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Thursday 31 May 2001

Jeudi 31 mai 2001

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Honourable Gary Carr

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L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 31 May 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 31 mai 2001

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

SPECIAL EDUCATION
SUPPORT WORKERS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I move that, in the opinion of this House, since special education support workers make an important contribution to the education and overall physical and mental well-being of special-needs students, immediate measures should be taken to declare special education support workers an essential service during work stoppages to provide special education programs and services at all times to students who have been identified as special-needs students.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Miller: In my first month of elected office representing the people of Parry Sound-Muskoka, there was a support workers strike in the Near North District School Board. I received hundreds of letters, e-mails, faxes and telephone calls from concerned constituents to do with this strike. Most were asking that support workers be deemed an essential service. This resolution originates from the need in my riding, as well as the rest of the province, to consider special education support workers an essential service.

In Ontario, many children who have special needs may require special education services in order to enable them to attend school where they learn life skills from their educational experience. Special education support workers play a pivotal role in the life of exceptional students and their families. Exceptional students rely on their support workers for all manner of personal tasks that most of us take for granted. Because of the nature of educational assistants' duties, many can be classified as nursing duties, which are essential in the province of Ontario.

Students with physical disabilities who need help with personal hygiene rely on assistants to help them in the washroom. Some students rely on assistants to help feed them. Special education support workers may even be required to administer medication. Students who are non-verbal rely on their assistant to help them communicate.

Students who are hearing impaired or visually impaired rely on their assistant to help them with the most fundamental tasks in the classroom and around the school. Without these special education support workers many exceptional students cannot function in Ontario schools.

Imagine for a moment a student with a severe physical disability who is unable to perform their daily activities independently, such as eating, speaking or walking. These students require the constant support of assistants to help them with these everyday life skills in order to pursue their goals in all aspects of their education.

I have spoken with numerous constituents who told me that support workers are essential in delivering quality and specialized care to help special-needs children reach their full educational potential. These assistants deliver the care and services that are essential to the lives of special-needs children. Disruption of these services has proven to be harmful to the well-being and everyday life of exceptional students and their families. That is why I feel the services of these workers should be considered essential for special-needs children. Without them, exceptional students are unable to reach their full educational potential. Many cannot even attend school.

The recent Near North District School Board support workers' strike in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka demonstrated how the withdrawal of school services is disruptive and impacts on the learning process of exceptional students. One of my constituents, Gail Mayhew of Nobel, spoke to me about her grandson, who is autistic. His schooling was disrupted for four weeks during the recent Near North support workers strike. Since Gail's grandson was identified as a special-needs student he has made a great deal of progress with the help of his educational assistant. However, during the recent strike, Gail's grandson suffered major setbacks in his overall progress. The strike was extremely disruptive to his learning, as it was to all children in similar situations. In fact, many of these children were recently told to stay away from school when their support workers were on strike because their safety in school could not be assured.

If I could quote from an article in the Toronto Star, dated May 21, 2001, written by David Lepofsky, chair of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, "An effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act would achieve barrier-free education from kindergarten through university. No special-needs students should again suffer the second-class treatment meted out during last month's Toronto school strike. Most kids without disabilities went to school; special-needs kids were told to stay home."

It is unacceptable that special-needs children were discriminated against in this way. However, assistants were not available to look after these exceptional children as they were on strike.

The most effective way to ensure special-needs students receive this needed care is to declare the work of their assistants essential. As we have seen recently in Toronto, without the special education support workers, these children cannot attend school. They are totally excluded, despite legislation that assures them equal access to regular schools.

In a Toronto Sun article dated Friday April 13, 2001, entitled "Disabled Kids are 'Victims,' Hurt by Strike: Parents," it states:

"Thousands of special-needs students have become the forgotten victims of the public school workers' strike....

"Thousands of kids were left without at-school care when 1,600 educational and health care aides walked out with other CUPE 4400 members.... The Toronto District School Board sent letters to the parents of 26,000 special-needs kids advising many of them to keep their kids home for their own safety....

"Susan Yewchuk, whose 11-year old son is autistic, says two classes of kids have been created."

Kathy Deschenes's son, who also is autistic, had to stay home during the strike while his brother attended school. She states, "My son without special needs came home with a letter saying it's business as usual, while another memo for parents of special education students tells them to keep their kids home."

School boards affected by the strike determined that their principals and teachers could simply not provide the extensive special services that these children need, and I have no doubt that the school boards were quite right. Our schools cannot serve exceptional students without the services of special education support workers.

I had the opportunity to talk to parents of special-needs children in my riding recently. The mother of one child told me how difficult it is to arrange care for her son when he is not in school. A regular babysitter will not do. The caregiver has to be able to provide specialized services specific to the child and has to know just the right way to communicate with him.

1010

When school services are suddenly withdrawn from these children, parents cannot easily make alternative arrangements. Even older children cannot be left at home alone. When educational assistants withdraw services to these children, the impact on them is far-reaching. Parents who cannot make adequate arrangements for their children must stay home to look after them. They lose time from work and money from their family's budgets.

Special education support workers aid students with many different exceptionalities: students with intellectual differences; students with auditory or visual problems, communication disorders, physical disabilities, behavioural disorders and developmental disabilities. The service provided to some of our special-needs students by their assistants must not be underestimated. It is essential.

My resolution today is focused on those exceptional students who need an educational assistant in order to attend school along with their peers. The most vulnerable children in the province have been barred from our schools because their assistants were not there to ensure their safety. This is the worst form of discrimination, because it targets an already disadvantaged group of our citizens.

I attended the annual meeting of RISE last weekend in Parry Sound. RISE is an organization that advocates for people with disabilities and is affiliated with the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres. My meetings with RISE have given me some insight into the challenges people with disabilities face in their daily lives—every minute of their daily lives.

Teachers in my riding who have special-needs students in their classrooms have told me how important assistants are in their classrooms. Much of their program must be modified and adapted for an exceptional student. His or her ability to function in the classroom often depends on having one-on-one supervision and help from their assistant.

Society's most vulnerable children have been discriminated against by not allowing them to attend schools when special education support workers are on strike. Let's not allow this to happen again.

Special education support workers provide an environment for all special-needs students to be integrated with all students. Special-needs students are unable to succeed or even function without the continuous support of these special education support workers. These people are essential to the everyday lives of exceptional students, and they should not under any circumstances be denied this service.

Therefore, on behalf of the people of Parry Sound-Muskoka, I am calling on the government to adopt this resolution.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate. The member has brought an important issue before us. Certainly our young people with special needs face unique difficulties in labour disruptions, and one needs to find solutions to the problem.

I used to be chairman of a school board. I was on a school board for 11 years, including chair for several years, here in the city of Toronto and have some understanding of the needs of special students.

I would say one of the most important steps that's been taken over the last 20 years, probably, is the move to increasingly integrate students with special needs into the total classroom. Virtually every school board now works very hard to make sure that our students with special needs are made, as much as possible, part of the regular classroom, and I truly applaud that.

When I was chairman of the school board in Toronto, we used to have unique schools, segregated, for—at that time they were called schools for the retarded; luckily that name changed. Really through the work of the parents we recognized that those young people best develop and grow within the regular schools; and that's

happened to a very large extent to the credit, as I say, of the parents and, I think, of the enlightened school boards across the province.

My first question on this issue is, is this a step backward in terms of ensuring to the best of our ability that all young people are made, to the maximum extent, part of the same environment? I say there is a risk in this motion that once again our special education students are treated differently. Offsetting that, of course, is the need, during a labour disruption, to make certain that these young people are safe and secure, and looked after and aided properly.

The second thing I would say about the issue of essentially taking away the right to strike for these employees is that there are some areas I agree with the Premier on. He said recently that taking away the right to strike for the teachers may very well not lessen the disruption but increase it. He's been around for some time in the education field, as I have. I think he was actually a school trustee about the same time I was, in the 1970s and early 1980s. He remembers, as I do, that before teachers had the right to strike there were significant disruptions going on but there was no mechanism to really deal with them, because they were essentially work to rule. The reason the then Davis government introduced legislation giving the teachers the right to strike, I believe in 1975, was a recognition that that perhaps was the best way of bringing disputes to a resolution. The Premier very recently said that, and I agree with that.

The member for Muskoka is suggesting that in this case we remove that right. I'd say that before one does that, we have to say, therefore, how do we resolve those disputes? By taking away the right to strike, would we simply be adding to the disruption for our young people or taking away from it? The Premier today just said we would be adding to the disruption.

I think during the last few months we've seen that where there is a long-standing dispute between support workers and school boards that has gone on for a considerable period of time and where the students' education year may be in jeopardy, there may be a need to consider legislation that would deal with that. As we all know, where there's a situation involving teachers and a long-term labour dispute, there is a legislative mechanism for dealing with that. There isn't one where we happen to be involved in a dispute with support workers, and perhaps there's a need to deal with that.

The next point I'd like to make is that at the root of the disruptions between the support staff and the school boards is a lack of funding. I reject totally the contention that provincial support for education has gone up. I would just say to the members to look at the budget. In 1998-99, the province provided \$7.7 billion of support for school boards. Today the province is providing \$8.5 billion. But we must recognize, first, that \$500 million of that money that is now in operating support from the province previously was in the capital budget. The province has completely changed the way it funds capital now, and \$500 million of operating grants go to paying

principal and interest costs on money that school boards have borrowed to build schools. That's \$500 million that's now in the operating budget that never used to be there. It's a neat accounting trick. It's a way to essentially get debt off the books.

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The school boards now have about \$3 billion of brand new debt hidden over there off the province's books that used to be on the province's books, because the province used to fund school construction out of provincial resources. Now they say, "School boards, you go borrow the money." So \$500 million of the grants from the province to school boards goes to paying principal and interest on money they've had to borrow to build schools.

Then the province said, "We're going to cut property taxes by \$600 million and we're going to replace it with increased grants." The \$600 million is supposed to be cut from property taxes and the province will increase by \$600 million in spending, and \$500 million in operating grants will go to pay the principal and interest on money school boards have borrowed to build schools. There's \$1.1 billion.

I contend, and I challenge any government member to prove this wrong, that four years ago the province was providing roughly \$7.7 billion in support to school boards. Today, on an apples-to-apples basis, it's \$7.3 billion. The only way they can show an increase is by saying, "We're now funding capital out of operating."

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Tell us what Dalton's going to provide.

Mr Phillips: I hear the member for London, who loves to heckle and seldom likes to listen. I would say to the member for London that the province is strangling the school system. You want to know where the real problem came up in Muskoka? It was because the Muskoka school board didn't have the money to provide for the support workers. You want to know the problem in the city of Toronto? Every year the city of Toronto is getting less money to spend on people in the city of Toronto. That's why they had a major dispute at the secondary schools.

If you want to know what the real facts are, member for London, you should be talking to the Minister of Education and saying, "We have to stop strangling our school boards." The problem the member for Muskoka ran into was that that school board simply did not have the resources to pay for those support workers. Who paid for it? I'll tell you who paid for it. Those students who were out of school week after week. There's what you should be yelling about, member for London. Yell at the Minister of Finance to solve the problems. You're attacking the messenger when you should be attacking the problem.

It's the Minister of Education and the Minister of Finance who have strangled school boards so they don't have the funds. I know that for a fact in the city of Toronto. Today communities can't use schools. We're closing pools because there's no money. The support workers finally reached a resolution of their dispute, and

then the school board had to lay off hundreds and hundreds of employees because they can't fund the settlement.

Member for London, as you love to yell in the Legislature, I suggest you spend a little bit of your time talking to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Finance and finding some real solutions rather than simply yelling all the time.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of the resolution put forward by the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. He's bringing forth to this Legislature an issue that was very significant in his riding. I compliment the new member for doing that, particularly a member who just won an election this past winter and is doing an excellent job here in the Legislature at Queen's Park.

The essence of this resolution is right here, that education support workers make an important contribution to the education and overall physical and medical well-being of special-needs students. I think too often that is overlooked, the tremendous contribution these people make to the education system, particularly to those special-needs students. Recent events, both in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, as well as what has happened here in Toronto with the strike of support workers, have absolutely been disheartening for those special-needs students. Listening to the concerns out there, it was very devastating to those particular young people. Some of them do not really understand what is happening, and I think it's very unfair that such students are put through that.

I agree with the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka that it's time our government review what is indeed an essential service. I know it's subjective, but there is no question in our minds, when it comes to services such as paramedics or police or firefighters, that those should be essential services, but what other services are essential? As I said, I recognize that it is a subjective opinion as to what should be and what shouldn't be.

I'd like to point out the fact that our government is indeed committed to the needs of these special students. If you look at the budget last year, it was up 17% from 1998-99. In 1999-2000, it was at \$1.2 billion; that was an increase of some \$32.5 million from the year before. Then we see in the budget this year some \$1.37 billion. That is a lot of money. We're also seeing some \$4 million to expand the support workers for special needs.

The real story that lies behind these numbers is what happens to these special-needs students when a strike occurs. Here in Toronto, those special-needs students were told to stay at home while the other students went to school. This is really segregation and it's something those students cannot understand or appreciate. It was a little different in Parry Sound-Muskoka, where the schools were simply shut down because of this particular strike. These young people have to learn basic life skills, things like personal hygiene, and these kinds of interruptions are really disastrous to their training programs. Again, it's something they don't understand.

I've always had a lot of trouble with strikes and lockouts from both sides. It seems to me a rather barbaric way of settling wage negotiations and arriving at a collective agreement. I'm sure if the minds sat down we could come up with a better way of dealing with this, but at this time we're still dealing with strikes and lockouts. Because of this, I think we really have to sit down and look at what is an essential service. Is teaching an essential service? Is nursing an essential service? Are physicians an essential service? I think the list can go on.

In closing, I'd like to address some of the comments made by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. He seems to have all the answers on education funding. I know he sits on the standing committee on finance and has a lot of insight. Nevertheless, I look back to when he and his party were in government. During their five years, there were good times in Ontario, certainly not because of their policies. But what happened? The spending doubled. They claimed the budget was balanced one year, but it was only because of innovative accounting methods. When Bob Rae came to office he said he wanted to be the Premier in the worst way and that's exactly how he got it—in the worst way, after five years of Liberal government in Ontario.

Coming back to the resolution before this House put forward by the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, I enthusiastically support it and compliment him for bringing it forward.

1030

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I want start by complimenting the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, again because of the very sound and rational way in which he tries to present the case for being very concerned about this issue of declaring special educational service providers as an essential service.

I want to refer to my personal background as the principal of a school before the 1999 election and explain to the public out there that although the intention of the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka might be to try to declare that special-ed providers are very essential and very important to our system—I have to ask the member, was he on my board, particularly my school, where I had to tell eight parents that because of the funding formula their child would no longer receive the special-needs assistance they needed to progress in my school? The year before, those students were receiving that special-needs assistance by those very special-needs assistants. Today I will announce that yesterday the board in my municipality had to make the decision of cutting special-needs providers. Why? Because the funding is not there.

The game and the fallacy that the ISA grants are getting bigger and bigger—they've shrunk. They raised the bar for the grants provided to hire those workers. The bar to qualify as a special-needs student was raised so high, they saved millions and millions of dollars by saying those special-needs students had to have that much more of a problem before we provide them with assistance in the very classrooms I had to vacate to take this job.

I am offended that this gentleman stands up today and says, "We are after better special education and we want to declare them special needs, and because of that we're going to make sure they're there." Are we talking about daycare services or are we talking about an essential service that those students need to progress in our educational system? I am offended that this gentleman thinks that by making this resolution and having us here agree that they shouldn't be allowed to leave that school, those students are going to be better served by it. Quite frankly, the funding formula ripped from the heart of those students the ability to have those workers there.

There are fewer educational assistants in our system than when this government took power. What did they do? They played a game at the expense of these special-needs students and their parents—the tears in their eyes when I had to announce to them as principal of my school that their child would no longer qualify to get the special help they deserved to be an equal partner in the educational system. It was ripped from them because this government had to save money at their expense. We're not even talking about the \$1.2 billion that this government took from that. We're not talking about the continuing downloading to school boards and ripping from them the responsibility for making sure those students receive that special help.

The unfortunate case is that I had to face those parents eye to eye and say, "I am truly, truly sorry." The hours and hours of paperwork you made us go through to qualify those students, to prove to you they needed help—that was ripped from us, because you raised the bar to even allow us to give them those educational assistants. Shame on you for trying to play a game at the expense of those students who now don't have that special-needs help they so desperately need. We demand that you return that to them.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join in the resolution put forth by my colleague Norm Miller. Comments have been made by members of the opposition, particularly the member for Brant and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. I want to focus on the comments of these members shortly. But what the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka—

Mr Tascona: Mr Speaker, I can't hear.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Niagara Centre is not in his seat. And the government members would know it's probably not good to be heckling your own member.

Mr Tascona: The focus of this is obviously to address the needs of special-needs students in terms of a labour strike. We have the reality of the situation that there was differential treatment during these labour disputes. The bottom line here is that the member from Scarborough-Agincourt obviously is very pro-right-to-strike for teachers and in the educational system. That's the bottom line. He's not only pro right-to-strike in the educational system; he also feels that the only way to have labour peace is to throw money at it. That's basically his solution. He doesn't want to look at accountability for school

boards. He doesn't want to look at standards in education to make sure we have quality education. When you read through the lines here, he says, "We need more money. That'll bring about labour peace." More money brings labour peace. He's pro right-to-strike in the educational sector, regardless of the cost.

But the thing I really take offence at—we heard a lot from the member for Brant about how he was offended, and I can't believe he has the disposition to say that. I wish I could say it to his face, but he's not here. But the bottom line is, he's offended by the resolution.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Point of order—

The Deputy Speaker: You'll withdraw the comment about attendance.

Mr Tascona: I withdraw that. I'd like to say it to his face. He's offended by the resolution. On what basis would he be offended by this resolution? Anyone who is coming forth here with that pompous attitude doesn't understand what's going on in reality. I think the member for Scarborough-Agincourt put forth that there's a risk they'd be treated differently. There isn't a risk here, member for Scarborough-Agincourt. The reality is, they were treated differently.

The thing that was put forth here, in the column that was written by David Lepofsky, in terms of how they were treated—special education students were told to stay home during the Toronto strike. I say for the member from Muskoka, as we've recently seen in Toronto, without the special education support workers these children could not attend school. The Sun article states, "Disabled kids are victims hurt by the strike." They were the forgotten victims of this public workers' strike. That's the reality. They were treated differently because of the inability to solve the labour problem. It wasn't about money. The bottom line is, we're dealing with a labour relations issue here.

What the member is putting forth in his resolution is to remove that right to strike, because the reality is they were treated differently. The member opposite from Scarborough-Agincourt is pro right-to-strike. He says, "Throw all the money you want at this, but at the same time treat them differently. Treat the special kids differently." So their position on special education, in terms of dealing with labour strife, would be to throw money at it in terms of, "We're still going to have that labour strife, and you'll be treated differently, but the bottom line is, make sure the right to strike for education remains."

We're looking at the funding issue, and I want to be very clear about this: there have been significant increases in special education funding. We have made it very clear that you can't take money out of special education and put it into hiring more 'educrats.' Special education funding has increased, we've brought accountability into special education funding, and we've made sure that school boards can't take the money out of special education. So the comments about where special education funding goes are not only unfounded, but the bottom line here is that the member for Parry Sound-

Muskoka is bringing about a resolution to deal with a serious problem where there's been outright discrimination by the school boards against special education children, and the only solution to maintain the education system intact is arbitration to resolve these issues, not the right to strike.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I want people to understand what just happened here. I saw the member for London-Fanshawe stand up to speak to this resolution; he even put his jacket on. What happened? Did his caucus let him speak? No. The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford bullies his way in, proverbially knocks him aside—

Mr Tascona: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was trying to speak in the House. The member was out of his seat, and I couldn't even speak to you because I couldn't hear. He knows that.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. So what happens? The member for London-Fanshawe stands up and tries to utilize his responsibility to speak to issues. Lord knows, he doesn't get a chance very often. His caucus has kept the member for London-Fanshawe on a pretty short leash. The member for London-Fanshawe finally figures he's got his chance to talk about this resolution—this union-busting, anti-labour, pro-scab resolution—and the member for London-Fanshawe gets brushed aside, body-checked by the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. Shame. Scandalous.

1040

So here we are. I was interested in hearing—I'm not sure; as a matter of fact I'll tell you I'm quite convinced I wouldn't agree with what the member for London-Fanshawe had to say. But, Lord knows, his folks have a right to have their member speak too. I protest the effort on the part of the government caucus to exclude the member for London-Fanshawe from this debate. I insist he be given an opportunity to speak to this resolution. I'm eager to hear what the member for London-Fanshawe has to say.

Let's understand what this resolution is all about. Of course special-ed support workers are critical. Every member of the educational community is critical to the maintenance of a healthy educational system. The author of this resolution says they're so important. Of course they are. If they're so important, why aren't they being paid accordingly? If they're so important, why aren't they being supplied to classrooms in appropriate numbers? If they're so darned important, as they are, then why doesn't this government do more, as it can and could have, specifically and most recently during the strike by CUPE workers here in Toronto? Why didn't this government do more to make sure the boards of education—in this past instance, most specifically, the Toronto board of education—had adequate funding so that strike could have been settled, indeed so that strike could have been averted?

Let's recall that those support workers were merely seeking the same percentage—not dollar value, but per-

centage—salary increase that had earlier been granted without a strike to teachers by that same board. The demands of those workers were not in any way, shape or form extravagant. This government didn't do anything to ensure the Toronto District School Board could avert that strike. The member who authors this resolution didn't speak up in this Legislature calling upon his government to pay back—what was it; how many hundreds of thousands a day were being kicked back into government coffers while those workers were on strike that the government could have returned to the board so the board could have properly funded the fair but modest salary increase those support workers were seeking? Where were you? Why weren't you speaking out then? Why are you now standing in this Legislature telling us that yet another group of working women and men have to lose their right to strike? That's what this is all about.

Interjection: He's pro-strike.

Mr Kormos: What more fundamental right can there be in a democratic society—

Interjection: He likes strikes.

Mr Kormos: Please, Speaker—than the right for working women and men, regardless of whether the workplace is an industrial workplace, a rural workplace, an agricultural workplace or whether it's in schools and within the educational family, to withdraw their labour? It's unbelievable.

Only yesterday, when this government rammed through its closure motion—I understand why Tory backbenchers are not accustomed to speaking to bills. It's because this government uses closure so frequently. I want you to understand, member for London-Fanshawe, that I've insisted you be given an opportunity to speak to this.

Mr Mazzilli: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent that the member for Niagara share his time with me. I would like to speak.

The Deputy Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? No. It's not granted.

I want to tell you right now—stop the clock—this is private members' hour. Everything is timed. I don't want to have any abuse of the rules. Let's just try to treat this as it is: it's private members' hour.

Mr Kormos: I understand the member for London-Fanshawe's desperation. I understand that he has to appeal to opposition parties to assist him to get time to speak on the resolution by his very seatmate. We saw what happened a few minutes ago when he stood, rose to attempt to speak to it. He got bodychecked by one of his own colleagues. I understand his desperation but I tell you it's something he's got to deal with within his own caucus. He's got to talk to his whip and his House leader. He's got to appeal to his Premier. He's got to rely upon his constituents to write letters, send faxes and e-mails saying, "Let our member speak." People from London-Fanshawe, e-mail the Premier and say, "Let our member speak." I'm doing the best I can to help him. I've already insisted that this government give the member from London-Fanshawe a chance to speak, because when he

tried to speak he was checked aside, shoved aside by one of his colleagues, who makes more money than he does.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Well, he does. Do you want me to identify the sources of the income? I'll leave it at that. I should identify the sources of income, but that's a matter for another debate, isn't it?

Scab legislation: let's understand that we've had more contentious strike actions in this province since this government was elected and since their repeal of the anti-scab legislation than we've seen literally in decades, than we've seen, I put to you, since the 1930s and even the 1940s when we saw the birth of the trade union movement here in the province of Ontario.

I understand why this government wants to take away the right to strike for any worker. I understand why it wants to take away the right to strike for education support workers, because the education support workers stood together in solidarity with their sisters and brothers as they took on not only their own board, but as they took on this government, because of this government's scuttling of public education, with all of the manifestations of that.

You see, that was but one of the manifestations of this government's attack on publicly funded education. We see a backbencher being used to—what is it? It's the old trial balloon syndrome. Let the balloon rise and see what kind of response there is. First, we'll start with the special-ed support workers and then maybe, as was contemplated—do you remember the contemplation, the amplified thinking, if it could fairly be called that, about maybe eliminating the right to strike for all of the support worker community, maybe eliminating the right to strike for custodians, for the people who keep our schools clean, hard-working women and men who don't make very much, just like special-ed support workers don't make a whole lot of money either?

I've been in those classrooms. I've been in those classrooms down in Niagara region and other parts of the province. I've been in those classrooms down in Welland, Thorold, St Catharines and Pelham. I've spent time. I've sat there and watched teachers at the elementary level, and yes, even at the high school level but most acutely at the elementary school level, deal with special-needs kids, ranging from modest levels of needs to some very serious and complex levels of needs. I've watched those teachers accommodate those kids, care for them, love them and teach them, help them learn, help them grow.

I've watched teachers do that with the assistance of support workers in their classroom and I've watched teachers who have been denied that assistance. I've watched as teachers cart into the classroom early in the morning construction paper, crayons, pencils and other school supplies that they've purchased out of their own pockets.

1050

I've similarly joined those teachers and their students and their students' families on Saturday mornings and

Saturday afternoons and Friday evenings when they have so-called fun fairs, the sole purpose of which is to raise money to support day-to-day classroom activities in their school. Ross school in Welland holds a minimum of three a year. It's not about having fun; it's about raising money, a nickel, a dime and a quarter at a time, being happy if a Saturday morning bake sale and flea market sort of thing manages to raise a couple of hundred bucks, because maybe they can buy a couple of books for the library, or maybe they can buy some of the arts and crafts supplies that are an integral part of kids' educational programs, or maybe they can buy some of the very sophisticated and specialized learning tools that are available for all kids, including kids with special needs, because "special needs" means precisely that—you've got special needs.

I've watched those same support workers do their jobs and do them in a caring, professional way. By God, you don't take away their right to strike, you don't punish them for being among the lowest-paid people in the educational community, notwithstanding that they equal any others in their level of commitment, their level of professionalism, and yes indeed, with respect to their specialization, their level of training.

This is just another manifestation of this government's hell-bent commitment to union-busting, its hell-bent commitment to destroying free collective bargaining here in Ontario. It knows the Charter of Rights doesn't permit it to ban trade unions, so it will do it through the back door. It'll eliminate the right to strike, or for the right to strike that exists it'll legislate workers back to work, making the right to strike irrelevant, and it will, by legislation, designate more and more workers as essential workers. Yes, that's coming to the floor of this Legislature very soon when it comes to paramedics, ambulance workers and this government's attack on the SEIU, CUPE and OPSEU workers who provide those ambulance services, once again effectively eliminating the right to strike.

I've got a message for the author of this bill and for the Premier: you don't legislate essential workers if you believe in free collective bargaining; you negotiate it. Let me tell you, let this member or anybody else on the government bench come up with a single instance of a special-ed support worker who has ever been anything less than thoroughly, totally committed to the welfare, the learning and the care of the kids who are in their care and who their job is to assist during the course of a school day and beyond—one single instance.

This is a shameful attack, because it's an attack not only on the special-ed support workers; it's an attack on the kids those support workers are committed to, because those kids, like all of our kids, deserve teachers, teachers' aides and support workers who are fairly paid, who are respected by this government and who have the basic democratic rights any worker should have, ought to have and does have in a truly democratic society.

This government committed itself some chunk of time ago to creating a crisis in education and, by God, it's

done it, and it's going to pursue it. It's going to pursue public education, drive it into the ground and drive its workers into the ground, be it support workers or teachers, until it destroys public education so it can sustain and use public dollars to finance its private for-profit school system.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to speak on behalf of the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka's resolution this morning, specifically declaring special education support workers as an essential service. The point's been established, I believe, that when we're speaking of children with special needs, particularly health needs, and physical support workers of the particular group we're talking about, it could be considered discrimination. It's not as in the cases where other children may also be disrupted by work stoppages in our schools. This is a particularly unique case, with children who are being deprived of the essential supports they need, in many cases to survive. The educational component is in addition to the support workers' role.

I think he makes a very good point. Today, as you know, it is illegal for health care workers to strike. There is a dispute mechanism, an arbitration process, where there are collective bargaining agreements reached without the need of a strike which does, in this case, affect vulnerable children.

A little bit of history, but first I want to mention that this morning I had the privilege of opening a two-day symposium on fetal alcohol syndrome, FAS, in Durham. A former neighbour and friend of mine, Marion Cook, has worked tirelessly from the early 1990s to have recognition of fetal alcohol syndrome as a precipitous ailment that may affect special education children. ADHD—attention deficit hyperactivity disorder—and others—there is a growing demand for special education services.

I would say, respectfully, that members of my family were special education instructors, speech and language pathologists. I chaired special education for about four years and am very supportive and sympathetic to this need.

The history should be examined here because for years the process of identifying children with special needs was called an IPR, an identification, placement and review program. That was often delayed for many years, until about grade 3 or 4, because once the child is identified, the service must be provided. So often it was delayed, delayed, delayed, and the supports were not put in place. When we encouraged the student focus funding model and identified ISA, intensive support amount, etc, we were attempting to make sure that the money for special ed is frozen.

I want to summarize that I understand the NDP's position. They are in favour of, and indeed encourage, strikes in our schools, which affects our children. Second, I'm suspicious of the Liberals' position because you can't trust them. It's a case that they don't keep their promises.

The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka has made a commitment. He's stated in public that he puts students first.

I also have more to say but the history does show that Dalton McGuinty is also opposed to the right to strike. That is on the record, it's permanent and it's something that should be followed up on.

Out of respect for the member from London-Fanshawe, I want to save him exactly one moment to redeem himself, because he's a member of great respect in this House.

Mr Mazzilli: It's a pleasure to speak to this resolution. The member for Niagara Centre has laid out the NDP position, of everyone's right to strike to get a collective agreement. And what do we have? Often, back-to-work legislation in this Legislature. The NDP has been consistent, under the leadership of Howard Hampton, in saying, "No, back-to-work legislation is not the way to go."

Where do the Liberals stand on it? Well, one day they vote for it and one day they vote against it. When it comes to our budgets, the NDP often support the Centre for Social Justice, which comes out with an alternative budget, and it is something to put forward to the people of Ontario. Where are Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals? What is the proper funding for education? What is the proper funding for health care? What is the proper funding for farmers? I have yet to hear that and I demand that we hear that from Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals.

The Deputy Speaker: Response? The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka has two minutes.

Mr Miller: I'd like to thank the members who commented this morning on this resolution: the member from Scarborough-Agincourt, the member from Brant, the member from Niagara Centre, the members from Northumberland, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and Durham, and lastly, the member from London-Fanshawe.

I'd like to comment that the member from Scarborough-Agincourt was talking more about teachers striking. This is not to do with teachers striking; it's to do with special education support workers for those special education students.

He talked about funding, and I'd like to point out that the funding for special education programs has increased 17% since 1999, and we are now investing, this year, \$1.37 billion in special education in Ontario—a very big commitment to special education.

The member from Brant was talking about programs to do with special education. The Minister of Education announced comprehensive new plans on January 27, 2000, to do with special education, and we have a good plan in effect for special education.

1100

The member from Niagara Centre was talking about his pro-union position. With his usual theatrics, which he's very good at, he was talking about the rights of union members. I happen to believe that the rights of special-needs children and students are more important than wage negotiations. Also, I'd like to point out that

normally with arbitration the history is that wage settlements tend to be higher than with negotiated settlements. So it should be to the benefit of the special education workers.

The key point here, though, is that the needs of these special education students are of the utmost importance and they are just too disrupted when a strike occurs. We must put the needs of these special education students first.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for debating this ballot item has now expired. I will put the questions relating to it at 12 o'clock noon.

DOCTORS' SERVICES SERVICES DE SANTÉ

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I move that in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario immediately develop and implement an emergency plan to address the critical shortage of family physicians in rural Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Renfrew has 10 minutes.

Mr Conway: I rise today on behalf of my constituents in rural eastern Ontario to address a matter of urgent and pressing necessity, namely, the fact that I am hearing more and more from people living in rural Ontario generally—and I speak as a member from rural eastern Ontario—and from my constituents living in communities like Cobden, Beachburg, La Passe, Douglas, Eganville, Griffith, Matawatchan and several other small communities that they simply are having a very real difficulty accessing or retaining the services of a family physician.

And it's not just in my part of eastern Ontario. I noticed the other day in the *Globe and Mail* some comments from Dr Ken Hook, who is the president of the Ontario College of Family Physicians. Dr Hook is a family practitioner in southwestern Ontario, according to this report, a 55-year-old doctor in Tavistock, Oxford county. Let me just quote what Dr Hook said: "The figures aren't good and what the public has told us is really quite shocking. It really shows that something has to be done fast."

I think Dr Hook speaks not just for his own society of family practitioners but certainly for most of the constituents who have spoken to me in my community. We know, according to the data, that our population is aging. In my part of eastern Ontario, we have some of the highest older populations anywhere in the province. If you're in an area like the Eganville-Douglas-Cobden-Beachburg area, it's a very rural part of eastern Ontario. The populations there are older than average. There is no public transit. There is a lot of winter weather.

Let me just tell this Legislature that people in that part of central Renfrew county—do you know how they are getting access to family practitioners? We've got, at Beachburg, two physicians coming over on a regular

basis from Shawville, Quebec, staffing the Beachburg Medical Centre; good people providing excellent service. These are physicians whose hospital privileges are at the Pontiac Hospital in Shawville, Quebec. So more and more of my constituents in that part of Renfrew country are going over to Quebec to get their hospital services.

It's not an easy problem, and I want to say that the Ontario government has done a number of things for which I applaud them, but these are small steps to deal with, as Dr Hook has said, an urgent problem.

I want to also make plain that in rural Ontario there are issues having to do with lifestyle. I've been through this debate for many years and there's no question that there are some lifestyle issues that have to be taken account of as we look at good public policy in terms of future physician recruitment.

There are demographic issues, not just for the general population but for our physicians. The average age of family practitioners in this province, particularly in rural small-town Ontario, is rising sharply. We know, for example, that one of the real problems many people are experiencing is that when their long-time family practitioner retires in some of these communities, it's virtually impossible to find a local replacement unless we can bring new resources into the community.

We also, quite frankly, have to take into account the feminization of the medical profession, which is a very good thing. But the medical schools are clearly going to have to graduate a substantially greater number of graduates to get to the same number of full-time equivalence because, happily, the young women who are graduating into the world of medical practice in most cases want to have and raise children. That has got to be understood in a way that I don't think we've understood it before.

What is to be done? In an area like the Cobden-Beachburg area of my constituency there's an excellent community group, the Whitewater-Bromley Community Health Centre group, with people such as Dave Shields and Bonny Johnson and scores of very dedicated community volunteers who have been working valiantly for the last number of months and years to find a solution to their problem. A very well regarded, long-time family practitioner died in the village of Cobden a couple of years ago. For that vacancy, there is still no replacement.

One of the solutions clearly is to expand the community health centre concept. It's not going to be the solution for everyone, but I can tell you in the Cobden-Beachburg area of my constituency we believe it is a solution. That community group that has worked so hard, raised public monies and public consciousness now has a number of physicians willing to consider joining the service on a salaried basis, but they have no resources. I know the government of Ontario has a pot of money for alternate payment mechanisms and I want to say that one part of the solution to this urgent problem has to be expanding the community health centre concept.

A second solution for rural Ontario has to be a look at medical school tuitions. We know, according to what the society of rural family physicians has told us, that one of

the strategies that works best for bringing rural physicians home to rural communities, or bringing physicians into rural communities, is recruiting them from those selfsame areas.

The average household income in Renfrew county is something in the \$43,000 range. Do you know that since medical school tuition fees were deregulated a few years ago, at the University of Western Ontario medical school the average household income now of a first-year entrant to the medical school has risen, in just two years, from \$80,000 to \$140,000. Let me repeat that. The average household income now of the first-year entrant to the University of Western Ontario medical school is \$140,000. That household income of \$140,000 is three or four times the average household income in Renfrew county and most rural communities.

Do you think that kind of medical school tuition fee policy is helping this critical problem? Clearly, it is not, and I beg the government to revisit this medical school tuition policy, and particularly to understand what it's doing in terms of aggravating a problem that is already serious.

Another part of the strategy clearly has to be, colleagues, that medical schools—and in our area, the two that are regional schools are the University of Ottawa medical school and Queen's University medical school—have to do a better job and do it much quicker, in making sure that young people who are being trained to become physicians have as part of their medical education a good and ongoing exposure to the opportunities of practising medicine in rural communities.

Some of the medical schools have made some tentative steps to deal with this, but I do not personally believe those steps have been aggressive or numerous enough. I have talked to deans over the years and I've heard all the excuses. I'm simply saying what rural members of this Legislature know, that whether it's Beachburg, Cobden, Eganville, Killaloe, Wilno, Griffith, Matawatchan, Chalk River—in fact the Pembroke city council, the Petawawa town council, have in recent days passed resolutions imploring the government, asking the Legislature, to take steps to deal with problems, including the city of Pembroke, where we now have a deficit of family practitioners.

1110

Medical schools can and should do more. I think we have an obligation to the hundreds of thousands of people, many of them elderly, living in rural Ontario, where there is no public transit to speak of, where oftentimes seniors are on fixed incomes and don't have great private resources to travel distances to get what? To get access to primary health care.

I'd simply say this is a matter that deserves more immediate action than we have seen from the current government. I repeat on behalf of people like those of Cobden-Beachburg, the Whitewater-Bromley Community Health Centre group, that's done everything we've asked them to do—they've gone out and prepared the community; they've raised awareness; they've raised

money—they have asked me to ask the government and the minister: when are you going to expand funding for the community health centre concept?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to take part in this discussion because I have the largest rural constituency in all of Ontario. In fact, it covers 35% of the geography of Ontario, and there's hardly a community in my constituency that isn't facing a shortage of physicians. But it's not just a shortage of physicians. It's a shortage of nurses; it's a shortage of other health care professionals. Indeed, almost every week the situation gets worse.

I want to speak about it from the perspective of family physicians but also from the perspective of all those other people in the health care system who support family physicians. When they're not there, it becomes more difficult to recruit and retain family physicians.

This is not some new thing. This is not something that sort of happened yesterday. In fact, this has been studied over the last 20 years a number of times. You can basically recite the issues that have to be dealt with. One of the problems is that if all of your medical schools are located in southern Ontario, and particularly in an urban setting in southern Ontario, when students, no matter where they come from, attend medical school, what gets drilled into their heads is that it's urban medicine, high-tech medicine, medicine that is supported by 10 specialists down the hall that's the only kind of medical practice you can have. In fact, that's the only kind of medical practice a number of medical students get.

Some years ago, in 1990, in fact, steps were taken to overcome that, in particular in northern Ontario, by instituting two things: the northwestern Ontario medical training program, called NOMP, and the northeastern Ontario medical training program, called NOMEK. In fact, those two things were actually quite successful.

If you looked at the medical school students who took part in those two medical training programs, which actually took medical students into the small communities in northern Ontario and let them experience what family practice would be like in a small town, those two programs were very successful in that many of the students who came through the program actually went back to those communities to start their practice. They didn't regard it any longer as somehow going to another planet. Many of them who went back and started up a practice or took over a practice in a small community like that, if you looked five years later, had stayed. They actually continued to work in that kind of setting.

So some inroads were made in overcoming this problem. But there are a number of things that have happened in the intervening years, particularly in the last seven years, that have made it more difficult. If you don't expand the number of training spaces—and I for one am glad that the government after seven years finally saw that. They finally saw that they needed to expand the number of training spaces. The announcement of a medical school in Sudbury is a good half-step, but it's only a half-step because we really want to deal with the

problem. We also have to establish something in Thunder Bay. You need to pay particular attention to what's happening in First Nation communities, because if First Nation communities cannot access family doctors and health care in their own community, then they will move to communities like Thunder Bay or Timmins or Sault Ste Marie or Sudbury or Kenora or Dryden or Sioux Lookout and you'll experience a physician shortage in the local community. So government has taken a half-step, sort of a half-recognition of the problem, but the half-step isn't good enough.

The other part of this that is problematic is that if you only think of health care and a medical practice in a small community or a rural community as simply family doctors, you miss a very important part of the equation. The important part of the equation is nurse practitioners.

If every time someone cuts their lip playing hockey or if every time someone has to get a few stitches as a result of a soccer injury they have to see a physician to get it stitched up, it won't take very long before your family physician is working 12- and 13-hour days, seven days a week. Under those circumstances you will not keep family physicians. They will leave because they can't sustain those hours of work over long periods of time.

So if we're going to deal with this issue we have to recognize that nurse practitioners are a central part of the solution. There are all kinds of health care issues that under the current regime have to be dealt with by a family physician but under a more thoughtful strategy could and should be dealt with by a nurse practitioner.

I'll give you an example of one that I had to deal with. About 10 years ago I was playing hockey on a Sunday night with some friends of mine in my hometown and one of the fellows got a stick up and got under my shield and cut me above the lip. It just so happened one of the fellows on the ice was a physician, a friend of mine, and he said, "Come on, I'll take you down to emergency and we'll stitch up your lip."

We get down to emergency and the emergency room nurse would be about as far away as the Hansard reporter is here, and he points to the emergency room nurse and says, "You see that nurse? She does better stitches than I do." In fact, every morning now when I wake up and I look in the mirror I understand what he meant by that remark, but at the time I didn't quite get the drift of it. But he said, "This emergency room nurse does better stitches than I do, but under the current rules I will stitch your lip because I get to make a claim against OHIP for an emergency service, and then when you come in seven days from now to have the stitches taken out I'll get to make another claim for OHIP. So it will cost me," referring to himself, the physician, "about \$100 to put five stitches in above your lip and then take them out again."

He points to the emergency room nurse, who at that time would have been paid about \$22 an hour, and he said, "It would take her about three minutes to stitch up your lip; it would take her 30 seconds to take the stitches out; it would cost the health care system less than \$10 for

her to put the stitches in." He said, "This is why we need nurse practitioners."

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): And who brought them in?

Mr Hampton: One of the government members wants to take some credit somehow for nurse practitioners. He ought to know that nurse practitioners were started by the government before you, and you ought to know that under your government there are 200 nurse practitioners in the province today who aren't working. They're trained, but they're not working because the government hasn't brought in a payment strategy for those nurse practitioners. If you want to get the statistics, talk to the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. They will give you not only the numbers, but they'll also tell you the situational issues of those nurse practitioners.

So I just want to point out that a thoughtful government would've said that we need to have a strategy whereby nurse practitioners can work throughout the health care system but particularly in remote rural and northern Ontario communities, and that if you have a strategy whereby they can be paid and they can be paid an adequate amount and they have some job security, you wouldn't have 200 nurse practitioners in Ontario today who are unemployed.

1120

If those nurse practitioners were employed, I suggest to you that the pressures on family physicians in small rural communities would be much, much less. They wouldn't have to stitch up every hockey player who comes in and has a cut above the lip. They wouldn't have to stitch up everybody who got a fish hook in their finger when they were trying to take the hook off their line. They wouldn't have to deal with everyone who comes in and has a common cold but simply needs to be examined to confirm that they have a common cold and then be told: "I'm sorry, there is no cure for the common cold. Go home, drink lots of liquids, stay warm and generally look after yourself."

A number of those things would no longer fall on the responsibility of family physicians. They could be handled by nurse practitioners, which would mean we wouldn't be working family physicians in rural and northern Ontario to death and we'd have a far better capacity to retain them in our communities.

I too want to speak a bit about community health centres because the issue of community health centres is important. I'll just give you an example of one of the communities in my constituency. It's a community of about 9,000 people. In fact, they have three doctors' clinics. I believe there are three physicians in one, four in another and four in another. They're really running three independent businesses.

Because they're running three independent businesses, there is not very much capacity for a physician in practice number one to cover for a physician in practice number two to cover for a physician in practice number three. In other words, they may all be making money, but in terms of health care for the whole community it's

rather uncoordinated. In fact, there are lots of gaps and cracks.

If you had a community health centre in the community, if every physician who came to the community didn't have to cover all this overhead of setting up a practice and employing their own nurses and their own receptionists and all of the support equipment, if they didn't have to worry about all of that, if there was a community health centre where they could work on a wage basis and they knew there were going to be nurse practitioners to support and, gee, maybe even something revolutionary, a chiropractor on staff to do some of the supportive work, in that community of 8,000, I would suggest to you that physicians would be able to cover for one another more often; nurse practitioners would be able to take responsibility for some of the work that now falls on family physicians; physicians might even get a weekend off once in a while; they might even be able to go home at night four nights a week, knowing that they're not going to be called in because someone is covering that week. They might be able to go away, say, to Toronto or to Winnipeg for further professional education, knowing that someone is going to cover for them for two weeks.

It's an idea where health care starts to make sense on a community level. But, alas, do you know what's happened in this province? The government has frozen the budgets and frozen the number of community health centres in the province for the last seven years. There's been no expansion in the community health centres across this province. There's a waiting list that doesn't run in twos or threes; there's a waiting list of several dozen communities who have put in a request for a community health centre and have been told by this government, "We're not expanding the community health centre network. We're not interested in making health care work on a community basis. We're not interested in a scenario where physicians would be working together, covering for one another. We're not interested in a strategy where nurse practitioners would be part of the program and would be helping to lighten the load on family physicians. We're not interested in any of that." They're saying to the communities, "You're on your own."

There are a number of things that could be done to make it easier to recruit physicians, make it easier for communities to retain their family physicians, make better use of nurse practitioners, and have a more inclusive, holistic health care system. Think of it, Speaker. Think of the money and the overhead a community would save if it didn't have to deal with the infrastructure of three independent physician clinics and instead there was one community health centre.

You wouldn't need three separate radiation devices. You wouldn't need three separate small labs. You wouldn't need three separate receptionist intakes. You wouldn't need a lot of this duplication of infrastructure, and it would actually start to make sense on a community level because physicians could cover for one another. Physicians could actually look forward to a quality of

life. They might be able to take a two-week vacation in the summer. They might have a weekend off without being called in to work, because another physician would be covering for them.

These are practical, workable things that could be done, that should be done in Ontario. But alas, what's been the government's response? "Don't go there"; not interested in expanding community health centres; continues to say no to the dozens upon dozens upon dozens of communities that have come forward and said, "We need a community health centre. We want to incorporate nurse practitioners within the practice. We want to broaden the community health centre, avoid the duplication, so our physicians will not have such a load, our physicians will be able to take time off for further professional education, will be able to spend time with their families etc." The government's response has been no.

I'm glad this issue was brought forward today. I'd be pleased to offer government members more illustrations, but alas, I don't think in general the government has been listening. That's why it's a private member's resolution.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): I certainly would share my time with the member for Northumberland. I know he was on his feet and looking forward to speaking to this resolution so I will only take a couple of minutes.

This resolution, like many others, is a direct budgetary issue. And when we hear about the budget and how money should be spent, we hear from Howard Hampton, the leader of the NDP, who supports alternative budgets like the ones which come out from the Centre for Social Justice. The CAW puts out its own alternative budget. You support that type of budget and certainly—

Mr Hampton: It's all part of democracy.

Mr Mazzilli: And it is. It is and I respect your leadership for being behind those alternative budgets.

But what is still a secret today is, what would a Dalton McGuinty Liberal budget look like? We hear every day, in this Legislature and outside of the Legislature, "You've not spent enough on this. You've not spent enough on that." What is the proper amount? I'm waiting to hear that. The people of Ontario are waiting to hear that. But you know what? The Ontario Liberals, under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, will not make those very basic decisions. I suspect the people of Ontario will want to hear some of those decisions.

Do you know what they're opposing now? A \$300-million tax credit for hard-working parents. It's OK for the rich to capital-cost their Mercedes with their businesses—that's OK—but for a hard-working family who has children and chooses to send them to a religious school to take a 10% tax credit, that's not OK with Dalton McGuinty. Those people should pay everything in taxes. They should pay their school taxes, they should pay their education and not get anything back for it.

Our government, under the leadership of Mike Harris, will continue to fight for hard-working families. I turn it over the member for Northumberland.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'd like to advance an important part of a solution that would actually help go a long way to further the cost of bringing doctors into Ontario.

When the Minister of Health attended the Windsor area to open the long-awaited Windsor Cancer Clinic, we brought into the Caboto Club for some meetings in advance of that. We sat him down to meet our medical school community, those who've been advancing for some time the notion of opening a medical school as a satellite of the University of Western Ontario in London. The minister's still hedging on when that's going to forward. We hope to hear something soon.

Following that meeting, we moved into the library in the basement of the Caboto Club. Just then the power went out. We continued in that hour to meet, I thought rather poetically, with the Minister of Health in dark. Thankfully, Dr Heimann was there with a huge flashlight. Why he would carry this around I don't know, but he turned the flashlight upside down, set it in the centre of the coffee table and we proceeded to have the balance of the hour meeting in the dark lit only by the flashlight.

1130

But what was impressive is that despite sitting in the dark with the Minister of Health, Dr Mark Gallow came to meet Tony Clement. A resident of Windsor, a member of the south Windsor community, a family doctor, someone who grew up in Windsor, was trained outside of Ontario as a medical doctor and continues to practise today as a family doctor in Michigan, he said to the Minister of Health, "I want to work in Ontario. I want to work as a family doctor in Windsor." Here are just some of the many letters that Dr Gallow has on file. Letters to the college of physicians, letters to the Minister of Health, letters to our local recruitment team: "How can I practise in Windsor?" Everyone is shutting the door on Dr Mark Gallow, a very knowledgeable individual who has practised for a number of years and who goes home every night to south Windsor and talks to his neighbours and friends about how they can't find a family doctor while he is more than happy to come back to work in Ontario.

These are the issues we brought forward to the Minister of Health. We said to the minister, "It's like giving them the sleeves out of your vest to make changes in the regulations. By the ministry's own account, we have some 450 people who have trained outside of Ontario at schools that can be recognized immediately to have standards equal to or better than ours in Ontario, who could be here tomorrow practising in Ontario—a vital part of a solution."

I marvel to hear the leader of the third party today stand and talk about underserved communities. In 1993, the NDP government cut the number of spots at our medical schools, under some cost containment measure which was at best short-sighted because it only compounded the problem that demographics cause us today, along with a whole list of other issues.

In that hour with the Minister of Health we brought to him cardiologists, Dr Chette and Dr Glanz, and sat with the Minister of Health and said, "We need to perform angioplasty in Windsor. We can't put these patients in Windsor, where we have a much higher level of heart disease and requirement for angioplasty, sitting in expensive cardiac care beds in Windsor hospitals on waiting lists for London. We need to move them quickly, to do angioplasty service right in Windsor." Not only does it service our patients better and actually help people who have heart disease live—because we have a higher mortality rate for heart disease in our area than in any other part of Ontario, and that means people die because they don't get service quick enough—but it also allows us to go and search for cardiologists and bring them to Windsor. They won't come to Windsor if they don't have the tools to practise their craft. What they need is access to the cath lab. They need access to the diagnostic equipment for heart patients. They need to be able to do procedures that they just stepped out of school learning to do. We need cardiologists in Windsor. We need to provide the field for them to practise as cardiologists.

Two months before that we met with the Ministry of Health. We gave them a nine-point plan of what they could do to provide services to lay the groundwork to bring physicians to our community, the most dire of southern urban centres in shortages of physicians. We itemized ways to increase funding for nurse practitioners so they could practise with family doctors. We asked that they expand community health centres in Windsor so that people could take advantage of that.

We asked them to do a review of these community clinics, the clinics that don't carry files on patients. We have patients, like cancer patients, who cannot fill pain prescriptions for cancer treatment because they don't have a family doctor. When they go to the local clinic, the local clinic will not give them medication on a prescription because they don't keep files on patients. We need to find a way to encourage all of those clinics to act in a much broader fashion to assist our patients who have no family doctor.

We brought in both CEOs of our hospitals to meet with the Minister of Health, Frank Bagatto and Dr Marty Girash, to talk about hospital operating budgets. What does this have to do with families and specialist physicians? Everything, because we don't have enough operating room time to allow our specialists to work in our area. We found an orthopaedic surgeon who came to Windsor and wanted to practise and could not fit into our operating rooms to actually do hip surgery and knee surgery because we can't operate our operating rooms with enough time because of the funding that our hospitals have.

When we've finished this restructuring and all the renos around our remaining two hospitals, from four, we still will not have enough operating room time for the current number of surgeons that we have in our Windsor area, let alone trying to attract the 50-some-odd special-

ists who have already been identified by a number of sources as being short in our community.

We asked this minister specifically to address, in southern urban communities, these kinds of solutions that he could implement tomorrow and not to wait the four to seven years before we see new people come out as doctors, out of schools and new medical schools. Increasing spaces is critical. We have solutions that can be implemented immediately: number one, starting with the streamlining of foreign-trained physicians. I marvel to have heard it in the budget. I marvel to have heard about it in a throne speech. I marvel to hear too that the College of Physicians hasn't had a phone call yet to tell them to advance their plan in any kind of meaningful way to get these people practising in Ontario.

I'm anxious to see the response from this House to my colleague Sean Conway's resolution that deals with the shortages in rural Ontario. Let me say that it's a sad day when a member from Windsor West fills out an application form that says "northern rural underserved designation program" for the city of Windsor, and yet that's what we did in 1997. After receiving that designation in 1997, we are shorter of doctors today than we were then. I look forward to the current government fulfilling our needs, which they can do in very short order with the kinds of solutions we have advanced for some time.

Mr Galt: I'm pleased to rise to speak on Mr Conway's resolution. I have a lot of empathy for his concerns. I really see it as equal access for all Ontarians to proper medical services. This is important to me in many respects, not only the medical aspect but also for small-town and rural Ontario as it relates to economic development. Serving on the Premier's Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal, one of the barriers we have in Ontario to economic renewal and development in rural Ontario is the lack of physicians and sometimes the lack of medical services in small-town Ontario.

I'd like for a moment to refer to some of the things that have been happening in my riding. Some of the communities have taken it into their own hands to ensure proper medical services are there. I would like to compliment the Campbellford hospital board for building a medical clinic. That was opened a year or so ago, and since then several physicians have come into their community. Quinte West raised funds and worked for a long time to get a new hospital in that community, the Trenton Memorial Hospital. They were promised a new hospital first by the Liberal government; they were then promised a new hospital by the NDP government; it didn't happen until our government came in and went through the HSRC and we ended up with a new hospital in Quinte West.

Interjection.

Mr Galt: The member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington I'm sure is very pleased to know there's a hospital being developed in her riding, up in Bancroft, as part of the Quinte Healthcare Corp. That wouldn't have happened had it not been for our government working with the Health Services Restructuring

Commission. I would think she'd want to compliment our government for obtaining that facility for her.

Also, compliments are very much in order for communities in west Northumberland, like Cobourg, Port Hope, Bewdley, Grafton, Colborne and Castleton, not to mention the townships of Hope and Hamilton, that worked so hard to raise funds for a new hospital, one I was pleased to announce just the day before the last election back in 1999. They've raised over \$11 million for that new facility. We broke the ground last spring and construction will be rolling very shortly.

A lot of things have happened in Ontario to help improve medicine. This problem is universal. It's across Canada and the US. It isn't just here in Ontario. We've brought in things like tuition payment for physicians who will go to rural Ontario and stay there for at least four years. We've increased spending this year by some \$1.2 billion, which amounts to more than several other ministries put together. In the next few years we will be expanding for physicians—120 positions, not to mention the 25 in the north and the 40 that already came in.

One of the problems we've had is that you will remember Minister of Health Ruth Grier coming in and capping what physicians could make and also cutting positions in medical schools. We're now finding the results of those cuts.

There's a tremendous number of things our government has been doing, making major steps to improve health services in rural and northern Ontario. The changes that were made pre-1995 are hurting today, hurting drastically. Are more changes needed? Yes, and I for one will be supporting Mr Conway's resolution.

1140

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I appreciate having the opportunity to speak on the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke's private member's resolution today. As mentioned by the member for Windsor West, it is a very important resolution.

C'est le temps propice de passer le message au gouvernement Harris et de lui faire comprendre qu'il y a une pénurie de médecins en Ontario et surtout dans les régions rurales.

Depuis l'élection de ce gouvernement en 1995 et aussi en 1999, nous nous apercevons que de plus en plus de nos médecins quittent l'Ontario pour pratiquer la médecine aux États-Unis et même en Europe. Aujourd'hui, ce gouvernement est conscient qu'il y a un manque de médecins dans 109 de nos communautés, et surtout dans le secteur rural, que ce soit dans les régions de Hearst, Kapuskasing, Pembroke, Wawa et même Maxville, d'où vient une de nos pages d'aujourd'hui, Rhianon.

Dans la circonscription de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, aucun transport en commun n'existe. Je peux vous dire, monsieur le Président, que dans la région de Bourget, tout récemment les bureaux de médecins ont dû fermer leurs portes, en raison du manque de médecins. À Rockland même, la clinique du D^r Cournoyer a fermé ses portes il y a quelques années, et le D^r Cournoyer et

quelques-uns de ses collègues sont maintenant dans la région de la Louisiane aux États-Unis.

À Alexandria, nous avons de grandes difficultés à garder nos médecins. Nos résidents et résidentes doivent se rendre soit à Cornwall, soit à Hawkesbury, et même à Ottawa. Encore une fois, aucun transport en commun n'existe. Mais il me semble que ce gouvernement, même si récemment ils ont présenté un rapport sur le développement du secteur rural, a complètement manqué d'identifier que nous connaissons une pénurie de médecins dans nos régions rurales.

À Cornwall récemment, le Centre de santé communautaire de l'Estrie m'a fait parvenir une lettre m'informant de leur situation alarmante. Le directeur de ce centre, M. Beaulieu, m'a informé que les médecins quittent la région de Cornwall pour se rendre à l'autre côté du fleuve Saint-Laurent, qui est les États-Unis. L'hôpital Montfort a de la difficulté à recruter de nouveaux médecins et même à garder ceux que nous avons en place. C'est dû à l'incertitude de ce gouvernement, qui parle toujours de fermer cet hôpital. Nous connaissons tous que l'étude qui a été entreprise en 1996 était complètement fautive. Il faut dire que, dû à la pression de membres de ce gouvernement, nous avons inclus l'hôpital Montfort à l'intérieur de cette étude, et nous avons identifié que seulement 18 % de francophones provenaient de cette région : encore là une lacune—je ne dirai pas un mensonge—dû au fait que les gens n'ont pas eu la chance de faire une étude approfondie. Mais il y a bel et bien 68 % de francophones dans cette région. Mais c'est dans ces études-là que nous pouvons voir que le gouvernement ne comprend pas la situation du secteur rural.

Tout récemment, le 13 février 2001, l'équipe McGuinty avait reconnu qu'il y avait bel et bien un manque de médecins dans 109 de nos communautés. On a même suggéré de regarder la possibilité de créer un campus en médecine dans la région du nord, mais le gouvernement s'est réveillé, et le 17 mai dernier, nous avons lancé une annonce disant que nous allions créer un centre de médecine dans la région du nord, soit dans la région de Sudbury et de Thunder Bay. Est-ce qu'il faut toujours renouveler la mémoire à ce gouvernement pour leur dire que de temps à autre il faut concentrer nos études à l'extérieur des grands centres et non seulement dans la région de Toronto ?

Nous connaissons très bien les objectifs de ce gouvernement : c'est de privatiser, privatiser, privatiser de plus en plus nos services publics. Mais lorsqu'il vient le temps de privatiser les services de santé, comme nous essayons de le faire dans le domaine de l'éducation, nous oublions toujours de garantir aux francophones et aussi aux citoyens et citoyennes de l'Ontario qu'un service sera toujours en place. Je regarde les situations des cliniques de radiologie. J'ai mentionné dans cette Chambre il n'y a pas tellement longtemps qu'une compagnie de l'Alberta qui avait fait l'achat de 140 cliniques de radiologie en Ontario était en grande difficulté. La bourse démontrait récemment que l'apport

ne vaut que 12 sous chacune. Cette compagnie de l'Alberta qui a fait l'achat de la majorité de nos cliniques—le gouvernement ne pourra regarder à s'assurer qu'il pourra y avoir une continuité dans le secteur rural. Tout récemment, nous avons annoncé que dans ma région seulement, la région de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, nous allions procéder à la fermeture d'au moins quatre de ces cliniques. À travers l'Ontario, plusieurs de ces cliniques font face à l'incertitude.

Toujours dans cette Chambre ici à l'Assemblée législative, nous osons porter le blâme sur le gouvernement fédéral. J'ai mentionné hier soir que le gouvernement provincial devrait faire attention, le gouvernement Harris, puisque cette année le gouvernement fédéral va remettre à la province de l'Ontario au-delà de 5,7 \$ milliards pour le domaine de la santé, et tout récemment nous avons annoncé que le gouvernement fédéral donnerait à la province de l'Ontario plus de 400 \$ millions pour l'achat d'équipement dans nos hôpitaux. Les 5,7 \$ milliards de transfert du fédéral au provincial représentent plus de 2 \$ milliards de plus de ce que vous avez obtenu en 1998-99 : 2 milliards de dollars de plus. Est-ce que c'est la raison pour laquelle aujourd'hui vous vous êtes tus sur ce point que le gouvernement fédéral n'arrive pas en aide ?

Je crois que le gouvernement doit se pencher davantage et regarder toutes les possibilités. Je regarde aussi dans le domaine des ambulances. Le gouvernement a omis encore de regarder au secteur rural.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to speak on this resolution from the member from Pembroke. I would say that obviously we're focusing on physician supply and distribution in Ontario.

I want to speak for a moment on one of the Rae government initiatives in terms of the northern medical school. I want to thank Dr George and other members of the Expert Panel on Health Professional Human Resources for their dedication in authoring their report, *Shaping Ontario's Physician Workforce*. I appreciate the challenges faced by the panel in considering the very complex issues of physician human resources. The expert panel is to be commended for producing a thoughtful report that maps out a comprehensive strategy to ensure we have the right number and mix of physician resources to meet future health needs.

Like the expert panel, this government is committed to ensuring that physician services are available to residents across Ontario. On May 17, in response to recommendations of the expert panel, we gave clear evidence of our commitment. In a landmark announcement, our government unveiled our plan to create a northern medical school, the first new medical school in Ontario in more than 30 years. A made-in-northern-Ontario medical school exemplifies our government's commitment to deliver high-quality health care to all residents of Ontario, regardless of where they live.

We expect that the new medical school will begin admitting students in the year 2004. From an initial group

of 55 undergraduates, 20 will move to Thunder Bay beginning in the year 2006 to complete two years of clinical training, while the remaining 35 will stay in Sudbury for clinical training. Both Sudbury and Thunder Bay will offer permanent post-graduate specialty positions, with Laurentian University providing most of the research capabilities. Medical students of this new school will develop their skills and experience while having the opportunity to work in northern communities. This will help the north keep their best and brightest at home.

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This was a key point raised by the expert panel. They examined research that clearly demonstrated that where doctors train influences where doctors practise. Not only will medical students gain skills and experience in these locations, but they will also form professional and personal relationships during the six to 10 years of training in the north.

As well, e-learning or computer-mediated communication programs will be developed to offer distance learning to students through the Internet while providing an interactive educational experience.

This plan has already generated lots of excitement in the north. The city of Sudbury has hosted a northern and rural medical school symposium. Experts from around the world and the country, as well as members of northern communities, presented issues related to establishing and operating northern and rural medical schools.

Jean Watters, president of Laurentian University, said this was "a historic occasion for health care in northern Ontario," and that her university "is honoured to be in partnership with Lakehead University in this important initiative to improve the supply and distribution of doctors in the north."

I couldn't agree more. Our medical schools will both train doctors in the north and encourage them to practise there. I want to express my congratulations to Minister Clement and to the communities of Sudbury and Thunder Bay for creating this remarkable opportunity.

In closing, I want to focus that in my own riding I've been a part of and working with a doctors' task force in the city of Barrie through Royal Victoria Hospital and other interested parties. We have certainly been working very hard to deal with the situation within my riding. Mine is a very, very growth-oriented riding with a lot of demands on health services, for sure.

I want to say that this government has taken many efforts to make sure there is a supply of physicians throughout the province in terms of a number of measures in rural areas and non-urban centres, and also has taken innovative approaches in terms of medical service. But I'd like to hear from the other parties opposite, because this basically is a physician supply and distribution issue. What I'd like to hear from them is whether they'd be in favour of a fair geographic distribution of family physicians across the province in terms of whether the other parties would mandate and require the physicians to locate, to be able to get the licence and their OHIP number, to make sure we have a fair

distribution. I'd like to hear from the other parties what they think about that, because I think they're dodging the issue.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): As a rural MPP, I also am fully aware of the problems with respect to recruitment and retention of physicians. There are a number of additional government initiatives I would like to describe this morning.

As we know, in July 1999 the Ministry of Health appointed Dr Robert McKendry as a fact-finding commissioner. This was a joint initiative with the Ontario Medical Association. When the report was released, we immediately committed \$11 million to implement the short-term recommendations and, secondly, to establish the expert panel which is chaired by Dr Peter George. I know mention was made of that by the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, who gave a very good description of what's going on in northern Ontario with respect to the northern medical school. This panel provided advice on strategies to ensure a number of things: an adequate supply of doctors and more effective distribution, and changes to the medical education system to ensure an appropriate mix of doctors in this province. From this panel, we will expand undergraduate and post-graduate enrolment. We will increase post-graduate training positions. This is the first of a series of government initiatives in response to the expert panel report.

In response to Dr Robert McKendry's original report, we have implemented a number of initiatives to help small rural and northern communities recruit and retain physicians. This is supported by an annual commitment of \$11 million. We are funding additional post-graduate training in Ontario to recruit back Canadian medical school graduates. We've expanded the international medical graduate program by 50%. We've doubled the number of community development officers. We've expanded two northern family medicine residency training programs. We've expanded the ministry's re-entry training return-of-service program by 15, from 25 to now 40 physicians, and we have created the tuition grant program and location incentive funds.

In July of last year the ministry announced \$4 million for free tuition, again to ensure that new doctors are willing to return to underserved areas. In July 2000 we announced new maternity benefits; female physicians are eligible to receive 50% of their average weekly earnings for the past year.

Our government has implemented a number of other initiatives, really too many to cover in the time allotted. I'll give a few examples that many of us are aware of: the \$70-an-hour sessional fee for those willing to work nights, weekends and holidays in our emergency department; the community-sponsored contract program, again directed toward northern communities; there is an Internet physician job registry, again in agreement with the Ontario Medical Association, to help identify and to help communities to recruit physicians; I want to remind those present of the locum program to assist northern and rural communities that are experiencing shortages of physician

services; and of course the underserved area designation, where communities that are experiencing a severe shortage get that kind of assistance. I know in my area, both Norfolk county and much of Haldimand have been identified. Again, unfortunately, when physicians are present we still have trouble having physicians report to hospitals.

Mr Conway: I want to thank colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their helpful and constructive observations with respect to this issue. I want to repeat, my concern as the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is this critical situation of doctor shortages, family practitioner shortages, in rural small-town Ontario.

Let me repeat that today in Ontario nearly 20% of our population lives in rural small-town Ontario and less than 10% of family practitioners work in small-town rural Ontario. So that problem is becoming more and more serious.

Yes, there have been initiatives undertaken by the current government, by the Rae government, by the Peterson government and by the Davis government. I might remind people that the nurse practitioner initiative began decades ago, I believe under the Davis administration. But as the Pembroke Observer editorialized last week in an editorial on May 22, 2001, "Doctors a Scarce Commodity Here in the Upper Ottawa Valley." In a very balanced and thoughtful way, the editorial in the Pembroke Observer makes the point that more and more of these communities—in my area it's Cobden, it's Beachburg, it's Westmeath, it's La Passe, Douglas, areas like that, Killaloe, Griffith, all kinds of small communities—there either is an older family practitioner retiring or simply no one there to meet the family needs of hundreds and thousands of people.

The member from Kenora is right that it's not just about doctors; we have to provide good primary care and I strongly support an expansion of the community health centres. Let me say again, for those good people in the Cobden-Beachburg area, the Whitewater-Bromley Community Health Centre group is a very powerful, positive group that has worked to find a solution, and for them it is an expansion of the community health centre concept. We have the need; we have the people. We need a positive government response in these areas.

The Deputy Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on this motion.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT WORKERS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with private members' notice of motion number 4, moved by Mr Miller. Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

DOCTORS' SERVICES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with private members' notice of motion number 5, standing in the name of Mr Conway.

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

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1200 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FALUN GONG

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): This past Saturday, I had the pleasure of joining over 50 practitioners of Falun Gong at Allan Gardens in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale. Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is a peaceful, healthy and popular meditation exercise of body, mind and spirit which has benefited thousands of Canadians and millions worldwide.

The fundamental values of Falun Gong—truth, compassion and forbearance—are really core values shared by most every citizen of our province. Tragically, the world has witnessed the often horrific persecution and intimidation of practitioners of Falun Gong in China simply for the espousal of their core values. It is, therefore, most disturbing that I report to this House that this past winter a rally was organized in Toronto to condemn Canadian Falun Gong practitioners, featuring the Chinese Consul General as the primary speaker.

Lawyer Rocco Galati reports there have been threatening phone calls from the Chinese Consulate officers to intimidate Canadian Falun Gong practitioners since July 1999. I understand this information has been brought to the attention of the Attorney General.

I am calling on all members of provincial Parliament, and in particular the Premier and the Minister of Citizenship, to speak out and protect Ontarians exercising their fundamental right of freedom of belief and freedom of assembly and association.

Today, I'm joined in the members' gallery by two of the Falun Gong representatives from my riding. I encourage all members to give them a warm welcome.

EDUCATION

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): During Reading Week, I had the opportunity to meet with two classes in the Notre Dame Elementary School in Cobourg; during constituency week, I spent an hour and a half in the technical department of East Northumberland Secondary School; and this Friday I'll be spending more than an hour with a grade 10 class at the Campbellford Secondary School.

A year ago, we were very fortunate to have the Minister of Education spend approximately two hours in an elementary school in my riding of Northumberland. Since my election in 1995, either myself, my staff or my wife have attended all secondary school graduations in my riding. I do this because I enjoy it, because it's educational for me and because I have been invited by the school. I can assure you that I did not do it because of the Liberal education critic's letter, nor do I have any intention of reporting to him any of my activities connected with education.

I congratulate the Liberals on finally getting out to visit schools, something the PC members of this House have been doing all along.

With all due respect, I would encourage the Liberal education critic to leave partisan politics out of education. I would suggest that he should be providing sound alternatives for our government's education policies. There is absolutely no room in our government for partisan politics in the classroom.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT LEGISLATION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): For over a year now, headlines in provincial newspapers have been reading as follows: "Dirty Water, Rural Politics"; "E Coli Scare Renews Calls for Ontario to Regulate Manure"; "Hog Factory Abandons Quebec ... Take Advantage of Ontario's Less Stringent Manure Disposal Regulations"; "Experts Try to Calm Neighbours' Fear of Factory Hog Farms"; "Neighbours Fear 6,000-Pig Farm"; "Hogs Aren't the Only Problem"; "Farmers Get a Bad Rap."

Farmers are truly getting a bad rap in this province. I lay the direct responsibility for this on the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for allowing the media to portray agriculture as the sole reason for the contamination of water in this province.

Minister of Agriculture, you must speak up. This can't be further from the truth in saying that all this blame lies with agriculture. I've got a municipality in my own riding, the village of Straffordville. Do you know why their water system is polluted? Because of faulty septic tank systems. You can't blame that on the farmers of this province.

This government and this Ministry of Agriculture have totally mishandled this issue of dealing with nutrient management. Ontario farmers, residents and municipalities are demanding clear, fair legislation and regulations. We need to level the playing field in this province, not just the minimum that municipalities may exceed. It's incumbent on the minister to stand up and guarantee to every Ontario citizen that we will see province-wide legislation.

Minister, your action is causing serious division in rural Ontario. It's stifling investment in this province. When will we see this legislation?

CHARLESTOWN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): It's my pleasure to stand today and publicly acknowledge the 30th anniversary of Charlestown Residential School located in my riding of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey. Thirty years ago, co-founders Wayne and Janet Dunster had a vision for how they could improve the lives of Ontario's youth. Their commitment, determination and perseverance led to Charlestown Residential School.

Charlestown Residential School houses hard-to-serve adolescents with developmental and other handicaps. Most of the residents at Charlestown are young teenagers placed there by children's aid societies from across Ontario. Through many governments and many different approaches in philosophy on how troubled youth can best be served, Charlestown has always been there, doing their job and doing it well.

Wayne and Janet are hands-on operators who take their responsibilities to the children of Charlestown very seriously. Young people who have spent time at Charlestown over the years still come back and update Wayne on what they are doing and how important their time at Charlestown was to their development.

As the local provincial member of Parliament, I've had the pleasure of working with Wayne and Janet Dunster over the years, and Charlestown Residential School couldn't have had more committed or determined advocates. It's my pleasure to congratulate Wayne and Janet on their commitment to Charlestown and wish them many more years of service to Ontario's youth.

SEWAGE AND WATER TREATMENT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Many municipalities in my Thunder Bay-Superior North riding are growing increasingly frustrated with the government's foot-dragging related to funding for upgrades to water treatment systems in their communities.

As you know, in the aftermath of Walkerton, the province is requiring all municipalities to meet new standards related to water treatment. While every municipality in my riding is working to meet those standards, it is nothing less than stunning that the provincial funding program set up to help those communities get on with the job has not yet approved any of the capital projects that were applied for well over six months ago. In the case of Nipigon, minor turbidity problems, which have forced the community to recently issue a boil-water advisory, could have been avoided had the province approved the funding application which has been gathering dust in some ministry office since last November. These delays are unacceptable.

Having said that, the problems my municipalities face go even deeper than that. While I believe that the province should provide full funding for these upgrades, it appears that the government will only provide a percentage of the costs. In the case of Terrace Bay, which

the ministry has determined is eligible for only 20% of the total cost, they may be forced to pay for their major upgrades by imposing huge increases to the residential property tax rates unless the government steps in.

Minister, I have two requests of you. First, please stop the foot-dragging and approve the applications you have received so that situations like Nipigon can be avoided in the future. But further to that, you must re-evaluate the level of funding support you will provide. Nobody will argue that clean drinking water is absolutely vital for every community, but surely your aim cannot be to bankrupt a municipality to achieve that goal.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I don't agree with Ian Urquhart, who wrote in the Star that there was no smoking gun at the Walkerton inquiry. The environment ministry staff wrote at least eight memos warning that the Conservative government's drastic budget cuts could put health or environmental protection at risk, according to evidence submitted this week. Testimony by Linda Stevens, the deputy minister at the time of the cuts, indicated that former environment ministers Brenda Elliott and Norm Sterling were aware of those worries. Stevens admitted that senior Conservative politicians knew their budget policies raised environmental risks almost from the start of the cuts in 1995.

Stevens said ministers Elliott and Sterling had seen some of the documents and had been at meetings where the proposals contained within were reviewed.

The cuts slashed the ministry's budget by almost half, led to the elimination of hundreds of jobs and forced the ministry to privatize such important functions as the testing of municipal drinking water, but the official government line was that the cutbacks would not compromise the environment. "These reforms will remove barriers that do not protect the environment and get in the way of job-creating economic activity and growth," the ministry's 1996 business plan said.

How can we trust any minister in this government ever again when they assure us their cuts will not hurt our health and safety? Never again can we trust them.

1340

DEER PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to pay tribute to a group of students from Deer Park Public School in the town of Georgina in my riding of York North. The students recently won a special award for their video on anti-racism and multiculturalism that they produced, directed, videotaped and edited. Steven Simon, teacher of the grade 5 class, travelled with the class to the awards ceremony in Mississauga to collect their award from Panasonic Canada.

Panasonic, through its Kids Witness News program, provides video cameras, tech support, editing suite, free shirts for the kids and a free school bus for a field trip.

Mr Simon is very enthusiastic in his praise of Panasonic as a sponsor of this type of experience for the students. Most children would not come in contact with or have access to this type of equipment at least until high school. Deer Park is the only school in York region, of just 15 in Canada, that is part of the Kids Witness News program. This is Panasonic's 10th year of sponsorship. Congratulations to Deer Park Public School and the students, and to Mr Simon and his grade 5 class.

AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): A new report on Toronto's ambulance service tells us that in almost one third of emergency calls, city ambulances took more than nine minutes to respond. These weren't routine calls; these were emergency calls in life-threatening situations where a delay of a few minutes can cost a life.

The report tells us that response times are much worse now than they were in 1997. Despite all the government claims to have done to fix the ambulance problem in the city of Toronto "once and for all," the so-called fixes have only made the situation worse.

Now the government wants to end critical care bypass, which was worse in March than it has ever been before. They're not going to allow hospitals to redirect their patients. But the problem of emergency room backlogs will just get worse under this new plan.

The Toronto report says that response times are slower because ambulances are waiting in parking lots with their patients, and that's because there is no room for the patients in the hospitals. The problem has always been, and still is, the lack of beds in hospitals. Since 10,745 hours of paramedic service were lost to unloading delays at a cost of \$1.8 million, why doesn't the government bite the bullet and put those lost dollars into hospital beds so the real problem can be addressed?

This is not just a Toronto problem. In 1999, 28 of 49 regions across the province were taking more than 15 minutes, on average, to respond to emergency calls. The standard for response times in rural areas is 15 minutes. That's the outer limit of acceptable standards and more than half the regions in the province aren't even meeting that standard.

The government is negotiating standards and cost-sharing agreements with the municipalities. They'd better be sure we have enough ambulances to better those disastrous response times.

PETERBOROUGH FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): The Peterborough Festival of Lights has recently been selected as the top cultural event in Ontario in the Attractions Canada Awards 2001. They were presented with a trophy at an awards ceremony in Halifax earlier this month.

The Peterborough summer festival of lights offers free open-air musical concerts followed by an illuminated

boat show and fireworks at Del Crary Park in downtown Peterborough every Wednesday and Saturday evening throughout the summer.

This season the festival entertainment lineup provides an attraction for the whole family with a variety of entertainers such as Lighthouse, Prairie Oyster, Jesse Cook, Canadian tribute to Glenn Miller, and Gordon Lightfoot, just to name a few. The festival is funded entirely by local sponsors and there is no admission charge to the public.

Minister, as the provincial representative for Peterborough, I would like to first congratulate Fred Anderson, chair of the festival, and his committee for their hard work and dedication and the recognition they so well deserve. Second, I would like to invite all members of this House to attend this festival this summer.

My colleague from Durham and I listen to it each Saturday night, both of us having cottages on the very famous Otonabee River, part of the Trent-Severn.

I invite everybody to come. It's a great evening. The Chair of Management Board has also been there and was entirely thrilled with what he saw. It's a great festival. Please come and join us.

HÔPITAL MONTFORT

MONTFORT HOSPITAL

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Je veux aujourd'hui féliciter publiquement l'administration de l'hôpital Montfort, qui est le seul hôpital de la région d'Ottawa à avoir reçu la prime de performance du gouvernement ontarien reconnaissant la qualité des services et l'efficacité de son administration, compte tenu de son sous-financement chronique de l'hôpital.

Yes, I want to take this opportunity today to publicly congratulate the administration of the Montfort Hospital in my riding of Ottawa-Vanier. Do you realize this is the only hospital in the Ottawa region that received a performance bonus offered by the Ministry of Health to 90 hospitals throughout the province for the quality of their services and the efficiency of their administration?

Ceci démontre pour une deuxième fois en moins de deux ans que l'administration de l'hôpital Montfort est une des meilleures en Ontario. Malgré tous ces déboires, l'hôpital Montfort continue d'être un excellent exemple de services médicaux exceptionnels et d'administration budgétaire efficace.

The staff and administration of Montfort Hospital continue to work very hard to allow this hospital to reach its full potential. I do hope the Harris government recognizes the importance of this institution to the community it serves so exceptionally.

Encore une fois, félicitations aux administrateurs de l'hôpital Montfort. Merci.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I stand on a point of order to correct the record on a question I asked yesterday. I ask for your indulgence, as I have to refer to the first part of my question, refer briefly to the Solicitor General's answer, refer to a letter from the chief coroner and then correct the record.

In my first question to the Solicitor General, in part I said that "your government refused to honour an agreement reached between the chief coroner, who negotiated on your behalf, and the Ontario Association of Pathologists," and the Solicitor General said there was no agreement.

Mr Speaker, before I correct my comments, I refer to a May 18 letter that went out to all the pathologists in Ontario from James G. Young, the chief coroner for the province of Ontario. It said in one paragraph:

"The Ontario Pathologists Association met on several occasions with representatives from the Ministry of the Solicitor General and myself, and together we agreed on a proposal.... This proposal was presented vigorously to the government on your behalf. The authority to approve any increase rests with Management Board and ultimately, cabinet."

I'd like the record to reflect that in my question when I said that "your government refused to honour an agreement reached between the chief coroner," I should have also said, "between the chief coroner and representatives from the Solicitor General." Thank you, Speaker.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin, we have with us today in the members' gallery east a former member, Mr Ron Johnson, the member for Brantford and a member of the 36th Parliament.

We also have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a trade delegation from the People's Republic of China. Please join us in welcoming our special guests.

1350

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Davenport (Mr Ruprecht) has provided me with written notice of a point of privilege, as required by standing order 21(c). I would like to thank the member for giving me sufficient time to carefully review this matter.

I wish to advise that I will be deciding on this matter without further hearing directly from the member at this time, as standing order 21(d) permits me to do.

The member indicated in his notice that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities made an important announcement outside the House about a training course for nurses and pharmacists. He requested that I instruct the minister to make the appropriate statement inside the

House as soon as possible so that he can better represent his constituents.

In response, the House will know that there are many precedents to the effect that a Speaker cannot compel a minister to make a ministerial statement inside the House. In addition, the matter raised by the member relates to activities outside the chamber and is unconnected with the member's parliamentary duties.

For this reason, I find that a prima facie case of privilege has not been made out. But I want to thank the member for his concern.

VISITORS

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have in the members' gallery a very special guest, a great British Colombian, who brings good news of a Liberal government here in Canada, a pioneer in the area of sports and entertainment, whose one fault is that he is my brother, Alan Bryant.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Please join with me in welcoming the students, the staff and the volunteers of the Terry Fox public school in Cobourg. They're in the public gallery.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Mr Speaker, I hope that members might join me in welcoming the two Marilyns to the members gallery west: my stepmother, Marilyn Smitherman, who is celebrating her birthday today, and her great friend Marilyn Balan.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TECHNOLOGY FOR CLASSROOMS
TAX CREDIT STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN VUE DE CRÉER UN CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT
FAVORISANT L'EMPLOI
DE LA TECHNOLOGIE
DANS LES SALLES DE CLASSE

Mr Hastings moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Corporations Tax Act, the Education Act and the Income Tax Act / Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'imposition des corporations, la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu.

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

The member for a short statement.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): This bill would amend the Corporations Tax Act and the Income Tax Act to establish a tax credit for a taxpayer who donates eligible computer property—you're not listening—to a school board if the board accepts the donation. The tax credit would be in the amount of the taxpayer's

undepreciated capital cost of the computer property immediately before the donation. The eligible computer property must have been acquired new by the taxpayer no earlier than three years prior to the taxation year in which the donation is made.

Regulations would be made under the act to limit the type of computer property eligible for the tax credit and to provide rules for determining the amount that a partner may claim on a donation by the partnership.

The bill would also amend the Education Act to provide that a school board that accepts a donation of eligible computer property is required, to the extent reasonably possible, to use the property in the classroom for the purposes of instruction of pupils in the board's schools and specifically in any schools of the board that the donor may specify in connection with this donation.

IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR ROAD USERS ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION
DES SERVICES À LA CLIENTÈLE
OFFERTS AUX USAGERS DE LA ROUTE

Mr Clark moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to permit the Minister of Transportation to delegate to persons in the private sector powers and duties and responsibilities to deliver services relating to road user programs / Projet de loi 65, Loi permettant au ministre des Transports de déléguer à des personnes du secteur privé des pouvoirs, des fonctions et des responsabilités pour fournir des services liés aux programmes à l'intention des usagers de la route.

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 ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Hon Mr Clark: I'll defer to ministers' statements.

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001
MODIFIANT LA LOI INTITULÉE
THE WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY ACT

Mrs Cunningham moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to amend The Wilfrid Laurier University Act, 1973 / Projet de loi 66, Loi modifiant la loi intitulée The Wilfrid Laurier University Act, 1973.

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

Does the minister have a short statement?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): The purpose of this bill is to update

The Wilfrid Laurier University Act, which has not been changed since 1973. The government is responding to a request from the university to update the university's governance structure and the language of the act.

The amendments, if passed by the Legislature, would update the Wilfrid Laurier University Act to add one more student representative to the board of governors, extend the terms of board officers, add the academic librarian and a member of staff to the academic senate, add a provision that would formalize past practice that the president of the university is the chair of senate, and provide a means to allow for de-designation of the president as chair of senate, modernize citizenship requirements for the board and use inclusive language in the act.

These changes were requested by Wilfrid Laurier University following consultations with the local community and stakeholders.

VISITORS

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have in the members' gallery this afternoon the father and the sister of one of our pages, Rhianon Cowley-Owen from Maxville. Page Rhianon told me that her sister will be celebrating her birthday on Saturday. Welcome to them in this Legislature.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d) the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr Kells and Mr Barrett exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Kells assumes ballot item number 37 and Mr Barrett assumes ballot item number 16.

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

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to introduce a motion that would separate out the parts of Bill 45 dealing with private education tax credits and also providing for a minimum of 370 hours of public hearing time throughout the province of Ontario this coming summer.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Transportation): As all members of the House know, our government committed in 1995 to improve the way government works for its customers. We promised to ensure that customer service and satisfaction are at the top of the public service's priority list. In the Common Sense Revolution and the Blueprint we also promised taxpayers a smaller, more efficient government, and we promised to deliver government services through alternate means where it is safe, practical and cost-efficient. We believe the proper role of government is to manage public services rather than deliver them directly. We believe in the innovative abilities of Ontario's private sector and continue to encourage its potential for the delivery of services.

With these fundamental principles in mind, I am pleased to introduce for first reading today the Improving Customer Service for Road Users Act, 2001.

As its name suggests, the bill is designed to improve customer service for Ontario's drivers. Under this proposed legislation, the Minister of Transportation would have the authority to transfer the delivery of some road-user services and programs to other providers.

Also under this proposed legislation, the public interest will continue to be protected. While the bill would allow my ministry to phase out its direct service delivery role in selected areas, the government would continue to perform a number of vital functions. It would continue to establish quality standards and ensure that those quality standards are met. It would monitor new service providers to ensure they comply with existing and future legislation and, through a comprehensive performance management system, it would rigorously audit the performance of the new service providers. This process will ensure the public is receiving services that are safe, consistent and fair.

The bill I am introducing today also includes strong measures for the protection of privacy and the confidentiality of personal information. The legislation would require new service providers to abide by the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. As well, new service providers would be legally and contractually bound to keep private information about their clients in strict confidence. Their employees would be required to sign confidentiality agreements as one of the conditions of their hiring. I should mention that this is the same high standard to which my ministry employees have been held. As well, new service providers would be required to create the role of privacy officer within their organization. The privacy officer would be responsible for securing customer records.

Additionally, measures that are already in place to address fraud would continue. Any instance of fraud would, as is the case today, involve a police investigation. As I noted earlier, the government is committed to meeting the needs of the public and to providing high-quality customer service.

If this proposed legislation is passed, we will have the ability to transfer driver examination services to the private sector. By transferring the delivery of driver examination services, including written, vision and road testing, to another provider, we would draw on the creativity, flexibility and innovation of Ontario's private sector. This in turn will create new opportunities for businesses and consumers.

Our goal is to build on the recent improvements in customer service that have been made and to offer even better service to the public in the future. We believe alternative service delivery of the driver examination business would lead to increased efficiencies in how the services are offered. This initiative underscores our commitment to achieve the goal of ensuring that the people of Ontario wait no longer than six weeks to obtain a road test.

The big winner in this initiative is the public, with streamlined, enhanced efficiency and faster service with the same high standards of quality that my ministry has established through its service improvements.

I want to make it absolutely clear that, as my ministry considers transferring the delivery of some of its services, this government will not permit road safety to be compromised under any circumstances.

In the months ahead, our government will continue to examine the government's assets and the important services it delivers. We will continue to examine innovative options to improve how our services are delivered to the people of Ontario and we will continue to pursue alternate service delivery wherever it is safe, practical and cost-efficient to do so.

I'm eager to hear the members' comments on this proposed legislation and look forward to working with all members of the House to pass it into law.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): On behalf of all members of this House, and in fact on behalf of all Ontarians, I'd like to rise today to acknowledge Ontario's senior citizens.

This afternoon we are honoured to have eight very special seniors in our members' gallery. These eight people represent the 1.5 million older adults in our communities sharing their skills, their knowledge and their experience. Our guests today have made contributions too numerous to mention here, but I would like to ask them to rise and be acknowledged.

Mrs Barbara Black is co-chair of the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations.

Mrs Shirley Dmytruk is the president of United Senior Citizens of Ontario.

Mrs Margaret Harche was a member of Ontario's Round Table on Elder Abuse, and is a founding member and past chair of the Councils on Aging Network of Ontario.

Mrs Lois Neely was Ontario's representative on Canada's coordinating committee to plan and promote the nationwide celebrations during the 1999 International Year of Older Persons.

Dr Elizabeth Podnieks is my co-chair on Ontario's round table on elder abuse and a professor at Ryerson Polytechnic University School of Nursing.

Ms Dorothy Rivers-Moore is a board member of a number of organizations, including the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly and the Ontario Women's Network.

Mrs Margaret Watson is the chair of Canadian Pensioners Concerned, Ontario region.

It's our honour to welcome them to the House. The members of this House are indebted to you for the contributions you have made to our province and to our country.

I would also like to acknowledge that there are two individuals who could not be with us today: Mrs Lillian Morgenthau, the president and founder of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, who started the organization with a handful of friends and has seen it grow to a powerful body of more than 370,000 seniors from across Canada; and Dr Ken Murray, who leads the Kenneth G. Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program. Dr Murray is being invested into the Order of Canada today, and that is why he was unable to be with us. He is the driving force behind the Alzheimer research and education program and Canada's first Alzheimer strategy right here in Ontario.

Twenty-four other seniors who have made extraordinary contributions to the life of our province will be presented with a Senior Achievement Award on Monday, June 4, by the Lieutenant Governor and myself and by their members of provincial Parliament, who will be joining them that day. Recipients of this award have recognized needs in their communities and have taken action. Since the first awards of this type in 1986, almost 300 seniors have been honoured for their contributions in the areas of community service, education, science, the arts, recreation, the preservation of history, voluntarism and humanitarian activities.

Our government is committed to helping seniors remain healthy, active and involved members of our communities. As a national comparator, our province is doing more to ensure the best quality of life for our older adults, and we're committed to providing them with the opportunities and choices necessary to maintain all aspects of this wellness.

We have been looking forward into the future at the needs of our aging population and planning accordingly. Our long-term-care investments reflect this kind of forward thinking. This government has increased investments in health care spending by almost \$6 billion. We are increasing spending on long-term-care services alone by \$1.2 billion, the biggest health investment in Ontario's

history. This investment is increasing long-term-care community services by over 50%, adding 20,000 new long-term-care beds and rebuilding 16,000 outdated existing beds. As all members of this House know, long-term-care services are outside of the Canada Health Act. Therefore, Ontario seniors receive no federal support for these services.

Last week, I joined the Minister of Health and Long-term Care when we announced the awarding of funding for the final 5,500 long-term-care beds in our province. These new beds and new facilities will help us meet the needs of our growing and aging population well into the 21st century.

To meet the needs of more than 100,000 Ontarians who suffer with Alzheimer disease, and their families and caregivers, we're investing more than \$68 million over five years in our strategy to combat this terrible Alzheimer's disease and related dementia.

1410

This 10-point strategy is the first of its kind in Canada and is considered one of the top leading programs in North America. We're also working toward a comprehensive strategy to combat elder abuse. This multi-sectoral strategy will be unique in Canada and will benefit Ontario seniors for decades to come.

Last year, the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat partnered with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association to deliver more than 100 safe-medication-use seminars for seniors. As we age, we often need to take more medication and in so doing it is vitally important that seniors know the dangers of not managing their medications correctly.

Many seminars are scheduled to take place during June and these have been designed so that one goes in every single constituency in this province. So every member of the House will have an opportunity to present this seminar to their seniors.

To help protect the health and well-being of seniors in retirement homes, the government funded the Ontario Residential Care Association to establish the first ever province-wide retirement home complaints response and information service. By calling a toll-free number, seniors, their families and retirement home residents can get help to resolve a complaint about any retirement home in Ontario, or they can receive up-to-date information about the full range of services and accommodation options.

It is through a lifetime of hard work and sacrifice by Ontario's seniors that we have such a strong and vibrant province today. Their contributions are enormous. They have built our roads, they have taught in our schools and they have led the development of our communities, our cities and our province as a whole.

Many grew up during the Depression where they learned thrift and priority-setting, and many served in the two world wars to secure our freedom. Seniors continue to this day to make significant contributions as members of boards and commissions, as volunteers and community leaders. To each and every senior in our province we say a collective thank you.

June is Seniors' Month all across Ontario and tomorrow we will be kicking off our celebrations. In Ontario each year, Seniors' Month gives us an opportunity to recognize and thank our seniors for all they have done, and continue to do, to improve the quality of life for all of us who call Ontario home.

Our theme for Seniors' Month 2001 is See Seniors; See Life. We chose the theme as a tribute to the men and women who built this province and to those who still participate and contribute so much to their families and to their communities.

Our theme also reflects the notion of wellness, the wellness of mind, body and spirit.

I encourage my fellow members of this House to take some time during the next month, and throughout the year, to reach out and get connected with the seniors in your communities.

As the year 2001 unfolds, remember See Seniors; See Life; see someone with abundant energy who continues to contribute in so many ways, see someone with vast life and cultural experiences from whom we can learn so much and see someone who deserves our respect.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm delighted, on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal caucus, to acknowledge the seniors in our gallery today and their leadership in our communities, not only now but over decades. We appreciate that very much.

It is most appropriate that we acknowledge Seniors' Month in June and have those presentations made next week honouring the seniors from across the province, because in reality they are the ones who have built this great nation and this great province.

I would however mention, on behalf of the seniors we believe we advocate for, that the government has cut back dramatically the number and amount of services that are provided to those who are seniors in our communities and those who are disabled in the community care access centre program. We know, from calls from every constituency in the province, that people are being rationed, people are being cut off. Seniors we hope would be able to live in their own homes are being deprived of services and I guess ostensibly are going to be moved out of those homes to elsewhere. The government's actions are totally unacceptable.

I also want to speak to my friend the minister responsible for seniors and remind him, as I have reminded him and ministers of health, that in my own constituency, having Espanola turned down for long-term care beds and requiring the people of Espanola to drive over 100 kilometres just to access the long-term care beds, is unacceptable. That decision needs to be reviewed.

I also wonder why this province has chosen not to assist seniors with their energy costs. Other provinces have done that. I have called for it, the member for Renfrew has called for it and the Liberal caucus has called for it. There is no mitigation of the energy costs that will be forcing seniors out their homes.

The delisting of drugs, the fees for prescription drugs, are all great concerns to the seniors of Ontario. I would

ask the government to live up to its rhetoric. We need to help the seniors in our society continue to contribute in a manner we all would prefer.

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): It's apparent to me and to everyone in our caucus that the total government on that side has subscribed to the John Snobelen school of create a crisis. A crisis was begun some years ago by this government in terms of G2 licensing. People had to wait 10 and 12 months to receive their licences. It put hardships on the working families of Ontario. It put hardships on students who were attending universities and colleges, who were driving to those facilities as well as trying to earn money to offset the skyrocketing tuitions that we see prevailing through this government.

The government knew for five years that the G2 licensing system was in effect and would at one time have all these clients seeking licences in one fell swoop. People waited 10 months and longer. They moved throughout parts of Ontario, from Toronto to Chatham-Kent, looking for access and a quicker and more efficient way. So the government created a crisis and now they say, "We have to move in and fix it," and they've brought in this privatization bill.

We know that profits will drive these companies. I'm very concerned, as I was with the previous bill, that these companies may not choose to work in remote and rural areas of Ontario. There are no guarantees that the offices we have in existence today would stay open. There are no guarantees that new offices would open in rural and remote parts of Ontario. There is no guarantee that the government will not in future privatize enforcement. As a matter of fact, the minister's own statement today says that "we will continue to pursue alternate service delivery." There is no guarantee this would not happen. There is no guarantee that inspection of such items as school buses would not be privatized in the future by this government. They have not said unequivocally that they would not do that.

The government has created crisis after crisis in Ontario to put their agenda of privatization and other aspects of their mantra forward. I believe we need hearings on this bill. We need to allow the public of Ontario to understand fully what this government has been up to. They can question the government as to why they create a crisis and then bring in privatization bills for the whole of Ontario.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The Minister of Transportation takes his marching orders from the Minister of Finance, no two ways about it, because the Minister of Transportation has joined this Harris Tory orgy of privatization, where they are prepared to attack and then abandon every facet of a quality, professional public service that has been developed in this province over the course of decades and generations.

In one of the most dangerous moves we've witnessed yet from the Ministry of Transportation, this Minister of

Transportation is prepared to hand over driver testing to the corporate, for-profit private sector. As sure as God made little apples, it'll end up being in the hands of American operators, like so much else has been when it's been privatized by this government, handed over to their corporate friends: public money for private profit, not a penny of which will even stay in the province of Ontario, never mind the country of Canada, but most of which is going to flow into the United States of America.

Shame on this minister for abandoning any concept of highway safety. Doesn't he get it? The reason you have the public service delivering driver examination is to maintain the integrity of it, to ensure it isn't corrupted, to ensure you can't go to the corner store and buy a driver's licence like you can a Bell calling card.

Minister, why don't you start paying attention to the 11 million Ontarians out there instead of the ideological hacks in your cabinet and in your ministry?

1420

SENIOR CITIZENS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On behalf of the NDP, I'd like to recognize the special guests we have in the gallery today who represent very important seniors' organizations in Ontario. I want to say that we appreciate the contribution you have made to Ontario life over many years, and we certainly know that because of your efforts the quality of life in all Ontario communities is that much better.

With respect to the rest of the statement made by the minister, I want to point out that I regret he neglected to note two very critical issues that are facing seniors now, and because he has neglected to do that, I think it's incumbent on me to raise them now.

The first is the use of restraints on seniors in acute care hospitals in Ontario. All members will know that my colleague from Beaches-East York introduced Bill 135 last fall, directly as a result of a terrible experience her mother faced in an Ontario public hospital. That was an experience where she was restrained, not because it was required by medical treatment, not because she didn't know what she was doing, but frankly, probably because there just wasn't enough staff available at that time to deal with her.

We know that hundreds and hundreds of other seniors across this province face that every day in Ontario hospitals. Because of the research she recorded during that debate, we know that the use of restraints in US hospitals is about 17% of seniors, and in Ontario hospitals 33% of seniors are regularly restrained. We know that researchers went into an Ontario hospital last fall. They found that in one public hospital 70% of the patients over 75 years of age were in restraints at 10 am, and there was clear evidence that the use of restraints cause more harm to many seniors.

That bill passed second reading. There were public hearings earlier this fall. Then the government prorogued and that important legislation was lost. I call on this

government to commit that when my colleague reintroduces that important bill to reduce the use of restraints in long-term-care facilities that primarily affect seniors, this government will give quick passage to that important bill.

Second, with respect to the funding for CCACs, CCACs provide important home care for seniors, for the disabled, for those being discharged from hospitals. We know that as a result of providing those services, many more seniors can remain in their own homes, in dignity, in their communities, and we know there is a net effect in terms of a reduction of costs to the health care system because they are not forced into very expensive, long-term-care facilities.

The current situation is that the 43 CCACs right now have provided deficit reductions to the Ministry of Health in the order of \$175 million, and \$80 million of that shortfall just reflects rate increases to services already being provided. The balance reflects the costs for new services.

We know that this year the ministry, although they have every other year funded the shortfalls, funded the deficits to meet that increased need, have now told CCACs it will no longer do that, so CCACs are in the difficult position where they will have to reduce services. There will be a tremendous impact on seniors, the disabled, those being discharged from hospitals when they can't receive in-home care, nursing care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, the rental of medical equipment and the rental of medical supplies or provision of the same.

I say to this government, you have a responsibility to the seniors of this province to fund home care services and meet the needs of seniors, the disabled and those being discharged from hospitals. You've got \$2 billion for a corporate tax cut. Find \$175 million for home care.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of the Minister of Transportation's comments, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion that would compel the Minister of Transportation to table the Highway 407 contract with this Legislature within one week.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

FINANCEMENT DE L'ÉDUCATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My questions today are for the Minister of Education. You will know that yesterday we launched our campaign in defence of public education in Ontario. We're fighting against your plan to take \$500 million out of our public schools and put that money into private schools, and we're fighting for our plan to improve public education that starts with smaller classes for our children.

You should know, Madam Minister, that already since the time you unveiled your plans to ambush Ontario's public education system, something that came unannounced and was not predicted, given your government's record and statements made by the Premier and yourself, we have heard from thousands of Ontarians who are very gravely concerned about your plan for private school vouchers. They want a full and meaningful opportunity to voice their concerns to you.

Will you now agree that, instead of that mockery of a hearing process which you plan to put in place, that sham, you will grant Ontario families a full opportunity through public hearings to be conducted during the course of the summer dedicated to your private school voucher plan alone?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Again, as the honourable member has heard me say in this Legislature many times, there are no hearings going to be occurring on a school voucher program because that is not the proposal before us.

First, I know the honourable member likes to claim he is for smaller class sizes. I will repeat yet again that on two separate occasions in this Legislature when there was legislation before this House to put limits on class size, he and his party voted against it. So let's just be clear on this record.

Second, our commitment to public education on this side of the House is as strong today as it was when we were first elected. There is no one proposing taking money from public education and putting it anywhere else, and everyone on this side of the House would oppose it if there were.

Third, I would suggest, based on the latest Canadian Jewish News that is talking about the fights among his own caucus members on this issue, perhaps the honourable member would pay a little more attention to his home base.

Mr McGuinty: The fact that you are prepared to take \$500 million out of public education and put that money into private education tells us you are not fully aware of the state of public education today in Ontario. That's a darned good reason why you need prolonged committee hearings, so that you have a full opportunity to hear from parents right across the province who will better inform you as to the state of education in their children's public schools.

Just to bring you down to ground level here, Madam Minister, here is a textbook that we received from a high school in Ontario, the Thomas H. Stewart high school in Peterborough. This is a history textbook that is available in the classroom, and if you will take a look at this, you will see that this book is literally falling apart. We asked the school and we asked the board why they weren't purchasing new textbooks. They told us they don't have enough money to buy new textbooks for their students.

At a time when we don't have enough money to buy textbooks for our students in public schools, we're wondering why you have now become firmly committed

and devoted to the cause of private education in Ontario. What we need is a full, extensive and ample opportunity for you to become better acquainted with the state of public education in Ontario. That means meaningful hearings. Can we have those meaningful hearings this summer?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member again keeps putting forward information in this Legislature that is simply not accurate. No one on this side of the House is proposing or supporting taking money from public education to put toward anything, period—end of story.

Secondly, perhaps the honourable member would like to second-guess the decisions of school board trustees, because that is clearly what he's doing. We have, for example, in this province school board trustees who actually said to their community that they were going to take textbook money and use it for their teacher compensation plan. Those trustees were re-elected by their community. If the honourable member is now asking us to pass laws retroactively to prevent school trustees from making those decisions, he should say so.

Mr McGuinty: What I'm asking you to do, on behalf of the Mike Harris government, is to take responsibility for public education. You're devoting all of your time and energy of late to private education. You're not accountable for private education. Your responsibility is not private education; your responsibility is public education and the 96% of Ontario families who rely on public education. That is your job.

People for Education are telling us that, province-wide, parents in elementary schools are raising \$25 million every year now for classroom supplies like textbooks. Forty-two per cent of our public schools are involved in raising money. We have children in Ontario who are selling chocolate bars for dictionaries and atlases. All this at a time when you've come up with \$500 million for private education.

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Once again, Madam Minister, it has become painfully apparent to all that you are disconnected from the reality of public education. What our parents need throughout the province is an opportunity to educate you as to what is going on in their children's schools. In order to do that, I am asking you on their behalf if they might not have the opportunity during the course of this summer to participate in province-wide committee hearings dedicated to your private school voucher plan.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Yet again, since the honourable member doesn't seem to listen frequently in this Legislature: there is more money being spent on public education in this province, as there should be. In 1995, when this government was elected, there was \$12.9 billion available for public education; today, it is \$13.8 billion—above and beyond enrolment growth, \$800 million more directly in classrooms, the biggest school building boom we've seen in this province in literally years, new money, new investments in the public education system. Why did we do that? Because we know—I know on this side, because I've been in the schools. I've

talked to teachers; I've talked to parents; I've talked to students, because that is my job. I do not need lectures from the honourable member trying to make political points on the backs of parents and on the backs of students about how to do my job. I would suggest that he look to his own caucus and his own reputation and his own credibility on this particular issue, since he continues to not know which side he's going to be on.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question, leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: Madam Minister, my second set of questions is also for you. I want to talk to you more specifically about special education and its state today in Ontario. After all, you have the special responsibility through our public schools to help ensure that parents are having the special learning needs of their children met.

People for Education tell us that today in Ontario, 35,000 children at the elementary level alone are waiting to be assessed for special education. They tell us that over the course of the last three years, there has been a 38% reduction in the availability in services of psychologists. I can tell you that in my hometown alone, Ottawa, we have gone from, during the course of the last four years, 33 school psychologists to 14. Some schools are reporting to the People for Education group that they have no access to a single board psychologist.

Madam Minister, in your capacity as the person ultimately responsible for public education in Ontario and understanding the predicament at least 35,000 parents of 35,000 children with special learning needs find themselves in, why is it that you have \$500 million for private schools, but you don't have money to help children with special learning needs in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I know it may be a surprise to the honourable member that there are more needs in special education. Of course there are. That is not news to this government. That is why we have been meeting and consulting with the special education community. That is why we increased special education money last year over 12%. That's why we're bringing in standards for how that money is used, quality standards for programs, to try and fix the neglect that they've left in special education that we saw under his government and the previous government. Do you know what? Here we go again. The honourable member, who says he's so supportive of public education—when we had legislation here in this House that said a school board could not use a dollar of special education money for anything else, who voted against it? The honourable member and his entire party.

Mr McGuinty: Let me tell you, Madam Minister, about Eric Stewart, a young man of 10 years of age in my riding, who suffers from a learning disability. His father, Blayne Stewart, sent you a letter on May 17, and I will quote from that letter. He says, "We've had to move our son from school to school over the past five years due to the many cutbacks in the special education for the school boards here in Ottawa. No matter what you say or how you say it or how you configure it using financial statements, your government has continually cut back, to the

point where children such as my son are given second-class treatment.”

He goes on to say, “I would like you to be in our shoes for just a day and go through the angst of wondering how your child is going to make it in this world and meeting with teachers and begging for extra help.”

Madam Minister, on behalf of Eric Stewart and his parents, and parents just like that across the province, why is it that you have \$500 million for private education but you don't have any money to help children like Eric right across Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The magical figure the honourable member loves to throw around, even though he knows it's not an accurate number—this magical number of \$500 million—maybe he thinks \$500 million is all the special-needs students need, but there is more than \$1.3 billion, money that is out there to help support parents who take care of special-needs children, teachers who are so committed to those special-needs students. It is an important priority, as it should be, because those young children can achieve, can succeed, if they get the right support.

Not only have we increased resources in the schools for special needs across this province—and is there more need? Of course there is, and we are the first to admit it. We are the first to say we are taking steps to try and resolve it. But we have also increased resources and money for those families with those important needs for special-needs kids in social services as well, not only when I was social services minister—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I want to remind you that it was you through your letter and the Premier through his letter who told us that we were looking at from \$300 million to \$700 million that would have to come out of public education in order to provide for your voucher program. You're the people who put that on the record, and I believed that, Madam Minister. I believed that when you said that, and I believed that when the Premier said it.

I think the issue here is whether or not you are committed to public education. But the facts speak to the contrary. For the last several weeks now, you have become particularly devoted to the matter of private education in Ontario. We have raised now for years the poor and miserable state of public education in Ontario: we have children who are short of textbooks, you've cut back on busing, you've cut back on special education, we have teachers who are stressed out, we have overcrowded classrooms, we've got an atmosphere that is poisoned by your brand of politics, and yet, in the midst of all this, suddenly you can find \$500 million for private education.

On behalf of our working families, Madam Minister, when are you going to assume your responsibility and stand up for public education?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, first of all, our commitment and my commitment to public education stands. That is why we have

put more money into public education—higher standards, curriculum.

Not only that; the member likes to say that he is for smaller class sizes, he likes to say that he is for more resources for special-needs parents, and yet when he had the choice to vote for something that would improve public education, he chose not to. When he had an opportunity to say where he stood on the funding to respect parental choice, he chose to be on both sides of the issue.

Secondly or thirdly or whatever point we are, this side of the House believes that parents have a right to choose. We respect those hard-working Ontario families in our riding; I don't know why he and his members are not respecting what they're hearing from those Ontario working families in their ridings.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Finance. My question is about the secret backroom hearings you gave to a special interest group pushing for public funding of private schools. The special interest group spent \$175,000 to be heard, and they got eight months of secret, private backroom hearings from your government. At the same time, you refuse our repeated calls for just 80 days of province-wide public hearings so the rest of Ontario can be heard.

Minister, tell me, how can you give a special interest group eight months of private backroom hearings and discussions and refuse the rest of the people of Ontario just 80 days of province-wide hearings on the same issue?

1440

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): There were extensive pre-budget consultations in Ontario this year. As Minister of Finance, I met with in excess of 350 people. There are countless submissions made. We don't view meeting with people as an improper thing to do. We view it as our duty as members of cabinet, as members of caucus on this side of the House. Our doors are open. That's our policy.

We certainly listened to all of the pre-budget submissions. We were not able to agree with all of the submissions, of course. We had to be fiscally prudent, manage Ontario's finances prudently, balance the budget and keep our taxes low and competitive so we can have the vibrant economy we have in Ontario today.

Mr Hampton: There's a problem with your answer, Minister. The fact of the matter is, this special interest group didn't come to the pre-budget hearings. Not only that, but they didn't even bother putting in a written submission. They were nowhere on the screen. The reason they were nowhere is because they were getting private backroom hearings exclusively from your government.

Minister, all the people who appeared at the pre-budget hearings, all the people who asked for more funding for special education, all the people who asked for more funding to ensure that there were textbooks in the classroom, to ensure that we had smaller class sizes, were

ignored. They're asking you now, since you gave eight months of backroom hearings to a special interest group that didn't even come to the pre-budget hearings and make a case there, will you now listen to the rest of the people of Ontario for just 80 days? Doesn't that seem fair?

Hon Mr Flaherty: If the member opposite has some information about a particular group that did not come to pre-budget consultations and that made some kind of secret backroom meetings, I'd like to know about it. I'd like to know who you're talking about.

If you're talking about the parents of Sikh children, the parents of Ismaili children, the parents of Jewish children, the parents of Christian children and parents with children in independent schools, if you're talking about them, then I wish you'd say so. If you think it was improper for me as Minister of Finance to meet with them, then you're entitled to your view. I think it is our duty on this side of the House to be open and available to all members of Ontario society, particularly in our diverse society, the way Ontario has changed over the past 25 years. I think that's our duty as elected members of this place.

Mr Hampton: Your duty, if you are going to make such a fundamental change in Ontario's education system, is to at least have the courage to go out there and listen to people across this province and hold public hearings so they have a say.

The group that boasts in their letter, the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, says quite clearly that their staff developed the tax credit proposal last fall and until this April with your government, and they persuaded, over that eight-month period, your government to do it. They point out that they spent \$175,000 getting private backroom hearings. If you're going to give a special interest group private backroom hearings, if they don't even have to come to the pre-budget committee hearings, Minister, don't you think that the rest of the people of Ontario who overwhelmingly rely upon the public education system at least deserve 80 days of hearings when you gave the special interest group hearings over eight months? Where's your sense of fairness? Commit to the 80 days of hearings.

Hon Mr Flaherty: As usual, the leader of the third party has most of his facts wrong. This is a party that, when they were in government, paid \$50,000 to a union to compose a song.

If you think we should not meet with certain groups in Ontario, if you think we should discriminate against certain groups in this province, if you think that's the right way for a government to act, you are entitled to your view. That's not my view. Our doors are open. As I say, in the pre-budget consultation we meet with more than 350 groups, including groups from all kinds of areas of the province and with different agendas, quite frankly, but that's our duty. We have to be open, we have to listen, and then we have to make responsible choices. In our view, the choices we've made, that we've put before this House in the budget bill and in the budget docu-

ments, are responsible choices for the people of Ontario, not \$50,000 to a union for a song.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Hampton: To the Minister of Finance: if you claim you want to be open, then you'll be holding province-wide public hearings for 80 days on your proposal, because the Ontario Alliance for Christian Schools didn't even bother to go to the pre-budget hearings. They didn't even bother to put in a written submission, because they knew they'd paid the \$175,000 and they were going to get backdoor access.

Minister, all those people you've ignored—the students, the parents, the educators—are going to be out here on the lawn of the Legislature at 6 pm tonight at a rally that the NDP is hosting. They want you to hold province-wide public hearings, 80 days. That's what you demanded 16 years ago. It was fair then; it should be fair now. Minister, if you're open, will you hold 80 days of province-wide public hearings so the rest of Ontario can be heard?

Hon Mr Flaherty: As you know, Speaker, our government has had more days of public hearings on bills than his government did from 1990 to 1995 or the Liberals did during their time.

We're committed to public hearings, which has been made clear several times here, with respect to Bill 45. The budget bill will be going to committee, as it went to committee last year, as budget bills went to committee during the Liberal government for several years, 1985 to 1990. So there will be additional consultations in addition to the very elaborate consultations which I did as Minister of Finance with the help of my parliamentary assistants during the three months or so leading up to the budget.

There were submissions, I might also tell the honourable member—his facts are wrong. If he wants to check the list of submissions from various sources, he'll see the accurate facts.

Mr Hampton: I have the list right here with me, and I challenge you to step outside the House and show us where that particular special interest group made a submission to the committee, because your facts are wrong and you better know it.

Let me give you an example of a group that will not be heard in the Toronto-only public hearings you're proposing. Aucune communauté franco-ontarienne n'aura l'occasion de participer aux audiences publiques à cause de cette décision. Chaque Franco-Ontarien sera exclu du processus. Il est évident que les francophones dans cette province ne comptent pas avec votre gouvernement.

Minister, it's a simple request. There are people across Ontario who will be affected by your government's proposal to use public money to fund private schools. In 1985, when we were considering support for separate schools, your party demanded 80 days of public hearings and you got them. That's what people are demanding now, 80 days of public hearings across the province. If it was good enough then, commit to it now, Minister.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Again, the member opposite has his facts wrong. I certainly heard from representatives of the Christian schools, of the Jewish schools, the Muslim schools, the Greek schools, the Sikh schools and independent schools generally. Yes, I have the list of the people I met with, too. You know, it's important that we are open and available to meet with people, particularly when a finance minister is preparing a budget.

One of the problems on the other side of the House is your view, and you hear this from the Liberals and you hear it from the NDP, that there's something called public money that belongs to them or belongs to government. We on this side of the House know that government can't give anything to anybody that government hasn't already taken away in the first place. This money belongs to the people of Ontario. It doesn't belong to the NDP and it doesn't belong to the Liberals with their confiscatory taxation policies from 1985 to 1995 that virtually ruined the province of Ontario. We've got this ship turned around and we've got it going in the right direction—a vibrant economy, prosperity. What a great province to live in.

1450

SAFE DRINKING WATER LEGISLATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, yesterday you were out at a photo opportunity with Imperial Esso, which produces the dirtiest gas in all of Ontario, and no doubt there will be a few other photo ops that your staff will trot you out to. Meanwhile at the Walkerton inquiry, some disturbing and revealing testimony is emerging about the danger in which your government was placing the drinking water in this province by massive cuts to the environment staff and budget.

A 1996 document tabled at the inquiry on May 28 stated, "... reductions will have an adverse impact on the delivery of environmental protection service levels, which in turn will increase public health and safety risks."

Godfrey Jenkins of your ministry, an expert in water, testified that the staff cuts severely hampered the ability of the remaining professionals to do their job.

Your government was warned clearly and repeatedly that the slashing of the staff and the budget would place drinking water safety in jeopardy, yet the only response came in the form of inaccurate hocus-pocus designed to paint a rather soothing picture.

Minister, have you received or have you seen any staff memos or correspondence warning you of the dangerous consequences of your failure to proceed quickly with legislation and regulations dealing with intensive livestock operations, the spreading of sewage sludge on farmland, abandoned wells and water-taking permits, and if you have, will you make those public today?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of the Environment): As the member knows, the commission is taking

a look at all the information. Obviously, I'm not in a position to speak to any of the information which is being presented to the inquiry. However, I can assure the member opposite that this government has taken steps to ensure that the water consumed in this province is safe.

As you know, we have introduced the safe drinking water protection regulation. We have Operation Clean Water, to ensure that the water is tested and sampled and that the information is made available to the public.

I can also assure the member that when the report is tabled and recommendations are forthcoming, we will certainly move forward with those recommendations. We share his concern for public health and protection of public health.

Mr Bradley: Minister, you have had recommendations from both the Provincial Auditor and two Environmental Commissioners about what you should do to protect the safety of water in this province.

At the inquiry, Sheila Willis, assistant deputy minister, operations division, testified to the following: "Constraints on the operations division will also have a detrimental impact on many client services, such as increased environmental risk resulting from our inability to conduct proactive inspections or devote time to thorough review of approvals, and a reduction in available scientific expertise within the division to support district staff ... reduced levels of responsiveness."

Goff Jenkins, when asked, "And did the substantial layoffs that did take place leave the drinking water experts short of resources and support staff?" his answer was, "In my opinion, certainly."

Our critic in the field of agriculture, Steve Peters, has filed a freedom-of-information request, trying to get some information about the spreading of sewage sludge. You have done nothing on sewage sludge yet. You've done nothing on livestock operations yet. You have abandoned wells all over the province that you are not looking after.

Do you have any memos in your ministry about this and any correspondence, and will you make those memos public so we're not put through another \$2-million or \$3-million inquiry as we bleed those memos out of you?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I can share with you the information that I have been working on with my colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to ensure that farming activities are properly managed. I believe that's the question you're asking.

Obviously we need to do everything we can to ensure that this province's environment and water are properly protected. I can tell you that several models are currently being evaluated for the regulation of agricultural operations in Ontario, and enforcement is certainly part of what is being considered.

STRATFORD FESTIVAL

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. Earlier this week I was pleased to host you in my riding

for the opening of the 49th season of the Stratford Festival.

As you know, the Stratford Festival plays a vital role in the economy of my riding. It generates about \$340 million in economic activity every year, it creates more than 6,000 jobs and accounts for 12% of the tourism in southwestern Ontario.

Given the importance of the festival as a major cultural tourism attraction, can you tell me what you are doing to help it grow and welcome audiences for another 49 seasons?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation): I thank the member for Perth-Middlesex for his question and for his ongoing support for institutions like the Stratford Festival and the Stratford Gallery in his riding of Perth-Middlesex.

There was certainly an outstanding performance of the Merchant of Venice this past Monday, which shows that Stratford is still on the cutting edge of bringing in new audiences, expanding their opportunities and putting on outstanding performances.

The first best option, of course, is to support these industries and cultural tourism so they can move off and be independent and try to take advantage of new business opportunities and new audiences and be quicker to respond to markets, and Stratford leads the way. In fact, as the member knows, some 96% of the revenue now is self-driven.

In order to help them expand their customer base and offer new products, they started a new series called Canada At Play, which is for new plays at Stratford. As part of that, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation provided a cheque of \$300,000 to help support that initiative to bring in new audiences and to support the great work of the member for Perth-Middlesex.

Mr Johnson: I wanted also to highlight the visit that you made on April 21, when you visited the town of St Marys and were welcomed in both the old and the new part of the Stonetown library, the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame museum, as well as the Milverton Arena and the former normal school that's right in Stratford.

The Stratford Festival is an example of how theatre can not only enrich our culture and our communities, but attract jobs and investment. What are you doing to promote other theatre organizations in Ontario so they can attract more audiences and become more self-sustaining as well?

Hon Mr Hudak: The member makes a good point. Cultural tourism has great potential in the province of Ontario and to get them to stay in Stratford, for example, longer, spend more money in the community and visit the other attractions the member mentioned.

My friend from Niagara Falls behind me says, "What about Shaw?" in his riding of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Certainly, the Shaw Festival as well has brought forward Theatrical Adventures in Wine Country, an innovative program to bring together the theatre, the wineries in the area and the hotels and motels to encourage longer stays and more investment in that community. The ministry is

pleased to support that initiative as well, which I announced about a week ago in that riding, for the member for Niagara Falls, Bart Maves.

In the city of Toronto as well, there is a dynamic theatre sector, the third-largest in the English-speaking world. Winter in Toronto is again one of these package deals, where they stay in the community, they see a play, stay at a hotel and, of course, go down and see the Haida.

DOCTORS' SERVICES

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Health. There is a most disturbing situation in Essex county caused by the wrong-headed actions of your ministry. CBC national television covered this travesty on Health Matters.

You claim to be committed to solving the doctor shortage, yet you are forcing the closure of the clinic of a dedicated community radiologist in Windsor. Our communities desperately need this clinic. The chief of staff of Windsor Regional Hospital said the health of the citizens of Essex county will be compromised if it closes. The district health council has also acknowledged the radiology shortage.

This community-based clinic employs 20 people to meet the critical needs of clients and citizens who are short eight radiologists. Staff and equipment are all funded by the specialist retention exemption of Dr Charles Gervais. But this year it has been cancelled because you say we no longer have a shortage. How can they pay staff and keep the lights on?

You talk of accountability and transparency for others, yet you refuse a list of all radiologists used in your calculations. We want the numbers and the names. Will you send them over to me today?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for the question. Of course, I will certainly take his question under advisement to pursue some of the details.

I can tell the honourable member that just last week I was in the community of Windsor, opening up the brand-spanking-new regional cancer centre, which of course is going to make the lives of cancer sufferers in the Windsor-Lambton area a lot better. I think there's a lot more access to treatment, a lot more modern medical equipment. So that of course is good news in the Windsor-Essex-Lambton area.

On the honourable member's question, I'd be happy to take it under advisement and get some answers for him.

1500

Mr Hoy: Minister, you should know that the doctor himself is sending you 50 to 100 faxes a day on behalf of patients and it's also appeared on the national news.

Minister, you know that many private, for-profit radiology operators have closed clinics in small communities where it isn't profitable enough for them, leaving the patients high and dry. The clinic in Windsor could help these underserved areas. It has state-of-the-art digital equipment that could be utilized long-distance. A plan to

show you how this equipment could be used to solve the radiology shortage province-wide was sent to you. That solution has been ignored. Now I hear that you may be considering a bailout of for-profit clinics. I hope that's not true, unless you are willing to give the same assistance to community-based clinics like Dr Gervais's.

The citizens of our community need to know that they will receive the same benefits as any other community experiencing a radiology shortage. They are watching in Windsor today. Tell them why their community is no longer considered underserved. Then, if you refuse to accept the error in your numbers, assure them that every community will benefit from any bailout that you might be considering.

Hon Mr Clement: First of all, I want to assure this House that in terms of funding for cancer services, there has been no change of policy. We have been increasing that funding year upon year. I'm sure that will be—unfortunately, because it means there are cancer sufferers in our province—due to continue.

I can tell the honourable member that this province, on behalf of the people of Ontario, has made a significant investment in Windsor by virtue of the creation and the opening of the regional cancer centre. I take the honourable member's question under advisement. If there is a better way to deliver better, safer, faster, cheaper cancer services in his community, certainly we'll take it under advisement.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, recently there have been discussions in the Legislature from time to time on the issue of workplace injuries as well as workplace fatalities. When the Liberal labour critic, the member for Hamilton East, introduced his private member's bill a few weeks ago, he indicated that the numbers of incidents were climbing.

I know members of this caucus are always interested in this topic, as are my constituents in Durham, about the issue of safety in the workplace. They want to know what our government is doing to correct this problem and to protect our workers. Can you tell the members of this House what the Ministry of Labour is doing to reduce injuries and potential fatalities in the workplace?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thanks for the question from the member for Durham. I want to say that the number of inspections that have taken place in the ministry has significantly increased, as well as the actual charges that have been laid and convictions as well.

It's also important to note, although there was a lot of hyperbole and rhetoric surrounding this particular issue, that the number of workplace-related injuries has decreased since 1995 by 30%. So understand that although it's not perfect and although any injury is a bad thing, the number of workplace-related injuries has gone down by

30%. That's also coupled with the fact that more people are out there working today than when we came to office.

We understand the concern for workplace safety. We know that kids are going to go to work for summer jobs very shortly. We want to alert them to the fact of workplace safety and the right to refuse. But we also want it to be clear out there that the number is going in the right direction, we're proud of that accomplishment and we think it's important to continue the good work.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for that very sensitive and very direct response, Minister. A 30% reduction certainly shows that we're making progress as we move forward.

However, the member opposite, in his private member's bill, suggests that he would raise fines on both individuals and corporations who are convicted of an offence under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Could you please update, not just me, of course, but all of the people of Ontario, and indeed clarify what levels of fine are going to be imposed on those who have endangered the safety of workers in Ontario?

Hon Mr Stockwell: The workplace safety fines have in fact been imposed over a number of years and they've been updated fairly regularly.

I want to just be clear with respect to maximum fines. Never have we had a situation where a maximum fine has been levelled. The courts understand that they can level fines up to a certain amount, but never has a maximum fine been met. I'm not suggesting that those maximum fines shouldn't be reviewed all the time—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Stockwell for mayor.

Hon Mr Stockwell: If the member for Riverdale wants to comment, I'm interested in hearing from her.

But you have to understand that just simply increasing the fines doesn't necessarily equate to having increased fines. There's a certain apportionment to that amount and we've never met that level.

I've got to tell you, from 1995 until today there are more workers out there. The Liberals often talk, and the NDP, about the working people, working families. Well, the big difference between this government and that government is, the big difference between working families and this government's administration is, they're actually working. That's a good thing.

So we are conscious of our concerns. We're careful that we've got to watch workplace safety and we think it's an important issue and we will continue to work to have safer workplaces.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, yesterday under questions from my colleague, the member for Beaches-East York, about impending cutbacks to home care services, you said, and I quote, "We're in the process of discussion" of whether to cover the budget needs of the community care access centres.

But at the same time that you were saying that here, your assistant deputy minister, John King, was telling the CCACs from Hamilton, from Sudbury, from across the province something totally different. He told the CCACs that there will be no increase in their base funding, no equity funding, no help from your government to meet the home care needs of increasing numbers of senior citizens from across the province.

You know this will lead to almost immediate cutbacks in necessary home care services for seniors, for the disabled, for those recently discharged from hospital. But Minister, I want to know. You told one story in here; your assistant deputy minister told a different story. Which story should the home care patients across the province believe?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for the question. Indeed in his prologue the honourable member neglected to mention that this government has increased funding for CCACs by over 72%, which is a matter of public record and should be on the record with respect to this discussion.

The honourable member mentioned two particular CCACs. I want to put this on the record as well. Hamilton-Wentworth under the last year of his government received \$35.6 million; under our government this past year it received \$53.1 million. Manitoulin-Sudbury under their government received \$17.1 million; under our government it received \$20.7 million. Those facts speak louder than his rhetoric.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The question was, who are home care patients to believe? The Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC has a projected deficit of \$1.8 million this year. Despite a specific commitment that was made by the former Minister of Long-Term Care, Cam Jackson, in August 1998 to our community, and I quote, "Starting in 2000-01 and in each of the next five years, the Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC will receive additional funding based on our equity formula," the Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC did not receive one cent of equity funding last year and has not received one cent of equity funding this year, Minister.

As a result, the Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC has announced a dramatic plan to cut homemaking services, nursing services, occupational physio and speech therapy services, the provision of medical supplies and the rental of medical equipment, all of which will have a dramatic negative effect on seniors, the disabled and those being discharged in my community. They can't afford to pay for it, they will go without, they will be forced into long-term-care institutions because you refuse to fund the home care services they need.

The question is, Minister, who are home care patients in Sudbury to believe? Are you going to fund the deficit in Manitoulin-Sudbury and are you going to fund the equity funding that your government promised as long ago as 1998?

Hon Mr Clement: You asked the question, "Who should they believe?" They certainly shouldn't believe you. This government provided more funding, as I've outlined in the answer to the first question, and more equitable funding than that government ever did in the five years of funding for home care that they did.

Do you want to know what my assistant deputy minister said to them? He said—now wait for this—"They must live within their budgets," something you never said in the five years of your government. It's probably news to your ears to say to someone who is a transfer partner, "Live within your budgets." That's the way the taxpayers and the citizens of Ontario expect the province to be run. You never said it in five years of government. You don't deserve to govern.

1510

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance and it has to do with the education tax credit. In January 2000, about 15 months ago, the government was very clear in its policy. It said very clearly that "extending funding to religious private schools would result in fragmentation of the education system in Ontario and undermine the goal of universal access to education." You also presented documentation on why you reached that conclusion. What you said in that, among other things, was that if you "were required to fund private religious schools, this would have a detrimental impact on the public schools and hence the fostering of a tolerant, multicultural, non-discriminatory society in the province," that that would be the result. You also said that extending public school funding rights to private religious schools will undermine our ability to "build social cohesion, tolerance and understanding." You went on to say in your brief that it would undermine our ability to create a tolerant society and truly protect religious freedom.

Those were the reasons why, about 15 months ago, you rejected this. Have I summarized the key reasons why, 15 months ago, you rejected extending funding?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): We have rejected funding to private schools. We have consistently done that. The funding proposal that we have created and that has been put forward in the budget bill is a tax credit. It is a tax credit for parents who choose, for their own reasons, for family reasons, to educate their children in certain traditions, in certain ways. That is a choice which we respect as a government. I understand that the opposition, the Liberal Party, has changed its mind about that. In May 1999 the Leader of the Opposition said, "Ideologically I'm not opposed to funding for Jewish schools." Today in the Toronto Star I read, "We will repeal private school tax credits when we form the government after the next election."

Our position on this side of the House is clear. I don't know what the position is on that side of the House: not opposed or opposed?

Mr Phillips: You spelled out why you were opposed very clearly 15 months ago. I want to read you what I regard as an extremely hard-hitting paragraph that frankly I agree with, and it's your own paragraph. It says Ontario "submits that one of the strengths of a public system of education is that it provides a venue where people of all colours, races, national and ethnic origins, and religions interact and try to come to terms with one another's differences. In this way, the public schools build social cohesion, tolerance and understanding. Extending public school funding"—and these are your words—"rights to private religious schools will undermine this ability and may result in a significant increase in the number and kind of private schools. This would have an adverse effect on the viability of the public school system which would become the system serving students not found admissible by any other system. Such potential fragmentation of the school system is an expensive and debilitating structure for society."

It couldn't be clearer, Minister. You spelled out the exact concerns my leader has been raising since you introduced this. I say again to you, if you believed that 15 months ago, and if those were the reasons you rejected it 15 months ago, can you tell us why we will not have exactly the same impact with the proposal that you now have in our budget?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I was following the honourable member's question until he started talking about his leader's clear position, because it's a bit foggy when in 1999 he says, "I am not opposed to funding for Jewish schools," and this morning I gather his party paid \$50,000 to say that they would repeal the proposed bill, assuming it would be passed.

We have been clear in favour of choice. From 1993 to 1994, in the Blueprint for Learning, we talked about choice for parents, choice for parents and their children. We are fully committed to full funding for public education in Ontario, to honouring the funding formula, which includes not only the public schools but also the Catholic schools and the francophone schools. But in addition, the government proposes to show respect for the choices of parents for their families, for their children, for their educational choices by investing additional funds for a tax credit for those parents. We respect their choices. The opposition apparently does not, but that may change from day to day.

FISH AND WILDLIFE LEGISLATION

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Natural Resources. My understanding is that residents of Wawa are extremely distressed with your ministry. It's beyond my comprehension why your overworked conservation officers would have time to seize Henrietta, a stuffed moose, from a storefront in downtown Wawa. The residents have a yellow ribbon campaign in an effort to free Henrietta and have her returned. Minister, I have read to children in Northumberland about Mucky the moose, but I've never

heard tell of Henrietta the moose before. Can you report on why Henrietta was seized, what is happening to her and when she will be returned?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member from Northumberland for a question that's on the minds of many people in this chamber. I know the member from Algoma-Manitoulin approached me on this earlier this week. He was quite concerned. I told the member I didn't know whether the responsibility reposed with me since my ministry does not have responsibility for the Upholstered and Stuffed Articles Act, and Henrietta the moose is, if nothing else, a stuffed article. But I can assure the member that from that time, I have now acquired an eight-week-old puppy named Jake and he has left the entrails of stuffed articles all over my house and barn. I now know more about stuffed articles.

I want to assure the member from Northumberland, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin and the people of Wawa that to us at the Ministry of Natural Resources, Henrietta is more than simply evidence, and that she is being very well cared for.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Minister, for that report on Henrietta and thank you for the answer. If I may follow up on a matter just a little more serious, can you tell us of the importance of carefully managing Ontario's fish and wildlife, and tell us some of the improvements brought in by this government in the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, which came into effect in January 1999?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Snobelen: It is often difficult to address these serious issues over the heckling, particularly when it comes from this side of the Legislature, but I can tell the member from Northumberland that we updated the Game and Fish Act a few years ago. It had not previously been revised since 1980. The new act, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, allows us to do more protecting of our fish and wildlife in Ontario.

Specifically, we can now manage a broader range of both game species such as moose, wild turkey and black bear and specially protected wildlife species such as the northern flying squirrel, the peregrine falcon and, a favourite of my seatmate here, the blue-spotted salamander. In addition to these, we have much better provisions for the protection of species across the spectrum right across the province. I thank the member.

1520

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Humber River Hospital in my riding has been in a state of crisis ever since your government decided to close Northwestern General. With that closure, our community lost an emergency room. As a result, Humber River has been on ambulance redirect and bypass at a greater rate than any other Toronto area hospital. My question is this, Minister: How many times has Humber River Hospital

been on ambulance redirect and bypass since the closure of Northwestern General?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): What I can tell the honourable member is that this government has supplied to the hospital sector more resources, more financial resources, more directed medical personnel, more directed nurse personnel, for emergency services than any other government in the history of Ontario, most recently just in the past fiscal year. We have worked with the hospitals. We have worked with them on a patient priority system that ensures the right patients are treated by the right physicians at the right time. This has been part of our policy from day one. We had a further iteration of it this year with the patient priority system.

If the honourable member has a particular example he wishes to share with us, we can take it under advisement, but I can assure the honourable member that his hospital is no different from other hospitals in Ontario, getting more resources to deal with emergency situations in a timely manner.

Mr Cordiano: That's simply not true. This government demands accountability from others—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Hey. You're not supposed to say that.

Mr Cordiano: The facts don't bear that out. This government demands—

Hon Mrs Ecker: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With respect, I believe the honourable member has said something unparliamentary. I think he should withdraw it, sir.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I was checking my time—

Mr Cordiano: I withdraw if it was unparliamentary.

The Speaker: I thank the member for his gracious—continue.

Mr Cordiano: The fact remains that this government demands accountability from others, but when it's asked to share information that could put it in a bad light, it exempts itself from any accountability. As a matter of fact, prior to 1998, the Ministry of Health regularly released data regarding ambulance redirect and critical bypass. Since then we haven't seen any of those data released. When our staff requested this information through a freedom of information request, we were refused on the grounds that, "This disclosure could be expected to seriously threaten the safety of an individual." Well, Minister, it is your refusal to release that information that seriously threatens the people in my riding. I want to ask you again: when will you release that vital information so that the public is safeguarded?

Hon Mr Clement: First of all, let me state for the record that the actual number has been \$700 million in new dollars for emergency services since 1995, the most recent of which is to help pay for a patient priority system that allows the individual hospitals to converse properly with the individual ambulance drivers and the dispatch, to ensure that we know the type of acuity the

driver is driving to a particular hospital to make sure no person is turned away, to make sure each individual hospital is aware of the type of acuity before the patient arrives there, and to make sure the person is treated fairly and comprehensively upon arrival.

That is the new patient priority system. It has been applauded by the hospital sector; it has been applauded by the dispatch sector; it has been applauded by the ambulance drivers. We had an independent expert panel offer these conclusions, which we in turn 100% accepted. If the honourable member has a problem with that, he's the only person.

VICTIM EMPOWERMENT LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question today is for the Minister of Correctional Services. As part of our government's ongoing commitment to strengthen and protect victims' rights, unlike of course what members opposite have ever done, and to create safer communities, your ministry introduced Bill 60, called the Victim Empowerment Act, on Monday, May 28. This bill, if passed, would allow victims of crime to attend parole hearings, which currently they are unable to do. The bill also proposes monitoring inmates' phone calls and grooming standards for inmates.

There are some critics of this bill who have argued that parole hearings should be open to the media and the public. Can you tell us more about how these initiatives will help to enhance community safety, as well as institutional safety, and encourage respect and accountability.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): To my honourable colleague, the name of the bill is the Victim Empowerment Act because that's indeed what it does. It gives victims some empowerment in the justice system so they can play a more meaningful role in things like parole hearings. Currently, under the parole hearings, victims are allowed to submit written submissions to the parole board that's doing the hearing. They can have a communication with members of the parole board before the parole hearing. This act, if passed, will allow victims to actually participate in the parole hearings, to physically be there, make deputations in front of the parole board member and the potential parolee, hear from the parolee the reasons why they think they should be entitled to an early release from jail, and, frankly, hear the decision as it is delivered to the potential parolees. That's active and very positive participation in the parole process.

Yes, lawyers are not allowed in that process. The time for lawyers has passed. The courts have had their time, the judges have had their say. This is a time for victims, and indeed that's what we'll be doing in this act.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to seek unanimous consent to move second reading of An Act to amend The Wilfrid Laurier University Act.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's very disappointing that the NDP have chosen to play politics with the students at Wilfrid Laurier with regard to this new act.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: What's disappointing is this government's refusal to allow province-wide, wide-based hearings on Bill 45—

The Speaker: We're not going to get into that.

We're now going to hear from the government House leader, I believe, on the order for next week.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 55, I have a statement of business of the House for next week.

Monday afternoon we will continue debate on Bill 56. Monday evening will be second reading of Bill 58.

Tuesday afternoon will be a Liberal opposition day. Tuesday evening we will continue debate on Bill 58.

Wednesday afternoon we will continue debate on Bill 56. Wednesday evening will be determined.

Thursday morning, during private members' business, we will discuss ballot items 11 and 12, and Thursday afternoon we will continue debate on Bill 58.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to express my dissatisfaction with the answer provided today by the Minister of Health and I have filed the appropriate papers with the table.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Chatham-Kent Essex has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health concerning radiology shortage in Essex, Chatham, Kent and Lambton. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm. I thank the member.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Under section 37(a) of the standing orders, I rise to give notice of dissatisfaction with the answer of the Minister of Natural Resources to the member for Northumberland's question regarding Henrietta. Mrs Anita Young and the people of Wawa are awaiting an answer on Henrietta. I have offered to take her into my custody, and I believe we could debate that at six o'clock this evening.

The Speaker: I appreciate that the member will know that he can't be dissatisfied with a question asked by somebody else.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just like to seek unanimous consent to allow the member to have a late

show with the Minister of Natural Resources on the Henrietta issue.

The Speaker: We'll deal with the unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to point out, because I know he'll feel left out, that the member for Nepean-Carleton has also expressed displeasure with the brevity that I dealt with the blue-spotted salamander. I hope to redress that in a further statement.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I received this petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas tax credits for private schools will create two-tier education;

"Whereas the government's plan is to give parents a \$3,500 enticement to pull their kids out of public schools;

"Whereas tax credits for private schools will encourage the growth of a segregated society of narrowly focused interests;

"Whereas tax credits for private schools will steal money from an already cash-starved public system and deliver public money to special interests who do not have to account for its use;

"Whereas tax credits for private schools effectively create a voucher system in Ontario;

"Whereas the Harris government has no mandate to introduce such a measure,

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

"We call on the government of Ontario to withdraw its plan for two-tiered education and properly fund public education in Ontario."

I affix my signature.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the announced tax credit for private school tuition will lead to government funds being directed to private education rather than the underfunded public school system that is mandated to educate all children, regardless of cultural, religious or socio-economic status;

"Whereas the education tax credit of up to \$3,500 per child, when fully implemented, will lead to an increase of students being enrolled in private schools to the detriment of the public schools;

"Whereas there will be no accountability for the use of public funds allocated through the education tuition tax credit; and

"Whereas the advocates for religious schools have indicated they will continue to seek full funding for reli-

gious education with the potential result of more public funding being diverted to private schools;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Ontario Legislature to vote to remove the education tuition tax credit from Bill 45, the Ontario 2001 budget legislation.”

That’s signed by P. Esposito of Welland, by D. Heelis of Fonthill and by thousands of others. I give it to Mark, the legislative page, affixed with my signature.

1530

LORD’S PRAYER

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Just before I start, I’d like to say that I am ending my personal protest against petitions being certified and I will now continue to present them in the House.

This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Lord’s prayer, also called Our Father, has been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada in the 18th century; and

“Whereas such use of the Lord’s Prayer is part of Ontario’s long-standing heritage and a tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary life;

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer is a meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

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

“That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord’s Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established custom, and do all in its power to maintain the use of the prayer in municipal chambers throughout Ontario.”

I affix my name to that as I believe in it.

NURSES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the nurses of Ontario are seeking relief from heavy workloads, which have contributed to unsafe conditions for patients and have increased the risk of injury to nurses; and

“Whereas there is a chronic nursing shortage in Ontario;

“Whereas the Ontario government has failed to live up to its commitment to provide safe, high quality care for patients;

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

“We demand the Ontario government take positive action to ensure that our communities have enough nursing staff to provide patients with the care they need. The Ontario government must:

“Ensure wages and benefits are competitive and value all nurses for their dedication and commitment; ensure there are full-time and regular part-time jobs available for nurses in hospitals, nursing homes and the community;

ensure government revenues fund health care, not tax cuts; ensure front-line nurses play a key role in health reform decisions.”

Again, I have a number of these petitions, part of the 10,000 names that we have on petitions, and I affix my own name in full agreement with their concerns.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will create two-tier education;

“Whereas the government’s plan to give parents a \$3,500 entitlement to pull their kids out of public schools;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will encourage the growth of a segregated society of narrowly focused interests;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will steal money from an already cash-starved public system and deliver public money to special interests who do not have to account for its use;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools effectively create a voucher system in Ontario;

“Whereas the Harris government has no mandate to introduce such a measure,

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

“We call on the government of Ontario to withdraw its plan for two-tiered education and properly fund public education in Ontario.”

These petitions have been signed by thousands of people across the province and I affix my signature to it.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I’ve got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, a very important petition I might say. I’m getting hundreds and hundreds of signatures on this.

“Whereas wide parental and student choice are essential to the best possible education for all students; and

“Whereas many people believe that an education with a strong faith component, be it Christian, Sikh”—especially Sikh—“Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or another religion, is best for their children; and

“Whereas many people believe that special education methodologies such as those practised in the Montessori and Waldorf schools are best for their children; and

“Whereas over 100,000 students are currently enrolled in the independent schools of Ontario; and

“Whereas the parents of these students continue to support the public education system through their tax dollars; and

“Whereas an effective way to enhance the education of those students is to allow an education tax credit for a portion of the tuition fees paid for that education;

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

“To pass the budget bill giving tax credits to parents of children who attend independent schools as soon as possible.”

Since I agree, I’m happy to sign my name to it.

WATER EXTRACTION

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the residents and cottagers of Bob’s Lake, strenuously object to the permit issued by the Ministry of the Environment to OMYA Inc to remove 1.5 million litres of water per day from the Tay River, without adequate assessment of the consequences and without adequate consultation with the public and those people and groups who have expertise and interest; and

“Whereas it is our belief that this water-taking will drastically impact the environment and seriously affect the water levels in Bob’s Lake and Christie Lake;

“Whereas Bob’s Lake and the Tay River watershed are already highly stressed by the historic responsibility of Parks Canada to use Bob’s Lake as a reservoir for the Rideau Canal; and

“Whereas the movement of water from the lake through the watershed for navigation purposes in the canal provides sufficient stress and problems for the lake. This water-taking permit will only compound the stresses on the waterway;

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

“We request that this permit be rescinded until a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of water-taking by OMYA Inc on the environment, the water levels and the water needs of these communities is complete. An independent non-partisan body should undertake this evaluation.”

I will affix my signature to this petition.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I’ve got another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will create two-tier education;

“Whereas the government plans to give parents a \$3,500 enticement to pull their kids out of public schools;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will encourage the growth of a segregated society of”—narrowly focused—“interests;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will steal money from an already cash-starved public system” and deliver public money to special interests who do not have to account for its use;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools effectively create a voucher system in Ontario;

“Whereas the Harris government has no mandate to introduce such a measure;

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

“We call on the government of Ontario to withdraw its plan for two-tiered education and properly fund public education in Ontario.”

That’s signed by Stephanie Repar of Fonthill, Michael Petrachenko of Welland and thousands of others across Niagara region.

ELECTRICITY GENERATING STATION

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I appreciate the opportunity to present a petition to the Parliament of Ontario on behalf of the member for Oakville, Gary Carr, and myself as the member for Mississauga South. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas Sithe Energies Canadian Development Ltd is actively pursuing the development of an 800 MW electricity generating facility;

“Whereas the 14-hectare parcel of land on which the station is proposed is located on the east side of Winston Churchill Boulevard in the Southdown industrial district of Mississauga;

“Whereas Sithe has stated its commitment to an open dialogue with communities where it has a presence and to being responsive to the concerns of the same; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has a responsibility to ensure the safety of Ontario citizens and to determine how this facility will impact those who live in its immediate, surrounding area;

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

“That the government of Ontario direct the Ministry of the Environment to undertake a formal environmental assessment of the Sithe project.”

We are now up to over 8,000 names in this petition, and it is with a great deal of pleasure that I sign the petition in support.

1540

SALE OF SCHOOLS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario which reads as follows:

“Whereas the Hughes Public School at 17 Innes Ave in the city of Toronto closed down and its premises have been declared surplus by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB);

“Whereas the city of Toronto has issued a building permit to the TDSB permitting the reconstruction of Hughes Public School for an entity called Beatrice House, for the purpose of a private academic school;

“Whereas the Beatrice House is not a private school”—at least it’s not registered with the Ministry of Education, nor has it been issued as an organization.

“Whereas other locations, such as the Brother Edmund Rice School at 55 Pelham Park or the EarlsCourt Public

School at 29 Ascot, which are being closed down, have been offered to Beatrice House to no avail;

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

“That the Honourable Minister of Education investigate the leasing arrangement between the Toronto District School Board and Beatrice House inasmuch as:

“(1) Boards are to seek fair market value when selling ...

“(2) Boards are to offer the property to coterminous boards and other public agencies operating in the area ...

“(3) Toronto District School Board has not dealt in good faith with our neighbourhood residents;

“Therefore, we respectfully ask you to consider our plea for justice. The Toronto District School Board has ignored our concerns and due diligence. We as a community tried everything within our power to fight the glaring and obvious wrong done to us, to no avail.”

Since I agree, I sign my name to it.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I’ve got a petition once again addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will create two-tier education;

“Whereas the government’s plan is to give parents a \$3,500 incentive to pull their kids out of public schools;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will encourage the growth of a segregated society of narrowly focused interests;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will steal money from an already cash-starved public system and deliver public money to special interests who do not have to account for its use;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools effectively create a voucher system in Ontario;

“Whereas the Harris government has no mandate to introduce such a measure;

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

“We call on the government of Ontario to withdraw its plan for two-tiered education and properly fund public education in Ontario.”

That’s signed by Mike Hunter of St Catharines, by Gary MacDonald of Thorold and by thousands of others from across Niagara region.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows—

Applause.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you, member for Mississauga South.

“Whereas children are being exposed to sexually explicit materials in many commercial establishments; and

“Whereas many municipalities do not have bylaws in place to protect minors and those that do vary from place to place and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials; and

“Whereas uniform standards are needed in Ontario that would make it illegal to sell, rent, loan or display sexually explicit materials to minors;

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

“To pass Bill 95, Protection of Minors from Sexually Explicit Goods and Services Act, 2000, as soon as possible.”

I’m pleased to attach my signature to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BROWNFIELDS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES FRICHES CONTAMINÉES

Mr Hodgson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to encourage the revitalization of contaminated land and to make other amendments relating to environmental matters / Projet de loi 56, Loi visant à encourager la revitalisation des terrains contaminés et apportant d’autres modifications se rapportant à des questions environnementales.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I will be sharing my time with the member for Durham, the Minister of Transportation and the member for Simcoe North.

It’s my great pleasure today to rise in the House and speak to an important piece of legislation that is intended to foster clean, healthy and dynamic communities in this province by encouraging the environmental cleanup and revitalization of lands known as brownfields.

The Brownfields Statute Law Amendment Act is a key element in this government’s encompassing commitment to reasoned, thoughtful growth and development in Ontario. This legislation is a kick-start for the environmental cleanup and renewal of brownfields: former industrial or commercial sites that can be found in virtually every community throughout Ontario.

I know that many members of this House share this government’s conviction that the revitalization of the province’s brownfields is vital to the future development of our communities. We’ve conducted consultations on this issue, we’ve had a working group look at this issue, and the time is right to have debate on this legislation, not just from the parties in the House but from members of the public as well. I’m particularly interested in hearing from people who would take on the challenge of revitalizing these brownfields sites. I welcome their review of this legislation and encourage their feedback. This is a

very important piece of legislation and I want to make sure that it works and does what it intends to do.

As members are aware, brownfields are usually located in urban cores, close to municipal services like transportation, sewers and water, and as such, brownfield sites represent an enormous untapped resource. Facilitating their development encourages efficient and effective use of existing municipal infrastructure, services and resources.

Brownfields exist in many communities throughout Ontario, often on lands that were previously home to chemical plants, dry cleaning stores, gas stations, railway yards or factories. These properties are usually located close to existing urban services and community transportation. Because of that, brownfields offer tremendous environmental, economic, social and fiscal benefits for the communities that choose to redevelop them.

As they are cleaned and redeveloped and as people once again choose to live and work to re-energize the area, there can be enormous social and economic gains to the whole community. Cleaning up and redeveloping brownfields can also help preserve our vital green spaces and farmland for all the people of this province.

I believe the most exciting aspect of cleaning up these contaminated lands is not just so that it will benefit communities today, but that it will be of enormous benefit for generations to come. By bringing these old industrial and commercial sites back to life, communities have a unique opportunity to improve their quality of life and protect the environment, to attract new business and new development and jobs.

To date, as I mentioned, we have conducted consultations. We have consulted with experts across Ontario during the past two years. We put together a panel of brownfield experts who worked with my ministry and with the Ministry of the Environment to prepare legislation that would encourage the revitalization of brownfields. The brownfields advisory panel chair, Blake Hutcheson, president of CB Richard Ellis Ltd in Canada, says this legislation supports the recommendations of the panel. If I may quote Blake, he says, "We believe this legislation will be good for Ontario, as it is both well thought out and balanced."

Today we have an opportunity to debate this progressive, forward-thinking legislation that will benefit all of Ontario's communities. I would encourage the public to take this opportunity to provide feedback as well. The intent of this legislation is to assist brownfield redevelopment in several key areas; to set out clear rules for cleanup of contaminated brownfield sites; to ensure that environmental standards are met and public health protected; to provide liability protection from future environmental orders from municipalities, lenders, owners and developers involved with brownfield properties; and to streamline planning processes to expedite brownfield projects and to help municipalities provide financial support for cleanup costs.

Cleaning up brownfields improves our soil and water quality and protects human health. By encouraging re-

development of brownfields, the legislation fosters clean, healthy, dynamic neighbourhoods and communities that all Ontarians want and deserve. Brownfields redevelopment supports more efficient use of existing infrastructure in services like sewers and public transportation, relieving pressure to expand on farmland or on greenfield sites. However, the tremendous benefits that brownfields offer are not being realized today because it can be difficult to clean up and redevelop these sites under the current legislative framework.

The proposed legislation and subsequent regulations will set out an environmentally responsible approach for cleaning up brownfields, while maintaining the Ministry of the Environment's powers to issue orders to address an environmental emergency or to take strong action against polluters.

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The purpose of the Brownfields Statute Law Amendment Act is to provide clarity and certainty for those involved in brownfields redevelopment: municipalities, developers, lenders and environmentalists. It addresses a number of specific issues now faced by those who wish to bring these lands back to life.

For example, the act is intended to provide:

Clear rules for cleanup through mandatory site assessment and cleanup, if required, of industrial and commercial sites being redeveloped into sensitive land uses such as residential and parkland, giving standards for contaminated levels in the soil and the groundwater the force of law and prescribing how a site assessment and cleanup is to be carried out;

Clear rules for environmental liability by providing protection from future environmental orders: for example, for a municipality from taking action for purposes of tax sales or actions related to other municipal responsibilities; secured creditors when taking actions to protect the interests in a property; persons conducting environmental investigations while acquiring interest in a property; and owners who follow the prescribed site assessment and cleanup process, including using a certified site cleanup professional and a mandatory reporting to the public site registry;

Ensuring quality cleanup and accountability through signoff by certified professionals, mandatory certification of site cleanup professionals and mandatory reporting of site assessment and cleanup through a public registry.

There may be some who question the need for this legislation. After all, brownfield redevelopment is occurring in some municipalities throughout Ontario today and my ministry is front and centre in highlighting these pioneering efforts through the ministry's brownfields showcase. But at the present, the process is very complex, difficult and frustrating. I believe we are missing an incredible opportunity to develop our communities. Without legislation of this kind, we will undoubtedly miss countless more opportunities.

Developers, municipalities and investors have all let us know that there are concerns with the process as it stands today. They have told us of the need for reform in

the legislation if we are going to make environmental and economic progress with these sites.

The Brownfields Statute Law Amendment Act is designed to remove the key obstacles to cleaning up and recycling these valuable lands. It will help us sponsor the clean, vibrant, dynamic neighbourhoods and communities that all Ontarians want. It will help us preserve our green spaces and our farmlands. It will help communities make more efficient use of existing infrastructure.

Communities will be able to make this work if it's passed by the Legislature. In essence, it will help communities grow more wisely and efficiently. The proposed legislation is good for the environment and it's good for human health. It calls for well-managed growth and it encourages local economic development and revitalizes our communities.

If enacted, the final legislation will form an important part of our government's overall Smart Growth initiative. As honourable members know, Ontario's Smart Growth vision is about managing our continued economic growth in a way that makes sure we have a healthy environment and a good quality of life. It's about giving people choices no matter where they live in Ontario and ensuring we have an infrastructure that will allow for those choices. Smart Growth is about encouraging sound community development. Cleaning up and reusing brownfields will help us create the conditions for continued growth that benefits our environment, our economy and our communities.

As members are aware, the Premier asked myself and my parliamentary assistant, Morley Kells, to lead a government-wide exercise in developing a made-in-Ontario Smart Growth strategy. We are consulting with people throughout the province. We are holding 17 regional consultation sessions as well as encouraging people to communicate their ideas on how we can have strong growth, healthy communities and a strong, healthy environment through newspaper ads that give the address of how to respond. We have a Web site as well. We're looking forward to hearing ideas from people right across Ontario on how to develop a made-in-Ontario Smart Growth strategy.

This brownfields legislation we're proposing today is a key component of our vision. I would encourage all members to take part in this debate, and I would encourage you to suggest improvements. I think it's in the interests of the government and in the interests of all the members of this House that this legislation is well done and does what it intends to do, to allow these areas that are contaminated in our downtown areas throughout Ontario to be revitalized, brought back into productive use, and to encourage less use of our green space.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Further debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to follow the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who I know has been and is leading a kind of visioning exercise, or is certainly leading the way in a visionary way to smart growth for sustainable communities across Ontario. In my briefings on Bill 56, I can tell you as a

former municipal councillor in the town of Bowmanville, the municipality of Clarington and the region of Durham, from time to time old gas station sites were particularly a problem. They ended up in many cases being abandoned, and yet these were serviced sites, usually with commercial designation, but no one wanted to assume any part of the liability. In fact, if you look at the waterfront in Toronto or in many communities like Hamilton or indeed Oshawa, I think every community has these sites. These sites are under-utilized economic losses or liabilities.

There are actually quite a few sections in the bill, but I think there are really eight particular sections. I'm going to dwell on just a couple of them under Bill 56 and make a couple of comments with suggestions I've heard in the community as well. I think it's important to put on the record that this comes under part II under the Environmental Protection Act amendments. For anyone listening or for those in the debate, it's important to realize that in no way does this exempt people from a very rigorous environmental oversight, while at the same time permitting both landowners and indeed municipalities to make the right decisions to make proper use of what our minister has called Smart Growth opportunities to make better use of current serviced land in many cases.

I just want to put on the record that I've spoken with and listened to the editor of the Orono Times, Marg Zwart. I believe she is the owner/editor of the Orono Times and has made significant inquiries with the York Durham Ministry of the Environment office with respect to the rehabilitation of an old gas station location in the village of Orono. I would say she is quite frustrated with how this really gets resolved, because in many cases what happens is that the current owner of record is unable to sell it because there are potential risks or liabilities, the banks won't advance money because they don't have an assessment on ways to rehabilitate the property or, in fact, it may have potentially leached to the adjacent property. So there are a lot of unknowns. Not only that, but a lot of money has to be spent to make those determinations.

So I commend Marg and others. In fact, I'm familiar with, from being on council, several sites that spent hundreds of thousands in litigation to find out where the contamination may have come from. It could have come from an adjacent gas station or other site. In most cases, industrial sites from many years past, abandoned, are owned by the public, technically, in default of taxes.

But getting back to the particulars of Bill 56, it's important to put on the record that part II of the bill amends the Environmental Protection Act and adds two new parts to the act. "The proposed part XV.1 of the act provides the establishment of an environmental site registry. It's very important that first we have a good inventory of those sites. Phase one environmental assessments are done on the site. It's required to determine the likelihood that contaminants have affected the property. "A more detailed assessment (referred to as a 'phase two environmental site assessment') may be required to determine the concentration of contaminants on the property.

If a phase two environmental site assessment is conducted in respect of any part of the property, a qualified person must certify in the record of site condition that the assessed property meets standards prescribed by regulation or that, in the case of specific contaminants, the assessed property meets standards specified in the risk assessment that has been accepted by the director. If the director accepts a risk assessment, he or she may also issue a certificate of property use that requires the owner to take actions specified in the certificate or to refrain from using the property for a use specified in the certificate or from constructing a building specified in the certificate.”

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So it outlines the site uses, really. “If a record of site condition is filed in the environmental site registry, the bill provides that certain types of orders specified by the bill cannot be made against the owner of the property and certain other persons, subject to specified exceptions.” That’s a very important part with exposing yourself to the liability once you’ve done these phase one and phase two site assessments.

The proposed part XV.1 also prohibits certain specific changes of property use. For example, you can’t change a site from industrial use to residential use “unless a record of site condition has been filed in the environmental site registry” and, of course, has met certain conditions. No one would want to see residential property or homes built on a prior contaminated industrial site.

“The proposed part XV.2 of the act contains special provisions that apply to municipalities, secured creditors, receivers, trustees in bankruptcy, fiduciaries and property investigators. These provisions provide protection to those persons from the making of orders under the act, subject to limitations and exceptions” specific in the act. In other words, third party people cannot be made liable because they’re involved in underwriting some of the expenses.

But part VII of the Planning Act—and I think this is very important—is the second part that I wanted to spend some time on. “Part VII of the bill amends the Planning Act. The amendments provide that municipalities may make grants or loans to tenants, as well as property owners” and could be exempted from taxes or something like that, “for the purpose of carrying out community improvement plans.” For instance, in downtown Bowmanville on King Street, there has been an abandoned gas station there right in the heart of town. It’s prime property, but it’s a gas station and nobody wants to develop it. It has just gone from owner to owner, and site application has failed one after another. But it’s a very valuable commercial piece in a small town, and it’s a service piece. It could be argued that if that site isn’t used, that proposed building goes somewhere else, and eventually it encroaches on agricultural land or land that isn’t serviced. It puts another burden on the community to expend or extend services. So this is an important opportunity for municipalities, and the tax assistance provided to the property under the amendment made to

the Municipal Act by part III of the bill cannot exceed the cost of the rehabilitation of the property.

In other words, what happens if they rehabilitate the property and it goes back into active use is that it’s reassessed as a current active commercial or industrial site and in fact goes back into production and then creates revenue by being assessed at current value and being assessed at current use and raises revenue for the municipality which in fact isn’t currently being collected because it’s abandoned and in tax arrears.

I think those are very good amendments. But I want to mention a couple of things that aren’t particularly germane here, I suppose. I was at a presentation the other day by the cement caucus. Wayne Dawson represents the cement industry, which in my riding is an important employer of 200 or 300 people. They brought forward a very innovative way to rehabilitate brownfield sites that many jurisdictions are using in certain applications. It’s called cement stabilization. Cleaning up and reusing of brownfield sites benefits our environment, our economy and our communities and arguably the quality of life, as well as improving the municipal assessment base. By making it easier to take advantage of brownfield opportunities, this legislation will make more effective use of existing infrastructure and preserve our parks and farmland, our natural and heritage landscapes.

So I think it’s a very, very important initiative, one that I certainly support. I encourage all members on the other side—who I know are equally interested in rehabilitating current use. I think the best example perhaps would be the Toronto waterfront properties, potentially a site of future development—arguably, it could be the Olympics. The proposed brownfield legislation will incorporate many recommendations made by a panel of brownfield experts appointed by the province in September of the year 2000. Furthermore, a brief summary of other jurisdictions demonstrates the currency of addressing the public policy issue of brownfield redevelopment. In fact, it is a growing area of expertise, and I think that knowledge and that knowledge base will make better use of existing sites that are now completely dormant or deserted.

The May 10 edition of the Economist reports that the British Tory government in 1996 introduced the rule of sequential testing in planning laws. Developers now have to prove there is no suitable location inside a town or city before they can hope to get planning permission on a greenfield site. What that means is that urban sprawl, urban expansion—there are some very good principles, as we can see in other jurisdictions.

The change in the rule is designed to promote similar principles as laid out in our government’s Smart Growth strategy. On the record, I want to commend the Honourable Chris Hodgson, the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. I was at the first Smart Growth symposium, which was held in Peterborough. The member from Peterborough, Gary Stewart, of course was there, along with the member from Northumberland, Doug Galt. But I think most importantly there were

members from I think it's the Kawartha Lakes Conservation Authority, the president and/or members of the Trent University staff—a very well respected environmental academic institution—and as well Sir Sandford Fleming College was represented. They've done a number of imaginative and innovative things with respect to environmental sustainability, with a lot of good programs and courses in Peterborough, at Trent and Sandford on that issue, which all fit very nicely into the whole Smart Growth principle.

I want to report, though, that at that meeting there were Mayor Sylvia Sutherland and other municipal leaders, and not just chambers of commerce but ordinary citizens, and I would say business people, developers, whom we have to recognize we have to coexist with. We have to somehow have a sustainable economy. We must provide safe, high quality of life communities where the environment is highly respected. This is a problem whereby, working together rather than just ignoring these things, we can have more sustainable communities.

The National Deal Flow Conference recently took place in Chicago. This trade show brings together all parties in the US with a professional interest in cleaning up and redeveloping America's environmentally impaired properties, or brownfields, and here is evidence that the market is interested in cleaning up brownfields. So the will is there, I think at all levels of government right through to the conservation authorities, to do the right thing.

That material is not going to get any better or improve. Arguably it could be leached from the property if it isn't dealt with sooner or later. US states, in co-operation with the Environmental Protection Agency, are developing brownfield redevelopment programs. In fact, 47 states now have voluntary cleanup programs in place. More than 20 states offer financial incentives to firms that undertake brownfield redevelopment. Pennsylvania is a leader in this important policy domain and will clean up its 1,000th brownfield site this summer.

The technology for cleaning up industrial contaminated brownfields has improved steadily and substantially. As members know, along with others, I have successfully developed a relationship, through the creation of a non-partisan cement caucus, with Wayne Dawson, who is vice-president, Ontario region, Cement Association of Canada. I might mention that members of the Liberal caucus as well as the NDP caucus who have cement operators in their areas are willing members of this association of MPPs who are trying to work with their community and existing government ministries, to do the right thing.

Our goal has been to advance the public policy discourse around the economic and environmental benefits associated with the cement industry. Cement presents some important options for brownfield redevelopment in the future. In the few remaining moments I have left, I'm just going to talk about that.

As I start this potential application, the cement operation that was St Marys became Blue Circle, then became

Lafarge, and I think just recently devolved because of competitive models into I think a Brazilian company. That's 300 jobs. It's a resource that's located in my riding on the shores of Lake Ontario in Bowmanville and it's an important employer for my constituents.

It's out of respect for that group—I'm sure whether it's Mississauga South, Margaret Marland's riding, and Mr Sampson as well, the minister there, I think, has a cement operation in his riding in Mississauga.

1610

In early May, the Cement Association of Canada hosted a site remediation workshop. Cement caucus members of all three political parties were invited and did attend. The workshop provided a forum for discussion of cement-based solidification and stabilization treatment technology for environmental remediation. At the May meeting of the cement caucus, we were privileged to hear a presentation by Charles Wilk, program manager for waste management at the US Portland Cement Association.

Solidification/stabilization treatment—S/S is the acronym—is used to treat industrial waste for disposal and in the remediation and site restoration of contaminated land. Solidification/stabilization is a popular technology in brownfield redevelopment since treated waste can often be left on-site, for instance, as a parking lot, to actually improve the site soils for subsequent construction of parking garages or other spaces where it's an appropriate use. That's where the scientist and the evidence work together.

Solidification/stabilization treatment involves mixing a blended agent into the contaminated waste. Successful treatment is accomplished through physical changes to the waste form and often chemical changes to the hazardous contaminants themselves. A commonly used S/S binding agent happens to be Portland cement. In the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency considers solidification/stabilization to be an established treatment technology. The EPA has identified S/S cement stabilization treatment as the best demonstrated available treatment technology for at least 57 commonly produced industrial wastes and has selected S/S treatment for 25% of the Superfund—this is their version of a program for remediation projects. It's sort of like a fund of money the federal government has set up to get rid of all these brownfield sites that, after years of neglect, are still there.

The extensive use of S/S in waste treatment and remediation makes it important that environmental professionals understand the physical and chemical principles of the technology, as well as how to apply the technology in the field.

Mr Tom Markowitz and Mr Robert Bruce represented the Ontario Ministry of the Environment at the workshop. I'm looking forward to meeting with them in the near future to further explore the use of solidification/stabilization treatment technology for environmental remediation of brownfields right here in Ontario and the applicable regulatory requirements, as outlined in Bill 56, and resources available to properly implement cement

stabilization as an effective treatment technology on contaminated sites.

Experience demonstrates that S/S is an effective tool in brownfield site remediation. Projects have included shopping malls, golf courses, auto-marine terminals, waterfronts. The advantages clearly demonstrate that there is value in adapting this type of approach to Ontario's legal, regulatory and real estate development environment, all in conformance with the Environmental Protection Act.

This government is acting to ensure that appropriate legislated mechanisms and safeguards are in place to ensure quality cleanup and containment of brownfields is a dominant part of the solution. The work of this government, through the leadership of Minister Hodgson, will provide a practical and environmentally sound approach to brownfield redevelopment that will ensure Ontario has cleaner, healthier and safer communities. Our strategy will provide clear rules for the assessment and cleanup of contaminated sites, clear rules for environmental liability, clear rules for quality assurance mechanisms, planning tools and financial tools.

The Brownfields Statute Amendment Act, but one aspect of the Progressive Conservative government's Smart Growth strategy, will result in the integration of land use and transportation, management of growth at an extra-regional scale, development and redevelopment of urban centres themselves. As our population expands, we've got to use less land, or at least existing serviced land more effectively, while protecting and conserving our natural environment, ecological functions and indeed promoting public transit.

The brownfields legislation is part of Ontario's Smart Growth strategy, as I've said before, promoting and managing growth in ways that sustain a strong economy, building strong communities and, most importantly for us and our families, promoting a healthy environment and healthy communities. This government is providing the framework for difficult but necessary decisions that will ensure we foster development and growth to keep Ontario strong, growing and ready for the 21st century.

Part of this framework is the Brownfields Statute Law Amendment Act. The legislation makes it easier to clean up and develop derelict brownfield sites, which will take pressure off greenfields and prime agricultural land, like in my riding of Durham.

I know there are others who are absolutely prancing to participate in this debate and, with that, I'm going to relinquish some of my time to, I believe, the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford or Simcoe North. Mr Speaker, thank you for the time to participate on Bill 56.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak to Bill 56, the Brownfields Statute Law Amendment Act. I'd like to thank the member for Durham, Mr O'Toole, for his comments. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Minister Hodgson, for putting forth this bill.

As most members know, brownfields are sites on which industrial or commercial activity took place in the past but are currently abandoned. These properties may or may not be contaminated. I think pretty well everyone in this House has driven by many of these sites across our province over the years. Quite often you see them not only in and around the cities but you see them in small towns. Some of our older factories that are no longer in operation are actually, in my opinion, fairly sad sights to see.

They're often located in prime locations where infrastructure and other urban services already exist. That's an important part in itself for this act because this act will allow the removal of those contaminated soils, to take advantage of that very expensive infrastructure that exists today.

Last September, the former Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr Clement, announced the appointment of an advisory panel to provide expert advice on the environmental cleanup and rejuvenation of brownfields. The result of these consultations is the Brownfields Statute Law Amendment Act. If passed, it would encourage the environmental cleanup and revitalization of these lands.

It is interesting to note that the Harris government was the first to introduce a process and a set of environmental standards for site cleanup here in Ontario. The proposed brownfields legislation, and regulations that follow it, would give these standards the force of law and set out a process for cleaning up brownfields.

The minister has found that one of the prime barriers to widespread brownfield redevelopment is current concern over environmental liability. I think pretty well everyone is aware of that as well, when we talk about where old gas stations and service stations were located, where gas and oil were spilled in the past. Many people—insurance companies, environmentalists—are very concerned about those sites. In a lot of cases, municipalities wouldn't even want to take on the responsibility, even if people hadn't paid their taxes on those particular sites. Despite the tremendous benefits to be gained from redeveloping brownfields, financial institutions and developers are often reluctant to invest in these sites. The caution stems from concerns over potential liability for future environmental problems and the financial implications of this liability.

The proposed legislation sets out clear rules for limiting future environmental liability, complemented by checks and balances to ensure that environmental standards are met and that the people of Ontario are protected.

The proposed changes do not alter the Ministry of the Environment's powers to ensure orders to address environmental emergencies or to take strong action against polluters. The ministry will continue to audit site cleanups.

Cleaning up brownfield sites has tremendous environmental benefits. It improves our soil and water quality and protects human health. The legislation, if passed by this House—and I certainly hope it will be passed—

would also remove the key obstacles to cleaning up and recycling brownfield materials.

By making it easier to take advantage of brownfield opportunities, this legislation will make more efficient use of existing infrastructure and preserve our parks and farmlands for the future. That's important too. If we can redevelop these lands, we can think of less farmland that will be used down the road in the future; there will be less of a concern about very sensitive areas like wetlands and that type of thing.

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Redeveloping brownfields will help meet the needs of our growing economy while protecting our natural and heritage landscapes. By making brownfields redevelopment easier, the proposed legislation will enable communities to improve their quality of life, be more competitive, and attract new businesses and jobs. Of course, those are the jobs that we continually refer to in all of our deliberations and all of our legislation: jobs for the future, jobs for the young people of our province.

This bill is an important step in the implementation of our Smart Growth program. As mentioned before, Smart Growth deals with growth in ways that sustain a strong economy, build strong communities and promote a healthy environment. It involves making decisions now on such things as protected spaces and public transit, decisions that will influence what Ontario looks like not only now, but 10 years, 20 years and even 30 years from now.

"Smart Growth" is a term that's been used by this government for the last few months. Smart Growth has become a high priority for our government. When we released our 2001 budget, the government said it would focus half of the \$1-billion SuperBuild millennium partnership fund on transportation and environmental initiatives.

Some of the goals of Smart Growth are, first, to move people and goods more efficiently, and it's important that we have a great transportation system in our province; second, to promote technological innovations to keep Ontario competitive in the global economy; third, to expand transportation choices within and between communities and between residential areas and places of work. I know that's really a concern that we have in our area in the Simcoe county region, because we have literally thousands and thousands of people—I think up to 30,000 people per day—who travel between the Barrie area and the south Simcoe area and the GTA. That's putting a tremendous burden on our transportation system. We would certainly like to see growth patterns where more industry or more jobs were up in the central part of the county so we wouldn't have this huge number of people commuting each day between the Barrie area and the city of Toronto.

We would also protect natural areas and farmland for future generations. I don't think there's anybody in this province now who doesn't agree that we have to do more to protect our environment, our very sensitive areas, our ANSI areas. This is for our future, our children, and I

think it's fairly unanimous across the province that we want this saved.

It would also encourage growth in areas where it will have the least impact on the environment and it will promote partnerships to execute the goals of this strategy.

Ontario Smart Growth also involves giving people lifestyle choice no matter where they live. It's a long-term, forward-looking strategy that requires input from the people of Ontario. To that end, the government is holding consultations with municipal leaders and business leaders, environmentalists and other community representatives in regions across our province. I am pleased that June 5—next Tuesday, I believe it is—the team will be visiting the Barrie area. I've already notified a few of the municipal leaders and some of the environmental groups in my area that they should attend this meeting and get some input into some of the Smart Growth policies.

I'm also pleased that Smart Growth fits in very well with the Oak Ridges moraine legislation and the brownfields legislation. They all sort of meld together, they're sort of intertwined, because we need to be very careful of the sensitivity of most of the areas around our province that are highly sensitive.

I have one of those areas in my riding: the Oro moraine. It's just as important to the residents of Oro-Medonte township as the Oak Ridges moraine is to the people who live in that particular moraine area. Although it is not quite as large, the Oro moraine does supply huge volumes of water to the city of Barrie and to developments throughout Oro-Medonte township. But there is a strong concern from the residents of that area that they want development carefully monitored and they want to look at the future of the moraine very carefully.

For that reason, I had the opportunity last March to host an event we held at a water symposium that is similar to consultations that are being held across our province. I was able to bring in a number of speakers to talk, experts on water quality, on groundwater monitoring, people from conservation authorities. I held this at the Oro-Medonte community centre.

I invited experts such as Ms Kerry Green, who is a project coordinator for the Oro Moraine Habitat Project. It is a two-year initiative undertaken by the Couchiching Conservancy, an environmental group that's a land stewardship group out of the city of Orillia. I also had Ms Vicki Barron, who is the manager of the Credit River Conservation Authority, and Mr Brian Beatty, a water resources engineer, who specializes specifically in groundwater.

Each one of these individuals spoke on a different topic. They weren't all coming from the same direction, but they were all concerned about water quality. They talked about how we could develop more projects in the area and at the same time carefully monitor the groundwater supply in the area. It is interesting to note that Mr Beatty started his career with the Ontario Water Resources Commission, now the Ministry of the Environment, in 1964.

At this water symposium that was held in Oro-Medonte township, over 200 people from my constituency showed up for an informed discussion on the future development of the Oro moraine. It is a highly sensitive environmental area, as I said earlier. It was an excellent opportunity for members of my communities to hear from the experts in this field of environmental concern. I think I'll plan on holding more of those events in the future, because it brings an emphasis to the environment and it gets a lot of people talking about something that they're very concerned about.

I look forward to continuing the conversation with the people of Simcoe North about the future development of our communities and of our province through contacting my offices in Orillia and Midland and through the Smart Growth initiatives that people will hear next and over the next few weeks with Mr Kells and his group who are going around to meet different municipalities.

I can assure this House that I will continue to listen to the concerns of the people of Simcoe North on this Oro moraine issue and that our government will continue to develop new ways to protect our environment. There are people, even as I speak—I've got letters on file—who would like to see a moratorium put on the development of the Oro moraine. If passed by this House, the brownfields legislation will be an important step to protect our lands and curb urban sprawl across our province.

I know we've got about 16 minutes left, and I wanted to allow the Minister of Transportation to speak on this very sensitive area. I appreciate the opportunity to speak here this afternoon.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Transportation): It is a great opportunity to be here and speak to this particular bill. It is also a great opportunity to see you in the chair, because that's one less skilled heckler I'll have to deal with today.

As we move into the 21st century, redevelopment of brownfield sites will be a key component in urban renewal and the growth of our urban centres. Brownfields are sites on which industrial or commercial activity took place in the past but are currently abandoned or under-used. These properties are often located in prime locations where infrastructure has grown around them and there already exist urban services. In addition, they may or may not have been contaminated after years of industrial or commercial activity.

The redevelopment of these brownfields will enable more economic activity to flourish in urban centres, leading to a renaissance in many of Ontario's cities. This government's brownfield strategy is to provide a practical and environmentally sound approach to brownfield development. This will help municipal governments build cleaner, healthier communities. This government was the first to introduce the process and a set of environmental standards for site cleanup in Ontario.

The proposed brownfields legislation and regulations would give these standards the force of law and set out a process for cleaning up brownfields. The proposed legislation and regulations allow for the cleanup of brown-

fields with a keen eye to upholding the stronger environmental standards. I am proud this government put this in place. It also maintains that the Ministry of the Environment's ability to address significant contamination in industrial and commercial sites is retained.

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It should go without saying that the cleaning up of brownfields has tremendous environmental benefits. Not only does it clean up urban centres, but it improves our soil and water quality, leading to a better quality of life for urban residents. This legislation is a part of our government's made-in-Ontario Smart Growth strategy. The strategy is to ensure that the Ontario we build today will effectively serve the growth and the needs of Ontario of the future. It links economic growth to using existing infrastructure in a way that makes sure we have a healthy environment, a high quality of life.

The cleanup of brownfields is one method we can use to benefit the economy, the environment and our communities. It encourages smarter patterns of urban growth by cleaning and recycling existing lands. That's what the made-in-Ontario Smart Growth strategy is all about.

This legislation makes it easier to take advantage of brownfield opportunities. Thus, municipalities will be able to make more efficient use of the existing infrastructure, preserve our parks and our farmlands. By recycling brownfields, municipalities will be able to protect the green spaces and our natural and heritage landscapes.

Something I'd like to draw to the members' attention in this legislation is environmental liability. This is seen as one of the prime, in many cases the only, barrier to brownfield redevelopment, and it is addressed fully in this bill. Despite the tremendous benefits to be gained from developing brownfields, financial institutions and developers are often reluctant to invest in these sites. Their caution stems from the very real concern over potential liability for future environmental problems and the financial implications of that liability. This proposed legislation sets out clear rules for limiting future environmental liability, complemented by checks and balances, to ensure that environmental standards are met and that the people of Ontario are protected.

The proposed changes do not alter the Ministry of the Environment's powers to issue orders, to address environmental emergencies or to take strong action against polluters. The ministry will continue to audit site cleanups and there will be clear, concise, articulate rules put in place to govern cleanups.

The proposed legislation would require mandatory environmental site assessment and cleanup, if required, to prescribed standards where there is a land use change from industrial-commercial to residential-parkland or to other land use changes prescribed by regulations. It would also provide clear rules for site assessment, cleanup and standards for contaminants based on proposed land use. It would also require the acceptance of a site-specific risk assessment by the Ministry of the Environment and allow for conditions to be placed on the use of the property.

Going back to the matter of environmental liability, this legislation establishes clear rules. The proposed legislation would provide liability protection from future environmental orders from municipalities if taking actions for the purpose of a tax sale or actions related to other municipal responsibilities. It would provide liability protection from future environmental orders for secured creditors, while protecting interest in a property.

It would provide liability protection for a fiduciary in their own personal capacity. It would provide protection from environmental orders for any person conducting an environmental investigation while acquiring interest in a property. It would also provide liability protection from future environmental orders for owners who follow the prescribed site assessment and cleanup process, which includes filing a record of a site condition to that site registry and using a certified site cleanup professional.

This legislation would maintain the ministry's power to issue an environmental order in response to an environmental emergency. It introduces a number of quality assurance measurements, which include sign-off by certified professionals, mandatory reporting to a site registry and an auditing process to ensure compliance with the legislation and regulations.

To summarize, I feel safe that this legislation goes a long way to establish clear and strict rules for environmental liability and cleanup of brownfield sites.

This legislation is a big win for municipalities across the province of Ontario, and nowhere more so than in my own community, the city of Hamilton. In September 2000, this government appointed a panel of experts to examine brownfield issues and make recommendations, many of which have become incorporated in this bill.

The new city of Hamilton is one of Ontario's oldest and most developed industrial cities, featuring a significant amount of brownfields, especially throughout the older sections of town. The redevelopment of brownfields will be crucial to the city's future, and that's why the city appreciated the opportunity to provide input to the brownfields advisory panel.

I can also advise the House that this bill has been very well received in Hamilton. Mayor Bob Wade campaigned last year on the need to clean up the city's brownfield sites. Very much a visionary, he knows the impact this bill will have on the new city of Hamilton. He recognizes that we need to get those lands back into productive use for several reasons. Cleaning up and reusing those lands will not only ameliorate Hamilton's environment but will also provide new job opportunities and increase local tax revenues.

Mayor Wade has expressed his support of this bill, and I'm sure many other urban mayors across the province of Ontario would agree. This bill will go a long way to helping the urban mayors redevelop their brownfields in their communities.

As I said earlier, this proposed legislation is a win for Hamilton. It demonstrates the kind of commitment the provincial government is willing to make to ensure that our cities succeed. And in the new city of Hamilton, we

need to do everything we can to help that new city flourish and prosper. My ministry alone has committed to funding projects like the Highway 6 extension from the 403 to the John C. Munro airport. At a cost of \$33 million, the province alone will be financing that extension, without any funding from the city of Hamilton.

Construction of this project is now underway and will greatly assist Hamilton's economic development. This government has also been very clearly on the side of projects like the Red Hill Creek Expressway, which will bring further economic growth and benefit to the people of my community when it is completed.

This legislation is another example of the provincial government doing what is necessary to help urban cities like Hamilton prosper.

This bill will provide some flexibility to municipalities to deal with contaminated and abandoned properties that are in a position of tax arrears. I understand that in Hamilton millions of dollars in property taxes are now attributable to potentially contaminated sites. The mayor himself has expressed concerns about this particular situation. This legislation will allow, will give the opportunity to Hamilton, to deal with that specific problem.

The liability protection from Ministry of Environment orders for municipalities exercising authority for the purposes of a "tax sale" or other municipal responsibilities is very important to Hamilton. This bill is addressing the primary stumbling block for getting many properties on the market.

Last night I spoke with John Dolbec, who works with the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, and he is extremely excited about this new bill coming through and the impact that it will have for Hamilton at this particular time.

Another reason why this bill is receiving a warm welcome in Hamilton is because it allows municipalities to deal with individual brownfield sites that are scattered throughout a municipality under the community improvement planning process. This means that Hamilton can begin cleaning up brownfield sites, not only in the downtown core, but in other industrial parts: the former city of Stoney Creek, in Dundas and in Flamborough. This legislation prevents Hamilton's cleanup efforts from becoming geographically constrained, restricted, as the city had done in the Bayfront area.

Lastly, this bill will enable municipalities to freeze or cancel the municipal portion of the property tax on brownfields that are being remediated.

Quite clearly, that alone becomes a major win for urban cities. It enables them to redevelop their brownfields. It enables them to provide the win to the developers and it enables the opportunity to limit the liability for the financial marketplace, for the developers themselves.

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This bill is a win for urban municipalities, but I'm especially pleased to see that this is a significant win for the new city of Hamilton. It continues to demonstrate our government's commitment to its success for all residents in all of its communities. I know, from speaking to

numerous developers in the city of Hamilton, they have been crying for this for many years. The Speaker will know this himself. He has spoken about brownfield development and the need for getting on with it for a long time.

We now have an opportunity to put this bill forth. We now have an opportunity to make sure that municipalities themselves have the tools to enable brownfield redevelopment to become a reality. It enables the municipalities to reach out to the development community and become that catalyst to ensure that in my community, the new city of Hamilton, it will prosper. It will enable them to find the ways and the means to put numerous pieces of property worth millions of dollars back into active production and enable the tax base to grow, which enables the community itself to prosper in the long run.

It's been my pleasure to speak to this particular bill today. I'm encouraging all of the members to support the bill and I'm looking forward to its passage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Davis Christopherson): Questions and comments?

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): We're anxious very soon to enter the formal fray with the debate, but just before we do that, I want to say for the record that I know the new city of Hamilton probably as well as anybody in this House. I know Mayor Wade very, very well. Mayor Wade is a friend of mine. I know the kind of commitment that Mayor Wade has to the community and the kinds of hopes and dreams that Mayor Wade has for enabling legislation that will empower the new city of Hamilton to really get on with the job of brownfield development.

I think as the debate unfolds, we'll discover very quickly that, unlike the picture painted by the member for Stoney Creek, this legislation goes nowhere near far enough to truly empower municipalities like the great new city of Hamilton to get on with the task of doing the important brownfield development that needs to be done.

I think it would have been helpful too—and perhaps they've done this; maybe they've just missed it—had the minister and those who had offered some debating points on the government side of the House taken the time to read the Association of Municipalities of Ontario brownfields task force report and some of the issues and processes they had identified that needed to be put in place and that are clearly missing from this bill. Also it would have been helpful had the recommendations of the minister's own brownfields task force been examined a little bit more closely vis-à-vis the drafting of the legislation.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This issue is of great importance to the communities in Niagara Centre: communities like Welland, Thorold, yes, and south St Catharines. The history of those communities is concurrent with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Those are industrial-based communities that over the course of the last, now, century and a half were built by virtue of small factories becoming bigger ones, and

there's acreage after acreage of lands in those communities properly described as brownfields.

But the problem is, those cities have already been whacked in the course of the last six years. They've been hit hard over the course of the last six years. They, like every other municipality in this province, are forced to impose—forced, not through choice, because I tell you, city councils like the councils in Welland, Cindy Forster, mayor; Thorold, Robin Davidson; Pelham, Mayor Beamer, have been working hard to develop, and have developed, great efficiencies, no help from this government. But even at that they are being forced to impose property tax increase after property tax increase because of the downloading.

Now this government's saying, "Oh, we've cleared the track. Now you can start cleaning up and developing the brown lands." Well, sorry, you've already gutted the fiscal basis of these small communities in Ontario. You've already ripped them apart financially. You've already got them raising property taxes through no choice of their own as a direct result of this government's downloading. And now you're saying, "Oh, yes, we now invite you, but don't expect any"—you talk about accountability. This government doesn't want to have any financial accountability for helping to rectify cleanup and permit the development of these brown lands. They just say, "Oh, we're going to open the door. You pay the price. The money isn't there."

Mr Dunlop: I wanted to just make a comment—

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry, member. As one of the speakers, you cannot comment. If you wish, you can be the one who does the two-minute response to all of the other comments, but we need someone who has not yet spoken from the government side. I'll keep talking as one of the government members works his way to his chair, and that member would be the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale who now has the floor.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is a pleasure to see you in that chair because, like my colleague said, it's one less educated heckler.

It is a very important subject we are discussing today, the brownfields, because it does happen that as industries open, or sometimes in a recession industries close, or the trends change, and all of a sudden you have these buildings that are on very prime land and can be developed, it's very important to make sure that we look after them and make sure we give the decision-makers the opportunity to actually go ahead with the progress.

As the member from Simcoe North said before, we are all very concerned about the environment and we certainly want to do everything possible.

It is a fact that a lot of things about the environment in the past we have learned from our schoolchildren. I remember a number of years ago the kids would come home and talk about recycling and this and that. They'd say, "You can't do that. You can't be throwing cans in the garbage." That's how slowly, as adults, our minds

started thinking toward the environment, and I'm very happy that movement started.

As I said, all of us want to do something about the environment, like using existing infrastructure to make sure the resources are diverted and going ahead with the utilization of brown lands in that sense. I'm sure everybody in the House will agree—and it's one subject where all parties can agree—that at the same time we're doing something good for the environment, we are also redirecting resources to redevelop some of this for the good of the people.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is a pleasure to take part in this debate.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): This bill professes to do a number of wonderful things, except the one thing it does not do is provide essential funding. Money is the key to this problem.

There's a great deal of risk associated with taking on development in brownfield sites. The private sector is not going to take on the enormous risk that's associated with the development of these sites. There are liability issues which are addressed to some extent in this bill, but there are civil lawsuits that could ensue from these brownfield sites that would still be attached to the new landowners. That's a concern.

The government has not made sufficient provision in terms of funding for these sites to be pursued with a great deal of success. The case in the United States where both the federal and the state governments have provided funding has proven a success. That is not what this government is proposing. There's a tremendous lack of funding, and I will get into questions around the lack of infrastructure spending, the kind of investment this government should have been making and is not making with regard to brownfield development sites. It is saying to municipalities, "Well, you go ahead and do it. We'll give you the tools," but the essential tool that's missing is provincial funding. A sufficient number of dollars has not been provided for municipalities to truly undertake these proposals, to work with the private sector. So the government says to municipalities, as they have always done, "Go ahead and do what you like, but we're not paying for it." Of course, municipalities, having suffered the anguish of downloading thus far, are not in a position to bring these sites forward. So this is a lot of hot air.

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The Acting Speaker: For a two-minute response, the Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: It really is a pleasure to summarize and to think of the input today from Minister Hodgson, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and then on top of that the Minister of Transportation from Stoney Creek taking time out from a cabinet meeting to come here and comment on the importance of this brownfield initiative to his riding, which is Stoney Creek, but it's the city of Hamilton where he's really trying to make it work.

The member from Simcoe North speaks on most topics, and that's important too.

The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale summed it up so succinctly when he started talking about the contribution that youth have made to rethinking how we do things. We should listen; I know on this side we do. I'm a little suspicious of the other side. I know the NDP have always listened to youth. They've got Peter Kormos, who really hasn't grown up.

I was surprised by the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. He's not trying to help Hamilton move forward. I think he'd be more comfortable if he came over here and worked with Brad Clark, worked with this government to move forward.

I think the comments of the member from Niagara Centre are brownfield sites in themselves. There's a lot of redevelopment that has to occur.

I think the most important thing is that it's an opportunity to move forward in the Smart Growth context. It's intelligent growth and it's common sense growth, meaning that when you drive by sites in downtown Hamilton, downtown Ottawa, downtown Toronto, and they're not developed, why? They are called brownfield sites. Why aren't people developing them? No one wants to assume the liability. This government has taken the first initiative but maintained respect for the environment.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr McMeekin: I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from York South-Weston, Mr Cordiano; the member from Brant, Mr Levac; and the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, Mr Colle.

Just before we get started on the formal debate, I want to let the honourable member from Durham know—and there were other comments from the minister, the member from Stoney Creek, and the member from Simcoe North—that I've done more in my sleep to assist the new city of Hamilton than this government on the other side of the House has done in its entire five years.

Off the top, I want to say that there's a huge need for legislation to address the issue of brownfield sites throughout the province. It's important that we get on top of the dirty toxic little sites that have become such a tragic part of our industrial legacy and that we get on with the task as best we can of cleaning up these sites. However, once again, this government's attempt to bring in legislation and truly partner with municipalities to successfully deal with this important issue unfortunately falls way short of what's actually needed.

One of the members of my agricultural community suggested to me last week that vision without action is a dream but that action without vision is really a nightmare. We've had the nightmare of brownfields for far too long, and unfortunately this legislation, while it goes part of the way toward helping us resolve some of the issues, will continue to ensure that brownfield sites are a nightmare for communities all across this province and the great new city of Hamilton.

We're told that cleanup of brownfield sites is but a part of this government's well-rounded Smart Growth plan. During my speaking time, I want to comment not

only on Bill 56 but I want to further discuss this government's so-called Smart Growth agenda—or maybe lack of a true agenda—with respect to what's really needed in Ontario and things that are needed to make municipalities, as the minister had said, the strong, healthy and prosperous places we all want to see.

To begin, I want to acknowledge that while it's fair to be critical, it's also critical to be fair. In that context I want to be fair. In ministry background material on Bill 56 we find a very good written summary of the rationale for the need for brownfields legislation. For example, the government recognizes that there is actually a problem with contaminated, mostly industrial sites, often near our precious lakes and rivers. I suspect 20 years from now, a barrel of water is going to be worth just as much as a barrel of oil is today. That's a precious, precious resource the member for Durham knows that we have to shepherd.

The government also recognizes the need to protect the health and safety of our citizens. The Plastimet site in Hamilton—you know about that, Mr Speaker—the lead-contaminated sites in Port Colborne and numerous horror stories related recently to contaminated school sites provide good examples of how rehabilitating a site would indeed protect the health and safety of our citizens. We all acknowledge the travesty of Love Canal, and certainly no one wants to see that kind of tragedy unfold anywhere in Ontario.

The government also highlighted, to their credit, a number of new initiatives and processes ostensibly designed to serve as a catalyst for community revitalization and redevelopment, including, we're led to believe, the generation of additional local property taxes from abandoned sites. The member for Stoney Creek mentioned this en passant, talking about Hamilton. I know from chatting with Mayor Wade and others that there are some 130 brownfield sites in Hamilton, totalling some 3,400 acres altogether in desperate need of reclamation. A redevelopment of these sites would generate in the order of some \$15 million in local property tax. Do you realize that's almost half of what this government short-changed the great new city of Hamilton, just in the shortfall with their so-called revenue-neutral downloading program?

Finally, the government referenced municipal risks related to the assumption of property through tax sale and the related need for creative financing. I've had the privilege of serving in the municipal areas as the former mayor of the great town of Flamborough—the only municipality in all of Ontario that actually lowered taxes six years in a row—and I know from direct experience that municipalities are generally advised to stay as far away from brownfield site projects as they can because of that whole liability issue. I want to acknowledge that the government has moved in a somewhat positive direction in terms of clearing up some of these issues but nowhere near far enough. Predictably, the creative financing that they reference requires no provincial investment. It's interesting: everyone else has to be creative but, as the member from Welland acknowledged, there's

no obligation here to come to the table. Nor does it offer any acknowledgement at all of the historic failure, in many cases, of the Ministry of the Environment to properly monitor site contamination, a failure which in and of itself as led ultimately to this focus today on the need for brownfield redevelopment.

Sadly, and notwithstanding these factors, without a true partnership with both senior levels of government—I don't want to lay it all on the province—this bill and one Canadian dollar will buy the Minister of Municipal Affairs, or the mayor of Hamilton for that part, but one small black decaf coffee at any local Tim Horton's doughnut shop. Frankly, the legislation fails municipalities and virtually guarantees, as the minister had indicated, that this government will miss countless opportunities to help municipalities all across this province struggle with this important need.

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Describing a couple of worthy objectives on paper is great, but it doesn't mean very much. I think it was Bobby Kennedy who once suggested that good judgment was based on experience, and experience invariably on bad judgment. My mother used to put it a little more simply. She said, "Teddy, go out and make mistakes, but at least make new ones." I wish she were here to give some counsel today to the members opposite.

In fairness, let me state clearly what I think is wrong with this legislation because the minister indicated, as you may recall, Mr Speaker, that he wanted some helpful suggestions because it was really important that this bill do what it was designed to do. So I want to start there.

First, while it provides municipalities with some additional tools, the tool box is still relatively empty. Instead of just the hammers and the screwdrivers we normally get, this government, and I'll admit it square up, has offered one additional tool: the measuring tape, but that measuring tape could just as easily be used to measure this government's failure to respond appropriately to the very advice that their own brownfields task force gave them and that the AMO task force gave them. Both talked at great length about the need to come to the table with some funding assistance.

The measuring tape also refers, I want to say, with respect to the relationship with the private sector. I happen to think there's an important role for the private sector, but private sector involvement is, after all, let's concede, profit-driven. It's different from public sector involvement. Private sector folk will get involved in those brownfield sites that maybe aren't as contaminated and will be a little easier to rehabilitate, where it could be shown that with a little bit of investment, working together they could make some money. There's nothing wrong with that. I'm OK with that, by and large. But wouldn't it have been wonderful if we had a government over there that said, "This isn't just about rehabilitating some of those good brownfield sites; it's about protecting the real health and safety of our citizens"?

The member from Stoney Creek talked about what is geographically driven versus what is criterion-driven. I

would much rather have seen something criterion-driven there.

Once again, when we talk about a real partnership, we see a provincial government that's gone AWOL again.

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: The member opposite laughs. I want to tell you, I've been in 22 communities all across this province as part of my Let's Build a Bridge tour. Do you know what they say in every single community we've been in? "We need a new relationship with the provincial government, one that's stable, one that's reliable, one where they listen, one where they consult, one where they quit abandoning us and the real needs we have." That's what we're hearing. That's being said about water; it's being said about downloading; it's being said about assessment problems in the OPAC situation. It's this no-fault insurance this government has: whenever anything goes wrong, it's somebody else's fault. You notice that? David, have you noticed that tendency? It's always somebody else's fault.

It's the mayor of Walkerton's fault. It's the staff person's fault. It's Allan Rock's fault. It's my fault as the mayor of Flamborough. It's always somebody else's fault. In fact, I've never once heard a cabinet minister on the other side get up in this House and say, "You know what? We messed up and we want to 'fess up. We were wrong. We've learned something from it"—

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: Other than that, other than the moose. "We've learned something from it and we want to make"—I take it back—"things right."

The second major problem has to do, clearly, with the lack of provincial funding.

Interjection.

Interjection: Stop picking on him.

Mr McMeekin: Yes, quit picking on him. Don't pick on him, member from Brant.

The minister did say he hoped that whatever we did would be well done. He said that what this bill is intended to do needs to be successful and he invited, you may recall, he said, "Please, give us some tips about how we can make things better."

As one who's always wanting to be helpful—some who know me well, to a fault—I want to share a few thoughts of what I think is needed to make this work. I work from the principle that every time you say something negative you should say three things positive, because you're not going to learn from the negatives, but maybe there's a tiny gem somewhere in what's offered from this side of the House that this government might want to embrace and use for that win-win situation that we're always hearing about.

I want to suggest that this government might have done something really, really helpful had they taken the kind of action that the province of Quebec took or that great state of New York took when both actually came to the table with some money, some \$30 million in the case of Quebec and some \$200 million in the case of New York, specifically articulated in what they called the

environmental restoration project funding program—\$200 million dedicated exclusively to the rehabilitation of municipal brownfield sites.

Had we seen an industrial heritage fund or some kind of public sector agency spring out in the context of the bill, I suspect there might well have been people on this side of the House who would have embraced that. Instead, what do we get? We get this nonsense about SuperBuild. On that, I want to say to members opposite, as we've been around the province their take on SuperBuild is that it's one giant crapshoot, one giant lottery. They don't always understand the rules, and unless they go out and hire somebody with great political connections, they often don't hear back for, in the case of one municipality, well over a year. We heard about cases like that as we travelled the province, municipalities saying, "We've hired so-and-so because we know they're close to the government. We figure that's going to get us our SuperBuild funding."

There are a couple of ways we can move forward on this Bill 56. We could move forward the smart way or we can move forward the dumb way. Given the choice, and for my part and for our party's part, the members on this side of the House, I hope we'd go the smart route. While this legislation may look good on paper, frankly it doesn't add up to much, just like, at least to date, this government's entire Smart Growth plan doesn't add up to much.

For example, let me read to you what was offered in one of the Toronto dailies today with respect to Smart Growth, the comments of someone from the Sierra Club, which perhaps some members opposite have had an opportunity to read. It's entitled "Smart Growth 'Dumb': Harris Given F+ for his 'Green Wash' of the Term." It reads:

"Premier Mike Harris's version of smart growth—building new highways, encouraging urban sprawl and refusing to fund public transit operations—is the antitheses of good urban planning, a well-known environmental organization says.

"Sierra Club of Canada spokesperson, Janet Pelley"—someone else you routinely ignore; anyone who's really concerned about the environment—"told a news conference yesterday Harris has sullied the term 'smart growth,' a catchword for environmentally sustainable development that originated with former US vice-president Al Gore."

She notes, "This is a legitimate term and it is a good term and it should not be abused by the Premier to 'green wash' the strip-malling of Ontario' ... Premier Harris says he has embraced smart growth, but the facts actually show he doesn't know what he is talking about.

"The Sierra Club issued a report card giving Harris an F+ for his version of smart growth, which calls for five more highways in and around greater Toronto and the Niagara region."

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She says, "Now any dummy knows that building new highways is not part of smart growth."

“The Tory government’s public consultations on its smart growth program ends June 18.

“The term smart growth is used in the United States for growth based on preserving farmland”—preserving farmland, you’ve heard of that, eh?—“and green space and on promoting public transit and communities that integrate work, shopping, living and recreation spaces as well as all income levels.

“Public transit forms the backbone of smart growth, and in Ontario we have no provincial (operating) funding for transit.”—the only jurisdiction in the so-called civilized world that doesn’t provide; even in the uncivilized world—“That is not smart growth, that’s dumb growth,” Pelley said.

“She said the ‘helter-skelter’ pattern of development in southern Ontario is costing the taxpayers millions of dollars for extra infrastructure to supply roads, sewers and water.

“Toronto’s population is expected to grow by 1.6 million people over the next 20 years,” Pelley said.

“The idea that cities can build their way out of congestion is a tired old solution from the 1950s that many studies have proven wrong This pattern of development generates polluted runoff that threatens our water and also impairs our quality of life.”

Municipalities all across Ontario are once again getting the short stick from this provincial government. The bill goes a few short steps toward a real solution. It helps a bit; even Mayor Wade, I suspect, would acknowledge that it helps a bit. But for it to really work we need a reliable, stable partnership. We need the province at the table. A friend who did some overseas work once described to me his definition of poverty. He said, “Poverty is having lots of food on the table and no one to eat it with, or having lots of people gathered around the table but no food.”

I think, to be perfectly frank and blunt, this legislation leaves us in a state of poverty in this province. The thinking behind it is poor thinking. It doesn’t go far enough. As I said earlier, too many of the very specific recommendations that were made by your own brownfields task force have been ignored.

I’ll conclude with this observation. “Municipalities have a direct interest in revitalizing the sites within their boundaries. Potential liability, a lack of private sector interest in the majority of brownfields, and the absence of financial support for remediation efforts”—did you hear that? this is from the AMO study—“represent the greatest obstacles.

“Municipalities are willing to take a leadership role in promoting brownfields redevelopment but they can only do so in partnership with the private sector, the provincial government and the federal government.”

They conclude by saying, and I agree with this, “By working together, we can all benefit from this modern day alchemy and turn brownfields into gold.”

Mr Cordiano: I am happy to be up on this bill, to engage in the debate. Again, this is an initiative by a government that attempts to go in the right direction but

does not provide the necessary funding for it. It says to municipalities, “This is a great idea. We should redevelop these brownfield sites. But you handle it. We turn it over to you because you have the resources to deal with this.”

Looking at the Fung report, for example, that commented on redeveloping Toronto’s waterfront, they estimated that the cleanup bill for Toronto’s waterfront would be on the order of \$1 billion: \$1 billion to clean up Toronto’s waterfront, the brownfields sites that are along the port lands. Toronto alone has 4,500 hectares of brownfields, the equivalent of 30 High Parks. That’s just Toronto. Around the province, the number is enormous. The cleanup bill could be in the billions of dollars.

This government is providing very little by way of financial support. It suggests that the SuperBuild fund will provide some funding. In order to access those funds, municipalities have to provide matching funding. Of course, municipalities are strapped for cash after this government has downloaded and dumped on them additional responsibilities.

Interjection.

Mr Cordiano: I do believe Mel Lastman is correct when he suggests that this government—

Interjection.

Mr Cordiano: I’ve always like Mel. He was my mayor for many years. As a matter of fact, he is right on this mess. He is correct in suggesting that this province is shortchanging the city of Toronto, that it is not providing the necessary funding, and this is yet another example of that shortchange.

To go on, US cities and other Canadian provinces have recognized that by working together—that is to say the federal and the state governments—by providing necessary funding, they can rehabilitate these brownfield sites in key cities such as Baltimore, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Those brownfield sites have been reclaimed. They’re helping to spawn a new era of growth in the core of those cities. It does work if the funding is there from the state level—in our case, the provincial level—and the federal level.

Now, to say to municipalities, “Well, you match the funds,” is all fine and good, but municipalities, as I say, have been downloaded with additional responsibilities and do not have the funding necessary. There is a tremendous shortfall on the part of municipalities just to keep up with the responsibilities they’ve been given as a result of downloading thrust upon them by this provincial government.

When we look at what this government has done with the whole area of infrastructure—let’s talk about Smart Growth, as my colleague alluded to many times in his remarks earlier. Smart Growth also includes a plan for public transportation to be expanded. Well, it doesn’t in this government’s scheme of things; it does not speak to that. The vision that this government has put forward is to build additional highways through some very sensitive areas of our province such as the Niagara Peninsula. Development is growing at an alarming rate throughout

the Niagara Peninsula and in the 905 region of the greater Toronto area, where we do have urban sprawl taking place at an unprecedented level, chewing up valuable agricultural lands.

I could go along with this if the government suggested that it would be prepared to fund, on a long-term basis, a rapid transit system, if it had a vision for rapid transit to be expanded throughout the greater Toronto area, because that's where it is needed. You cannot get from Mississauga city centre to Oshawa city centre in any reasonable amount of time using public transit. It is simply not possible. It would take you an entire day to get there. There are people moving between Mississauga city centre and Oshawa or York or the city of Vaughan, many of the cities in the GTA. People are moving to and from those places using what else but highways? The gridlock has reached unbearable proportions. It is hurting our economy.

The infrastructure that we have in place is dilapidating. Why? Because this government continues to do what it does best, as it suggests, and that is to dismantle government operations. The only modus operandi that it sees fit to pursue is to continue to look at reducing government revenues by all forms and means and passing the burden on to municipalities and increasing fees on all fronts, but it has not the revenues to do what is necessary to build infrastructure in this province.

1720

Yes, it says it has SuperBuild. Well, frankly, some municipalities have made applications to SuperBuild and they're being delayed. There's been no response for over a year in some cases. So it's not an open-ended funding scheme with SuperBuild.

I think this government is dragging its heels because it does not have the money. It's not interested in investing in infrastructure. As I say, we sorely lack a public infrastructure system for public transit; a vision for the greater Toronto area. That's what's desperately needed for our economy. You cannot continue to build highways and alleviate the problems that we have by building highways alone. That's simply not going to accomplish what we need for the future of growth in the greater Toronto area, and beyond that into the Niagara peninsula. The infrastructure demands are enormous. The gridlock will continue to be felt if you continue to build highways alone, if we don't pursue a path whereby we promote public transit.

Of course, this government has gotten out of supporting public transit of any kind. It, too, has passed that responsibility on to municipalities. The fare box in the city of Toronto supports public transit almost entirely now. That is just devastating for public transit, not to mention the terrible effect that has on our air quality. We just have too many people in cars these days travelling to and from work. That should be displaced by the use of public transit, but it's not available. I cannot fault people for using their cars when there is no other option to get around in a reasonable amount of time.

We need a vision for public transit that extends to the greater Toronto region, that includes York region, Peel, Halton, Durham and possibly goes into Hamilton and down into Niagara Falls, because that is the area of rapid growth, the engine that feeds the economy of this great country. We are starving it.

We are an export-oriented nation. We need additional roads, but in order to deal with the gridlock problem over the next 20 years, we simply can't do that by building roads. If you build more roads, more cars will be on those roads, along with an additional number of trucks. You'll never alleviate the problem.

It does tie into the development of brownfields, because you have these brownfields that exist in municipalities in the greater Toronto area, but we have to deal with the question of greater intensification for these municipalities. It is a laudable goal, and I support that, but you have to give municipalities the funding necessary to make this possible.

There are some other issues with regard to liability in this bill. The government likes to say that this question is dealt with by the bill, that if new landowners follow the prescribed MOE site cleanup assessment and the use of a certified professional for the cleanup, the new owners would be exempt from liability. That's not entirely true. New landowners are still subject to civil liabilities and officers and directors of these corporations are also subject to some level of liability. So this is not clear. I would suggest to you that the private sector is not going to be involved in these projects if those items are not cleared up.

In addition to that, with respect to cleanup and the use of MOE officials, I'd like to know how it is that you're going to have officials conduct a timely assessment of these brownfield sites if there aren't enough MOE inspectors on hand. Since this government cut Ministry of the Environment staff levels by at least 900, as we know in previous budgets, I'd like to know how it is we're going to have timely assessments and inspections being made of these brownfield sites.

Those are some very real concerns I have with respect to this initiative. I think if you are going to give this some real credence, you have to provide the necessary funding. I looked in last year's budget and I looked at this year's budget: the funding for infrastructure is simply not there. Using this method of pawning it off, saying, "We have the SuperBuild fund. That's going to solve all of our problems," frankly, it's not working. There are delays in the application process. We simply don't have the infrastructure being built today that we needed 10 years ago. By the time we get around to building the infrastructure, another number of years will have passed and we will be behind the eight ball yet again.

I've got to remind this government that we have been living through prosperous times and you have not made the essential investments in infrastructure that are necessary to keep the economy growing. Do not underestimate how important that is. You can't get it going with the private sector if you're not prepared to put in additional

dollars, because the requirements are far greater than you've estimated them to be.

I think there are some problems with this legislation that go beyond what's contained in the legislation, and the lack of funding is a real sore point here.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Brant.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on where you are sitting at this moment. I know you will do a great job.

I want to thank the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot: as always, very logical discussions that we have. The member for York South-Weston always keeps in mind the ability of a community to pull together and use its base as the reason why he's reaching out and asking the government to help us in this case. And I know that the member for Eglinton-Lawrence has a deep interest in this because his municipality is affected by it.

I think we should begin by naming the bill. I'm going to provide, for the people who are listening, the authentic name of this bill and then probably wade into the little game that this government often does about how it names its bills, what it's trying to do to the people of Ontario or trying to hide from the people of Ontario.

This is called Bill 56, Brownfields Statute Law Amendment Act, 2001, or shall I say Bill 56, brownfield download amendment act, 2001? Or shall I say Bill 56, the brownfield—you pay for it and we tell you what to do act, 2001? Or shall I call it Bill 56, brownfield—we seek your input, we say we consulted but we don't take the key advice that you've given us in partnership for paying for this problem act, 2001? Or finally, shall we call it Bill 56, brownfield—superbuild 2, the sequel?

Quite frankly, I'm going to make it very clear that there are parts of this legislation that were sadly needed and there were consultations and advice provided by some very notable people in the province of Ontario. We heard from—and I would like to make sure that I give credit for this—a councillor in Brantford, from ward 5, who has probably one of the oldest areas in town. I grew up there, and quite frankly in Eagle Place we had industry as far back as the 1800s. So during the Industrial Revolution we had all of these companies locate in our area. We have the Grand River, a heritage river, going through that riding.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Paris, Ontario.

Mr Levac: In Paris, Ontario. We have rivers. We have a man-made lake, Mohawk Lake, right in the heart of this industrial area, found to be filled with toxins. We have the downtown area, in which we're trying to recover a lot of those assets again. In Brantford we are a brownfield community that needs this action.

As a matter of fact, I'm glad the johnny-come-latelies are starting to talk about this, because part of my platform, and even before that the municipality's platform, was, let's move on brownfields because we know the economic value of making this major recovery. We don't want to be a partner in urban sprawl. We want to make

sure that our industrial sites are clean, safe and renewable. Quite frankly, I'm glad to see that you've finally hooked on after the pressure that Councillor Marguerite Ceschi-Smith from ward 5 in Brantford has put on the government, and Councillor Paul Urbanowicz from ward 1, who has a very serious problem in his ward in the riding of Brant, in the city of Brantford.

1730

I want to point out a rather interesting phenomenon that took place. As a result of concerns raised by the constituents of Brantford after the last recent fire in a site that is a brownfield site—and I have evidence here dated May 17, postmarked before Mr Hodgson made his report. I'm very proud to say that I wrote the minister a letter before an editorial from the Brantford Expositor said maybe the MPP should get involved. Quite frankly, I did.

“Dear Minister Hodgson:

“Please find enclosed an article from the Brantford Expositor regarding yet another fire that has occurred in an abandoned factory site in my riding”—a brownfield site.

“Minister, I urge you to act quickly”—I must have a lot of influence, because he released his report the next day—“on comprehensive legislation regarding brownfield sites in municipalities”—comprehensive—“legislation that would give municipalities both the necessary powers and funding they need in order to deal with this blight effectively. Councillor Marguerite Ceschi-Smith of Brantford has been an active participant and vocal advocate for the legislation your government should be tabling in order to deal with sites such as Northern Globe.

“With proper urban management, old dilapidated buildings such as the Northern Globe building can be torn down and the property, after appropriate cleaning takes place, can be turned into useful green space or much-needed affordable housing in our older neighbourhoods,” or even reusable industrial sites.

“Councillor Paul Urbanowicz from ward 1 is requesting that this building be torn down. I support this measure, and hope that the provincial government responds with financial assistance to help eliminate this hazardous site from our community.”

This was sent to all of the people concerned: Marguerite Ceschi-Smith; Paul Urbanowicz, our mayor; Ted McMeekin—he received a copy of this letter and acknowledged it to me immediately; and the minister. So we're on top of this.

Our municipalities across the province know that this must be acted upon. But what I think is important to point out is that although the government keeps referring to, in their side of the story, the fact that they've listened and they've heard all these experts speak, one of the most overriding responses that was given to them, report after report, was that we must form that financial partnership.

We want to see the government put its money where its mouth is. Quite frankly, it hasn't happened. They've referred it and deferred it to SuperBuild, but what we forget to tell the public out there is that there are hooks to going to SuperBuild. And here's one of the major hooks:

the municipality's got to fork over quite a large percentage of the money as well. Do they want to put in some money to the program? Absolutely. But what's the problem? Why did I mention the brownfield-downfield-downville bill? What they said was, "You've downloaded us already."

Many municipalities across this province are already looking at tax increases in order to provide them with the services they once had. After reviewing those budgets, looking at the essential services that those municipalities have to provide, they still ended up having to say to us, "Is there anything we can do with this government to tell them to stop downloading these costs? They're not revenue-neutral." Because they weren't revenue-neutral, you've added to the problem by now telling them this brownfield bill is going to be the saviour of brownfields in Ontario, but nobody's going to be able to afford it. It should be a consistent amount of money that's available to all municipalities.

I want to make a comment about the bill's content itself, part III of the Municipal Act amendments: "Part III of the bill amends the Municipal Act. The amendments allow municipalities to pass bylaws providing for the municipal tax assessment to assist with the environmental rehabilitation of the properties that do not meet the standards prescribed for filing a record of site condition in the environmental site registry in accordance with the amendments to the Environmental Protection Act...." That means you, municipalities, have to foot that; you have to forgo those taxes. "With the approval of the Minister of Finance, these bylaws may also apply to school taxes."

What does that say? They're not going to allow the municipalities to worry about the school taxes, because they've got to get permission from the Minister of Finance. Let me ask this simple question to our municipalities: do you think for one minute the Minister of Finance is going to turn around and say, "Sure, go ahead. Let us forgive taxes"? Not a chance.

In the next part, the bill amends the Municipal Tax Sales Act. "The amendments provide that, if a public tax sale of property fails to find a purchaser, the municipality may acquire the property." So it's, "You go ahead and spend the money but we're not going to help you." You can acquire the property, but you're not required to do so. How nice of you. "If the municipality does not acquire the property within one year after the tax sale, the tax arrears certificate is deemed to be cancelled." Thank you very much.

We're not going to support the bill. We say that the idea is correct. The consultation was half done. Brownfield redevelopment offers real opportunity, if the government would acknowledge that for Ontario communities, but the real tool that is needed is redevelopment money. The key element, the tool that is missing is the government stepping up to the plate. You set the table but you don't put any food on it. You say, "Come to the table but you can't have any food." Unfortunately, this is one element of their Smart Growth that seems to promote

something that is actually intelligent but they're making everyone else pay the piper.

The panel this government asked for was comprised of representatives from the municipal, development and environmental sectors. Each one of those sectors came up with the right idea, the right concept and the right direction, but unfortunately what happened was that when the key components of all those sectors said, "Please provide us with the funds as a partner to do so," they walked away from the table. But now they get to say, "We consulted and here is the great idea we've got." I'll tell you, the mayor, Councillor Ceschi-Smith and everyone else is saying, "Right idea, but please, where's the money? You've downloaded us to death. We can't afford anything else, but please provide us with the help." They said no. They've abandoned them.

The term "brownfields" is used to describe these abandoned lands. Quite frankly, we know that other than in Brantford there are sites across the province that need this rehabilitation that would involve all—I say all—of the municipalities in this wonderful rehabilitation idea that has been floated for many years with, still, no funds, no opportunity, just a lot of empty words that everybody already knew. What's unfortunate about it is that this government doesn't even want to acknowledge it. They seem to be taking credit for everything that's being said today. Unfortunately the grassroots people who have been working in this province to come up with the solution looked to this government for assistance and they got the cold shoulder. I'm terribly sorry that the municipality of Brantford and all our ridings had to put up with this show, but no go.

Mr Colle: I certainly appreciate the comments of my colleagues, and first of all, the former mayor of Flamborough, the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot—I can't forget Aldershot. I also heard our colleague from York South-Weston and our colleague from Brant, formerly known as Kingsville.

I would like to perhaps make a few different comments because I think our colleagues have covered a number of the areas already quite thoroughly. One of the things I'm most concerned about is that the attitude of this legislation is again one that sort of tries to indicate they want to do the right thing because people are saying that getting rid of brownfields is the right thing. It encourages development on existing infrastructure and not on new greenfields or farm fields, so that is something we all fundamentally agree has to be done for us to survive as a city or a region.

We can't keep building on the family farm, we can't keep paving and bulldozing family farms, and we can't keep destroying our rivers, streams or ravines from Halton all the way to Cobourg. We have to basically follow what other nations are doing, and what the United States in fact is way ahead of us on, and that is building on existing urban envelopes. That's the key, I think, to sustainable growth.

1740

As the government tries to do that, as my colleagues have mentioned, there is very little help that they give to the local level, the people who pay property taxes. A lot of the burden of undertaking this policy—which benefits everyone, especially the provincial government, which will gain all kinds of tax revenues—is that the local property taxpayer is going to be asked, basically, to share a disproportionate amount of responsibility of undertaking this policy by the provincial government.

As you know, the local property taxpayers in the province of Ontario pay more property taxes almost, on a proportional basis, than anyone else in North America. They now not only pay for basic garbage and fire services and police services; in something that's unprecedented internationally, not just in North America, local property taxpayers are now being asked to fund public housing—done nowhere else in the world—on the property tax base.

Public transit—whether it's GO in the regions or TTC or York regional transit—that is on the property taxpayers' bill: unprecedented in the world. Ambulance services, a proportion of social services: all on your property tax bill. So if those responsibilities weren't pushed on the property taxpayers of Aldershot or the property taxpayers of Windsor, perhaps there wouldn't be this criticism of this bill to the extent that certainly my colleagues have put forward.

But since you have these unprecedented downloads on property taxpayers, when you look at this bill, we have to stand up and say that one of the concerns about this initiative—which is, I think, generally, in an organic way, a good initiative—is that it asks more of the burden of doing something that is beneficial for the whole province and the provincial government on to lower tier municipalities and their property taxpayers.

The success of brownfield redevelopment and regeneration and restoration has been as a result of direct investment from provincial or state governments into the municipalities as an inducement, as an investment to make this a reality. Without that kind of investment in some kind of regeneration trust fund, some kind of re-greening trust fund, these initiatives will not be successful. They will be at best ad hoc, very spotty, but they won't be a comprehensive success because some municipalities will not be able to afford these initiatives because there's too much of a cost brought to bear on their property taxpayers. Where they're faced with property tax increases or cutting services and paying for transit, public housing, and some of the roads have been downloaded on them, they cannot afford to spend money they don't have on this provincial initiative.

We hope that maybe for a change this government will listen to property taxpayers, will listen to the opposition and perhaps set up a regeneration fund that you will get back a hundredfold if you clean up those brownfield sites properly and comprehensively. So there's a return for the provincial government to do things right, and there's no

return for anyone if you expect the municipalities to carry the cost of this by themselves.

I think there's been, really, over the last number of years, those of you who know Toronto—I know my own general area—there's been some great success stories almost despite the lack of provincial co-operation in bringing back old industrial sites to successful, livable sites. For instance, at the base of Casa Loma there used to be the old Sealtest factory site for many, many decades. It was transformed into a very successful townhouse development. It sits right at the base of Casa Loma, right near public transit. It's a great success story.

If you look at the old American Standard factory at Lansdowne and Dupont, it has been cleaned up, and in fact there's an apartment building that's gone up there on that site. There's a site right now at Weston Road and St Clair—the old Weston Bakery site—where housing is going in. But that basically took the municipalities on their own, and a lot of risk on behalf of investors, to make that a reality.

It can happen. I think the private sector's willing to do it, municipalities are willing to do it. The province now is saying, "Do it," but they're not putting their money where their mouth is. That is what's missing in this legislation: some kind of funding mechanism which doesn't download another huge responsibility on those property taxpayers who, again, are paying more than anybody else pays in North America here in Ontario. We're asked to pay for so many things here and growing by the minute.

I'd also like to ask the Speaker to take into account another interesting thing. There is also a total lack of compatibility with what this legislation says and what the Ontario Municipal Board is doing with this government. The Ontario Municipal Board, as you know, is an appointed, unaccountable body that makes incredible numbers of planning decisions for this government, and it makes decisions that are sometimes not compatible with what the government is saying or what local municipalities are saying. Certainly it usually overrules what citizens are saying.

I'll give you an example: in my own riding there's a wonderful affordable housing complex, Rosewell Court, which has been there very successfully for 50 years, right at Avenue Road and Lawrence—affordable housing, good living conditions, right next door to Lytton Park, which has beautiful homes, great schools. Well, a developer came along and said, "I want to bulldoze those affordable rental townhouses," and 99% of the people in the area came to meetings by the thousands and said, "Why are you bulldozing these affordable buildings which are intensified?" There's a lot of good intensity, a lot of good density there. They're bulldozing them because the developer wants to put up condos. Why put up the condos where you already have intensification, you have good affordable housing? Put your condos down where the brownfield sites are, not where there's existing intensification, not where it impacts on people's ability to enjoy their neighbourhood.

Here's an example where the Ontario Municipal Board is obviously not connected with this government or its so-called policies of smart growth. It is totally in a world by itself. It didn't listen to a thousand people who said, "Don't bulldoze." It didn't listen to the city of Toronto who said, "Protect that affordable housing that's there." The municipality said, "There's already enough density there. Put those condos somewhere else." No, the Ontario Municipal Board said, "We don't care what a thousand people said. We don't care what the Lytton Park Ratepayers Association said. We don't care what the Metro Federation of Tenants said. We agree with the one developer, that one property owner who says, 'I don't care what the other thousand tenants say. We're going to bulldoze and do what we want.'"

If this government is serious about directing development into brownfield sites, they better call in their friends they appoint to the Ontario Municipal Board and give them a shake—a good hard shake—because those people who are appointed to that board think that they are basically above the public, above ratepayers, above, I'd even guarantee, any individual or planning directives this government has. They are a government almost unto themselves—not even a government; they're basically an oligarchy that's been appointed by this government and runs free with no controls.

I don't see any of this in the legislation, that we direct, somehow, intensification into the brownfield sites and not bulldoze existing affordable housing sites or compatible neighbourhoods which took decades to build up. The OMB comes along and says, "I don't care whether for 100 years people have spent their blood, sweat and tears building up successful neighbourhoods like Lytton Park." The OMB doesn't care about that. It says, "No. We, who are appointed to the OMB, are going to decide what that neighbourhood's future is going to be like." That is not fair and it's not right and it's not good planning. It's something this government better wake up to.

I should also mention that the whole brownfield initiative is, I guess, part of this spinning the government's been doing about smart growth. I think it's meeting today or tomorrow at the Hilton hotel, consulting with whom I don't know. Certainly it's not consulting with ordinary people, who will tell you this government's so-called spin growth doesn't work unless you're committed to public transit. You can't have smart growth unless you have a government that commits to the everyday funding of the operating expenses of GO Transit or of the TTC, or of all transit systems.

1750

This government is not talking smart growth when it just talks about highway expansion. I read in the paper today that they want to widen the 400 to 12 lanes through Barrie. You'll be widening highways forever. You'll be widening highways to Niagara; you'll have wall-to-wall pavement all the way to Niagara Falls. It will never solve your transportation problems. If you're really interested in achieving sustainability, you have to invest in GO Transit. You have to have all-day service. Why not run

an all-day train service to Niagara Falls from Union Station? But no, this government's hell-bent on paving, paving, paving.

In fact, look what happened. The 407 was supposed to solve all our traffic problems north of Toronto. Well, as you know, what happened is that the 401 is basically a parking lot. It's a full-time parking lot. The Don Valley parking lot exists. The 407 is so expensive, ordinary taxpayers cannot even use it. Meanwhile, the Spanish consortium and SNC Lavalin become mega-millionaires at the expense of the Ontario taxpayer and they increase the tolls on the highway. Whether you do it by tolls or whether you do it by widening highways to 12, 15 or 100 lanes, you can't unlock gridlock and make smart growth happen unless you put some money into a balanced infrastructure that allows people to get to work by train, by bus, by streetcar in an affordable way that is not paid for just on your property taxes. Ironically, we sit here today, and in the greater Toronto area, certainly in Toronto, TTC fares are going up, services are being cut back, night bus routes are being cut back. It's really contradictory.

I'd like to make one comment. Someone mentioned about the city of Toronto complaining about the downloading. The city of Toronto has made a very direct challenge to this government: if this government believes its downloading figures are revenue-neutral, the city of Toronto, Mayor Lastman and Deputy Mayor Case Ootes, have said, "Bring in the Provincial Auditor. Let him look at your books to see whether you're telling the truth about downloading." This government is afraid to call in the Provincial Auditor because they know they fudged the figures, that downloading is not revenue-neutral. Again, I challenge this government, if downloading is revenue-neutral, to bring in the Provincial Auditor. Obviously you won't because you know your figures are not the correct ones. The local taxpayers have the right figures; you don't.

The Acting Speaker: It is now time for two-minute questions or comments.

The floor recognizes—the Chair recognizes—the member for Toronto-Danforth.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): That's the first time I've heard you refer to yourself as "the floor," Mr Speaker. But this is my first opportunity to congratulate you on being in the chair. I must say I'm very impressed by your ability already, your first time in the chair, to name us all by our ridings. I think that's to be applauded. As you know, I went through that system myself and it took me a much longer time.

I will get my opportunity to speak, I guess, when this bill comes up again, and I will be doing the full hour for my caucus. I'm sure you're all going to be glued to your seats to hear what I have to say about this bill and, believe me, there is plenty.

In response to the many Liberals who spoke today, however, I would say the issues that were raised are ones that I hope the government will listen to and pay attention to. I'm going to be talking a lot about my views

of what real smart growth is as well, and some other issues around municipal affairs right now, downloading and all kinds of issues that are part of this bill we're talking about today, but specifically about this brown-field development that we need to see happening.

I spoke specifically to the minister and told him the NDP caucus very much wants to see legislation which would allow this kind of brownfield development to take place, but I also told the minister that we need public hearings, which he has agreed to. Unlike the education situation we are in, he has agreed to do that.

Many of the issues raised need to be dealt with before our party can support the bill. The best way to do that would be through committee. I certainly hope the government will allow us that opportunity.

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to be able to stand and make a few comments today, particularly on the members from the Liberal opposition. After listening to their comments, I don't know whether they're supporting the bill or not. I'm assuming they're not at this point.

Some of the comments I want to speak to: first, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence made a comment that we're building a highway to Barrie of six lanes. I think that's how you worded it. That is one option we're looking at. The Ministry of Transportation for Ontario is doing a study. They're doing studies through the whole 400 corridor network right up to Highway 11 at Barrie. One option is the six-laning.

Another option is a train route. Mr Tascona, my colleague from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, convinced the government in the last term to acquire the land in case that railway to Simcoe county was needed. Many people support that. That's being discussed as part of the study. I think it's only fair that we don't say there's going to be a six-lane highway, for sure, to Barrie.

I want to make one further comment on the brown-fields, on Bill 56. I like the advantage of what it does for our infrastructure, being able to utilize the infrastructure we have in our municipalities to redevelop that property. It means tremendous savings, not only for the municipalities but for the developers as well, because they'll reuse those services, like storm water and sewer, even some of the services like natural gas and cable to the site as well. Those are my comments. It has been a pleasure to speak today on that.

Mr O'Toole: I want to follow up on my colleague's comments. Smart Growth is really the debate in this particular bill, brownfields being specific, but if you apply the theory of innovation and the theory of creativity—I think the member just mentioned that.

I met yesterday with the Railway Association of Canada. I know that many members have. I'd like to put on the record, with respect, the hard work of Bill Rowat from the railway association, the president; Bruce Burrows; as well as Ronald Mason, and he's from Canadian Pacific Railway. They're talking about short lines.

I would put on the record that clearly this government is looking at creative, innovative suggestions for the growth that's going to hit this province. For those who

want to stand in the way of redevelopment, both green-field sites and creative alternatives to Smart Growth, they'll find a thousand excuses, negative reasons not to try and support, at least in a positive way, some of the innovative suggestions of this government.

The alternative, their resistance to change and being creative, is more stall, more encroachment on—the recent freeze on the Oak Ridges moraine: I'm proud this government is prepared to look at innovative ways to manage growth.

Why do we get the growth? A good part of it is that the federal government allocates some 400,000—we get 60% of all the people, the new Canadians. They're welcome, with their ideas. Where do they come? They come primarily to the GTA. They're welcome. I might say that the federal government doesn't send the dollars. We get 60% of all new Canadians; we get 40% of the dollars. Our point here is that we need to accommodate the vision for new Canadians and existing Canadians, who are growing. The population of the GTA is larger than most of the provinces. Smart Growth: these are the options. I think this government is moving forward. I want to hear the opposition too.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? Hearing none, one of the lead speakers for a two-minute response. There are no other two-minute comments, although there's a slot left; it's not being filled. I will recognize one of you, not both. The Chair recognizes the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

1800

Mr McMeekin: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Always west to east.

This has been a good debate. For our part, we have taken very seriously Minister Hodgson's invitation to make positive suggestions to help improve this bill.

I believe the Minister of Municipal Affairs really does want to try to do the right thing and he's really pleading in this House today for some help. And do you know what? He needs some help because this bill is quite inadequate. That's why my colleague Mr Colle and others have literally gone out of our way to be so forthcoming today with positive suggestions designed to improve this legislation. Let me just recap a few of those.

First and foremost, it's absolutely incumbent on this government to revisit and to reread their own task force's recommendations. They might want to read AMO's report as well.

Then they should move quickly to focus on this important issue by actually creating a separate industrial heritage fund. They should stop abandoning our great cities by beginning anew to work with municipal leaders, the federal government and yes, even the private sector. They should listen and understand for once—I know it's difficult—the need to share expertise and training resources. They should focus on prevention to maximize the liability of the people who have actually committed the polluting act. Finally, they should come to the table.

My final plea is, please don't put your money where your hearts are. Put your money where your mouth is. You're talking the talk; walk the walk.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Chatham-Kent-Essex has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Health. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

DOCTORS' SERVICES

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Indeed, this afternoon I put a question to the Minister of Health and asked about the community-based radiology clinic of Dr Charles Gervais. He gave me an answer about cancer care, treatment and the independence of the new cancer centres. I was totally puzzled by his answer and it leaves me with only two possibilities. The first one is that he deliberately evaded my question to speak about a totally different matter; or second, that he did not understand the difference between cancer treatment and what goes in a radiology clinic. That's even more scary, coming from the Minister of Health. But in either case, I'm troubled and totally dissatisfied with the answer that was given.

The fact is that Dr Gervais has a staff of 20 nurses and technicians who use state-of-the-art digital X-ray equipment to visually display structural or functional patterns of organs or tissue for diagnostic evaluation.

Because of the desperate shortage of radiologists in southwestern Ontario, Dr Gervais obtained an exemption under the specialist retention initiative to provide services in his community-based Windsor clinic. This year, however, your ministry decided that he no longer qualifies for the exemption and has clawed back the funding for services that the doctor has already been providing. That means he cannot pay his staff, his rent or for his equipment to provide the level of service that patients in our area require.

We are short eight radiologists. It is worse this year than it was last year, when the government said he did qualify. We want to see the names of the radiologists you claimed are practising and we want to see the population figures the government is using.

Is that too much to ask from a government that demands accountability and transparency from others? This information should be made public knowledge. Why is it being kept away from Dr Gervais and indeed the community? Why are you forcing this clinic to close when his services are desperately needed in the community?

The chief of staff of Windsor Western Hospital states in his letter that if the clinic closes, it would be a significant loss to our community. He said it would have an ad-

verse affect on the operation of the hospital's diagnostic imaging department because they do not have the resources to meet the increased demand of consumers. He says further delay will occur and the health care of the citizens of Essex county will be compromised.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons recommends the minimum radiologist-to-patient ratio is 1 to 16,000. To obtain ministry SRI funding exemption status, the ratio is 75% of the recommended minimum, which is 1 to 21,333.

The present population of Essex county is 381,672 plus Kent county's population of 112,897, which adds up to 494,569 people. The full-time radiologists in Essex county are 15, that is, five in each hospital, three at DiagnostiCare, Dr Gervais and one in Leamington. In Kent county there are 4.5. That is a total of 19.5 radiologists to serve 494,569 residents. That is a ratio of one to 25,362 people. Your benchmark is 1 to 21,333. Clearly, Dr Gervais qualifies and I demand to see how your ministry could calculate it in any other way. The ministry's physician numbers are totally out of date. All we're asking you is for the proof of your numbers so that we can prove that indeed you are wrong. Why is the ministry so afraid to provide those numbers to Dr Gervais and the community of Windsor-Essex and beyond?

So as I said, I was displeased with the answer from the minister and it really would be a scary thought if he did not understand the difference between cancer treatment, which is what he talked about in his answer to me, and radiology clinics, such as Dr Gervais's. I anxiously await the government's participation in providing these numbers to the questions I've put forward here this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): The chair now recognizes the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health for a response of up to five minutes.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Thank you very much, Speaker, and I also congratulate you on your work in the chair the last few days.

I am, as you mentioned, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, and have been asked by the Minister of Health to respond to the member from Chatham-Kent Essex's question. I'll do that today supported by my colleagues from Durham and Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

Each year, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care receives applications to the service retention initiative program, as the member opposite has alluded to. Eligibility criteria are reviewed and approved annually by the Physician Services Committee, which is a joint committee comprised of members of the Ontario Medical Association, which represents doctors, and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. If the SRI program determines that there will be an under-supply of doctors in a certain field in a certain area, they can agree to give relief from the billing cap, an exemption from the threshold of a doctor in that area. The exemption allows the doctor to bill over and above the \$420,000 cap which currently exists, which was increased from \$410,000

from last year as a result of an OMA agreement. By the way, any doctor can bill over and above their \$420,000 cap without an exemption from the SRI program, and they will get paid for every service they do over and above that cap, but just at a lesser amount.

In this case that the member opposite raises, physicians are assessed based on the type of services they provide, the supply of specialists in the county and adjoining counties and the type of sub-specialized services provided. In 1999-2000, the SRI program advised that there were 16 radiologists in Essex county. For the year 2000-01, the SRI program noted that the number of radiologists in Essex county increased to 21. As a result, the SRI program advised that radiologists in Essex county did not meet the geographic undersupply category and therefore did not receive the threshold exemption.

There is, I will let the member opposite know, because I note that he disagrees with the numbers put forward by the specialist retention initiative program, an appeal process, so that if that doctor disagrees with the numbers that the SRI, as I have just mentioned, has put forward and using those numbers has denied an exemption to a billing cap, there is an appeal process which that doctor can follow. Again, I would like to reiterate that any doctor can continue to see patients over and above their \$420,000 billing cap. They do get compensated for those services delivered but at a lesser amount, which is an agreed-upon contract with the Ministry of Health and the OMA.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 1:30 pm next Monday afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1811.

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