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Lundi 30 septembre 2002

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Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 September 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 septembre 2002

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TORONTO WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION CORPORATION ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ DE REVITALISATION DU SECTEUR RIVERAIN DE TORONTO

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 25, 2002, on the motion for second reading of Bill 151, An Act respecting the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation / Projet de loi 151, Loi concernant la Société de revitalisation du secteur riverain de Toronto.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): It's my understanding there are a few minutes left on the clock, but that that time will be waived. Therefore, the floor now goes in rotation over to the government side and the Chair recognizes the member for Malton-Gore—I blew it, didn't I?—Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. My apologies. Please proceed with your speech.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Thank you. You're quite right; I know it's a long riding name. I'm very pleased to be representing the riding, though, so I thank you for allowing me this opportunity this evening. As people watching at home will realize, this is the late sitting, from 6:45 onwards till 9 o'clock. I hope I get all the time to speak till 9, but I may not, because I think other members might want to share the time.

This evening, for the people watching at home, we're speaking on Bill 151, which is the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation Act, 2002, and I rise in the House today to voice my support for this bill. This proposed legislation would create a permanent Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corp or, in short—it's a cumbersome name anyway—the TWRC.

The permanent corporation is designed to replace the interim corporation that has been in place since last November. The TWRC would have significant responsibilities for developing and revitalizing much of the undeveloped land along Toronto's central waterfront.

As members know, this is an area of the city that has been neglected for many years and everyone agrees it is long overdue for investment. As I travel throughout Canada and North America, if I'm lucky enough, I always have comparisons with cities like Vancouver, Boston and Chicago. They've done wonderful things for their waterfronts. I'm hoping that, through this bill and through the commitment the provincial government has made for the waterfront, we will also have not only in name but in actual reality a world-class city where we can attract the much-needed tourism for our industries here.

The fact is, revitalizing Toronto's waterfront is of tremendous importance both to the future of the city and to the future success of our provincial and national economies. From this perspective, the establishment of a permanent waterfront corporation to oversee this major development and redevelopment project is of vital importance.

As members of this Legislature know, the city of Toronto and the greater Toronto area have long been engines of growth for Ontario's economy and indeed the economy of Canada. Both the city and its surrounding regions are expected to experience further significant growth during the next 25 years.

Certainly my riding, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, is growing very well. We are welcoming all the new residents, as many as 15,000 residents a year. Along with growth, there are always some infrastructure-type concerns, problems in terms of congestion on the roads, but I'm pleased to say that this government is acknowledging those and addressing those, as we should be addressing those.

I was quite intrigued reading an article recently in one of the latest issues of Maclean's magazine where they chose an example—not an example but a story where someone had moved away from Vancouver into Kelowna, wanting to get a better, easier and quieter life, but then they were missing the sounds of the traffic. They compared the traffic with making deals and with life in the community, so they were quite happy to come back to the city. So it's a nice thing to have traffic. I don't think we want to go back to the days of the 10 lost years when there was nobody travelling and everybody was sitting at home and not working.

1850

We need to meet the many challenges this growth will bring by planning and making new investments in infrastructure and other vital facilities. We need to coordinate those investments effectively, because they will come from many partners, including the private sector.

A permanent Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corp, TWRC as I said before, would act both as a catalyst and a

conduit for investments in Toronto's waterfront. It would also present the significant and varied interests of the city of Toronto, the Ontario government and the government of Canada. It would enter into innovative partnerships with private sector organizations to transform a forgotten part of the city into commercial and residential communities, parks and green spaces.

Today, as you know, there was a throne speech from the federal government. One of the OMNI channels asked me to comment on that just about 40 minutes ago. I said it had great rhetoric, all kinds of wonderful promises made. But as we know, in the past when they had the federal Red Book—I'm sure you remember—they were going to scrap the GST and they made all these promises. Then they came back and said, "Do you know what? Maybe we'll increase the GST to 10%." So you don't know how much you want to believe the throne speech.

Nonetheless they made some effort to say, "We want to work with the provinces, and we want to perhaps increase health care funding," and it's long overdue. As you know, in the 1960s as medicare came in, it used to be a 50-50 partnership. Then in 1993, or around that time, the federal share was dropped to 18 cents from 50 cents. Currently they're funding 14 cents on the dollar. I'm hoping they won't break their promises in this throne speech and will start funding health care, hopefully from 14 cents to 18 cents and onward at some point in time to 50 cents on the dollar. They do have the money, as we know. They have a surplus sitting there, and we hope they will recognize the needs not only of Ontarians, even though I am speaking for Brampton-Gore-Malton-Springdale, Ontario. More money should be coming for all Canadians. So I'm hoping, even though I know we are all going to be disappointed, because they make all of these promises but they never deliver.

The permanent TWRC, as I said, would develop specific plans and seek willing partners to undertake the massive redevelopment work that's needed along the lakeshore. It would do it under the leadership of Robert Fung, whom I've had the honour and privilege of meeting, whose vision of the waterfront's tremendous potential has fired people's imaginations and raised expectations for the future of this area.

As members will know, the city, the province and the federal government have formed a unique partnership with a view to renewing the waterfront, long overdue. Each level of government has committed $500 million, for a total public investment of $1.5 billion, to kick-start the revitalization process.

It is perhaps interesting to note that many of the members opposite have talked about this government's so-called neglect of the city of Toronto. They have complained about municipal amalgamation, about local service realignment, about cutting red tape and about initiatives to reduce the size and cost of government. They've also alleged that we don't care about Toronto, and that we have not been investing enough in its future. In this regard it may interest members to know that two of the most prestigious accrediting firms, Moody's Investor's Services of New York and Standard and Poors, have recently acknowledged the benefits of our government's initiatives for Ontario's municipalities, particularly Toronto.

Last week, Moody's Investor's Services announced that it had raised its debt rating for the city of Toronto from AA to AA1. Here's a quote from the press release issued by the company on September 26:

"The upgrade reflects the city's strong fiscal performance in the face of many organizational and financial challenges in recent years, combined with an increased provincial presence in funding municipal infrastructure projects."

Moody's goes on to note that Toronto has successfully managed the challenges associated with amalgamation and local services realignment, while maintaining fiscal discipline. The company also points out that the local economy which expanded very rapidly during the late 1990s continues to be resilient despite a more general economic slowdown elsewhere.

The Moody's news release is very specific about the provincial government's role in helping Toronto to achieve this higher debt rating. The company says, "A provincial commitment to provide financial support to transit projects will provide new funding to the city, helping to offset pressures.

"Furthermore, the creation of a new provincial agency, the Ontario Municipal Economic Infrastructure Financing Authority, and the provision of provincially subsidized lending through this body will provide additional benefits to Toronto. The re-emergence of the provincial government as a provider of funding for infrastructure will help Toronto keep its debt low while allowing for plenty of new capital investment."

Another major US credit rating firm, Standard and Poor's, has also recently acknowledged the support the Ontario government is providing to municipalities. In a September 5 news release the firm confirmed Ontario's AA credit rating. The company also noted the financial benefits that the proposed Ontario Municipal Economic Infrastructure Financing Authority will have for Ontario municipalities.

I recognize that some members may not be aware of the significant benefits that will flow from the creation of this new financing agency which the Premier announced in August. The agency is called the Ontario Municipal Economic Infrastructure Financing Authority, OMEIFA. I hate to use the shortened names, they confuse people, but nonetheless it is a part of the government and that's how things operate sometimes in the bureaucracy.

It begins its existence with an initial capital infusion from the province of $1 billion. That's a handsome sum. We need to do more, but it's a good start: $1 billion. That money can be used by municipalities to subsidize 50% of the interest costs of any funds borrowed through this authority.

In addition, the Ontario Clean Water Agency, OCWA, will work with the authority to provide an additional $120 million to finance municipal water and sewer infrastructure projects.

The creation of the new municipal financial authority complements the government's previous announcements regarding the creation of tax-free opportunity bonds to help municipalities raise money for vital infrastructure projects. The pool of capital created through the new authority will further reduce municipal financing costs for infrastructure. The amount of capital available to local governments will expand in future, as the financing authority begins to issue opportunity bonds.

Opportunity bonds are tax-free bonds that municipalities can use to help raise money for local capital infrastructure investments. Unlike a standard bond, the interest earned by investors on opportunity bonds would be tax-exempt. This tax-free status will make the bonds more attractive to investors even though they generally yield a lower rate of interest than conventional bonds.

We will consult and work in partnership with municipalities, the federal government and other stakeholders to design the most efficient and beneficial opportunity bonds program. Consultations have been announced to take place throughout Ontario during September, October and November. Details about the opportunity bonds program, including the consultations schedule and a means for communicating feedback on the proposal, are on the Ministry of Finance public Web site.

1900

I can again, they can certainly access most of those facilities through my Web site, www.ramindergill.com—very easy to remember. So I do encourage people to visit that as often as they get a chance, and feel free to send me their questions, because I'll be very happy to pass on their concerns, as need be.

The consultations will seek the views of municipalities and businesses on whether they're interested in other financing and economic development tools.

We'll be engaging stakeholders at a number of forums, as well as through a province-wide tour, to ensure that as many communities as possible have an opportunity to provide input.

The federal government's participation will be essential to the consulting process.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I find this all very interesting, but for the last 10 minutes, I haven't once heard "waterfront revitalization" or "Toronto."

The Deputy Speaker: Is that it?

Mr Prue: That's it.

The Deputy Speaker: Then take your seat. I think the speaker will bear that in mind. I'm not going to rule in favour of the point of order, but I would ask the member to ensure that he doesn't stray too far from the point, which of course he usually does not.

Mr Gill: I'm pleased to see that the members opposite, and there are two of them, are both listening. So I'm pleased. But there's more to what I'm speaking about, specifically about the waterfront redevelopment.

It is hoped that they will help municipalities renew and expand their infrastructure by joining Ontario as partners in providing a tax exemption for municipal bonds and contributing to the OMEIFA.

These funds are very, very important to have—to have the partnership between the municipalities, the provincial government and hopefully the federal government, so that we can revitalize the much-needed waterfront in Toronto.

I've outlined this innovative new financing initiative at some length to highlight the fact that the government of Ontario has been very active in developing effective solutions to help municipalities finance local infrastructure. They've always said the municipalities don't have enough money, but here's a tool. They've always said they want more power to come up with innovative solutions to financing. Here is a tool where the investors can now get involved in these bonds and create the much-needed money that they need for this vital project.

The creation of OMEIFA and the provision for opportunity bonds are two important initiatives in this regard, and in a sense, the redevelopment of the Toronto waterfront is another one.

As I've already mentioned, a total investment of $1.5 billion has been committed to the waterfront redevelopment project by the city, the province and the federal government. This money will help revitalize and transform Toronto's waterfront and will help kick-start the process of finding private sector partners to invest in the city's future.

At the end of the day, our investment will help strengthen the city's international competitiveness, and that is good not only for Toronto, but also for Ontario and the rest of Canada. In the process, we'll be creating thousands of new jobs, our neighbourhoods and our new facilities for living and working in downtown Toronto.

Mr Speaker, I'm always very encouraged as I travel close to York Street, coming into downtown, because there's a huge number of cranes. I know you do the similar drive every day. As the previous Premier used to say, "Cranes are back." It's great to see so many cranes because construction's back. People have the confidence, they're building, and that creates confidence in consumers as well.

Bill 151, the one we are speaking about this evening, fulfills a provincial commitment to take the lead on waterfront redevelopment through the creation of a permanent waterfront revitalization corporation. If the Legislature approves—I'm hoping they will, in the discussion and the debate today—we will have taken a significant step toward unlocking the waterfront's tremendous potential. There's no doubt that potential is significant.

As Mr Robert Fung, who chairs the Ontario Waterfront Corp, has pointed out, he could be looking at a series of major projects that might include: 10 million square feet of new commercial and industrial space, an amount equal to the floor space of five SkyDomes; a total of 74 hectares or 183 acres of new public park land; up to 35,000 new permanent jobs, an estimated 165,000 person-years of employment in construction.

Mr Speaker, I do have a lot of points that I want to make but it looks like I might be running out of time, so at a later date, perhaps, I'll come and join the discussion again.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like to comment on the comments of the member across the way. Certainly, obviously, he's supportive of this and I know his government is supportive of it. They may have come kicking and screaming to the table, but they came to the table. We know that the federal government and the municipal government took the lead, they were the lead governments on this, so the reality is the provincial government had no recourse except to come to the table. I'm glad they came to the table because this is an important project for the city of Toronto, and I think it sends a very positive message to the other cities and towns across Ontario.

The member spoke about the importance of competency. I guess if I have a problem, it's the provincial government's representatives on this commission. Bill Farlinger has become a rather influential individual since he rode in a bus in 1995 with Mike Harris as they rolled across Ontario and ultimately, in my estimation anyway, haven't made Ontario a better place. But certainly Bill Farlinger did pretty well. He's pretty influential at OPG and he's going to be here. I don't know if the competency level is as high as I would want it to be with the representatives for the provincial government, but that's for them to decide. I would just hope that no conflict of interest arises. You obviously have one with Al Leach being on the board of SNC Lavalin and also the vice-chair of GO Transit. That's an obvious conflict of interest, so that's one of the things I'm concerned about. But we'll let the debate unfold.

Mr Prue: I listened with great interest, and it's good to know that the city of Toronto is appreciated by Moody's, among other groups. But I think I need to stand and say that all is not well in the city of Toronto. I think those of us who live in this city, those of us who are downtown, who are not tourists who come here during the day and leave at night, see that a great many things are starting to go wrong.

We can see that the city of Toronto is suffering from a service delivery—that although it has gone into four different quadrants and is being serviced from four different areas, it is not being serviced identically across the city. We're seeing pockets of problems in our parks and in our streets, which are not nearly so clean as they once were.

We're seeing the problems in municipal governments, whereby access by ordinary citizens has declined to the point that it is now truly becoming frightening. Toronto, before amalgamation, had some 1,300 meetings where local citizens could come together and meet face to face with their politicians and talk about the issues of the day in their neighbourhoods. Last year in Toronto, there were only some 30 local meetings. So we have gone from 1,300 to 30. We can see that in the city of Toronto, like many municipalities, tax increases are now the order of the day. The last two successive years have seen 5% tax increases, and the forecast by the treasurer of that city is that one can expect 5% or more tax increases for at least the next 20 years to come because the tax base is no longer able to sustain itself.

You are starting to see urban decay. You are starting to see gridlock. So although Moody's is most happy with the financial picture in Toronto, those who live in this city are starting to see some cracks. Hopefully the waterfront will be able to help repair and bring some new vibrancy to this city, which is sorely in need of it.

1910

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I am pleased to rise and make comments on the remarks by the member opposite and just remind the House that Ontario Liberals do support this bill. We support the efforts of development and revitalization.

It's interesting to note, however, that such important issues as development and revitalization should be dealt with promptly. We know that this bill has sat on the order paper for almost a year and was mentioned in the 2000 budget some two and a half years ago. Once again we see that the Harris-Eves government is long on promises and short on delivery. This happens over and over again with the Harris-Eves government.

We could certainly stand some assistance in my riding of Chatham-Kent Essex on development and revitalization when it comes to doctors. For my very first public meeting in 1995, where I invited the public to come and comment on revitalization, what we needed and most specifically the medical situation, it dealt with doctors. The government should know that when businesses want to set up shop, open and create jobs, they come to an area and they say, "First of all, what is the situation with your medical care? And what are your schools like?"

They're closing rural schools in my area, which is detrimental to bringing in jobs. We have too few doctors. Persons who live within the riding and always have do not have doctors. People moving to the area call my office and say, "Where can I find a doctor?" We need help in many areas of the province that are chronically underserved. This will bring about development and revitalization, because the companies I'm speaking of can buy the mortar and bricks anywhere but they need the services for their employees.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I didn't hear the member across the way speak even for a moment about the fact that just last week his government sat by while many of Toronto's citizens were kicked out of the only homes they could find, on the waterfront at tent city; or why they didn't get together with the municipal government of Toronto and Home Depot to come up with a solution that would have seen these people housed in a dignified manner that reflected the richness that exists in this province and in this country.

It's actually quite disappointing, which brings me to the other point I didn't hear the member reference at all: any kind of a commitment to affordable housing or social housing on the waterfront. We know they're committed to making sure their friends on Bay Street are going to be looked after. They did that to organizations like Brascan

with their hydro deregulation. I was hoping to hear something more about that from the member tonight, but he obviously didn't want to talk about that.

I'm proud to say that our leader, Howard Hampton, has put forward a private member's bill called the Toronto Waterfront Fair Housing Act. We want to ensure that affordable housing is part of the vision so that we aren't just building an enclave for the rich.

If our act had been in place and we had been the government last week, we would have brought all the players together—the city, the federal government, the people on the waterfront in tent city and some of the people who advocate on their behalf—and we would have come up with a plan that would have seen something perhaps unique and exciting happen on that property that would indicate the kind of direction we would want to go in as a government to make sure everybody was being served.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Gill: I do appreciate and thank the members who took part in this response to my notes: the members for Sudbury, Beaches-East York, Chatham-Kent Essex and Sault Ste Marie. It does show that they were at least listening. We do know that previous Ontario governments have toyed with the idea, and they never did anything when they were in government. At least we are here with SuperBuild to make sure the funds are there. We don't want to do it alone; we can't do it alone. We want the municipalities and the federal government to be partners.

The member from Beaches-East York talked about "tourists come and tourists go." We want to make sure that tourists come. As you know, new attractions bring close to two million additional visitors to Toronto each year. We are very supportive of that, because we do need them.

The member from Sault Ste Marie talked about tent city and social programs. The best social program anybody can come up with is more jobs—one million more jobs in Ontario in the last seven years, and the cranes are back, like I said before.

I saw a beautiful bumper sticker the other day while I was driving. It read, "I go to work. I fight poverty." That is the best social program we can create for the people of tent city, for people in need—a hand up, not a handout. I'm very pleased to be part of a government that recognizes that Toronto is a great city and that we need to nurture its development. I'm happy to support this bill. I know the members opposite support this bill but, being members of the opposition, have to say they don't. I'm not sure where they stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'm delighted to join the debate on Bill 151, the so-called Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation Act, which is actually the only thing in front of us here tonight. There are no politics in front of us tonight, there is no Standard and Poor's, there is no measuring the standard of the government. Those are there to be discussed at other times, and I'm sure we will have our opportunity. This bill, even if it were approved tonight, isn't going to put a shovel in the ground tomorrow—but finally, to see the government moving to do something positive, something concrete, something with a vision, if I can say, with respect to Toronto and especially the revitalization of the lakefront in Toronto.

This is what's in front of us. It is to have this corporation legitimized, hopefully with a most distinguished board, a most distinguished bunch of people representing the corporation and the interests of the people of Toronto, hopefully with the scope, the purpose, the power, the aims to really do something that should have been done perhaps many years ago. But we are moving. This bill, of course, was introduced almost one year ago.

In his final remarks the member said, "I'd like to know where the opposition stands." Well, let me tell you. There are benefits to seeing that this bill proceeds, and I'll make my remarks with respect to that. There are reasons for seeing that this indeed proceeds, because we are not dealing with politics or if the province has a triple-A or a triple-B rating or whatever. It has to do with the city of Toronto, which is the heart of Ontario and the economic heart of Canada. If it's done properly—

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: Indeed, I'll second the member there—we have an opportunity to do something with the lakefront of Toronto and the city of Toronto that we can really be proud of. I trust that with the various appointments from the three levels of government, because this is something which is funded by the three levels of government, we will have wonderful people under the direction of Mr Fung, who will proceed with the utmost sense of responsibility and show leadership and say, "We have a vision for the next 20 or 25 years. We will be making the Toronto lakefront and Toronto as a whole the jewel of North America, and we can really say we can compete with any other city in the world."

1920

When we talk of revitalizing, we are not just talking about the lakefront. Having been around for a number of years at the municipal level, and I have seen what happened to the lakefront in Toronto, I'm ashamed to say that we deserved a lot more, a lot better than what we have presently at the lakefront. But at least we are moving.

So let me say to the members on the government side: this has been a year on the books, but it's there. We are here for second reading. We're not even at the final stage to get it out of this House, but we're getting there.

It is the establishment of a corporation which will have to lead this wonderful idea of doing something with the waterfront in Toronto. It is to redevelop for the next 20, 25 years, and maybe into the future.

Let me say at this stage, because we are just now in the discussion—when I say "we," I mean the city of Toronto—they are conducting a number of public hear-

ings with respect to the new proposed official plan for the city of Toronto. I think this comes at a very propitious time, when the city of Toronto says, "Well, we see growth, we see potentials, and we have to do it in a very comprehensive but in a very orderly fashion." I will get into transportation and housing, if I have the time.

I think this is at a very propitious time for the existing leaders in Toronto, Toronto municipal council, and the people who will be leading this agency, if you will, the waterfront corporation, to really work together and say, "How can we incorporate our vision for the waterfront with the new official plan of Toronto?" I think both of them must work together, because I believe we cannot have a vibrant waterfront without a healthy, vibrant city of Toronto. You've got to have the waterfront, you've got to have the city core and you've got to have the rest of the city.

I don't have to tell you that every one of us from time to time has had a chance to perhaps take a trip, go on a holiday, visit many other places, and many, many times we have been told, "Well, make sure that you stick to the oceanfront in the hotel strips, in the walkway. Don't you venture yourself going on the back streets."

We don't want that. We want to make sure that when people enjoy the amenities that will be created on the waterfront, equally—equally—they will be enjoying the core and they will be enjoying seeing the rest of the city, from one end to the other. Only then can we say that we have accomplished a very successful vision 20 years from now.

I don't know about my colleagues in the House, but I'm planning to be here 20, 25 years from now to see exactly the fruits of what we are doing today. I don't see anybody getting the joke, but that's what I intend to do. If I'll be there, that's another story, but at least I can say today that—

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: —absolutely—that we have an opportunity to engage this wonderful corporation here, and say, "We want something to be done with the waterfront in Toronto." And why not? Why not?

The benefits are innumerable, absolutely innumerable—economically, socially, culturally. Toronto is what it is today, and it can be a lot more tomorrow. But it's up to our vision of today, and in appointing the leaders of the corporation, it's up to their leadership; it is up to their vision.

I hope that all levels of government which have a share in this can retain responsibility and oversee, as the document is showing us, that on an annual basis they will have to supply various documentation, accountability, budget proposals and so forth; that indeed, every level of government, putting aside politics, will oversee in the best interests of all Ontarians, because I believe that whatever flows from the city of Toronto, everyone has to gain; that the members leading the corporation will propose the best plan and get on with it as soon as possible so that in the future we can say, "Yes, indeed, it has been successful."

Let me touch briefly on some of those things that we should benefit from or we will benefit from. It is not only making a beautiful waterfront, walkways, nice green grass and trees and flowers; I think it's a lot more than that.

This envisages a long-term plan, the next 20, 25 years and probably even beyond. It requires a lot of effort from a lot of people, especially from the three levels of government. I want to say to the member across the floor and the members of the government that funding is not stopping here. I think this requires a lot of commitment on behalf of the three levels of government. But I hope, as they say, that this will eventually have to be a partnership of the public and private sectors so that it's not going to be a burden on the city of Toronto and the taxpayers of Ontario.

I have to tell you that we have seen in the past some wonderful projects in the city of Toronto but, in the end, I have no idea if they were so economically wonderful for the people of Toronto. I'm going to have to remember which projects those were, but I think they were not at the same level as Expo 67. I think we've had our share of sinking money into losing propositions.

You would create a tremendous economic potential for us here in Ontario, in Toronto, for all our people: long-term jobs. Economically, I think it would bring a boom to various industries, not only in the GTA but within Toronto itself: restaurants, entertainment facilities, shops, theatres, hotels, convention centres. It would be a people's place first of all, of course. I hope this would be the main aim. Jobs would come with putting the shovel into the ground and saying, "Finally, we are there."

As I said at the beginning to my colleague on the other side, let's not talk about politics or Standard and Poor's or Moody's or whatever with ratings; let's see how far and how quickly we can go so we can get to work, because we are already not one year late but many years late.

Socially, we know the benefits that can occur to Toronto and the people of Ontario. We are already blessed with the richness of a number of events over the years, many cultural events, from downtown to uptown to the Danforth area, where people come from all over the world to attend, to enjoy and to join with the people of Toronto as well.

Culturally, I think it would be even better. Where else would you go in the world but to a city like Toronto, which is, yes, clean and safe and has a number of recreational facilities, artistic facilities, theatres? We are attracting some of the best shows in the world and they keep on lasting for months and months, and I think we need more of that.

I think it's up to us that this revitalization, as we call it, this transformation, if you will, does take place and takes place in the most responsible way. Accountability, of course, yes. That goes without saying—God forbid, we don't want to see any more 407s; I think this goes from one end of town to the other; while we are talking about the lakefront down here, the 407 is practically in

the boondocks with respect to downtown Toronto—but not along the same lines and the same experience.

I say to the government, you have our blessing, because we see this as something that has to happen, as something positive. But most of the co-operation must come from the provincial level itself, and not to play politics with this issue, because it is too big and too important to play politics with.

1930

This is not the occasion to remind the government members that Toronto is being depleted of one of its major resources: $1.76 billion is being collected by our friendly government here, supposedly to go for education, but it's not going there. We have seen the effects of downloading; we have seen the effect, for example, of no more funding, no more subsidies for transportation.

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: We know it. We've already said that and I said I won't go into that because this issue is too important to play politics with.

But there are other things attached to it. In order to make it work, in order for this vision we have—the province, the feds and the city—to work, the revitalization cannot and must not stop at the waterfront. There are a number of other things that must take place at the same time, concurrently, if this is going to work. I know the Premier knows that, I know the Prime Minister knows, I know our mayor and I think most people in Toronto know and I'm sure that even the people who are supposed to be appointed to the corporation know that we are not stopping there.

There is another part just north of the waterfront that must be addressed at the same time as well. When I say that, I'm referring to transportation improvements, new extensions, maintenance to the existing ones. For example, we need some expansion or renovation at the existing Union Station. We have to address the environmental issues and problems with respect to the Don River where it comes into Lake Ontario. We have to address the industrial and port lands as well. This must become part of the entire revitalizing plan.

While it is part of the waterfront revitalization, there are other factors which must be addressed as well, and so they should be. We have the expressway and Lake Shore. We have streets which are part and parcel of the waterfront that must be addressed. Some assessment studies must be done as well with respect to that. It's not only a question of saying, "Well, we are proposing this plan at the waterfront. It looks beautiful. Let's do it." In order to make it work, to make it functional, we have to address the other issues which become part and parcel of the entire waterfront renewal plan. I'm sure they know that. I'm sure they do, from the feds to the provincial government and most of our own local municipal people.

The aim of this new corporation would be to take the lead and address exactly what we would like to see at the waterfront. I hope we can move fast enough so that we can have some local input as well, because we are saying to the corporation, "Here you are. You have been appointed. Take it and run."

I still hope, and I'm sure all levels of government will retain some sense of responsibility and urgency to require and seek input from the people of Toronto as well. After all, they are the ones who will be paying a lot of the bills and consequences. There will be a lot of them who will be living in the city, and I think we owe it to them that indeed the members of the corporation will come to the city of Toronto people and say, "We are ready to go. Let's do it."

I did mention before that we've got to look beyond the limits of the waterfront. When we as Torontonians, as Ontarians—people coming from the States or other parts of the world can very willingly, safely, happily, enjoy the rest of the city without seeing our people lined up on a subway grill trying to keep warm. We don't want to see homeless on our streets. We want to make sure that we provide for those people. We want to make sure that the success of the waterfront incorporates every other facet of the plan itself. Only then can we say that we've accomplished what we envisioned some 10, 20 years ago with the waterfront revitalization.

If we give them the purpose, the power, the direction, we must seek their leadership and make sure that, indeed, the waterfront will be a waterfront for all Ontarians and Torontonians to enjoy, where we can very well say, "Yes, indeed, Toronto has finally become the world city that we always wanted." Until then, until it stays on our books in here, until we continue to debate it and then move it to the action, nothing is going to happen.

I have to throw this in: let's not play politics with this issue. Let's not hang on to it until we have the next election, for the sake of saying, "Oh, yes, here it is, look what we're doing." This is not an issue to play politics with. I think the opposition is in favour. We are only waiting for the government to say, "We need it. We've been waiting for a year; let's get on with it. Let's give them the power, let's give them direction, let's give them the leadership." But the leadership must come from us in this House first. So I hope the government is listening, and we hope that we can get on our way soon.

The Deputy Speaker: It is now time for members to take up to two minutes for questions or comments.

Mr Martin: I want to say I appreciate the comments by the member who just spoke, the member for York West. I agree with him that we need to get on with this and it needs to be a mix of activity there. Certainly we in the NDP caucus support the provincial and federal action to redevelop Toronto's waterfront. In particular we support a vision of mixed income housing, offices, public space and cultural facilities on the waterfront. In particular we're looking to make sure there's some housing that's affordable for all people there.

It's about time the government got on with it. They've waited for two years after the announcement to move this important project forward. We'll be watching to make sure that public assets are not given away and that there is sufficient public accountability. Our critic for Municipal Affairs and Housing, whom you'll hear from in a few minutes, Michael Prue, has put together a compre-

hensive urban vision document. We will provide $300 million per year for a fund for a dynamic downtown. This fund would help fund waterfront development, fixing up heritage buildings, cleaning up brownfield sites and a variety of other things to improve our city centres throughout the province.

Our vision also involves affordable housing and an Ontario transportation trust fund to fund transit and roads.

We're concerned, as I've said before, that in all of this we will leave the ordinary working man and woman, the ordinary person—for example, the people who ended up being evicted last week from the tent city on the waterfront—out of the equation altogether, and we think that would be a mistake and an unfortunate oversight. The sooner we get our heads around the fact that everybody deserves to live in a dignified, affordable home that's safe, that they can afford, then it benefits us all. We get to claim ourselves as a civil society then.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions, comments? The member for Oak Ridges.

Applause.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): First, I want to thank my colleagues for their applause. I was disappointed that the members opposite didn't join in, but I can understand.

Applause.

Mr Klees: Thank you very much.

I want to commend the member from York West for his speech today on this bill. It shows the deep sense of understanding that he has of the city of Toronto, and also I think it demonstrates the importance of this bill, that members of all parties are speaking in favour of getting on with addressing the need to revitalize Toronto's waterfront.

The member rightly referred to the need to ensure that the people of Toronto have a say in what that looks like. In my remarks later I'll be addressing some amendments that the government will be proposing that will ensure that, in the course of consultation, entrenched in this legislation is the requirement of the corporation to go back to the people of Toronto and incorporate public consultations as these plans are developed. Also, reference will be made to the importance of conforming to Toronto's official plan as these plans go forward.

1940

I do not live in Toronto. I live in the town of Aurora and represent the riding of Oak Ridges. But let me tell you that when I am travelling abroad—it is true that although people should know where Aurora is and where Oak Ridges is, they don't—regardless of where I have been in the world they know where Toronto is. This bill, I believe, will do much more to ensure that Toronto is front and centre in people's minds around the world. We look forward to this bill being passed.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): It's a pleasure to make some comments regarding Bill 151, because it is one of those rare occasions where everyone is very supportive of the direction of the revitalization of the Toronto waterfront. Toronto is a world-class city. The revitalization of that waterfront, I believe, is long past due. It truly is about treating the city of Toronto so it attains and has that world-class character that we have to constantly develop.

You know, they say that politics is about the art of the possible, and this is one of the truly rare occasions. We look at the word "politics" sometimes and it's pejorative, it's negative. This is one those occasions when we can sit down and say that something is happening that has the intent to make the city a much better place to live, and the word "revitalization" says that.

We also have to be very conscious that whatever is balanced there when it comes to this tremendous amount of money that is injected, there is a fair public consultation process that takes place. We have to make sure the public will have access. When we talk about private-public partnerships, we always have to ensure that we protect the interests of the public as much as we encourage the private sector to invest and be a partner. Too many times we have seen that the private sector sometimes tends to be protected more than the public.

I'm pleased to support this bill.

Mr Prue: I would like to commend the member for York West. He spoke, I think, somewhat passionately, but he spoke in a very balanced way, talking about the needs of Toronto but also the need for accountability. I think this is something that is absolutely essential for all members of all parties to understand as we go into what is probably going to be one the largest mammoth undertakings in the history of Toronto. This needs to be an accountable project which at the end of the day will not bankrupt the city, the province or the country.

We have seen in the past, in other places where such mammoth projects have gone on, that although they have succeeded to a greater or lesser extent, they have sometimes ended in bankruptcy. I'm thinking particularly about the London docks, which, if you go there today, is a remarkable place that was once nothing much more than what we see on our own waterfront.

The member also talked about sinking money into losing propositions. I want to assure him that I don't think our waterfront is a losing proposition. But it will be a huge project to reclaim it because of the toxicity of the land and because of the difficulty in marrying the public and private partnerships that are going to have to take place there.

There is a cause to be made for revitalization, and he said it very well. It desperately needs to be revitalized. That land needs to be revitalized. Take the time to walk down there and see the vacant factories, the places that are boarded up, the weeds that are growing and the decrepit railways.

Last but not least, he talked about the urgency, and yes, there is some urgency. There would have been more if we had been fortunate enough to get the Olympics, but we didn't. That should not deter us from looking at the long-term future of this city, and it is urgent at this time that those lands be brought into productive use.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for York West has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Sergio: My thanks to the members for Beaches-East York, Sarnia-Lambton, Oak Ridges and Sault Ste. Marie, who have contributed to my remarks. I would be accused of living in another world if I were to say I wish the House would always be so pacific, easy to get along with and supportive of everything the government does. It could, and I know this would be a good wish.

Let me briefly address something the member from Oak Ridges said. It's something we all do, and the member from Oak Ridges does it so well. He said when we travel we don't say we are from Mississauga, Aurora, Newmarket or wherever. We say we are from Toronto. I wonder why.

Everything we do, we do it for our people. I can't image the benefits a project of this size would bring to our people.

Mr Bartolucci: Even Sudbury.

Mr Sergio: My friend Rick Bartolucci says "Sudbury." Of course, the numbers of trades, machinery, components, parts, materials are just unthinkable. This is something our neighbours, our sons and daughters would benefit from and would be working in one of these avenues. But above all we've got to do it because it is right. It's been right for many, many years, but we just could not get the political will behind it and say, "We've got to do it." We are there. Let's not pussyfoot around. Let's do it. I'm pleased to see there is support around the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The chair recognizes the member for Oak Ridges.

Applause.

Mr Klees: I do hope that my mother in St Thomas is tuned in tonight. She would be thrilled to hear this applause; it doesn't happen often. This is an historic occasion.

I'm pleased to participate in the debate on Bill 151. Let me begin by saying the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation Act is indeed important legislation, as we have already heard this evening. It would fulfill the province's commitment to provide leadership on waterfront redevelopment by creating a permanent corporation. In turn, that corporation would play a central role in developing and overseeing the completion of an estimated $12 billion in projects. As members know, a unique waterfront redevelopment partnership has indeed been created by the government of Canada, the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto. Together, we're committed to taking advantage of the tremendous opportunity Toronto's waterfront presents, not only to the city and to the province, but indeed to this country.

Our three governments see the redevelopment of Toronto's waterfront as an unprecedented opportunity to accomplish a number of important goals. Those include planning and managing the kind of smart growth that Toronto, the GTA and Ontario will need over the next 20 to 25 years, strengthening the city of Toronto and its economy, along with that of Ontario and indeed the country, realizing the enormous potential represented by the approximately 2,000 acres of underdeveloped land near the city's centre, and perhaps most importantly, creating thousands of new jobs, new business opportunities, new homes and neighbourhoods, new parks and public spaces in the heart of Canada's largest and most exciting city.

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I want to speak very briefly to the reference that was made earlier in debate and in responses by the member opposite who was so concerned, and rightfully so, about the city's and the province's underprivileged. I believe that an event like this, a project like this, will indeed go far to strengthen the economy not only of the city but of the province, and give opportunity to people who perhaps don't have that opportunity now to have a job, to earn a living, to in fact become engaged in this momentous opportunity.

I think all of us here today understand the importance of this project. What some members may not know, however, is that the opportunity we have before us closely parallels a similar opportunity that presented itself to the city of Chicago some 150 years ago. In an interesting aside I'd like to share some of those details with you.

During the great railway boom of the mid-19th century, the Illinois Central Railroad came to the city of Chicago and asked for a right-of-way into the heart of that city. Chicago was becoming one of the more important railway towns and much of this activity focused on the city of Chicago. At the time, Chicago was still a relatively young city with a population of about 30,000.

Despite the city's youth and its activity, its leaders recognized the aesthetic and environmental importance of the city's waterfront on Lake Michigan. What's more, they had a vision and the foresight of how to create something special on that waterfront.

The city realized that the lakeshore was suffering badly from erosion, thanks in part to the strong winds that were constantly blowing in from that lake. The issue of erosion is one we're familiar with. I grew up on Lake Ontario and I can tell you that I know the power of the waves on the shoreline. There are people who have lost literally hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars of lands to the power of erosion.

They knew, in the city of Chicago, that a system of breakwaters and dikes was needed in order to protect and maintain that city's shoreline. The city had already asked for financial assistance from both the federal as well as the state governments, and none was forthcoming. As a result, that city negotiated a unique partnership agreement with the Illinois Central Railroad. The city agreed on the one hand to give the railroad an efficient route right into the heart of the city. That was a 300-foot right-of-way on the east side of Michigan Avenue, which was the main street of Chicago at the time. In exchange for that right-of-way, the railroad then agreed to build and maintain a breakwater that would protect the city's shoreline. To this day, the city of Chicago enjoys the benefit of that partnership that took place.

The Illinois Central also agreed to separate its right-of-way with a series of low walls and grass berms. It agreed

to the city's stipulation that the railway structure could be high enough to obstruct people's views on the lake only to the point where it would still be aesthetically pleasing and they would have an appropriate view of the lake.

Decades later, even the railroad executives agreed that Chicago's waterfront was one of the most significant aspects of that city and that the waterfront line of that railroad was one of the most significant entrances to any major city in the world. Again, it was the partnership that made all of that happen. When the great Chicago fire of 1871 destroyed much of the city's downtown area, that entrance remained intact.

Today, most freight traffic has shifted away from downtown Chicago, but the waterfront line is still an important part of the regional transportation network serving commuters, linking the downtown area and that waterfront. At the same time, the central waterfront remains one of the most attractive and vibrant parts of the so-called Windy City. It has parkland where people can walk, cycle, swim and play. It has a number of major attractions, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the