at privatizing some services, like police or fire, which we have I think ruled out completely, or like garbage, as a number of municipalities have done, or water or sewer, which they're free to do now.

They were free to do it under your government and there are no restrictions on municipalities doing it. They did that under your government and some have privatized some of those services under our government. The exact opposite is what the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is looking at: Should we put a freeze on that, or under what conditions ought municipalities to be allowed to exit from a business and have the private sector or another agency do it? That is under consideration. I'm sure it'll have your support.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you need to talk to your Minister of Municipal Affairs because his answer yesterday, here and outside, was very clear and unequivocal, that as far as he's concerned, your proposal to force municipalities to sell off their water and sewer systems is going full speed ahead, regardless of what the Walkerton inquiry finds. Don't you find a contradiction here? Don't you find a bit of a contradiction if the Walkerton report finds that your privatization of water services already, your reductions in the amount of work and staff to protect water supplies, are connected to what happened at Walkerton?

Your proposal as put forward by the Minister of Municipal Affairs amounts to complete contempt for the inquiry and contempt for people in Walkerton. Don't you see that, Premier? You can't be saying to the people of Walkerton and the people of Ontario that you want to get to the bottom of this, and then at the same time be saying, "Oh, but notwithstanding Walkerton, we're going to push ahead with more privatization." There is a contradiction and you owe it to the people of Ontario to tell them the government's true agenda. Are you interested in getting to the bottom of this or are you going to force on municipalities more of the conditions which put their drinking water at risk? Which is it?

Hon Mr Harris: We've been very clear that any actions we're taking are to ensure safe drinking water for all residents of this province. The only contradiction is the stuff you seem to be making up. You're asking me about a proposal that you made up that nobody is considering. Yes, I'm opposed to your proposal that nobody is considering. It's not our proposal; you're the only one

who has talked about it. I do know, and I repeat as I said in response to your first question, that municipalities privatized a number of services under your government. They were free to do so; they were their services. They have also done so under our government.

I am not aware of a single municipality that wishes to privatize its water system, but they could do it today. We are looking at under what conditions municipalities ought to be allowed to privatize any of these services that they've traditionally performed in the public sector under their own care. I think you would want to support that. I'm sure you would want to support that. I don't know why you make up this other silly stuff.

Mr Hampton: It is quite incredible. When reports or studies emerge from your government which put into question your government's direction or agenda, suddenly the whole government, from the Premier down, says: "I didn't see that. I didn't know about it." That's exactly the line that the Minister of the Environment tried: "I don't know a thing about this."

Premier, what we're talking about here is a cabinet document that says you are going to set up a review process which will not only have the effect of forcing municipalities to sell off their water systems, but also would have the effect of forcing municipalities to lay off the very people who are there to protect the water; in other words, to duplicate what you've already done in the Ministry of the Environment.

Premier, in the context of the Walkerton inquiry, which is supposed to look at all of these issues and see what were the factors that led to the death of seven people and possibly 11 people and the illness of 2,000 people, that's one of the very things they're going to look at. Don't show contempt for that inquiry, and show some respect for the people across Ontario, Premier. Tell them that you're not going to proceed with this proposal, you're not going to put in motion this proposal in any way, while the Walkerton inquiry is being held. That's all I'm asking, Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: Given that it's your proposal, we won't proceed with it.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, yesterday at estimates committee, your total failure to answer most of the questions that were put forward was really quite incredible. So I want to ask you a question today. I know your deputy minister isn't here to help you, but I hope you can answer this question on your own.

Ever since Walkerton, people across Ontario have been worried about the quality of their drinking water. So my simple question is this: How many Ontario communities today are having to boil their drinking water? Can you answer that simple question, Minister?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): First off, with respect to the estimates committee yesterday, I think everyone ought to be aware that the leader of

the third party asked a very technical question. I offered one of my assistant deputy ministers to answer that very technical question for him. You know what? He refused. He wouldn't listen to what the assistant deputy minister had to say.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Newman: It's all a game. There he is, asking a question, but he doesn't want the answers. It was unbelievable, when an assistant deputy minister came to the table to offer the answers of a very technical nature and the leader of the third party refused to listen to that assistant deputy minister.

Mr Hampton: The minister has just illustrated why I asked that very simple question. Here is the minister who is supposed to be protecting the quality of Ontario citizens' drinking water, and he can't even answer that simple question.

What is more unbelievable, Minister, is that essentially I've asked you the same or a similar question on May 29, May 31, June 1, June 5 and June 7, and you still don't know. That is the sad state of your ministry and the sad state of yourself as Minister of the Environment.

I want to come back to your drinking water surveillance program. It only checks 28% of Ontario's 627 local water systems. Some 452 municipal water systems are ignored by your government. Isn't the reason you keep refusing to answer these very basic questions that every Ontario citizen has a right to know because you simply don't have the program, you don't have the staff, and what's more, you don't have the will to protect people's drinking water?

Hon Mr Newman: Nothing could be further from the truth, what the leader of the third party is saying. He talks about the drinking water surveillance program. There have been media reports that that was cancelled. That is wrong. We've actually added more facilities to the drinking water surveillance program. In fact, an additional 10 facilities each and every year are added to that program to monitor testing.

Mr Hampton: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Minister, just release the information today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That is not a point of order.

1450

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Walkerton has happened. Seven people have lost their lives—at least seven people—as a result of E coli in that water system. They're telling us that as many as 2,000 people were buckled over and in intense pain when they fell prey to the E coli illness. An entire community was devastated. Now people right across the province of Ontario are wondering whether or not you are doing everything you should be doing to make sure it doesn't happen to them and their families in their communities.

You cut the ministry budget by 40%. You let one third of the staff go. Do you not agree that in the circumstances, to provide some reassurance to the people of Ontario and to those many parents out there concerned about the state of their drinking water, it is the right thing to do today to announce that you're going to hire at least 100 inspectors and enforcement officers who will be on the job around the clock, seven days a week, 365 days a year, on a permanent basis, from here on in, to make sure this never, ever happens again?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): We have taken actions to make sure this never, ever happens again. If any of the reviews, including the internal review, indicates a need for more staff, as I indicated, the ministry has been given carte blanche to hire that staff.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you continue to be wilfully blind to what happened inside your own ministry. You continue to turn a deaf ear to the many warnings that have been issued. You haven't paid any attention to those kinds of things. What that does is demonstrate your refusal to take at least some minimal responsibility when it comes to making sure this doesn't happen again.

Let's leave Walkerton behind for the time being. Let's leave that to the inquiry for the time being. What about the future? Don't you feel some sense of responsibility to do what's necessary to make sure that Ontario's drinking water is safe in every community? Doesn't that dictate that in the circumstances, given the cuts that have been made to your own ministry by you, we rehire on a permanent basis at least 100 inspectors and enforcement officers? If I'm wrong, then why don't you tell the people of Ontario why it is you think I'm wrong and why I shouldn't be so worried about their safety when it comes to their drinking water?

Hon Mr Harris: No one has said you're right; no one has said you're wrong. I'm a little surprised that in the short period of time you always have all the answers, more so than Justice O'Connor, more so than the coroner, more so than all the experts.

We have, as I've articulated, taken a number of actions right away and immediately. Those actions and directives have, I think, been supported by all who are involved. Instead of wild accusations, and quite frankly some silly nonsense, what we have been doing is putting in place plans for the short, the medium and the long term. We have not refused to accept responsibility. We have accepted carte blanche, as Premier of the province I have accepted carte blanche, that if there is anything that has been amiss or is amiss, or any concerns about the future, our job is to find that out and go and fix it.

POVERTY

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I understand that tomorrow John Clarke from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty will be protesting outside the Legislature. This group is protesting in order to bring the issues of the poor to the attention of the government. It

seems that one of Mr Clarke's issues, among many, is that he wants to reinstate the 21.6% cut to welfare rates. His group on numerous occasions has shown that it is willing to enter into a physical confrontation with police to make its views known. Is this necessary? Can you not tell us today what our government has done to help the poor in this province?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Trying to restore hope and opportunity in this province has been the top priority of this government. We've made job creation and economic growth a real priority. In fact, our welfare rates in Ontario continue to be as much as 36% higher than the average of the other nine provinces.

Where do we look to find validation for that policy? We look to Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals. He put out a press release last year. It says: "I fear I may have left the impression that it was my intent to fully restore the 22% welfare cut to all recipients. That is not my intention," said Dalton McGuinty. He obviously accepts the view of this government and the size of up to 36% higher than the average of the nine provinces. He didn't promise in his campaign document to spend a dime more.

We're doing a whole lot to help the poor, whether it's to increase funding for the child care supplement for working families, more money to help single parents get to parenting schools and training schools, more money for breakfast nutrition programs—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mrs Munro: The reality is that John Clarke and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty are also coming to the Legislature tomorrow to bring attention to the plight of the homeless. They believe the government is not doing enough to help. Mr Clarke feels so strongly about this that he has asked to personally address the Legislature on this topic in order that his views be heard. I don't believe anyone in this Legislature disagrees that homelessness is an important issue that needs to be a priority of everyone in this chamber. Minister, can you tell Mr Clarke today what you are doing for the homeless in this province?

Hon Mr Baird: Like Mr Clarke, and indeed many people right across the province of Ontario—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, come to order, please. Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Baird: Like all Ontarians, we're tremendously concerned about the plight of the homeless in this province. Building on the more than \$2 billion a year that we spend to help those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, we're spending \$10 million with our provincial homelessness initiatives fund, providing funds to every municipality across Ontario to help them combat homelessness. We're providing \$66 million a year to help municipalities pay for emergency shelters, increasing money for the community start-up benefit, providing more money to help divert ex-offenders from the hostel

system, and providing more money for municipalities through the community partners program. The Ministry of Health is providing as much as \$45 million in new money for additional mental health supports.

And finally, now, when the federal Liberal caucus in Ontario, all 101 of them, were missing in action, we have an MP and a minister from New Brunswick actually coming to the table with some money six months after she announced it. We're looking forward to getting that federal money flowing because of the total inaction by the Liberal caucus from Ontario.

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Back to a subject that people of Ontario are talking about that's extremely important. This question is to the Minister of the Environment. I've heard about this so-called inspection blitz of water treatment plants in the province that you're going to undertake. I hope this isn't just a public relations exercise, because I don't think your ministry officials have told you what's involved in inspecting each one of these plants.

The people who are actually going to do this: What are their specific qualifications? What is their specific experience? What is their expertise? Do they have certificates to be able to do this? Do you recognize that it takes probably at least a week to do a thorough physical and paper inspection of the plants in Ontario? How on earth are you going to do this? Where are you going to get the staff? Are they going to have the proper qualifications to do the job?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): On May 29, I announced a proposed regulation that looked at four issues: One of them was the notification requirements for labs in the province; another requirement was for municipalities to inform the Ministry of the Environment that they intended to change the laboratory that was doing the work for them; another point included in that was that all labs must be accredited; it also included a review of the certificates of approval, which includes looking at and inspecting all of the 630 sites in our province. This inspection will be done by the end of this year and it will be done by qualified personnel.

1500

Mr Bradley: That is absolutely no answer to the question. My concern is who the specific people are, what kind of certificates they have to be able to do this job, what expertise they have, what experience they have, where on earth you're going to get them now that you've fired most of the people out the door of the Ministry of the Environment and broken up the dedicated teams. And you know how long it takes to do and what's required in these inspections.

If you're taking them from the Ministry of the Environment, what important jobs are you taking them away from? How are you leaving the people of this province vulnerable in other areas? They're finding barrels of volatile compounds in downtown St Catharines at this

time. They're boiling water or refusing to use the water in French River. They're boiling water in other places. Sewage treatment plants need inspections to ensure they're not spewing forth contaminants. Where on earth are you going to get the staff, and if you get them from the Ministry of the Environment, what other areas are you leaving vulnerable to risk in this province?

Hon Mr Newman: I did answer the member's question. I indicated to him that all inspections would be done by qualified staff, that each and every one of the 630 facilities in Ontario would indeed be inspected, along with the certificates of approval for those sites. They will be inspected. It will be done by the end of this year—630 sites throughout the province. This is a goal that the Ministry of the Environment will achieve.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Much of my riding of Durham, as you might know, is similar to parts of northern Ontario; there are those who might think it is part of northern Ontario. We face many unique challenges: the great distances between people, distances to travel, lack of public transit, sparse population, climate control. These all affect economic development and the delivery of service. Minister, can you explain to the Legislature and to the people of Ontario what initiatives your ministry is undertaking to help create a level playing field in small-town and northern Ontario communities to spur economic development?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I thank the member for his question. A number of opportunities for northern communities were made in the budget: a record highway investment program of \$850 million in the next four years; record tax cuts for business, particularly for the mining sector, to spur that; as well, we have the northern Ontario heritage fund.

One particular program in the heritage fund that I like to boast about is our capital assistance for small communities program, targeted at the small communities in northern Ontario that often face greater challenges because of distances and small populations. That program invests about \$27 million into various projects to renew and enhance local services and infrastructure in 275 small communities throughout northern Ontario.

By investing in infrastructure in small towns, we are helping these communities to grow and prosper in the years and decades ahead. Our funding has helped to improve community infrastructure, create jobs and boost the northern economy.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for that response, Minister. I know you and the Minister of Agriculture have gone out of your way to help address and rebuild small-town Ontario.

As you know, I've had the privilege of travelling most of Ontario as part of the Legislative Assembly process. One comment that I've heard—and I'm sure you have

too—is that many small parts of northern Ontario have not experienced the economic boom to the extent that southern Ontario has. I recall that in the budget, as I said, both you and the Minister of Agriculture have announced that there would be funding for renewing parts of small-town Ontario. Could you explain what the heritage fund will do to help small-town and northern Ontario reach their full economic potential?

Hon Mr Hudak: The member makes a very good point. The unemployment rates are dropping in northern Ontario. In the northwest they have dropped from 9.4% down to 6.7%, and in the northeast from 11.6% down to 9.9%. Progress is being made to create jobs in northern Ontario and better opportunities, but there is more work to be done. That's why we'll continue to cut taxes, to invest in northern Ontario highways.

In particular, I was very pleased that in the year 2000 budget on May 2, not only did we renew the heritage fund, not only are we expanding the heritage fund, but we are doubling the heritage fund to \$60 million per year, doubling the kind of investment we're making in small-town northern Ontario communities.

In the next few months, the heritage fund will be reviewing its programs and guidelines to build upon its most successful programs, like the small communities initiative I mentioned to the member earlier on, and will look to new areas of investment. Our government's demonstrated commitment to northern Ontario communities will continue well into the future.

RETIREMENT HOMES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Health. The tragedy in Walkerton has made the importance of frequent inspections and ongoing monitoring to protect public health and safety all the more clear. I want to remind you of another area where you've failed Ontarians.

Last October I raised in this House—and sent you a letter with proposals to address—the crisis of unregulated retirement homes. You did nothing to respond to those proposals. After a series of Toronto Star articles detailing horror stories of vulnerable seniors experiencing abuse and neglect, in the absence of provincial action the city of Toronto took interim measures in areas of their jurisdiction like public health, fire code and building code.

This week I learned that the city of Toronto's retirement home inspection program is going to be cancelled at the end of this month unless they get a cheque from you, the Ministry of Health. The hotline will be cancelled; the inspectors will be laid off. We've seen what happens when public health gets short shrift under your government. Minister, will you provide public health units with the resources they need in order to maintain inspection of private retirement homes?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think the member is well aware of the fact that the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation has been addressing this issue. I would refer it.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. Let me say that we have been working with a number of different organizations to talk about what we can do with rest and retirement homes in the province of Ontario. Let me be very clear today that there is a municipal responsibility associated with rest and retirement homes; that the city of Toronto, through a number of its earlier municipalities, has bylaws that are there to protect seniors in the retirement homes; and that we continue to work with municipalities as they implement new bylaws to ensure that the people in retirement homes in their communities are safe.

Ms Lankin: Minister of Health, these additional resources that have been put into inspection of rest and retirement homes will end at the end of this month unless you give them a cheque. Not only must you provide the resources, you must put in place standards-of-care regulations. We're talking about people—medically frail, medically compromised seniors who need care—who, because of lack of other options, are being forced into inadequate care.

You send out a parliamentary assistant on a tour with backroom, closed-door, by-invitation-only so-called consultations. Now we hear from top health officials that she's not even going to issue a report. She's only passing on a recommendation to the minister and that recommendation is for self-regulation of the industry. You are going to abandon frail seniors to self-regulation by an industry whose track record screams out for the government to step in and protect seniors. Minister, have you learned nothing from the tragedy at Walkerton? Where is the report? Why is it being buried? Will you assure us that you will do your job and not hand this over to an industry that is not capable of protecting the interests of those frail and vulnerable seniors?

Hon Mrs Johns: I find it somewhat amazing that the member opposite would talk about this government in that regard. Let me say that this government has moved forward with an elder abuse strategy; they've moved forward to ensure that seniors are safe in their communities. We continue to work at many different initiatives. We've made more long-term-care facility beds available to the seniors in this province. We continue to work on a number of different initiatives to make sure that seniors are safe. Let me say that we will continue to work with the municipalities to make sure that seniors in every municipality across this province are safe.

SAFETY-KLEEN SITE

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. The Safety-Kleen landfill and incinerator is the largest toxic waste site in Canada, and your government approved its expansion in 1997 with no public hearings under either the Environmental Protection Act or the Environmental Assessment Act to fast-track the process. This 300-acre

site sits on an aquifer with close proximity to the Great Lakes. The experts are expressing doubts about the clay liner that's protecting the groundwater and they think it could be leaking from contaminants.

Hazardous waste is still being dumped within 15 metres of these cracks. To add to this problem, Safety-Kleen has applied for bankruptcy. You, as the minister of the crown, have direct responsibility to ensure that our groundwater is not being contaminated. Minister, this is serious. Will you act and put a full-time inspector on that site and a geotechnical engineer to oversee the repairs on this site?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I want to assure the people who live near this landfill site that we will take any action that is needed to handle this situation and to safeguard their health and their environment.

In addition to formal inspections by ministry staff, we're also inspecting the site on a regular basis to respond to complaints or to evaluate changes in the operations at the Safety-Kleen site.

Recent comments in regard to the adequacy of the ministry monitoring at the site overlooked the fact that the company already employs inspection personnel, consultants and geo-site professionals to monitor site operations and to report their findings to the ministry.

1510

Ms Di Cocco: Minister, with all due respect, I'd like to tell you that the Taro landfill in Stoney Creek has a full-time inspector and it is not even a toxic hazardous landfill. Not only that, this is the second-largest in North America, and Minister, you are accountable if we have contamination of our groundwater in Moore township.

The previous ministers and you have ignored your responsibilities. You consistently appear to protect the interests of Safety-Kleen at the expense of our groundwater and the people of Sarnia-Lambton.

You can act now, Minister, and just put an inspector on the site, a full-time inspector, and a geotechnical engineer. That is your responsibility, sir.

Hon Mr Newman: My responsibility as Minister of the Environment is to protect the environment. That's what I'm doing. Ministry staff are required to conduct formal inspections of hazardous waste disposal sites a minimum of once per year. Typically with this site, the staff conducts inspections on a semi-annual basis. There's groundwater monitoring, and that's audited by the ministry staff on an annual basis.

In addition to these formal inspections, there are also regular inspections conducted based on such factors as environmental concerns, other potential non-compliance issues and whether or not there have been recent changes to the site operations.

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

Minister, earlier this year you told this House about a report that you had sent to the Honourable David Collenette, federal Minister of Transportation, which was entitled Improving Quality Service Standards for Airline Passengers. From what I recall, the report included several practical, voluntary solutions to improve the quality of flying experiences for passengers.

Minister, could you please inform this House what Minister Collenette's response to the report was?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I want to thank the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford for raising an issue that is of utmost importance to air travellers in this country.

I wish I was able to update the member on Minister Collenette's response to the report. The problem is that I'm still waiting to hear from the minister myself, 12 weeks after I sent him the report. I've had staff from—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister take his seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Sorry for the interruption, Minister.

Hon Mr Runciman: I've had staff from my office contact Mr Collenette's office asking when we will receive some sort of response to our recommendations, and even they didn't know when we would get an answer.

Fifteen key travel industry players representing thousands of Ontario travellers took the time to sit down with me to draft suggestions for some real change in the airline industry. I find it very frustrating, as they do, that the federal government doesn't even have the common courtesy to draft a letter saying, "Thank you for your submission, and we'll take a look at the recommendations and get back to you." I'm very disappointed in the lack of response from the federal government. I had sincerely hoped for a better reception, since I thought we had the same objectives in mind.

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

Mr Tascona: I've been following the story of the airline mergers in the papers and have read the many horror stories that have come from disgruntled passengers as a result of the changes of services. Stories about people being sent to the wrong terminal at Pearson airport and cancelled trips seem to be popping up more and more frequently. However, I've also read plenty of articles addressing steps the federal government claims they have taken towards improving services to Canadian travellers.

Minister, could you clarify for me and for the members of this House who are listening what the federal government has done to address this issue?

Hon Mr Runciman: That's just the problem: The federal government has yet to take any significant steps towards improving airline services in this country. Last month, Minister Collenette announced he was appointing a special commissioner to investigate travel horror stories. Apparently, this commissioner will look into customer complaints, but it's not clear if he or she will have any power to force airlines to act on the recommendations. The Competition Bureau is investigating one

specific incident of predatory pricing with Air Canada, but that doesn't even begin to cover the hundreds of other problems consumers face while travelling. Our report includes recommendations like instant, 24-hour access to customer complaint representatives, careful baggage handling and improved onboard service standards.

This government is committed to doing what we can to bring consumers' concerns about airline service quality to the attention of the federal Liberals. It's unfortunate that they can't commit to simple solutions even when they're—

The Speaker: The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I wish I had a question for the former minister. He's getting his style back.

Today I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. Through all of this, I think it's becoming fairly obvious that we have a crisis in water management in this province. The reason is because you and your colleagues have allowed a turf war to paralyze water policy development in Ontario. Water policy is fragmented among six ministries and agencies in Ontario, resulting in a total lack of coordination.

MNR is responsible for a very important management agency: our conservation authorities. They are the lead agencies that manage flood plains and watershed quality in many parts of the province. During your term in office, you have cut transfers to the conservation authorities by 77%. Minister, can you assure me today that you will stop the cuts and start to reinstate funding to our conservation authorities?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I want to again inform the member opposite, as I stood in my place in this House on several occasions over the last three or four months as the province was anticipating some drought conditions a few months ago—the Speaker will remember—I have made representations in this chamber that we have worked cooperatively with several ministries to design a strategy to help municipalities meet those needs across the province. Contrary to what the member has represented today, we in fact are working together more now than we ever have to help meet these needs across the province, whether that be drought response, whether that be flood plains, which is the original reason for the conservation authorities. We continue to fund conservation authorities across this province for the flood control that they were designed to do.

Mr Ramsay: The non-answer I've received from the minister really confirms my fears that he is preparing to make the final and last cut to the conservation authorities of \$7.6 million, which I believe is now being recommended to him by his staff. Your ministry is desperately trying to hold on to something to manage, because you've downloaded and offloaded everything else. By

destroying our conservation authorities, MNR would become the lead agency for watershed management. Meanwhile, the conservation authorities are going to play a lesser role under municipal control. Here again, you're changing responsibilities without assuring that municipalities have comprehensive legislation and regulations to ensure effective management of all of our water resources. This continues your ad hoc approach to water management right across this province. When are you going to sit down with your colleagues and finally decide upon which one ministry in Ontario will be the lead to manage our water resources?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I can assure the member opposite that all of my colleagues on this side of the House are concerned with water issues right across this province. There is a concern with that in every relevant ministry, and there are several of those. As I mentioned a moment earlier, we are working together, and we have been working together over the course of many years, particularly the last year, to develop strategies that will meet the needs across the province. We think it's best done when ministries co-operate together, and that's what we've done over the course of the last year.

As it relates to conservation authorities, let me again remind the member opposite that we continue to fund the flood and erosion control that the conservation authorities were designed to do. Conservation authorities, as the member will know, are very different across the province. They have independent boards that set the standards for the different operations that they have in different communities. We continue to work with them right across the province.

1520

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Minister, my constituents and I are quite thrilled that the Toronto 2008 Olympic bid recently announced that Hardwood Hills, one of the many great sports facilities in my riding, will host all of the mountain bike events if the bid is successful.

That news made me wonder what our government is doing to help our young people participate in sports and recreation, not just so they can compete in the Olympics but to better prepare them for a long, healthy life. I understand that we do not directly support athletes themselves but that the federal government does. Can you explain the difference in the funding, Minister?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank my colleague from Simcoe North for the question. I'd also like to say that it is the federal government's responsibility to support high-performance athletes who compete at national and international levels. It's the province's responsibility, on the other hand, to make sure that the citizens of the province are active, young and old, regardless of whether they're

excellent athletes or just out being involved in day-to-day activities. So the province provides \$7.4 million to provincial sports organizations, such as the Ontario Wheelchair Sports Association or the Ontario Cycling Association, to ensure that citizens of the province are involved, they're active.

One of the other things we do is make sure we participate in games. We fund the Ontario Summer Games, which are happening in Durham this summer. We funded the Winter Games that happened in Sault Ste Marie, the Senior Games, the Games for the Physically Disabled, and we can't forget the 2001 Summer Games that are happening in London.

Mr Dunlop: I thank the minister for her explanation of the support for our provincial organizations. I'd also like to thank her for the opportunity of opening Timeship 2000 in Gravenhurst last Friday. That's a wonderful exhibit and I hope everyone in the province can get a chance to see it.

I'd also like to know what our government is doing to help communities provide the facilities our athletes need, not only to compete but to play sports and develop their skills. I think most of us are aware of the great plans to provide some excellent sporting venues for the Olympics, but what about places in my riding like Orillia and Midland? What support can they expect in terms of providing facilities for ourselves and for our children?

Hon Mrs Johns: I would like to reiterate the member's comment about Timeship 2000. It's a fabulous exhibit that's going across the province. It will be close to everybody, in 31 ridings all across the province. I know that everyone will enjoy it.

There are two initiatives that we're talking about when we're talking about building community arenas and soccer fields. The first one was announced in the budget, thanks to the Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves. It was the SuperBuild sports, culture and tourism partnerships initiative, and it's \$300 million over five years to ensure that we rebuild and enhance facilities in the sports, recreation, culture and tourism areas.

The other program, which I'm extremely proud of, is \$6 million over three years for a community sports opportunity fund. This is going to encourage young children between the ages of 6 and 16 to get involved, whether their parents can afford it or not. We'll make sure that communities work together with the provincial government to ensure that everybody is active, everybody is involved in sports in Ontario who wishes to be.

COST OF ELECTRICAL POWER

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. It's about another of the government's initiatives that seems to have gone wrong.

Premier, when your Minister of Energy brought in electricity reform, otherwise known as deregulation, he said that rates would go down by between 8% and 40%. Imagine my surprise two weeks ago when the manager of the Abitibi Consolidated paper mill in Fort Frances came

to my office and said that as a result of your deregulation, the mill faces at least a 20% increase in their electricity rates. A 20% increase will mean a loss of jobs.

There are 15 other paper mills across northern Ontario, Premier. What are you going to do when all of them face these kinds of increases? Even one of your good friends, the president of the Independent Power Producers' Society, says, "Industrial users of electricity will probably see an increase in their power rates as the generation rate of the province equalizes to the adjoining US states."

You were supposed to cut power rates, but they're going up. What is your government going to do about it?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): It was a significant portion of the large power users in the industries and the industrial associations that supported preparing Hydro in this province for competition that is coming across North America. They were the ones that lobbied and advocated and said we needed to be ready for that competition.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Harris: Rather than scream and yell and interrupt, perhaps the member would like to hear the answer. What we indicated in an all-party committee, supported by your party, supported by the Liberal Party, was to put a plan forward of how we could phase in to that competition and ultimately achieve those benefits.

Mr Hampton: We didn't support it.

Hon Mr Harris: I'm sorry. Now the member says they didn't support it.

All indications from the industry groups are that this is a good thing to do. Some users had rates that were a little lower than other users as a result of deals that they had cut with Ontario Hydro. If they're able to continue to cut those deals with Hydro or other providers, then they—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the Premier's time is up.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Under standing order 59(e), "No estimates shall be considered in the committee while any matter, including a procedural motion, relating to the same policy field is being considered in the House."

This afternoon in the estimates committee, the estimates of the Ministry of the Environment were scheduled. As you know, we have as well this afternoon an opposition non-confidence motion dealing with environmental matters. It's my understanding that all of the House leaders have agreed that it would be improper for the estimates of the Ministry of the Environment to proceed. The chairman of the estimates committee is insisting that the committee sit this afternoon, which I don't think is proper.

I'm looking for some direction from you as to whether or not it's necessary for the chairman to call an estimates meeting this afternoon, given that our standing orders

actually prohibit any discussion with regard to the environment minister's estimates this afternoon in a committee.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Windsor-St Clair on the same point of order.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, that is not my understanding of what the Chair of our committee said. When we first raised this matter this morning, when we discovered that in fact the government was trying to avoid having its minister appear before this committee, we said at the time, and the government agreed, that there would be an adjournment of this hearing until next week, as I understood it. My understanding also was that there simply needed to be a motion put by the committee to that effect, and that that had to be put by the committee. That was the information we were provided by the government side. If that's not the case and we can simply re-schedule the hearing for next week, then we certainly can do that.

The Speaker: We have two more on the point of order. I think we have solved it, and I think sometimes when we tend to stand up and talk, we, for want of a better word, un-solve it. I think we have solved it, if I see both sides—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Any more talk and I'm not so sure. I will entertain points of order, but I think, if I'm looking at the House leaders on all three sides, the situation is solved. If members get up, we might not be in a situation to solve it. I leave it up to you. But I think we have solved it and I look for the guidance—on a point of order, the member for Broadview-Greenwood.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr Speaker, I wanted clarity as to what the government House leader said. What happened at committee yesterday—in fact, I suggested as an option, and I believe the government members didn't agree, that we cancel the estimates for today so we could all be here. That option was turned down by government members. I just want to get that on the record. Let's not play games with this. We're all agreeing that it should—

The Speaker: I appreciate that, but where we're at now is the committee is going to, with all-party agreement, have a motion to sit another day. That will solve the problem, I think.

1530

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Our page from Davenport has a few friends with her, including her mother, in the west gallery. I thought you might have the chance to welcome them.

The Speaker: I thank the member. It's not a point of order.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to iterate that I'm glad there is agreement on the estimates committee, but just for the benefit of the information of the House, the estimates committee can choose whether or not to accept a substitution for the minister. That question was put to

the committee. That's simply for the information of the House. There wasn't a ruling by the Chair, but rather, as is the precedent, the committee was asked whether they preferred that. A motion was put to have it sit another day and then another motion was put to have a substitute, and that has now been solved.

The Speaker: I thank the members.

PETITIONS

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

“Whereas prostate cancer is one of the leading causes of fatal cancer in Ontario;

“Whereas prostate cancer is the second leading cause of fatal cancers for males;

“Whereas early detection is one of the best tools for being victorious in our battle against cancer;

“Whereas the early detection blood test known as PSA (prostate specific antigen) is one of the most effective tests at diagnosing early prostate cancer” and whereas the Minister of Health's inaction is literally causing men to die needlessly;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to encourage the Ministry of Health to have this test added to the list of services covered by OHIP, and that this be done immediately in order for us to save lives and beat prostate cancer.”

I affix my signature to this petition as I'm in agreement, and give it to Christopher Kent from Sudbury to bring to the table.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to revert to motions at this point in time to put forward a motion with regard to the sitting time for the standing committee on general government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent. Is there consent? It is agreed.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: In this House, if there are two of us standing, one of us is out of order, and it's not me.

The Chair recognizes the member for Hamilton West on a point of order.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Mr Speaker, I merely wanted to point out that we're prepared to give unanimous consent but I don't think we all agree that we want to eat up the petition time to do that. We're quite prepared to do it afterwards or suspend the clock, but not to use the time. With that in mind, I would ask you, Speaker, to put the time back on and we'll do this right after.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to change the time to immediately after? It is agreed. We will continue with petitions.

WATER QUALITY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm glad we made that agreement so I didn't lose petition time.

This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents of the riding of Durham:

"Whereas it is well known that cattle are a significant source of dangerous strains of E coli bacteria; and

"Whereas cattle can be a serious source of degradation to rivers, streams and lakes through (1) defecating in or near the water, (2) breaking down and trampling banks and beaches, and (3) destroying vegetation in riparian zones;"—it's very well written, actually—"and

"Whereas many farmers permit their cattle to enter lakes and streams as a source of water;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario pass binding legislation to establish mandatory setbacks from all watercourses, lakes and wetlands to prevent landowners or tenants from using such watercourses, lakes and wetlands as a source of water for cattle and other animals;

"We further respectfully request that the legislation be drafted in such a way that it cannot be overturned by the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board or any other special interest group."

I am pleased to present this on behalf of my constituents.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas there has been chronic underfunding for developmental services in Ontario; and

"Whereas underfunding affects frontline workers' ability to provide a quality of life for the clients; and

"Whereas the underfunding is placing the lives and the safety of clients in jeopardy; and

"Whereas the underfunding has led to long waiting lists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to increase funding to meet these five priorities for improved quality of life for people with developmental disabilities:

"(1) provide services beyond the basic needs of the clients;

"(2) improve the ratio of staff to clients;

"(3) increase the availability of services to eliminate waiting lists;

"(4) address the changing needs of clients;

"(5) address the high rate of staff turnover and burnout."

This is signed by over 500 individuals from the province of Ontario in London, Parry Sound, Hamilton,

Dryden. I have affixed my signature as I am in full agreement.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have further petitions from Cecil Mackasey and Rick Roberts of CAW local 222. This has been forwarded to me by Cathy Walker, who is the national health and safety director for the CAW.

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances (carcinogens); and

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens; and

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances; and

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

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

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

Again, on behalf of my NDP colleagues, I attach my name to this petition.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, a very vital one.

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

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

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I affix my signature as well to this excellent petition.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition that contains 1,000 more signatures.

To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is actively pursuing private sector operators to run Ontario's correctional facilities, including adult strict-discipline boot camps, three megajails and five young offender facilities;

"Whereas findings show there is no cost savings to the taxpayer of Ontario;

"Whereas public safety will be greatly jeopardized in our communities;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon all plans to privatize any aspects of the province's correctional system."

This was sent to me directly from the citizens of Penetanguishene and Midland and I affix my signature to this, with my thanks to them.

1540

ALGONQUIN PARK WOLVES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition here that was taken up by Laura Coristine, a Queen's student, and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario is committed under the Provincial Parks Act to protecting and preserving wildlife, the natural heritage and history of the land, and the diversity of the Algonquin Provincial Park ecosystem for the benefit of future generations; and

"Whereas the Algonquin wolves currently have very little protection unless they stay within the boundaries of Algonquin Park, and transboundary migration is common among Algonquin Park wildlife; and

"Whereas the majority of Algonquin wolves must leave the park at some time, as part of their natural movements; and

"Whereas the majority of Algonquin wolf deaths outside the park are human-caused, which is threatening the integrity of the population;

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

"We demand that protective measures, including policy modification and public education, be enacted to

ensure the continuing survival of Algonquin Provincial Park populations, recognizing that the Algonquin wolves have a vital and integral role in healthy ecosystem function;

Specifically, that a minimum 10-kilometre no-kill zone be implemented around the perimeter of Algonquin Park for the protection of wolves venturing beyond park boundaries, with the no-kill zone including all townships that lie within this area, and the Ministry of Natural Resources take responsibility in promoting the coexistence of humans and wolves through public education programs, in order to reduce the senseless killing of wolves."

It's signed by about 1,500 people and I affix my signature to it as well.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Kinsmen/JS MacDonald school is slated for closure,

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

"To direct the Upper Canada District School Board to remove the notice of closure for the Kinsmen/JS MacDonald special school facility.

"Since 1963 the special education facility has adequately served the needs of those students requiring special education programs and services throughout Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

"Presently, the Kinsmen school meets the needs of 45 children ranging from minor learning disabilities, behavioural to more complex multi-challenges."

I submit this petition with my full support and I affix my signature.

DELAYED START OF SCHOOL

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have literally hundreds of names on these petitions and they wanted to ensure that this was were read in the House.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas for 1998 and 1999, a delayed start program, developed by community councils with input from students, had been accepted and successfully implemented for the schools of Glendale High School, Norwich District High School, and East Elgin Secondary School; and

"Whereas to this date there has not been resolve to this issue for September 2000, we hereby petition the Legislative Assembly to provide leadership and resolve for this very important local issue;

"Whereas this plan has, for two years, proven itself to be irrefutably beneficial to the students of these schools and developed with their best interests in mind;

"With the full support of all the parties concerned, we, the undersigned students of the schools who will be

affected by this decision, support the continuation of the late-start program as it has existed.”

I affix my name to these hundreds of names.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I have a petition signed by so many people from northwestern Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 74 diminishes quality education for students in this province by ensuring teachers will be responsible for more students each day and will therefore have less time for each student;

“Whereas Bill 74 attacks the very heart of local democracy and accountability by creating a system of informers and absolute powers for the Minister of Education;

“Whereas Bill 74 cuts not only the heart out of education but also the spirit by making teachers perform voluntary activities on threat of termination;

“Whereas Bill 74 is an unprecedented attack on the collective bargaining rights of Ontario’s teachers; and

“Whereas Bill 74 turns over all control over education in this province to one person, the Minister of Education;

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

“We call on the government to hold public hearings on Bill 74 immediately and also to terminate the bill.”

I’m glad to put my name to it.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I’ve got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

“Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

“Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

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

“That the government of Ontario will:

“Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

“Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

“Fight the federal government’s plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

“Ensure that the Ontario government’s sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible.”

I’m happy to attach my name to it.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 74 diminishes quality education for students in this province by ensuring teachers will be responsible for more students each day and will therefore have less time for each student;

“Whereas Bill 74 attacks the very heart of local democracy and accountability by creating a system of informers and absolute powers for the Minister of Education;

“Whereas Bill 74 cuts not only the heart out of education but also the spirit by making teachers perform voluntary activities on threat of termination;

“Whereas Bill 74 is an unprecedented attack on the collective bargaining rights of Ontario teachers; and

“Whereas Bill 74 turns over all control over education in this province to one person, the Minister of Education;

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

“We call on the government to hold public hearings on Bill 74 immediately.”

I know that 700 people in Toronto in my riding of Parkdale-High Park and the municipality of Durham also believe that this bill should be withdrawn.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): By consent the House agreed to go to motions and we’ll do that now.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I move that the standing committee on general government be authorized to sit beyond its normal hour of adjournment today until 8 pm this evening.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

It was that the standing committee on general government be authorized to sit beyond its normal hour of adjournment today until 8 pm this evening.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WANT OF CONFIDENCE MOTION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I wish to move the following motion:

That in the opinion of this House:

Since the provincial government has failed the people of Ontario in its duty to protect our drinking water—which killed people and made them sick; and

Since the provincial government has failed the people of Ontario in its duty to protect our air from pollutants—Ontario's air causes 1,800 premature deaths a year; and

Since clean water and air are essential to the health and well-being of Ontarians and their confidence in Ontario's water supply and air has been shaken;

Therefore, the government no longer has the confidence of this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr McGuinty moves want of confidence, that in the—dispense?

Interjections: No, no.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr McGuinty moves:

That in the opinion of this House:

Since the provincial government has failed the people of Ontario in its duty to protect our drinking water—which killed people and made them sick; and

Since the provincial government has failed the people of Ontario in its duty to protect our air from pollutants—Ontario's air causes 1,800 premature deaths a year; and

Since clean water and air are essential to the health and well-being of Ontarians and their confidence in Ontario's water supply and air has been shaken;

Therefore, the government no longer has the confidence of this House.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

1550

Mr McGuinty: So that people watching today understand, this is a non-confidence motion. I'm calling today on the members of this House to state that they no longer have confidence in this government. What I'm doing in a real sense is calling on the members of this House to formally recognize what is going on outside of this House, and that is, quite simply, that the people of Ontario themselves have lost confidence in the Mike Harris government.

I want to take some time now to speak to the issue of leadership, in particular leadership in terms of how it earns the confidence of people. How does a government show leadership? First of all, it shows leadership by doing its job, and the job description of a government, or at least the job description of a government as I would draft it, would include as its most fundamental responsibility to keep Ontarians out of harm's way, to keep Ontarians safe. It's the government's job to protect human life. What could be more important than that? Are tax cuts more important than life itself? Is ideology more

important than life itself? Is politics more important than life itself? Obviously, the answer is no.

To earn the confidence of the people, a government must do its job. When this government failed to protect our drinking water, it failed to protect human life and it didn't do its job. The consequences were nothing less than horrific. At least seven people have lost their lives, somewhere around 2,000 people became sick, and an entire community was plunged into a state of devastation.

It seems to me that when we turn on a tap, when we take a sip from a drinking fountain, when we give the kids a glass of water before tucking them into bed, we are placing our trust in our leaders to protect us. We are trusting our leaders to make sure that Ontario water won't make us sick and won't kill us. That is a sacred trust. This government and its leadership have violated that trust. This government failed to do its job. It failed the very first test of leadership.

How else does a government show leadership? By listening and then acting. This government was warned time and time again that a water disaster was brewing, but it failed to listen. It chose instead to ignore warning after warning. It was warned by its own environment ministry officials in 1997 and again last January. It was warned by the Provincial Auditor in 1996 and again in 1998. It was warned by the Environment Commissioner in 1996. It was warned by the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy. It was warned by the Ontario Municipal Water Association. It was warned by the Toronto Board of Health. It was warned by its own ministry officials inside the Ministry of the Environment. And it was warned by Ontario Liberals as far back as 1996, when we brought this issue and the potential for disaster and harm to the attention of the Premier and the then Minister of the Environment.

Time and time again this government has failed to listen. It has turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to all of the information and all of the warnings, which, when taken together, trace a roadmap to the Walkerton disaster. This government failed to act. It failed to ensure that the proper people, procedures and policies were in place to prevent this kind of tragedy from happening. It failed to provide adequate backup so that water treatment plants and sewer systems were properly inspected. It failed to ensure that the right people and the broad public would be notified just in case a crisis should occur. This government failed to act when the facts were placed before it. It failed to act when those facts cried out for action. By so doing, this government failed another fundamental test of leadership.

I can tell you something else about leadership and leaders. Confidence is earned by leaders who, in a time of crisis, bring to it strength and courage. When the tragedy hit Walkerton, and it hit Walkerton hard, this government's leadership responded not with the strength needed to accept responsibility but with weak, pathetic attempts to blame others. This government's leadership responded not with courage, but with cowardly attempts to pass the buck.

A strong leader doesn't go to the site of a tragedy simply to suggest that it was somebody else's responsibility, but the Premier went to Walkerton, complete with entourage, and blamed the NDP. Then shortly after that, he blamed human error. Then shortly after that, he blamed Ontario municipalities in general. Then shortly after that, he blamed the town of Walkerton itself. Think of that for a moment. Here is a community consumed by grief, burying its dead, mourning the loss of its loved ones, struggling to make some sense out of this terrible tragedy which has visited them, and Mike Harris, the Premier of Ontario, rises to the occasion, turns to the people of Walkerton and effectively says, "Yeah, well, you brought this on yourself." It seems to me that strong leadership, worthy of a people's confidence, would have stood up and accepted responsibility.

I can also tell you that strong leadership would have begun immediately to search for answers and solutions. The Premier said he wanted answers, but he did everything he could to avoid a full, independent and public inquiry. The Premier wanted to turn the matter of the Walkerton tragedy over to a legislative committee controlled by his government. To do so, to use the words of my colleague Sean Conway, would be effectively to ask the defendants to sit in judgment of their own case.

I am proud to say that as a result of my party's work we were successful in dragging a reluctant Premier, kicking and screaming, into a full, open public inquiry. Strong leadership wouldn't have had to have been forced into a public inquiry as the result of intense political heat. It would have called a public inquiry immediately simply because it was the right thing to do and because it was the only thing to do that would do justice to those people who lost their lives in Walkerton and to their families they left behind.

The Premier said that his heart went out to the people of Walkerton, but there was no compensation until we pressed the government to provide some, and then all he anted up was \$21 per person. Let's put this in some context. We now live in the post-deficit era. This government is the beneficiary of \$5 billion more in revenues than were originally anticipated. They have committed to \$9 billion in tax cuts over the next several years, but all they could ante up for the people of Walkerton at the outset was \$100,000, or \$21 per person. A strong leader would have led the people instead of being dragged along by them.

1600

You know how else a government shows leadership? It learns from tragedies and then it does everything it possibly can within its power to ensure that tragedy is not repeated. But this government's leadership has failed to do that as well.

We Ontario Liberals have put forward an intelligent, responsible action plan. It lists the kinds of things that we should be doing now to prevent another Walkerton. Our plan calls for the government to release water surveillance reports for 1998 and 1999 so people will know what's happening to their water. We believe there is a

tremendous sense of urgency felt by the people of our province. They have a real concern about the safety of their own drinking water in their own communities, and they're questioning themselves when they give a glass of water to the kids. I think this government has the responsibility to release information that it has with regard to the safety of our drinking water. Today we had a minister, the Minister of Transportation, stand up and say he's going to make it mandatory that we provide information regarding a vehicle that's been involved in an accident. Why can't this government do the same kind of thing with respect to the safety of our drinking water? If there's been anything untoward happening out there, any information at all connected with the safety of our drinking water should be provided by this government.

Our plan also calls for an inspection of every water treatment facility in the province so we can restore public confidence, but in order to do that, the government has to hire an additional 100 inspectors and enforcement officers so we can get the job done. I was saddened to learn this morning and again today in question period that the Premier believes that this is nothing more than a temporary crisis, nothing more than a bulge, a blip on the screen that calls for nothing more than a quick fix and a temporary solution. We are in a permanent state of crisis when it comes to managing drinking water safety in Ontario. The only way that a responsible government, a government that demonstrates real leadership, should react to that is by putting in place permanent solutions.

We've also asked the government to ensure that the Ministry of the Environment once again comprehensively tests our drinking water. It's hard to believe, but the Ministry of the Environment, under its drinking water surveillance program, is no longer testing for E coli. A particular strain of E coli is what killed people in Walkerton. It's what made 2,000 people sick. I think those Ontarians who aren't aware of this information will be shocked upon learning that this government is now so far removed from drinking water safety, has abdicated its responsibility to such an extent, that it is no longer testing for the presence of E coli in our drinking water. We think that, at a minimum, they should be doing that kind of thing effective immediately.

We've also said—and I am proud to say we said this during the campaign in 1999—that we believe it's time to pass a safe drinking water act in Ontario, one with real teeth and enforceable standards, that makes clean and safe drinking water a matter of law in Ontario. This government is satisfied with policies and directives and guidelines and objectives, none of which amount to anything in a court of law. We think that safe and clean drinking water should be something that you could take to court and enforce, and that's what a safe drinking water act would do.

So we've put forward this action plan, and this government has failed to move forward on any front. It has been too busy covering up to do what's necessary to clean up. It's been too busy protecting its image to do what's necessary to protect Ontarians. Strong leaders

learn from a tragedy and they do everything in their power to prevent another tragedy. This government failed to do that. It failed another test of leadership.

Everything that I have described in water protection is happening with respect to the air we breathe as well. There again are warnings, but the government fails to listen and fails to act. There are smog days, but the government, in keeping with its tradition, passes the buck. And there are tragedies, tragedies which are just as sad, if not as dramatic, as what happened in the town of Walkerton. Smog, as everybody knows, is a silent killer. It moves by stealth. It envelops us and it gets inside our lungs and it causes the most damage to our most vulnerable, our youngest children and our oldest parents and grandparents. We know, this government knows, that smog kills 1,800 Ontarians prematurely each and every year, but in the face of that information—provided, by the way, by Ontario's doctors—in the face of that evidence and tragic statistic, this government doesn't listen and it doesn't act.

This is why today I felt compelled to bring forward this motion. I know that in this place, party politics can have a greater hold on government members than the people that they represent. I understand that. That's the way this government works. So this motion may not be successful inside the Legislature, but as a leader, I know and my caucus colleagues know that our first responsibility lies with the people of Ontario.

I say today that the people of Ontario have lost confidence in this government, this government which has failed to provide strong leadership, both in terms of what it did prior to the Walkerton tragedy and what it's doing today in failing to adequately respond to what happened in Walkerton. This government, this Mike Harris government, failed to do its job. It failed to protect human life. The Mike Harris government failed to listen. The Mike Harris government failed to act, and it fails to act this very day. The Mike Harris government failed, in the face of tragedy, to accept responsibility. The Mike Harris government failed to move quickly and to get answers. The Mike Harris government failed to move quickly to provide adequate financial aid to the people of Walkerton. The Mike Harris government failed to do what's necessary to prevent another Walkerton tragedy. The Mike Harris government has failed to provide leadership.

It's important to understand what we're talking about here. This failure by this government to provide real and strong leadership has produced a cost that transcends this place and transcends politics. The cost of that failure has been human life itself, and nothing could be of greater value. Surely all members in this House would agree to that. In Walkerton, a family lost their child, their baby girl, two and a half years old. She lost her life as a result of drinking contaminated water in Ontario in the year 2000. Six others lost their lives as well. When it comes to our drinking water, a town, and I would argue a province, has had its sense of security shattered.

1610

I can tell you that the people of Walkerton have earned our respect by responding with courage and compassion. The people of Walkerton have shown true leadership. The Mike Harris government has not. That's why I am urging all members to recognize what has happened outside of this House. The people of Ontario have lost confidence in the abilities of the Mike Harris government to provide strong leadership.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I am rising to tell the Legislature that I and my caucus support this very serious resolution before us today, a resolution that doesn't come before a Legislature that frequently.

I want to start by saying that what we all have to realize here is that what happened at Walkerton goes to the very heart of the neo-conservative agenda. I don't think the government has realized it yet but what happened in Walkerton has taken the shine off the Common Sense Revolution. I think we have to go back into history a little bit and remember that even prior to 1995 when Mike Harris, then in opposition, came up with and designed the Common Sense Revolution, he didn't just do it by himself. He had his backroom boys helping him out, coming up with this very neo-conservative strategy.

The whole approach, the whole idea, was to get government out of people's faces, to get rid of—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would ask those who are standing between me and the speaker to sit down. The Chair recognizes the member for Broadview-Greenwood.

Ms Churley: The very design of the Common Sense Revolution was to downsize government, to get it out of people's faces. In fact, Mike Harris very proudly used to say, "We are not the government; we are here to fix government." The whole approach was to downsize government to the extent that we no longer have a government that is taking care of the safety of our citizens any more. The idea was to cut the role of government throughout our entire society, and that included environmental protection.

What amazed me is that with all of the cuts Mike Harris brought in, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources were cut at twice the rate of any other government ministry. Indeed, in the last budget, the 2000 budget, those members sitting here today got up and applauded, and are still applauding every day, every opportunity in this House when they talk about it.

In that budget, as you know, Mr Speaker—when you're not in the chair, you sit in the caucus—when the government found over \$8 billion to give away for more tax cuts—when we're rolling in money, there's \$8 billion to give away in more tax cuts, mostly to the very wealthy and to corporations—there was yet again another \$16-million hit to the Ministry of the Environment; and I forget how much to Natural Resources, but I know there was another cut there. I almost fell out of my chair. After all of the cuts—it now adds up to about \$100 million cut

from the Ministry of the Environment over these past five years—you've got to ask why.

Of course, we know the answer. Tory members, including the Premier, have stood up repeatedly and spoken to the press and said that they want to get rid of red tape; and environmental regulation is red tape, and they're committed to getting rid of 50% of it by next year. Well, I'd like a definition of what they call red tape when it comes to protection of the environment.

I want to get back for a moment to this very serious issue. We cannot talk about what happened at Walkerton without also talking about the so-called Common Sense Revolution and downsizing government to a state where they're no longer effectively in control of protecting the citizens any more. That's what happened here.

I recall there was a man named Tom Long who was very involved in developing that agenda, and now—this is a very serious issue that people have to start thinking about—Tom Long is out there running for the Canadian Alliance party. He said that if he wins and is elected, he will implement a common sense revolution nationally and implement the other business-supportive, cost-cutting actions of the Harris government. If I were people across the country I would be very afraid of this man, because he is one of the chief authors of what's happening here in Ontario today.

As everybody knows, 11 people have died in Walkerton and at least 2,000 made sick by E coli contaminating their drinking water. The MOE was informed of E coli in January of this year and did not follow up with the Walkerton water treatment plant for almost three months. The MOE by its own admission failed to notify the medical officer of health of this contamination.

The ministry, again according to their own statistics, knew in 1998 that there were 3,300 violations in terms of discharge of polluted water and yet, incredibly, only one prosecution.

I believe I made a mistake when I asked the minister a question about this yesterday. I said "not one" prosecution, which gave him the opportunity to stand up and say, "Hey, we did prosecute somebody." In fact, there was one.

The previous minister, Tony Clement, now the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—

Interjection: The minister of privatization.

Ms Churley: —the minister of privatization, although the Premier sort of tried to backtrack on that one is a big way today. The minister said that more inspectors would be hired. Nothing was done. But worse than that, not only were more inspectors not hired, the ministry budget was cut once again.

In February 1999, the ministry internally issued a directive telling staff not to follow up on a wide range of environmental complaints, and that's because they were downsized to the point where they were unable to make sure there were staff in place to keep their own laws in place.

The provincial water protection fund is broke now and you're going to cancel it completely. The minister likes

to stand up and brag every time a question is asked about this. He says, "Hey, we've got this water protection fund, and it was going to be spread out over three years, but guess what? We were so excited we accelerated it over two years, so that municipalities could get on with fixing their sewer and water systems." But again and again we remind the minister that the problem is that on top of all of the other cuts—the cuts to the municipal assistance program which our government, the NDP, had heavily invested in communities in terms of upgrading sewer and water projects; the cuts to staffing throughout the whole water system—on top of that they're going to reduce this so-called water protection fund to help municipalities upgrade their systems, to fix their systems, to a big fat zero next year—zero. That ties in very well with what the Minister of Municipal Affairs was saying yesterday outside this House to the press—and is quoted all over the place—"Of course we're looking at privatization." I believe he said something like: "We shouldn't even be here if we weren't doing our job. We should be looking at this." The Premier backtracked completely on this today, or tried to anyway. I believe there must have been a cabinet discussion about this today and I believe there are probably a number of members of the cabinet and the caucus who were not very happy with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing's comments yesterday.

1620

The minister continues to amaze me and this House by not being aware of documents prepared by his own ministry. This includes documents that warn him about the damaging impact of government cuts. Maybe he's going to have to start using the freedom-of-information process that everybody else out there is having to use. They have to spend a lot of money. That's what they've got to do now to get information from the ministry.

Actually, it's worse than that. The Ministry of the Environment has so much trouble now tracking even its own documents because they are so understaffed that today, if you can believe it, they called an NDP office here at Queen's Park to get a copy of a memo written by their own assistant deputy minister of operations. Incredible. Under Minister Dan Newman, the Ministry of the Environment is reduced to calling the NDP to find their very own document. I wonder if we'd charge them as much as they charge for a filing under FOI. I wonder if we should start at least making some money from helping the minister out and getting him his own documents.

There are many reasons why we do not have confidence in this government's commitment to protect our water and our whole natural environment. One of them that we're just hearing about now is Safety-Kleen. The company is the number one importer of hazardous waste to Ontario. They bring it in by the truckload and, by the way, they are also asking for Dan Newman's permission to increase the importation of hazardous waste to their site in Wentworth-Burlington, home of the soon-to-be-called by-election. The company has gone bankrupt and Ontario does not have sufficient funds in reserve to cover off the huge environmental liability we may be about to

inherit. I believe the minister said \$2 million. How far off? I know in the United States it's about \$70 million.

Confidence in this government on the environment? Give me a break. I would say that throughout the last couple of years, even their own supporters have absolutely no confidence in this government's commitment to the environment. In fact, it is the mishandling of the environment, as I said earlier, that's broken the spell of their Common Sense Revolution. The magic is gone and the truth has become clear. This government regards environmental protection as an unnecessary impediment to their profit-seeking business friends and supporters in the private sector and has accordingly done everything possible to eliminate it.

Water and Walkerton are really sadly only the tip of the iceberg. We're spending a lot of time right now, for obvious reasons, talking about water and Walkerton because of the tragedy that happened there and the increasing awareness that the cuts to the ministry and the downloading and the deregulation and the amalgamating and the privatizing—this government's very agenda, when we go to the heart of it—played a role in that tragedy.

These days we're not talking about air pollution, but we have and we will again, because that problem is getting worse. The minister brags about all the so-called policies and programs he has put in place, but we know very well that most of them are voluntary. He can talk about Drive Clean, but if he doesn't do something about converting the dirty coal-fired plants to natural gas, it's like putting in Toronto alone a million more cars on the road.

I know the minister got forced into quickly calling a moratorium after the Premier accidentally misspoke himself and said that of course the minister wasn't going to sell the Lakeview plant unless it was converted to natural gas. I watched people scramble over there. If you could have seen the looks on the faces of the Minister of Energy and the then Minister of the Environment—I don't know if it was you or not. Yes, of course it was. There was a scrambling around of staff, and suddenly people were running around and notes were flying about, and very quickly after, the minister was out in a scrum saying, "Oh, we've placed a moratorium on it." That was damage control. But may I say I'm glad the Premier misspoke himself so that there was some damage control done which now, with the moratorium, gives us an opportunity to continue to pressure the government to convert all of those plants, not just Lakeview.

I believe the document that NDP research got a call about this morning was the document that I was quoting from quite frequently. Again I'll remind the minister that one of the major reasons we don't have confidence not only in him to do the job as Minister of the Environment—you know, it's true I've been calling for this minister's resignation. But I've not just been calling for this minister's resignation. We've had four or five—were you the fourth or the fifth new minister? The fifth new Minister of the Environment since this government came to power.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: The fourth; whatever. It's just changes in faces. That's not going to make the difference. It doesn't matter to me whether Dan Newman is the Minister of the Environment or somebody else is the Minister of the Environment, because if you don't restore the funding to the Ministry of the Environment and come in with a new mandate again for the Ministry of the Environment that is actually to protect the environment, then it is not going to make any difference. It doesn't make any difference—

Interjections.

Ms Churley: The members are now starting to heckle and speak back. I will tell the members that in the last election campaign we were very honest with people. And it's true; people bought your message and not ours. That's obvious. There's nine of us here. But we were honest about our commitments and we said that we had to restore money not only to the environment but also to health and to education and across the board, because the cuts had been so deep that our communities had been badly hurt. And we did say quite clearly how we were going to pay for the 500—not 100, but 500—new staff that we would immediately put back into the Ministry of the Environment, and that was just for starters. One hundred new people hired right now is hardly going to make a dent, given that we've had over 900 people fired from there.

So yes, I admit to the Conservatives that we said we would invest more money back into the environment. In fact, we, when in government, went through a very deep recession, not caused by the NDP, as the Tories and sometimes even the Liberals like to say. But they all know better what happened there. We decided to borrow money to keep protecting the environment. We put in over \$200 million. May I say that for a while the Minister of the Environment and others were going out there systematically telling people that the NDP cut \$200 million from the Ministry of the Environment. They are not saying that any more because I've pointed out to them in the House to check the records, and they did. In fact, that money was not cut from the Ministry of the Environment; it was put into the Ontario Clean Water Agency, which the government now, by the way, although they're backing off from that right now and putting it on hold, is planning to sell off to the private sector.

I'm just going to close by reading a few quotes again which I've read into the record before. But one of the most compelling reasons why I have no confidence in this government in terms of protecting the environment and protecting the health and safety of our people is because they were warned on so many occasions that something terrible was going to happen, that they couldn't keep up these cuts and deregulation without something terrible happening. They have been warned since 1966—

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Nineteen ninety-six.

Ms Churley: Did I say 1966? It feels that long sometimes. Since 1996.

I'm going to quote for you again the *Globe and Mail* of April 23, 1997. This is by James Rusk, Queen's Park bureau at the time. Ms Ligeti, the former Environmental Commissioner, was being interviewed about one of her damning reports about this government's terrible record on environmental protection. This is quoted right from the article: "She stressed that government cutbacks have compromised environmental protection, particularly in three areas: the testing of drinking water, acid rain and the inspection of pits and quarries."

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They just cut the acid rain program again, too. That's one of the areas that was identified. Later on, she said she could not point directly to any environmental deterioration that has resulted yet from the government's action. "What you're looking for is dead bodies, and we're hoping to avoid that." She used that line. Unfortunately, sadly, tragically, we have those dead bodies. What is so terrible about this situation is that the government had been warned time and time again, both internally, within the ministry—there's no denying it now; we've got the document—and externally, by the Environmental Commissioner, by all kinds of environmental groups, by the OMA. There were many, many groups warning the government, and they failed to listen.

I'll close by saying that we cannot wait until the end of this public inquiry to rehire the staff and put the mandate of protecting the environment back into the Ministry of the Environment. I don't want to hear that as an excuse every time we ask questions about releasing test results for water testing, releasing the results of the latest audit, doing all of those things. Immediately the government should be announcing that they're not just going to hire 100 new staff; I'm calling on the government today to hire at least 500 of the staff that they fired over the past five years. It doesn't get back all of the 900, but it will go a long way in starting to repair the damage that has been done and hopefully put the procedures and people in place so that we will never have a Walkerton again and so that we will start doing everything we can. That means spending the resources and hiring the staff to curb air pollution in this province and to curb all of the other environmental problems that we are seeing getting worse and worse yearly here.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to have this opportunity to talk about the Ministry of the Environment's commitment to ensuring well-protected drinking water for the people of Ontario.

I know that every member of this Legislative Assembly has been deeply moved by the tragedy that has unfolded in Walkerton. It is a sad reminder of the importance of environmental vigilance.

I want to assure my honourable colleagues and the people of Ontario that the provincial government and the Ministry of the Environment are being vigilant in the protection of Ontario's drinking water. We have responded decisively to the *E coli* breakout in Walkerton, and

we're working to ensure that the municipality has access to a safe, long-term supply of drinking water. We are taking actions that will further protect drinking water in all parts of Ontario.

Ontario has long enjoyed high-quality drinking water. In fact, a report released this year states that Ontario drinking water quality is as good as or better than that found in many jurisdictions around the world. The ministry's drinking water surveillance program indicates that 99.98% of water samples analyzed meet the health-related objectives of the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives.

I want to emphasize one point here regarding the drinking water surveillance program. Despite media articles suggesting that the program has been terminated, it has in fact actually been expanded. Today it monitors 175 municipal waterworks, and it continues to grow at about 10 facilities per year. In fact, it represents 88% of the people serviced by municipal water in our province.

In light of what has happened in Walkerton, it's not surprising that we're hearing more numerous concerns raised across the province about water quality in local communities.

We're also hearing reports around the country. In the province of Manitoba, recently there were reports where similar findings were found in its water supplies. Federal Environment Minister David Anderson recently said that his province of British Columbia issues approximately 200 boil-water advisories per year. But the point remains, Ontarians can be confident that their drinking water is safe and well protected.

Before 1993, provincial laboratories provided free testing of drinking water. In 1993, a fee was instituted. At this time, about 1% of municipalities were using private labs. Between 1993 and 1997, municipalities had a choice of using provincial or private labs. By 1996, half of the municipalities in the province were using private labs. The use of provincial labs was phased out because non-government labs proved to have the capacity and the capability to provide quality testing services.

I'd now like to look at the notification requirements. Because of the changes in public and private lab usage, we took extra precautions to ensure that notification requirements were known and understood by all. These precautions, which I will outline in a moment, were intended to make sure that everyone was clear as to their responsibilities with respect to notification. The procedures to be followed by municipalities were not changed. They were the same today as they were in 1995 when we came into office.

The Ontario Drinking Water Objectives, as revised in 1994, state, "If the water contains any indicators of unsafe water quality ... the laboratory will immediately notify the Ministry of Environment district officer, who will immediately notify the medical officer of health and the operating authority to initiate collection of special samples and/or take corrective action."

This provision does not distinguish between public and private sector laboratories.

In May and June of 1995 the ministry sent a letter to all water utilities setting out the minimum recommended sample for waterworks. The ministry wanted to ensure waterworks owners clearly understood their obligations. With this in mind, our letter said, "The owner must notify the Ministry of Environment district office as soon as possible of the occurrence of any treated water or distribution system bacteriological analysis which indicates unsafe drinking water quality."

A copy of the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives was included with that letter.

In January 1997, the ministry released a guidance document for choosing an environmental analytical laboratory. Let me quote from it briefly. "In the case where a sample result for a parameter designated as health related in the Ontario drinking water objectives is above a certificate of approval limit or an Ontario drinking water objective, the contracted laboratory must immediately inform the local medical officer of health, the Ministry of Environment district office and the contracting agency of the exceedence."

It is clear that the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives place an onus on laboratories to inform the ministry. Since the ministry wanted to ensure that it receives the necessary information, the 1995 letter placed additional responsibility on the owner, as well as to let the ministry know of problems as soon as possible.

Finally, the guidance document makes it abundantly clear that the laboratory which analyzes the sample has an obligation to inform the district office of the ministry, as well as the local medical officer of health and the contracting agency when a drinking water objective is exceeded.

The cumulative effect of these three documents—the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives, the 1995 ministry letter and the 1997 guidance documents—is to clearly indicate that the laboratory and the water facility owner both have the obligation to notify the ministry of drinking water contamination. We expect that the notification procedures I've outlined will be fully reviewed through the various investigations and inquiries that are taking place.

But I would like right now to turn to the Ministry of Environment's actions as the Walkerton situation unfolded. The ministry moved quickly to ensure that the municipality will have access to a long-term, safe drinking water supply.

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On Thursday, May 25, after discussions with the local health unit and the town of Brockton and its consultants, the ministry issued a field order to the town, setting out the requirements the town would have to comply with in order to restore the water supply to safety. We are continuing to look for the source of the problem with a number of partners, including the local medical officer of health, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the town of Brockton. The town of Brockton has turned over the operation of the municipal system to the Ontario Clean Water Agency. The agency is working with the

municipality to get the municipal system cleaned up as quickly as possible.

As a precautionary measure, I've contacted municipalities across Ontario to advise them on what actions they should take if they have concerns about their water supplies or if they receive calls from citizens concerning private wells.

Testing Walkerton's water supply is being conducted by a private lab contracted by the town. The municipality has begun a significant upgrade of its system and is now undertaking a systematic house-by-house decontamination process. While we cannot predict with certainty, we anticipate it will be approximately six weeks before we can recommend to the medical officer of health that the system can be safely restored to use.

My colleague the Attorney General, Jim Flaherty, has announced a public inquiry into the events surrounding the Walkerton tragedy. Mr Justice Dennis O'Connor of the Ontario Court of Appeal will serve as the inquiry commissioner. As everyone here is aware, Minister Flaherty yesterday set out the guidelines for the inquiry, which will be comprehensive and will look at every aspect of the Walkerton situation.

The inquiry joins three other investigations already underway, including an Ontario Provincial Police investigation, a coroner's inquest into the deaths believed to be linked to the E coli breakout, as well as a ministry legal investigation into the events surrounding the contamination of the municipal water system, and this will be carried out by my investigations and enforcement branch.

I'd now like to turn to the action plan we have developed to further protect drinking water in Ontario:

First, inspection of each of the 630 municipal water treatment facilities in Ontario by the end of this year: We will make sure there is full compliance with the legal requirements that protect our health and our drinking water. We will ensure that these facilities are meeting the conditions set out in their certificates of approval and that they are meeting the Ontario drinking water objectives. We will issue legally binding orders in any instance where we determine there is any failure to comply with health-related requirements. These inspections will give priority to facilities where there have been problems in the past, such as results indicating that Ontario drinking water objectives have been exceeded.

Second, a ministerial review of certificates of approval for all municipal water treatment facilities: This review will result in each municipal water treatment facility in Ontario having one new certificate of approval that clearly sets out what is approved, that restates the requirements of the regulations I will introduce and sets site-specific conditions for the operation of the facility. While the plant inspections will ensure that all facilities are doing what they are supposed to be doing according to the conditions placed upon them, the certificate reviews will determine if the facilities are adequate to the task of meeting municipal water needs in the 21st century.

Third, a drinking water protection regulation is being developed under the Ontario Water Resources Act: Our

intention in developing this regulation is to make Ontario's drinking water protection standards among the toughest in the world. The regulation would give these standards, for the first time in Ontario, the force of law. In my announcement on May 29, I announced that I had instructed ministry staff to develop a regulation including the following mandatory requirements:

(1) All laboratories, including laboratories at water treatment plants performing tests on drinking water, must be accredited by an agency such as the Standards Council of Canada, which works in tandem with the Canadian Association for Environmental Analytical Laboratories.

(2) Municipalities must inform the Ministry of the Environment if they change the private laboratory facility that is testing their water. This will ensure that the ministry will contact the new lab and inform it of its roles and obligations.

(3) Notification requirements will be made absolutely and unequivocally clear. If any laboratory finds that a test result indicates unsafe drinking water quality, it must immediately inform the Ministry of the Environment and the medical officer of health, as well as the municipal water facility operator. The ministry will require a municipality to immediately notify all three if they find a problem. The ministry will require every water works to do so itself, unless they are assured notification has already taken place.

As the honourable members can appreciate, the regulation is not finalized, but it will be more comprehensive than these proposed requirements that I have outlined.

The actions I have just outlined for my fellow members show that the provincial government and the Ministry of the Environment are showing leadership in the protection of Ontario's drinking water. We have responded decisively to the E coli outbreak in Walkerton, and we're taking actions that will further protect drinking water in all parts of Ontario to ensure that no other community ever has to face the kind of tragedy that happened in Walkerton.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I want to talk very briefly about the fact that there's ample evidence that the government was neglectful in dealing with the issue of safe water for the people of Ontario. You talk about leadership. The Provincial Auditor—this is the group that we, the Legislature, engage to give us objective, third party evaluations of what we're doing here—in 1996, couldn't have been clearer. He said to the government, "We have a major problem with drinking water—31% exceeding the maximum acceptable limits." He said to the government, "What are you going to do about it?" The government said to him: "Right now we're working hard. We're preparing a plan to deal with this. We'll do it."

Two years later, 1998, the auditor went back and revisited this issue: 31% exceeding the maximum limits. They said: "What are you doing about it? This is a major problem." This is our Provincial Auditor warning the government, in as clear terms as possible, that they were

neglectful. They said there, "We still haven't done it." Two years later: still not done.

Our Environmental Commissioner: again, an independent person appointed by the Legislature. We appoint this person. This person is responsible for looking objectively, in a third party way, at our environment. The Environmental Commissioner made exactly the same point to the government and said: "This is desperate. Where is this plan?" And got the worst kind of bureaucratic run-around I've ever seen—got four different answers from four different ministries.

Today in the Legislature we heard about one of our conservation authorities saying that as of June 2000—this month—there still is no comprehensive plan. I say to the people of Ontario: Nothing could be clearer about the neglect of this government. They were warned by our auditor about this huge problem, and they put them off in the most callous way, saying, "Don't worry, we're doing the plan." They had no intention of doing the plan. Two years later, the auditor came back and said, "Listen, I want to know what you've done about this." Nothing. It still hadn't been done.

So I say to the people of Ontario: This motion today calling for lack of confidence is as a result of independent employees of yours, of the taxpayers, providing us with more than enough evidence of the enormous problem. The government did the worst thing. They simply put the auditor off, put our Environmental Commissioner off. Wilful neglect. Now we hear from the minister, "We're doing this, we're doing that, we're doing this." I think the people of Ontario have a right to be completely outraged.

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They knew about this problem. They were told about this problem, the problem was spelled out, and they completely ignored it. It's wilful neglect, and nothing could demonstrate more a lack of confidence in a government than six people dead, our water program still not in control and the government giving us nothing but bureaucratic gibberish when they should have been doing what they promised to do four years ago and coming forward with a legitimate plan for dealing with a serious problem in the province of Ontario.

Ms Martel: I am pleased to participate in the debate today. It's an important debate. It's a very serious debate. I hope the government members recognize that as they get up to speak today.

We have in the last number of weeks witnessed in this province an incredibly horrible tragedy. I can't imagine what the families of those who have been victims and who have died from this E coli outbreak must feel right now. I can't even begin to imagine what they must feel, knowing that in Ontario in the year 2000 they couldn't depend upon safe drinking water for themselves and their families. They couldn't depend on it in the province of Ontario in the year 2000.

You think that these kinds of horrible tragedies with respect to drinking water happen somewhere else, in some Third World jurisdiction where governments don't

give a damn about those kinds of things. Imagine how people must feel. In this province where we used to pride ourselves on environmental protection, in a province that just saw an unanticipated \$5-billion increase in revenues from last fiscal year to this, in a province where we have all kinds of expertise and experts in a ministry who have been laid off, they must just continue to believe how unbelievable it is that we find ourselves in this situation where no one in this province—no one—can trust the quality of the drinking water that's coming out of the taps in their communities. That is a sad state of affairs.

Frankly, this government has to accept responsibility for that, because this government came to office in 1995 on a promise that it was going to get government out of the face of people, get government out of their way. "Let them do their own thing; it will be so much better." We've seen regulation after regulation that had been put in place by successive governments to protect people and their drinking water, their health care and so many other things just wiped away by this government, all under the guise of getting government out of the face of people.

This government was going to fix government. It wasn't going to be the government; it was going to fix. What this government has been obsessed by since its mandate began was how it could cut, cut, cut regulations that had been put in place over many years to protect people and how it could cut the staff that were necessary to enforce those regulations so they could give a big tax break to the rich and famous. Where has it got us? What has it led to? To a horrible tragedy in a community in this province and to a situation where I think the majority of people, if you had a chance to talk to them today, would say they have no confidence—none—that their drinking water is safe. What a sad state of affairs in this province in the year 2000.

It's worth going through a bit of a historical review of what's happened at the Ministry of Environment and Energy because what has happened is unacceptable. It's certainly not defensible. I don't know how the government today is going to put up its members to try and do just that. Let's go through just a brief historical review of what was in place and what's been cut courtesy of this government.

In 1991, our government started the CURB program, the Clean Up Rural Beaches program, to encourage farmers to use proper fencing etc to keep livestock away from polluting water sources.

In 1993, our government allowed municipalities to choose to use either the MOEE labs or private labs to test their drinking water. The vast majority of those municipalities indeed stayed with the Ministry of the Environment.

In 1993-94, the MOEE launched a major capital infusion program to upgrade municipal water and sewer plants right across this province.

In 1994 the Ministry of the Environment and Energy under the NDP updated the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives to require labs to report to the ministry, and

then the ministry to report to the medical officer of health, when contaminants were found in drinking water.

In 1994-95, the budget for the Ministry of the Environment under the NDP was \$558 million. We established the Ontario Clean Water Agency and another \$2 million was put into that agency to allow it to develop and get underway.

Then we had the election of the Harris Conservatives, coming to get government out of the face of people. In 1995, one of the first things the Harris government did was to cancel the Ministry of the Environment's report of environmental violations, which under us had been called the convictions report.

In 1995, the Mike Harris government cancelled CURB, the Clean Up Rural Beaches program.

In 1995, the Environmental Commissioner began to warn against the effect of cutbacks on water management. In her report, she called on the government to implement the groundwater protection strategy to try and avoid the disaster that has now come upon us with respect to Walkerton. The Environmental Commissioner repeated that request in every subsequent annual report that she provided to this House and to this government, and this government did nothing.

In 1996, the Harris government closed the four government testing labs—in Thunder Bay, London, Kingston and Toronto—and took the province of Ontario entirely out of the water testing business, so that all municipalities were forced to use private labs. If I remember, at the time that legislation was passed all of those municipalities were given a mere eight weeks to try and shift to the new provider. It's no wonder there was an increase in their costs when that happened.

Between 1995 and 2000, the Harris government has laid off over 900 Ministry of the Environment staff. This includes those involved in water testing, scientists, and the investigation and enforcement branch.

Between 1995 and 2000, the Harris government has taken \$100 million out of the operating budget of the Ministry of the Environment. That just proves how much of a priority this government places on the environment, doesn't it?

In 1996, the Ministry of the Environment's drinking water surveillance program under this government stopped testing for microbiological parameters—ie, E coli—and the number of annual government tests for municipalities, for their systems, dropped from 400,000 to zero.

In 1999, in the fall, Mike Harris got rid of Eva Ligeti, probably because she continued to raise her concerns with respect to the environment, and appointed Gord Miller. Everyone in this House knows that Gord Miller had been a former Progressive Conservative candidate, a friend of Mike Harris's. I guess the interesting question is if Gord Miller, in the first annual report he provides to this House, will actually call on this government to implement the groundwater protection strategy in the same way that Ms Ligeti did in the full five years that she was appointed under this government.

In the 2000-01 MOE budget, we see now a decrease of over \$16 million from last year to this year. Again that shows the priority this government places on the environment. If you look at the spending in real dollars, that 2000-01 budget is actually below the level of 1971-72 spending, in the year that the Ministry of the Environment was first created.

In 1998, we had 3,300 violations of water pollution discharge standards, and that covers both private and municipal sewage treatment plants. Of the 3,300 violations, the ministry launched one, and only one, prosecution. Again that tells you something about the priority this government places on actually prosecuting those who pollute. It's clear to see there is no priority at all with respect to this government.

The year 1996-97 marks the most recent or the last year that we've had a report published by the Ministry of the Environment on their drinking water surveillance program. I suspect the reason we don't have those reports is because there hasn't been the staff available to do the work, to generate the reports.

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We know that in January 2000 the MOEE's office in Owen Sound was notified five times of contaminants in the Walkerton water system by labs. The ministry waited three months to follow up with the PUC and the ministry never did notify the medical officer of health of the contaminants despite the MOEE guidelines to do so, which our government set out in 1994.

The minister talked about what the ministry has done since Walkerton. He would have been better off to talk about what the ministry didn't do with respect to Walkerton, which by and large led to the terrible tragedy that occurred there.

If you look at the sheer numbers of people who have been let go from front-line staff—those are the people who would do the surveillance work on those water systems, the staff who would deal with the enforcement, who would deal with the prosecution—that tells it all because in 1995, in the operations branch of the Ministry of the Environment and Energy, there were 890 staff. By 1998, that had been reduced to 651—some 339 inspectors, enforcement officers, front-line staff dealing with the safety of our drinking water out the door, courtesy of the Mike Harris government. I think that speaks to the lack of priority this government has with respect to the environment.

More importantly, it speaks to the lack of priority they have placed in protecting our drinking water and in dealing with those who pollute. The numbers themselves tell the whole story and there's no way to deny those numbers. Those numbers and the prosecution numbers—one out of 3,300 prosecutions actually brought to court—makes it clear this government is not interested in protecting our water system. It certainly isn't interested in dealing with those people who are polluting.

It's interesting that even within the ministry, the assistant deputy minister in charge of the operations branch knew that this was going to be a problem when

the cuts were made. She issued some memos, which I understand the minister was looking for yesterday and which the minister called our office for today. He obviously doesn't have them in his own ministry.

In a memo dated May 22, 1996, she says, "As you know over the two phases of the savings plan the ministry will eliminate 752 positions, 279 of them in our division...." Page 2: "These measures will have an obvious impact on our work plan. Over the next few months we will be working on adjusting our priorities and compliance strategies to harmonize with the ministry's core business functions."

There certainly was a lot of adjusting of priorities. Safe drinking water wasn't a priority any more. Prosecutions of those who pollute our water weren't a priority any more. Compliance strategies: There wasn't much of those because there wasn't the staff to even do the investigations to ensure that people were compliant, whether they're in the private sector or municipal water systems.

That speaks very strongly to the lack of priority this government places. It's interesting that even one of the management staff, the assistant deputy minister, at that level could recognize that they weren't going to be able to do all the work they were supposed to do, given the enormous cuts to the staff who were needed to protect water in Ontario.

We're going to have a public inquiry, as well we should. I guess the Premier, after much bad publicity, had to back down and was forced into it. I'm really concerned that in the face of this government just yesterday announcing the terms of the public inquiry—I hope it will get to the bottom of what happened at Walkerton; I hope it will investigate very clearly the impact of the cuts at the Ministry of the Environment and what effect that had and will probably continue to have on water safety in this province—we now find out that the same government is now intent on privatizing water and sewage systems right across the province.

What contempt this government holds this inquiry in already, if the purpose of the inquiry is to get to the bottom of whether or not the cuts had to do with what happened in Walkerton and have to do with the other communities right now that have boil-water orders.

In the face of that, we find out yesterday that the government clearly wants to move forward on a plan where municipalities basically would have to demonstrate whether their municipally owned systems cost less and are more effective than what a private operator might provide. We know that even though the municipalities will conduct their own examinations about this over the next five years, they will be subject to a provincial audit of their decisions, and all of the rules governing the audit process will be set by the minister.

The proposal also cited my municipality because it's one that this government has forced an amalgamation on. I can tell you that in my community we're not interested in having private water, private ambulance, private sewage treatment etc. The municipal staff who are there

right now are doing a very good job to protect us, thank you very much, and we're not interested in seeing some kind of similar tragedy occur in our community.

What needs to be done? The first thing this government can do is hire back the staff it laid off. At least 900 have been laid off, and you'll recall in the last election we said, as part of our plan, that we would hire back at least 500. It won't get us all the way, but it certainly will be a much more significant start after the decimation we've seen at this ministry under this government.

Second, with respect to the water protection fund, which is due to end this year, the \$200 million this government has allocated to those municipalities that need provincial assistance to clean up, to fix, to renovate their water and sewage systems, if this government had a priority at all with respect to drinking water, they would be announcing today that they are going to continue with that water protection fund.

Indeed, in the face of the massive amount of money in terms of revenues that were unanticipated that this government got over the year, some \$5 billion, they should be announcing a major increase in that water protection fund so that those municipalities that are having trouble with their water system and are facing huge costs to do some upgrading will have somewhere to go. We've already heard, from David Lindsay himself, that the SuperBuild fund will not be a place where they can come and apply and be welcome and get money. The government has an obligation to continue the protection fund and increase it greatly.

Finally, we don't need this government to make promises it can't keep. I heard the minister here today talking about the regulations he had announced and all of the things the ministry is going to do. Do you know what? With the cuts they've had—we've already seen the effect in Walkerton—if they don't hire some more staff, they will never be able to do one thing he talked about today.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise today to speak on the confidence the members of this House have in our government, and I don't think there is any question that confidence is indeed in order.

Before I get into my presentation, I want to express my thoughts, my empathy, my sympathy for the residents of Walkerton, for those who have lost loved ones and those who have suffered. There have been hundreds if not thousands who have suffered in Walkerton over this rather pathogenic E coli, the 0157 strain, that has infected people there.

But I also recognize how amazed I am at how the people in Walkerton have pulled together to cope with this tragedy. I commend all of those, from all across the country, who have been supporting the people in Walkerton. From my riding, businesses throughout the riding are sending aid and help to Walkerton. The municipalities in Northumberland are also sending financial aid to those people.

It's interesting that neighbouring towns and cities have also pitched in with outstanding efforts. Cities such as London have offered management and staff from their

hospitals and any other form of help that is required. The city of Guelph has offered donations of bottled water, and the town of Hanover has invited residents of Walkerton for free showers and bathing facilities. These are some examples, just barely scratching the surface. Places like Bruce county, Brampton, Durham, Orangeville, Parry Sound, Kitchener, St Thomas and Waterloo have all been quick to respond with their offers of help also.

It's certainly an outpouring of concern from individuals throughout this province and I am very proud to be an Ontarian to see that, similar to the ice storm. Rather than sitting back and assuming that their city or town hall is going to do it, these individuals are doing it. They are offering their prayers, their donations of bottled water and everything from diapers to food. Many individuals have made themselves available for voluntary assistance that might be required. This is the true heart of Ontario, particularly rural Ontario. We're a tight-knit family and pull together during times of crisis.

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It was my privilege to be in that community last Thursday evening, not because of the announcements some of the ministers were making at that time, but I had committed two months before to speak to the Bruce-Grey-Huron-Perth-Georgian Triangle Training Board. It was quite interesting to be there and to see the support and confidence that people outside of the Walkerton area have for Walkerton. They were there in person supporting that community. It's a community that's hurting, that wants to get on with life. It's great to see companies in Walkerton, like Culligan and Tim Hortons, providing clean water for those residents.

What I find really appalling about this Walkerton situation is the feeding frenzy that it has spawned among the members of the opposition. They're turned a tragedy into a media opportunity, which is extremely unfortunate. They've done everything possible to spread misinformation and innuendoes about the events leading up to the E coli outbreak and steps that could have or might have been taken.

It's very unfortunate to hear the Leader of the Opposition criticizing and going on, but to my knowledge the leader of the official opposition has never gone to Walkerton since this has occurred. I compliment him for recognizing and asking for a moment's silence here in the Legislature, but as far as I can recall, that's the only comment he's made of empathy or sympathy—or any member of the opposition, third party or official opposition. It seems like the only thing they're interested in is taking and winning political brownie points, having little concern for the people of that community. The opposition's stance demonstrates they are morally bankrupt and not above using personal family tragedies to score cheap political brownie points.

I think it was Mark Twain who made the quote, "Get your facts straight first, then you can distort them as you please." The opposition has taken and distorted the facts before they got them and before they identified what was

right or wrong. They've just gone ahead and distorted them. Clearly, the opposition has not taken time, nor do they have any desire, to get their facts straight before they start misinterpreting and twisting them. The opposition across the floor has been flapping their wooden wings attempting to fly and not doing a very good job of it.

In the last term, I was very proud to be the parliamentary assistant for the Ministry of the Environment. I was listening to both the member for Broadview-Greenwood and also the member from Nickel Belt. I'd just like to bring to their attention a few things that were happening during their term. Between 1992 and 1995, their party eliminated over 200 positions; 208 to be exact. Then in 1994, 120 drinking water plants did not meet compliance requirements. I'm sure you'd be aware, Mr Speaker, that in 1991, of the 387 sewage treatment plants in this province, 91 plants did not meet provincial standards. That was in 1991. I'm sure you would remember that date very well.

Here are just a couple of quotes from third parties that I thought you would be interested in. The first one is from Christina Blizzard: "The party that had made so much hay out of environmental issues ended up doing very little that was positive in the five years it was in power."

Then Jeffrey Simpson—this is more current—March 3, 1999, "And the NDP's record was an abysmal disappointment to environmentalists who felt betrayed" by the Bob Rae government.

The only change that's occurred in Walkerton in the last five years has been the fact that the water being tested has been in a private lab rather than a public lab. I think it was Andrew Coyne in the Post who said that the only thing he could identify that was absolutely done properly was the operation of that lab. You would think public labs were like Utopia and the private labs were garbage. Scientists are scientists. They have ethics, whether they're in private labs or whether they are in public labs. This is not a big issue. If they think everything's wrong in private, then tell me about the trust they have of pharmacists when they go to a pharmacy. Whether it's a privately run pharmacy, one in a great, big shopping mall, one of these big box stores, or one in a hospital, which pharmacist do you trust the most? I don't think you differentiate which pharmacist you trust the most just because of the store or the building or how they get their salary. A pharmacist is a pharmacist is a pharmacist, and so is a scientist.

I don't believe for one minute the opposition's allegations that the tragedy in Walkerton is anything more than a localized event. I truly believe that if all the protocols and procedures in place had been followed, we would not be in this debate today. Similarly, I don't think the people in Walkerton would be in trouble. However, we will wait for all the studies, and I'm sure we will get to the bottom of this and will know what's going on and what should be corrected down the road.

The ministry helps municipalities develop action plans for safe water supplies. They work with the municipalities. Our government has taken action to protect against future problems. The minister has already made a move on four different regulations. We've sent advisories to municipal treatment plant operators reiterating their responsibilities for testing and examining any possibility of contamination. In all cases, independent of ownership, the operator of the facility is responsible for the testing of the quality of the water.

Just last Friday I interviewed a PUC manager of a water plant in Cobourg for my cable show. I thought it was interesting. He pointed out that chlorine is added at three points throughout the water treatment plant—and he indicated this is standard procedure—once to the raw water when it first comes into the plant, again when it goes into the settling basins, and again as it goes out into the distribution system, ensuring that there is residual chlorine still in the water when it gets to the end of the tap. So in a typical plant here's three opportunities to double-check that chlorine and make sure that it is at a proper level to kill organisms. Any one of those additions of chlorine should, in fact, do the job.

I think the opposition should be extremely pleased with the response of our government, all of the things that are happening. First, there's a coroner's inquiry. Second, there's an OPP investigation. Third, there's an MOE investigation of policies and procedures—should they be corrected? Then there's a public inquiry. We first started out with an all-party legislative committee, just as the leader of the opposition had asked for, and now we've gone to a public inquiry, just as the opposition has asked for. We've put out some \$300,000 to assist the two school boards in that area so the students can go to other schools where we know that the water is indeed safe. Last Thursday there was a multi-million dollar compensation package offered to the people of Walkerton.

We certainly feel that our government has been very responsible in offering this kind of emergency relief, on a compassionate basis, to those who became sick, to those who have lost loved ones, and of course to those businesses financially hurt by the crisis. We started out with some \$100,000 to help pay rent and some of the inconveniences, and we've moved on with more.

Just more recently, we announced that Mr Justice Dennis O'Connor will be leading the inquiry, will be the official commissioner for this, and we're bringing in amendments to the Public Inquiries Act to protect employees when they testify.

The Premier has assured us that he demands answers. We're going to get answers. This public inquiry is as broad as you could possibly make a public inquiry. The Premier has acknowledged that there's a responsibility to the victims and their families to get to the bottom of this tragedy, and we've taken decisive steps to do exactly that.

Therefore, in light of the government's response to this tragedy, I believe that our government should have the full confidence of this Legislature. I think it's also

interesting to quote to you what's being said here in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, if I might, just for about a minute or a minute and a half.

"However, the province deserves credit for offering money not only to those who became sick or lost loved ones, but as emergency relief to businesses financially hurt by the crisis. Quite simply, the aid package gives Walkerton residents more choices than they had. No one has to accept the compensation. In fact, people should think carefully before making a decision because whoever takes provincial compensation surrenders the right to sue the province. This is a fair stipulation. While the government should compensate victims, it should not have to do so more than once. Nor is the government trying to evade its obligations because it will cover the initial fees for those who seek legal advice.

1720

"The selling point of the provincial offer is that it will get money to the people of Walkerton faster than any lawsuit. It will also get it into the hands of people who could really use it—victims—and not lawyers. This is important."

The editorial goes on to talk about the tainted blood and the hepatitis problem and how long it took with that inquiry to get money into the hands of the public. Indeed, that was a very unfortunate tragedy with the blood scandal and all the difficulties there for the people who were infected. The dollars would flow through and give them some assistance.

I see some comparison in this situation with the tragedy of an air crash and how that is followed up with a very thorough investigation. Once the investigation is completed, then various procedures and protocols are changed, if necessary; different equipment in the aircraft is changed. I see it as similar here. Once the study is completed, then we will change policies and procedures if it will help to protect people from these very pathogenic varieties of E coli, salmonella etc into the future, and possibly other things could be added to the waterworks. Maybe a requirement for ultraviolet light or something like that might help to improve the safety of the water.

I'm extremely disappointed, in winding up, that the leader of the opposition first requested an all-party legislative committee—this was in Midland on May 26, a Friday—and then the following Monday who voted against having an all-party legislative committee but the leader of the official opposition. Obviously another flip-flop.

Here we have the leader of the official opposition pressing every emotional button you can possibly think of to get headlines in the local press, the press across Ontario. He has shown little to nil empathy or sympathy for the residents of Walkerton other than for that one request for a moment of silence.

Shame on the opposition for their actions and inaction. Shame on the opposition for the only solution they can come up with is to spend more money. Spend, spend, spend is their only solution. Shame on the opposition for trying to win political opportunity from this extreme trag-

edy. Shame on the opposition for being totally morally bankrupt. Shame on the Leader of the Opposition for continuing to flip-flop. Shame on the opposition for a total lack of empathy and sympathy for this situation.

Congratulations to the residents of Walkerton for pulling together in such a tragic event and making things happen afterwards. Congratulations to Ontarians for pitching in and helping the residents of Walkerton in this disastrous situation that they've been through.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I apologize for being a little unorganized. I didn't know the member for Northumberland was going to be finished so quickly.

I just wanted to put on the record my sense that this issue of Walkerton is something on which I know my constituents would want me to publicly say express their sympathies and concerns. Their hearts and souls are with them. That's certainly one of the things I wanted to say.

I know that this debate today is to hold the Minister of the Environment accountable, as if he isn't in question period every day. I can only say to you that the biggest question I hear that I have some problem with—as you know, I'm on the estimates committee and we did sit through some very laborious hearings yesterday. There were some very strong points made that I think need to be reinforced. I would say to you, in looking at the Ministry of the Environment's budget since we took office or perhaps for the last decade, since 1990, there are some real explanations for why those changes have occurred.

The most important thing, which I think some of the newer members on the other side should pay heed to, is that some of those changes were in the system itself. One of the staff reduction numbers that I hear floated around a number of times is clearly an explanation of the way that the ministry business is managed. The whole OCWA piece—that's the Ontario Clean Water Agency—is moving a number of people out of the ministry into an agency. The head count reduction is 900. If you look at the reductions in numbers and you aren't prepared to look at the detail behind it, you'll have a complete misconception of where and why the budget has changed and the head count in the ministry has changed. I'm going to go through a number of small points in the limited time I have left. I think you should write them down, because this is an important part, and by the questions that get asked repeatedly it appears that you're not prepared to listen.

I believe all of this is done in the most efficient way of delivering a service safely for the people of Ontario. I don't say this in a partisan way. Many of these initiatives were begun by the previous government. I believe the whole way of managing OCWA was set up by the NDP government. In 1993 it was transferred out of the ministry, with a reduction in the budget of \$435 million and 980 staff persons. As well, in 1993, the former Ministry of Energy was merged with MOE, bringing in \$55 million and 200 people. Subsequently the energy core business was moved out to the new Ministry of

Energy, Science and Technology, so that had taken dollars and staff out of the ministry.

When you look at the year-over-year reduction, it is wrong to make the direct assumption that we have reduced the service. It's my understanding, from listening to the minister's statement on record yesterday, that there are no less enforcement or investigatory people in the ministry. It's my understanding, as well, from the public accounts record yesterday—and Mr Bradley from Niagara Falls would know—that they said on the record yesterday that a greater percentage of the total operating budget is now spent on enforcement.

I think that bears repeating: A greater percentage of the total budget—I believe that's 49%—is spent on the enforcement activity within the ministry. If you look at the functions within the ministry and you look at OCWA and science and technology and the other pieces that have been moved out of the ministry, with the operating dollars that go with them and the staff head count that goes with them, naturally someone in this House could—I hate to use this word—mislead the public. But “not tell the public the whole story” is the proper way to phrase it. Clearly that needs to be on the record.

I really would say that today a critical activity has 741 staff and \$63.4 million, a decrease of about 10%, and that's the real number that needs to be dealt with. The minister's funding reduction—the total overall is 44%—must include those other services that have been decanted out of the ministry. You should write this down, Steve: 980 positions out from OCWA; 117 positions for the Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology; 56 positions transferred from the shared services—that's where they combine computers and HRM activities; 21 positions from the Niagara Escarpment—Jim, you'll be pleased that that is now at arm's-length from the ministry; 802 positions reduced principally in managerial, administration and technical positions.

What I want to say here is they have actually reduced the numbers by moving services out. If someone here wants to tell me that a scientist who's employed outside of the ministry is any less a scientist than someone who's inside the ministry, that's a debate for another day. They're qualified, professional people, and I would have nothing less than qualified, professional people.

In fairness, I believe Minister Newman brings his heart and his soul to that ministry. It has been clear in question period here that he cares about the safety of our environment and he cares about the people in Walkerton, and he should not be discredited or treated with any less dignity than any minister who's trying to work with a very troubled situation.

With that, I would be prepared to allow the member for St Catharines, a previous Minister of the Environment, or the member for Kingston and the Islands to complete the discussion.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): What this motion is all about is confidence, confidence in our water system. The people of Ontario have lost confidence in it. What the government should be doing, what

the Premier should be doing, what the Minister of the Environment should be doing, is one thing and one thing only, and that is to do whatever they can so that the people of Ontario will once again have confidence in the water system in this province. We haven't got it right now, and therefore the people have lost confidence in this government.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further debate? The member for Brampton Centre.

Applause.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): The sound of a one-handed clap.

In the remaining time I just want to make a couple of comments. This is with respect directly to the want of confidence motion. The previous member said the government should be doing one thing and one thing only: whatever it can to resolve the issue, to restore the confidence in this province. That is exactly what this government is doing. The inquiry is there. The examination is there. The investigation by the ministry is there. There is no limit on the funds that are required to repair the situation in Walkerton.

When we want to talk about actions, we also want to talk about leadership. When the Walkerton incident first broke, what happened? The Premier and a number of the ministers, including Minister Newman from the environment went personally to Walkerton.

Interjection: Just like the NDP.

Mr Spina: The leader of the third party, Howard Hampton, was there, exactly. But who wasn't there? The Leader of the Opposition. McGuinty sat in his ivory tower. He sent his minions to Walkerton. We didn't see him anywhere. Then he has the gall to accuse this government of a lack of leadership. The leadership that I saw was Premier Harris, the Minister of the Environment, the leader of the third party and his staff who went there to personally speak with the people of Walkerton. That's leadership, not what the Liberals propose.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The member is factually incorrect, of course. The Leader of the Opposition did go to Walkerton. I know he would want me to bring that to his attention.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Much later.

Mr Bradley: I want to say to the member it's a very difficult thing to do—if you're asking me about it, for instance—because I know you worry about exploitation of situations. I did not question anybody's motivation, but there's often a reluctance to exploit a situation by showing up there when you know the cameras are going to be there. I could have gone up the first time it broke. All the national cameras were there and so on. There's a reluctance to do that in a tragic circumstance where people have lost their lives. The Leader of the Opposition did in fact visit Walkerton. He did so, not on a public basis with a lot of fanfare, but he met with people from Walkerton on a very low-key basis and did not exploit it.

This is a non-confidence motion for a purpose. It's because we in the opposition believe that on the specific issue of the environment, this House does not have confidence in the government. If it were on the issue of who gives away the most in tax cuts to corporations—and there are some people who believe that's the right thing to do—this government would win first prize. I think you're giving \$4 billion away to corporations in tax cuts. This is a priority for this government, and some of the members have said why they believe it to be a priority. I don't believe it is a priority. I believe that we require those kinds of funds to carry out public functions which we've been elected to provide to the people of Ontario.

Sadly, Walkerton, in my view, was a tragedy waiting to happen. No one wanted it to happen. There's no one, under any circumstances, who would want that to happen. But unfortunately, when you remove the public services, when you create a crisis of confidence in public service, when you take away the staff and you take away the financial resources, then you increase the risk measurable of an incident of this kind happening. That's what happens.

This is a consequence of the philosophy behind the Common Sense Revolution, because the Common Sense Revolution essentially says that government is evil, that government should be shrunk to the bare minimum, that there should be massive tax cuts and massive cuts to investments and expenditures on the part of government. We reap the consequences of that in various ways. I believe that municipalities across this province are reaping those consequences today by being vulnerable to very difficult circumstances.

Steve Peters, the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, brought to my attention that the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital water is contaminated, and those people do not have it available to them. All around the province we're getting reports of this kind, and it's most unfortunate.

I would like to say to people who are thinking of visiting Ontario or investing in Ontario that the water is absolutely safe. When I've talked to business people—and I don't purport to be a business person—they tell me that when they are investing, they don't simply look at who has the lowest possible taxes; they look at what kind of health care system, what kind of public services, what kind of infrastructure and what kind of environment you have. We have made a mistake by de-emphasizing the environment to the extent we have.

Even in the latest budget we have a further cut in the Ministry of the Environment budget, now well above 40% since the Conservative government came into office in 1995. One third of the staff is out the door. You simply can't take those people away and be able to do the job.

I had the honour and privilege of being the Minister of the Environment of this province for a little over five years. I have some experience. I knew that to do the job you had to have the staff and you had to have the financial resources. That's why I've urged the Premier to

provide those kinds of funds to the present Minister of the Environment and to the Minister of Natural Resources. There's a need for investment in that important field. Having had that experience, I know how important it is to have the staff and the financial resources behind you.

The ministry has been virtually dismantled. It is disheartening to the people there; it's demoralizing. There were some quotes in a story by Susan Bourette in the *Globe* the other day that said the following:

"Ambitious civil servants have been told to avoid the environment ministry at all costs. 'It's the kiss of death for your career,' said a senior civil servant in another ministry.

"Mr McDougall"—who works for the ministry—"says workers, most of whom initially came to the ministry because they felt passionately about the environment, are beleaguered not only because many of their colleagues have been shown the door, but also because the cuts have run so deep that they feel they can no longer do their jobs."

They say that under the Tories, and for the first time in the history of the ministry, new policy directives were handed down in 1998 that essentially told inspectors to ignore public complaints and issues such as drinking water. There are many quotes in there.

If you talk to the people, they feel demoralized. These were people who were very enthusiastic at one time. I would visit the regional offices or visit various components of the Ministry of the Environment. The people had been given clout within government. Now they're told to be business-friendly. I'll tell you how you define that. When you're an officer working for the Ministry of the Environment and you're told to be business-friendly, you know you lay off business except in extreme cases. It's most unfortunate when that happens.

I know as well that within government the Ministry of the Environment has lost its clout. The Premier has rotated them. He's had four different ministers. It's hard to get a grasp on the ministry when you keep moving the ministers around. One minister had the job part-time in fact.

Then you set up the Red Tape Commission. It was re-established the same week as the Walkerton story broke. The purpose of the Red Tape Commission was to change regulations, to weaken regulations, to get rid of regulations which got in the way of business. The promise that was made by some Tory candidates, not all, in the last election was, "We're going to get the Ministry of the Environment out of your face." That was a promise that was kept.

Unfortunately, when you have these these regulations changed, onerous and unreasonable as they might appear from time to time on the surface—they're there to protect the environment. This government dismantled, changed and weakened those regulations just as it passed two bills in the House, one to weaken the approvals process and one to weaken the environmental assessment process in the province.

They closed the four laboratories. I thought they were good laboratories that we had in this province. It was essential for Ontario to have these safe laboratories. I happen to believe sincerely and honestly that, if that E coli result would've shown up at a Ministry of the Environment laboratory, the person from the Ministry of the Environment would've called the medical officer of health immediately, had the whole operation shut down and the whole town would've been notified, because they are public servants. They are accountable to the public. They're accountable to this Legislature. That's why it's important to have those kinds of laboratories available. Unfortunately, the government made a decision to close them.

If the regional, district and area offices were properly staffed, they could respond. In my own riding, I've had some environmental incidents in the last little while, including yesterday. It's very difficult for our staff locally to be able to respond to them because there are so few of them.

1740

The Provincial Auditor, totally independent of this Legislature, warned the government of problems with drinking water in this province, and those warnings were ignored. The Environmental Commissioner, Eva Ligeti, not only warned the government but was fired when she was critical of the government—fired out the door for being critical of the government, her advice ignored. She was replaced with an individual who was twice a Progressive Conservative candidate and was the president of the Progressive Conservative Association federally in North Bay, in the riding of Nipissing, the Premier's own riding. It was against the wishes of the opposition that that individual was appointed to that position.

I note as well that there are several internal documents that have come into our hands which have warned this government that these were going to be the consequences. There was a gathering in Collingwood in 1997 where they were worrying about legal defences to be mounted against exactly the kind of eventuality that happened, tragically, in Walkerton.

In January of this year there was a proposed revision to the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives document that was leaked to the opposition and to the news media because people felt strongly that these warnings to the government about the consequences of their policies were essential to be in the public hands.

The drinking water surveillance program, we are told, is still in existence. Unfortunately, it doesn't report to anybody. We've not had a report for some three years now on the drinking water of this province, so we don't know in individual municipalities what the problems are or how they are being rectified or if they are being rectified. It's absolutely essential that that information be provided by the ministry. In fact, what's happened today is that instead of the doors being opened, as they were in 1985—ordered opened; it was no longer to be the Ministry of Defence—they've reverted back, and it's even worse now in terms of providing information to the

public. Just call a Ministry of the Environment office now and see if you can get a response. Do the local employees want to provide you with a response? I would suggest they do. They have to go through many hoops today to be able to provide information to the news media or to individual members of this Legislature. That simply isn't right.

We have several environmental reports, including the Sierra Legal Defence Fund report which asked, Who's Watching our Waters? That pointed out that they had to get this information through a freedom-of-information request. They had to pay money and be delayed in getting information that should have been readily available from this government on discharges into our waterways—in other words, the contamination of our waterways—and how few charges have been levelled and convictions have been effected by this government, because they are intentionally being business-friendly.

We have fewer inspections taking place. I questioned the minister today in the House. I know that you cannot inspect all of the plants in Ontario before the end of this year and do a good job. It takes a minimum of a week to do a plant. It takes expert people who have certificates for doing this. It's a hands-on job. It's not just looking at the certificate of approval and saying, "Everything looks OK." It's an intricate job where you need people with expertise to do it. To suggest that's going to be anything other than a public relations exercise I think is trying to misrepresent what is happening on the part of the government policy.

We see a privatization coming of the Ontario Clean Water Agency. They bragged about it when they brought it into Walkerton. They were desperate. That's the agency they're trying to dispose of. It's on the Web site, for sale. The Premier says, "If the deal is right, we'll peddle it to the private sector." I don't think that would be in the interests of the people of this province.

I want to say that this government claims to be tough on crime. It has been soft on environmental crime in my view and should get much tougher.

The Premier promised in 1995 not to cut a penny from the Ministry of the Environment. That is in writing. That's a promise by the Premier. It reminds me of the promise not to close any hospitals. Neither of those promises has been kept, although I guess technically it has. He didn't cut a penny; he cut millions upon millions of dollars from the Ministry of the Environment.

Last, I want to say that if you ask the people of this province and the people of Walkerton—and this symbolizes this government and its approach perhaps to public protection—"Would you rather have that \$200 cheque mailed to your house as a public relations gimmick or have it applied to drinking water in this province?" they would apply it to the safety of drinking water.

The Acting Speaker: Mr McGuinty has moved that, in the opinion of this House:

Since the provincial government has failed the people of Ontario in its duty to protect our drinking water—which killed people and made them sick; and

Since the provincial government has failed the people of Ontario in its duty to protect our air from pollutants—Ontario's air causes 1,800 premature deaths a year; and

Since clean water and air are essential to the health and well-being of Ontarians and their confidence in Ontario's water supply and air has been shaken;

Therefore, the government no longer has the confidence of this House.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1746 to 1756.

The Acting Speaker: Members take their seats, please.

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

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Lankin, Frances
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	Levac, David
Bountrogianni, Marie	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martel, Shelley
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	McGuinty, Dalton
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Conway, Sean G.		

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Brad	Hudak, Tim	Palladini, Al
Clement, Tony	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Coburn, Brian	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Dunlop, Garfield	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Ecker, Janet	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Elliott, Brenda	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Eves, Ernie L.	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Flaherty, Jim	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David
Guzzo, Garry J.		

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 40; the nays are 52.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguee aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)		
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement		
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)		
Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)		
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)		
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)		
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Vacant
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

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

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

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