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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 6 April 2004

Mardi 6 avril 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 6 avril 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ADAMS MINE

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):

Yesterday we witnessed the introduction of the curiously titled Adams Mine Lake Act. I say "curious," because before yesterday no one knew it was a lake; they thought it was a mine. This magical transformation of a mine into a lake is part and parcel of the illusion Liberals are trying to create to hide what I consider the power-grabbing, dictatorial nature of this bill, which in the flourish of a pen will sign away property rights, hit taxpayers with compensation costs and impose a redefinition of the word "lake" on the province of Ontario. In the spirit of undemocratic redefinition, I will be referring to this bill as the "no landfill in Liberal ridings act."

I was listening to the environment minister yesterday, and it made me wonder if that minister of the crown, or anyone on that side of the House for that matter, believes that landowners, property owners, farmers or iron ore miners in Ontario should have property rights. When a government can come in and retroactively trash the legal rights of a property owner, it speaks to the lack of property rights here in Ontario. I wasn't aware that Liberal democratic renewal included the trashing of basic democratic rights. I do realize the Minister of the Environment has the power to take away water permits; I was unaware the minister has the power to take away land, property and legal rights.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I rise today to report on my experience visiting four schools, three in my area and York University. I took the challenge of the Minister of Education, the Honourable Gerard Kennedy, to visit and have a personal experience. I visited a special-needs school, the Zareinu Educational Centre of Metropolitan Toronto. I also visited Vaughan Secondary School, St Robert Catholic High School and York University, for a short time.

I was pleased to experience some of what the students go through in their daily lives. One of the things that struck me significantly was the respect the schools,

teachers and principals have for our Minister of Education. There were very positive comments on what he is doing and what he is attempting to achieve. That, in my opinion, will assist us in doing what we intend to do.

Also, there were comments about portables. In my area, a growing area, there are too many portables. There is also a lack of computers. We need more funding to buy equipment within the education system and we need more funding to buy books, but we also need more funding for transportation so our kids will be able to go to specialty classes, whether it be sports or music or other subjects. Overall, there is a positive mood that we will be able to make major improvements in the education system, and I'm pleased to report that.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): In recent months, Ontarians learned that the word of our Premier is meaningless, and now it looks as though his signature is equally meaningless. That signature is on an explicit taxpayers' federation election pledge to balance the budget, a goal that could have been achieved if the government had lifted its finger to even try. But when it comes to setting budget priorities, Mr McGuinty would rather play the politics of spin than make the tough decisions he said he could make.

You will hear excuses. It will be said that Ontarians told the so-called budget consultations that they don't want efficiencies found. But the kangaroo consultations were designed to produce only such an answer. You will hear a lot of political spin about a structural deficit. But the government's only plan to address this phantom is to post a deficit that's as bloated as possible.

Therefore, I want to draw attention to a key aspect of the balanced budget law: the pay cuts for any cabinet that fails to balance the budget. As we return to the era of tax, spend and borrow economics, we'll be seeking guarantees from every minister opposite that they will receive no stipend or salary supplement from the Liberal Party to offset the richly deserved salary penalties they will incur as a result of bringing to this province a deficit which is unnecessary to burden the people of this province.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Shortly after forming government in November 2003, Premier McGuinty asked me to conduct broad-based consultations to determine how our government might better protect women and children from violence. Our goal: to restart a constructive dialogue, long absent at

Queen's Park, under the thoughtful direction and determined leadership of the Premier—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Could you please wait?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to question whether or not it's appropriate for the parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, to make a statement at this time.

The Speaker: I'm not quite sure if the member is making a statement of policy within her jurisdiction. Could I hear the statement first? I cannot rule on this unless I know it is in that direction. Then we can make a decision if it is out of order or not.

Ms Broten: Perhaps if my friend opposite had listened to what I was about to say, he wouldn't have concerns. I will start again.

Shortly after forming government in November 2003, Premier McGuinty asked me to conduct broad-based consultations to determine how our government might better protect women and children from violence. Our goal: to restart a constructive dialogue, long absent at Queen's Park, under the thoughtful direction and determined leadership of the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I think the member was making a correct point of order. I think that's within the jurisdiction the Premier had asked you to do, within that policy area, and you are the parliamentary assistant for that. So I would regard that as not being a statement coming from you. I'll have to pass on that one.

1340

POVERTY

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It wasn't too long ago that Toronto liked to say of itself that it was a world-class city. It wasn't too long ago that the late Peter Ustinov called Toronto "New York run by the Swiss." It wasn't too long ago that people came from all around the world to study a unique government, to study our neighbourhoods and to study the social and cultural integration that people come to expect of Toronto.

But the last 10 years have not been kind to the city of Toronto. Yesterday, the United Way released a study called Poverty by Postal Code. In Poverty by Postal Code, they talk about the number of neighbourhoods that are now living in poverty. In the last 20 years, we have gone from some 30 neighbourhoods where the majority of people live in poverty to up to 120 today. This has been disproportionate to all other municipalities in Ontario and to those who live in those poor neighbourhoods—primarily new immigrants and visible minorities.

This government has an obligation to look after the Queen City. This government has an obligation to build housing, to look to redress the welfare and ODSR rates and to have programs to help our newest Canadians. We are looking forward to this government doing exactly that in the upcoming budget debate.

TARTAN DAY

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Members' statements, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. It's déjà vu.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Perhaps my jacket has already brought enough attention to this fact, but I rise today in celebration of Tartan Day. The tartan is an important symbol of Scottish heritage and it is with pride that I wear this tartan jacket.

My mother, Anne McArthur Norman, was born in Whiteinch, Scotland, just outside of Glasgow. My father, Frank Stuart Miller, wore this same tartan jacket in this very Legislature many times in the past, particularly on the special occasion of introducing the Ontario budget.

This particular tartan is the Royal Stuart tartan. It was sold by Garwoods of Muskoka on the main street of beautiful Bracebridge. The Royal Stuart tartan is that of the Queen and wearing it was traditionally seen as a sign of loyalty to the crown or to the Royal Stuart line. In 1746, an act of Parliament imposed a ban on the tartan in an attempt to stamp out the culture, which was seen by the Hanovarian government as the power base for the House of Stuart. As you can see, they were unsuccessful and this important cultural symbol lives on to this very day.

However, today I wear this tartan not only in honour of Tartan Day and in recognition of Scotland's rich cultural heritage but also in memory of my father. My father was well known for wearing this tartan jacket and in fact used a tartan button in his successful 1985 leadership bid.

In conclusion, I would like to add that my father's tartan collection does not end here. I am also fortunate enough to have his equally stylish turquoise Muskoka tartan, but I will save that for next year.

Happy Tartan Day.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): For a moment, I thought it was Frank Miller himself.

SIKH SCRIPTURES

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It's my pleasure to rise today to speak about a historic event which took place this past weekend. On Sunday, 149 copies of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh religion's highest spiritual authority, arrived in Canada. The scriptures were airlifted from the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar. This is the holy city of Sikhs and the only place where these scriptures are printed.

Their arrival was the culmination of efforts by the Sacha Sauda Gurmat Parchar Society, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, SkyLink Aviation Inc and the Sikh community. Some 200 Sikhs joyously celebrated the holy books' arrival at Pearson International Airport.

The Guru Granth Sahib, also known as the Adi Granth, is the only scripture of its kind that contains the works from the religion's founders, along with works

from other faiths, which is why it is only fitting that they came to Canada, a nation known for its religious diversity and social inclusion.

The day before yesterday was a tremendous day for the Sikh faith.

The Sikh community in Canada is working hard to establish a printing facility here where the holy books can be printed according to religious specifications. This would be a phenomenal accomplishment for the Sikh community in Canada and worldwide.

On behalf of the Legislature, I congratulate the Sikh community on this successful first delivery.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise in the House today to express my disappointment and my constituents' dismay with the bill introduced yesterday by Environment Minister Leona Dombrowsky. The Adams Mine Lake Act, 2004, will prohibit the controversial Adams mine from ever being used as a landfill, but it will do absolutely nothing to stop landfills like site 41 in my own riding of Simcoe North.

The Liberals tried to pull the wool over our eyes. They included the Adams mine announcement with several other environmental initiatives just so they could disguise the real issue. The announcement was made to stop a fellow minister from resigning.

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Who started the process?

Mr Dunlop: To the Minister of Agriculture, just remember Walkerton, would you?

I respectfully submit that this legislation is all about Liberals helping Liberals, and nothing more. Let's not forget that the Minister of Natural Resources threatened to resign last fall if he didn't get his way on the Adams mine landfill. Minister Dombrowsky has expressed her passion for clean water time and time again. If she meant what she said, she should have used yesterday's opportunity to also help stop landfills like site 41, not just a landfill that's located in a Liberal riding. As the Minister of the Environment, Leona Dombrowsky is supposed to represent all Ontarians on environmental issues. She previously announced a moratorium on all new and expanded water-taking permits, so why didn't she announce a moratorium on all new landfill construction?

In her statement to the Ontario Legislature yesterday, Minister Dombrowsky said, about the Adams mine landfill proposal, "The key approvals for this proposal came before the Walkerton tragedy." She also said, "The proposed legislation would revoke all existing approvals for the Adams mine landfill...." In fact, she did an order in council.

The key approvals for site 41 also came before the Walkerton tragedy, so I fully expect legislation to be forthcoming from the minister that revokes all existing approvals for the site 41 landfill.

PASSOVER

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): I rise today in recognition of those Ontarians celebrating the holy Jewish holiday of Passover. Passover marks the Jewish people's historic struggle to free themselves from slavery under the rule of the Pharaohs, their exodus in the desert, and Moses's subsequent receiving of the Torah from God atop Mount Sinai.

While Passover marks the birth of the Jewish nation, its message speaks to all of us in its celebration of freedom. In Ontario and in Canada, we live in a society that values freedom and celebrates diversity.

The Jewish community in my riding and other parts of Ontario and Canada has recently been distressed and saddened by hateful actions against them. Sadly, other religious communities have also been targeted. Events like those that happened in Montreal the other day are appalling, and I know all members of this House stand with me when we condemn them.

As Premier McGuinty has said, an attack on any one of us is an attack on all of us. We stand together with the Jewish community in this trying time. The Jewish community must continue to celebrate its heritage and freedom even as it struggles against attacks on freedom. Passover marks this celebration.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr Leal and Mr Colle exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Colle assumes ballot item 39 and Mr Leal assumes ballot item 14.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Yes.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that Mr Leal and Mr Colle exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Colle assumes ballot item 39 and Mr Leal assumes ballot item 14.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Tuesday, April 6, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those against?

I think the ayes have it.
There will be a five-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

The Speaker: Order.

All those in favour, please rise.

Ayes

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Arnott, Ted | Fonseca, Peter | Patten, Richard |
| Arthurs, Wayne | Gerretsen, John | Peters, Steve |
| Baird, John R. | Gravelle, Michael | Phillips, Gerry |
| Barrett, Toby | Hardeman, Ernie | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Hoy, Pat | Qaadri, Shafiq |
| Bentley, Christopher | Hudak, Tim | Racco, Mario G. |
| Berardinetti, Lorenzo | Jeffrey, Linda | Ramal, Khalil |
| Boutrogianni, Marie | Klees, Frank | Ramsay, David |
| Bradley, James J. | Kular, Kuldip | Rinaldi, Lou |
| Broten, Laurel C. | Kwinter, Monte | Runciman, Robert W. |
| Brownell, Jim | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Cansfield, Donna H. | Leal, Jeff | Sandals, Liz |
| Caplan, David | Levac, Dave | Smith, Monique |
| Chambers, Mary Anne V. | Marsales, Judy | Smitherman, George |
| Colle, Mike | Matthews, Deborah | Sorbara, Greg |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Mauro, Bill | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Craitor, Kim | McGuinty, Dalton | Takhar, Harinder S. |
| Crozier, Bruce | McNeely, Phil | Van Bommel, Maria |
| Dhillon, Vic | Meilleur, Madeleine | Watson, Jim |
| Di Cocco, Caroline | Miller, Norm | Wilkinson, John |
| Dombrowsky, Leona | Milloy, John | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Duguid, Brad | Mitchell, Carol | Wong, Tony C. |
| Duncan, Dwight | Mossop, Jennifer F. | Wynne, Kathleen O. |
| Dunlop, Garfield | Oraziotti, David | Yakabuski, John |
| Eves, Ernie | Ouellette, Jerry J. | Zimmer, David |
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel | Parsons, Ernie | |

The Speaker: All those against, please rise.

Nays

| | | |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Bisson, Gilles | Marchese, Rosario | Prue, Michael |
| Kormos, Peter | Martel, Shelley | |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 77; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

WEARING OF YELLOW RIBBONS

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: April is generally regarded as the month when we recognize the scourge of cancer in our society. I rise to seek permission of the House for the wearing of a yellow ribbon in this House during the month of April.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Unanimous consent has been requested to wear the yellow ribbon. Is that the pleasure of the House? Okay.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VIOLENCE FAMILIALE

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I rise to inform the House of the

action that our government is taking to protect women and children by fighting domestic violence. You will know, Mr Speaker, that we are committed to building strong and safe communities. Well, a community is only as safe as the homes within it, and too often women and children face violence and fear in their very own homes. A community is only as strong as the support it offers the most vulnerable people within it, and too often the victims of domestic violence lack the supports they need to escape from that violence.

Nous croyons que chaque personne dans notre province a le droit fondamental de vivre en paix et en sécurité. Chacun de nous a l'obligation de travailler ensemble pour assurer cette paix et cette sécurité.

Each and every person in this province of ours has the fundamental right to live in peace and security. Each of us has an obligation to work together to ensure that peace and security.

So today I'm announcing that our new government is taking a new approach. The Ontario government will be tough on abusers—abuse will not be tolerated—but it will no longer focus almost exclusively on criminal justice while neglecting the supports that victims need and the prevention that must be put in place.

I want to acknowledge and pay tribute to my parliamentary assistant, Laurel Broten, the MPP for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who has met with front-line workers and experts from across the province to identify needed reforms. Her excellent work has provided the foundation for our government's plan. We've been told time and time again that we need a balanced approach, that we must go after the abuser but we must stop leaving the victims behind.

Today I'm announcing the first steps in a long-term approach that will better protect women and children. Once women leave abusive relationships, one of their greatest needs is to be supported in safe housing. This is essential to establishing lives that are free of violence. So we are announcing today \$3.5 million in additional funding to invest in second-stage housing community supports. This is long overdue, and it is badly needed.

We know from tragic experience that we must do a better job of intervening early to protect women and children before it's too late. We are funding a pilot project on a risk-assessment tool that will lead to improved training and support for police officers, crown attorneys and others working in the criminal justice system. This will help these people to better assess risk in abusive situations.

We need to continue to work together to fight domestic violence, so we are going to hold a provincial conference on domestic violence, bringing together community leaders, experts and service providers so they can share best practices, especially best practices when it comes to preventing violence and providing better supports to victims.

We're also establishing a new ministerial steering committee on domestic violence, chaired by the Minister of Community and Social Services and minister respon-

sible for women's issues, Sandra Pupatello, which will lead a continuing fight against domestic violence. Most importantly, we need to break the intergenerational cycle of violence, especially when we know that boys who observe their fathers abuse are 1,000 times more likely to become abusers themselves, and especially since we know that girls who observe their mothers being abused are much more likely to become victims themselves.

So we're going to invest \$4.9 million in a four-year public education and awareness campaign. It will be targeting children and youth. It will be aimed at mobilizing communities across Ontario to break the cycle of violence.

These are significant steps that represent a change in attitude and approach by the Ontario government. They are steps in the right direction, yet they are first steps. Our work will and must continue until the violence ends; until women and children in Ontario no longer live in fear; until our communities and the people who live in them are truly safe, not just from the violence we see on our streets, but from the more insidious violence that happens behind closed doors.

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Thank you so much for this opportunity. In speaking on this very important issue, let me start today by telling you how pleased we are to have joining us in the gallery Margot Franssen, the owner of the Body Shop Canada; if she wouldn't mind standing for us. The Body Shop has raised over \$1 million for violence prevention programs. We're very pleased to have this Order of Canada recipient here in our midst today.

Beverly Wybrow is here. She's the executive director of the Canadian Women's Foundation, the only national organization working for girls and women, which funds 300 violence prevention programs. Thank you so much for coming today.

This is a very important day for us, for our government and for every member in this House. What we need to do is to put the people who issue the coroner's report out of business. The next time a woman is being flung across the room, worrying more about whether her children will be safe or if her children saw this—this government has to move ahead; they have got to give this woman options. They've got to help with that Herculean effort to get her out the door and know that there will be supports in place for these women to get back on their feet. I can't think of a more focused effort than what we will have in this government.

I'm very pleased to chair a task force amongst our ministers, where I get to work with the Minister of Children and Youth Services to determine how we break that cycle of violence when young boys and young girls are witnessing violence; how we can focus such a prevention campaign to target women, in particular, in the aboriginal community and new Canadian women, whose numbers in terms of domestic violence are skyrocketing. This is the kind of prevention campaign that we have to focus on with a real effort. We hope we'll have all of us here in this House supporting these efforts.

My leader spoke about the risk assessment tool. Why is that so important? It's important because the inquest that provided us with recommendation after recommendation told us that we have ways to stop the abusers from being free when they pose a significantly high threat and high risk of reoffending. That's how we ended up with women being murdered in this province. We've got to stop that.

Let me say too that, above all this, all of us in this House will do well to follow our leader's footsteps in this, because we have a passion for this issue. We understand that we cannot have women in Ontario who fear being in their own homes, who don't know how they will make ends meet. We have had report after report after report, in particular in these last couple of weeks, and they have really honed the arguments for us to say how we as a government can step in.

Probably the most significant part of this announcement today is getting our government back in the business of second-stage housing. This is probably the most significant part because once that woman has landed at the door of the shelter, a broken woman, we need to put supports in the form of counselling services around these women who often are so traumatized they don't know where to turn. How will they find housing? What will happen to their kids? Will their kids get to school the next day? These are the things that this kind of supportive housing will identify and help with. What we're saying today to all people in Ontario is, it is unacceptable to see domestic violence and not be able to interject and find these women support. I am so pleased to be a part of a McGuinty government that is moving forward in this manner.

1410

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I do appreciate the announcement that's been made today on this issue of violence against women and the actions that governments take to prevent violence against women and their children. I look at it as a non-partisan issue, and I truly believe that all members of this House—all 103 and all three parties—have worked diligently to move forward to create an environment that continues to take action against this violence.

We know that violence against women continues to be a very serious problem, not just in this province but throughout the world. It continues to be persistent, far-reaching and severe. In fact, the consequences and cost of violence to women themselves, to their children and to our economies, in terms of medical, psychological and economic impacts, are high; it's an estimated \$4.2 billion.

But again, I think all governments have worked hard. I know we did. We took steps to help prevent domestic violence. We did make very substantial improvements to Ontario's system of supports for victims. We committed resources to address violence against women. In fact, the expenditures increased by about 70% from 1995. We spent over \$160 million in the areas of safety, justice and prevention. We provided money to shelter beds, coun-

selling, telephone crisis services, specialized domestic violence courts, crisis intervention, personal safety planning and a 24-hour-a-day, province-wide crisis line. I know the actions we took built upon the actions that had been taken by the NDP government before us. But it's never enough, because the violence continues.

I want to take a look at two of the programs we introduced, where we contributed \$5 million. One of these programs was a \$5-million transitional support program that assists women in identifying and accessing the resources and supports they need, including housing. There was another \$5-million program that was an early intervention program for child witnesses of domestic violence, which helps our children recover from the effects of witnessing violence in their families.

Then, if I look forward, in December 2002 we committed another \$21.4 million to new initiatives to support victims but also to hold abusers accountable. Some of this money went into these areas: There was \$5 million to enhance the safety, accessibility and security of shelters for abused women and their children. There was \$5 million for a public education and prevention campaign to engage all Ontarians in helping to prevent domestic violence against women and children. There was a \$4.5-million program over three years for community-based grants to strengthen the linkages between local victim services in order that we could improve service delivery to the victims of domestic violence. There was \$2.7 million for safe, private waiting and interview areas for victims and witnesses as part of the expansion of the domestic violence court program.

There was also \$2.4 million for a specialized domestic violence bail program to help the police and crown attorneys better protect the victims of domestic violence. Trained staff were made available to interview victims before bail hearings to get all the available information to better assess the risk to victims in domestic violence cases.

Then there was \$1.2 million for a domestic violence review committee in the office of the chief coroner, bringing together specialists and community experts who will review all domestic violence deaths. Finally, there was \$600,000 to bring together domestic violence experts, community leaders and service providers in order that, by bringing all these people together as you are proposing to do, we can all look at strategies; we can use the expertise and the ideas that everyone has available. We were going to bring that forward to have regional and provincial conferences in order that we could further improve services. So I'm glad for the announcement today, and I applaud you.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): The first thing I'd like to say is that we're very happy to see the election promise being kept today—I think that's the first or second—and that is bringing back funding for second-stage housing today. It was a very important step forward, and I know that women's organizations and victims of violence are very glad for this announcement today. We have to bear in mind that about 25 buildings

across the province were shut down. They're still there as housing, downloaded to the municipalities, but the services were taken away. What you're announcing today is putting those services, which are critical, back in. We're happy to see that and hope you will expand them.

As you well know from the study that came out yesterday, *Walking on Eggshells*, from the cross-sectoral group and its recommendations—which the Premier, then the leader of the official opposition, signed on to—and many, many reports that have come before this House over the years and from the various inquests after the horrible deaths of women—we know what we have to do. That report yesterday, *Walking on Eggshells*, told us again, reiterated again and again, what to do.

I'm somewhat concerned that this is all we're hearing today, particularly given your commitment when in opposition to all of those things that we know we have to do to stop this violence, and by the fact that there is nothing, for instance, today about the first-stage shelters, which we know were cut under the previous government by 5% or more across the board. They are falling apart. There isn't enough room in second-stage housing across the province for all of these women and children to get that counselling. There's not enough room in the existing system. We need those cuts that were made to the shelters to not only be reinstated, but we need more funding for those shelters and services.

As a result of the report issued yesterday, which was truly heartbreaking, Premier, and I hope you will have a look at it—welfare rates were cut by the previous government. It's now about a 34% cut in real dollars. These women are supposed to be trying to leave violent situations on that amount of money. We need a commitment to those welfare rates right away, and we need a commitment to affordable housing right away. Those are the kinds of things that, in particular, we heard about yesterday. We heard that 20% or more of the cases of children being brought into care in 2003—can you believe it?—were because of lack of housing. So on one hand your government has expanded the money to the child welfare system by about \$84 million. We support more money to protect children. But in the meantime you see that 20% of these children are being taken away from their mothers after experiencing a violent situation because they have no place to live. So the child welfare system gets extra funding to take these children away—and God bless, they need to be protected.

Premier, what we want to see in the upcoming budget is a real commitment to reinstate an awful lot of the cuts that were made and things you promised when you were in opposition. You signed on to this cross-sectoral strategy. You asked impassioned questions and spoke the way I am speaking today, sometimes quite tearfully, emotionally and passionately, about this issue being one that, as the member for the opposition said, is not and should not be partisan. But it becomes partisan when promises are made and we get all of these reports and nothing is done except small baby steps.

The other thing I'd like to say, Premier, is that you did mention that a consultation was recently done by your

parliamentary assistant. What I want to know is why the results of that consultation are not being released so we can all take a look and see what people said and what the recommendations are. We don't need any more studies or ministers meeting. All of the reports and recommendations are here. Let's just move on them.

1420

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Premier, you've removed the Minister of Finance from his responsibilities over the markets in Toronto and their regulation. Can we ask you today, will the Chair of Management Board also be assuming the minister's responsibilities for promoting Ontario bonds and paper after the reading of the budget?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I refer that to the Chair of Management Board.

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I go back again to the comments, dare I say, of the Integrity Commissioner, who reviewed this matter and said about the Minister of Finance's approach, "From that point on Minister Phillips, the Chair of Management Board, assumed responsibility for all OSC matters. I remain of the view that the steps you took on February 25, 2004, were sufficient." I repeat, the Integrity Commissioner has looked at this matter and determined that the steps the Minister of Finance took were sufficient. He looked at all the circumstances. If at any time in the future we determine that there are other matters that inadvertently may still be resting elsewhere, I'm sure we would look at that. But I repeat to the public and the Legislature that the Integrity Commissioner looked in detail at this and determined that the steps that the Minister of Finance took were sufficient.

Mr Eves: The Integrity Commissioner ruled that it was quite appropriate that responsibilities for the markets and the regulation be removed from the finance minister. I go back to my original question: Does it not logically follow, then, that with respect to selling Ontario paper to those very same markets, through those very same exchanges, those responsibilities would also be removed from the finance minister and placed in your hands or in the hands of some other minister of the Premier's choosing?

Hon Mr Phillips: Again I say that the Integrity Commissioner—looked at this matter in considerable detail and the letter he wrote is dated March 8, 2004—reviewed all the matters and looked at the circumstances and, I repeat for the public, said, "I remain of the view that the steps you took on February the 25, 2004, were" quite "sufficient." So I think, as I said, the Integrity Commissioner has reviewed the matter. He has determined that the steps the Premier and the Minister of

Finance took were quite sufficient. I believe that to be the case.

Mr Eves: The Integrity Commissioner ruled that it was quite appropriate that the markets be removed from the finance minister's responsibility and that the Ontario Securities Commission, which regulates those markets, also be reviewed. As a matter of fact your very own Premier, on his way into caucus this morning, when asked about the responsibilities for the OSC and the markets being removed, said, "We just think it's appropriate under the circumstances. We are concerned about optics when it comes to these things, so those responsibilities have been removed from him." Do you agree with your Premier?

Hon Mr Phillips: Again I say to the member, and I say to the public, recognize this: This matter was reviewed in detail by the Integrity Commissioner. Justice Coulter Osbourne, knowing all of the circumstances, reviewed it in some considerable detail. The opposition may not want to hear this but I think the public wants to hear this. The conclusion that the Integrity Commissioner drew after examining all the details is, I repeat, "I remain of the view that the steps you took on February 25, 2004, were sufficient." I believe the Integrity Commissioner was right on that matter.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is once again to the Premier and it comes to the Sorbara scandal. This doesn't just speak to your integrity, Premier. It speaks to the ethical standards you set for your government.

Yesterday, the opposition was once again stonewalled in our attempts to get to the bottom of this and have our questions answered. Justice Osbourne said specifically that your Minister of Finance should separate himself from any investigation with respect to the Canada Revenue Agency, but your Minister of Finance also remains the minister of revenue. I want to ask you very sincerely—

Interjection.

Mr Baird: There's a second letter, I say to the Chair of Management Board.

I want to ask you very specifically what measures you, as Premier, have put in place to ensure that your minister, his political staff and his deputy minister and officials are not involved in any way, shape or form with this revenue investigation. Would you answer that, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: This remains from the outset an attack on the finance minister's integrity. I have known the finance minister for 15 years. He is a man of integrity, and I believe the members of the opposition know in their heart of hearts that the Minister of Finance is a man of integrity. The Integrity Commissioner himself has reviewed this particular matter. He says the Minister of Finance has acted appropriately and responsibly in the circumstances, and I believe that ends the matter.

Mr Baird: Premier, it's only a few steps from this chair to that chair, but it seems to be an ethical mile, because you come into this House day after day and refuse to answer the opposition's questions.

You may be interested to know that the Ontario Ministry of Finance and the Canada Revenue Agency speak daily, because they cooperate on audits of Ontario firms. The Ministry of Finance and the Canada Revenue Agency do audits, sometimes jointly and sometimes together. It has been publicly reported that this federal agency is investigating Royal Group Technologies.

I want to ask you a specific question: Have you, as Premier, checked with the Ontario Ministry of Finance, which works for your Minister of Finance, to see if they are cooperating in any way, shape or form with this investigation? Would you answer that question directly, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member knows better than that. I am not, and I am not going to, direct anybody within the government to get involved in any way, shape or form with any kind of investigation or potential investigation. We think that's the appropriate and responsible thing to do in the circumstances.

I know the members opposite, for their own particular reasons, have an interest in trying to resuscitate this issue, but I believe it is a dead horse, and flog as they might, this horse will not get to its feet and gallop away.

Mr Baird: You're right, Premier: This issue certainly isn't going to gallop away, because we're going to live up to our responsibilities to Ontario taxpayers to hold you accountable, and to hold you accountable for the ethical standards you place on your ministers.

When you sat in this chair in the official opposition on June 14, 2001, you said, "Ian Urquhart of the Toronto Star put it eloquently in a column. Mr Urquhart wrote, 'There is one downside to a cover-up, no matter how well it is executed: it tells everyone that there is something to hide.'"

Premier, on March 1, you used your government majority on the government agencies committee to shut down reconsideration of the appointment of the vice-chair. On the 24th, you shut down our attempts to investigate the Ontario Securities Commission, and last week you shut down the attempts by the member for Toronto-Danforth to get to the bottom of this scandal. If you have nothing to hide, why are you working so hard to ensure that no light of day is put on any of these ethical issues? What have you got to hide, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I ask you, Speaker, judging from appearances, who is working harder on this issue in this House: the people on that side or the people on this side?

I was hoping the members opposite might want to ask us, for example, questions relating to OPG and Hydro One. They might want to ask us, for example, about—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm trying to hear the Premier's response.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I thought they might want to ask us about the openness and transparency and, frankly, the honesty we have introduced in our dealings with OPG and Hydro One. I thought they might want to ask us about that or, if not that, then about the number of water inspectors we have hired or the fact that we're investing in public education once again or the fact that we're

committed to helping women and children who find themselves in abusive situations. Those are all important public policy issues that I would think they would have wanted to ask about.

1430

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Premier: Private, for-profit auto insurance companies are picking the pockets of drivers and picking the pockets of innocent accident victims while they're lining their own pockets with huge new profits.

You've got a way out of this mess. You see, in New Brunswick, an all-party committee of Conservatives, New Democrats and, yes, Liberals has just released a landmark report on auto insurance. This committee put the auto insurance industry under the microscope and found there is only one way to ensure fair, low-cost auto insurance for everyone, and that's public auto insurance. Liberals in New Brunswick, along with Conservatives and New Democrats, say in this landmark report that the only way to provide fairness and affordability is public auto insurance.

Premier, you need an escape route from this mess. Will you bring in a non-profit, public auto insurance system here in the province of Ontario?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I'm with Bob Rae on this one; I have to admit that. We have examined the issue very closely and we have determined that public auto insurance would not serve the interests of the people of Ontario. What we did instead, in keeping with our commitment made during the course of the campaign, was that as soon as we formed the cabinet—within 15 minutes of that, in fact—we immediately froze auto insurance premiums in the province. We've now taken steps to ensure that drivers in the province of Ontario experience, on average, a 10% reduction in their premiums. We are making progress. We're doing so in a realistic, responsible and practical way.

Mr Kormos: Premier, your inability to handle the affordability issue around insurance could well put you with Bob Rae four years from now, at some high-priced law firm downtown.

You see, New Brunswick's all-party committee was very, very clear that private auto insurance is a monster that can't be caged, it's a beast that can't be tamed, it's a mad dog that can't be leashed, and it's time that public auto brought it to heel. The committee says this about public auto insurance and what it's going to mean to drivers in New Brunswick: It will immediately lower the average driver's rates by more than 20%—that's what Liberals are saying in New Brunswick—and it will stop big insurance's discrimination and provide coverage for everyone, regardless of age, gender or where they live in the province.

If you won't commit to public auto insurance, will you at least follow the New Brunswick lead and strike an all-

party committee to look at the viability of public auto insurance for Ontarians?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I know the minister wants to speak to this.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): We've actually done better than that. Within about 15 minutes of our government being sworn in, as you'll recall, the Premier announced that we would be taking steps within 90 days of bringing forward legislation. We did that, sir, in the fall Parliament. We passed a bill. Later on this month, within days, drivers right across Ontario, as their insurance renewals come to them, will see insurance rates that are lower by 10%, and we've only just begun.

The second phase of our program will see sharper markets that are more competitive and more alternatives for individual policyholders to design a policy that will make sure we have the lowest possible insurance rates. I think this outdoes what's being proposed in New Brunswick.

HOSPITAL BOARDS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. Across the province, volunteer hospital board members are angry about Bill 8 because they know that it allows your government to grab power and control and centralize decision-making here at Queen's Park in a way, frankly, that would make even Mike Harris blush.

New Democrats are opposed to Bill 8 because it gives broad, sweeping powers to the Minister of Health to unilaterally impose orders and compliance directives, and there is no opportunity for third party review when issues are in dispute between the ministry and local boards. Bill 8 is about Queen's Park having the final say at the expense of local volunteer boards, who know best about what is needed in their communities.

Accountability is a two-way street; it's not about your government having all of the say all of the time. Premier, why is it that your government is so intent on controlling local hospital volunteer boards?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I disagree fundamentally with the member's characterization of Bill 8. This is a genuine effort on our part to work with our communities, those people who find themselves on our hospital boards and those people who manage our hospitals, to establish a partnership that gives effect to the desire of the people of Ontario to have improved value for their health care dollars and to bring about measurable improvement in the quality of care we deliver to people.

We did something that was absolutely extraordinary with this bill. We put it out for hearings after first reading. We intend to put it out to committee again after second reading so we can continue to listen to the people of Ontario on this. We actually believe that by putting these things out to the public we end up with a better product at the end of the day.

I disagree fundamentally with the characterization. This is an effort on our part to enlist people who work in our hospitals and volunteers so that we can better serve

all Ontarians when it comes to delivering better-quality health care.

Ms Martel: I was at the public hearings and the local hospital boards who came before us were opposed to this bill. They were opposed after first reading and they're going to be opposed after second reading, because this bill is all about you grabbing power and centralizing it here at Queen's Park.

Look, the Conservatives tried to do that with education. In the name of efficiency and accountability, they tried to take away power from local school boards and centralize it here at Queen's Park. It didn't work with education under the Conservatives; it's not going to work for health under you.

I said it before and I'll repeat it: Accountability is a two-way street. You are going in the wrong direction with this bill that gives you all of the power all of the time. I repeat my question: Why is your government so intent on taking control of local volunteer hospital boards?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'll refer this to the minister.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I always find it interesting when a member of the former government that reached in and reopened collective agreements lectures everybody else about the appropriate way to practise.

In the days since I have become Minister of Health and introduced Bill 8, I've had the opportunity to visit more hospitals across Ontario than I can count at the moment. In meetings in Mississauga with the Trillium hospital, which included board members, we talked about the increasingly productive relationship between the government of Ontario and Ontario's hospitals.

Bill 8 is fundamentally a bill that builds on the work of Roy Romanow, who said in his seminal report that it was critically important we establish the principle of accountability. During the subsequent hearings after second reading, I very much look forward to the opportunity to demonstrate that people across Ontario are strongly in support of Bill 8.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Minister of the Environment, a minister who seems not content to be only a member of the promise breakers' club, she wants to lead the organization.

Minister, according to the Toronto Star, you are "quite confident" you'll be able to meet a 60% recycling target for the province's waste by 2008.

Interjections.

Mr Barrett: Stay tuned, please.

My question is, what happened to the confidence you exhibited December 5 last year when you told members of this Legislature that your government would meet the 60% target by 2005? Now you say you will not be able to keep your waste reduction commitments by 2005.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question.

Mr Barrett: Now it's not until 2008, not until the next election and perhaps after the election. Minister, come clear. The only thing you are planning on reducing is confidence people have in your government's ability to keep its word. Is this another broken promise?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): This government is committed to assisting municipalities in dealing with municipal solid waste. We have committed that municipalities in the province will meet 60% diversion targets by the year 2008, and yesterday was the beginning of a process where we will review the Environmental Assessment Act. We will improve the tools that will be made available to municipalities so that they can in fact achieve this goal.

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I would also like to say to the member opposite that there are municipalities already in the province that have achieved 60% diversion. We intend to showcase those municipalities. Just today, I met with the mayor of Toronto, who is very eager to work toward our goal of 60% diversion. So I believe that this government has demonstrated leadership in an area that was totally lacking from the previous government.

Mr Barrett: Minister, you know as well as I that the 60% diversion commitment you have made comes with a cost. It's an exponentially higher cost as we move from 50% diversion to 60%, although I didn't hear any price tag mentioned in yesterday's news conference.

We already know that you expect industry and the private sector to foot half the blue box bill. That represents about 50% of your diversion commitment. Where will the rest come from? The cost of banning organic waste from landfills works out to over \$50 million across the province every year. Where will that money come from? Will it come from your budget? I doubt it, considering the bogus \$8-billion deficit you are touting. Minister, what will be the cost of diversion not only to companies, but to municipalities? Secondly, who will pay?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: What we have heard from municipalities, which are responsible for managing municipal solid waste in the province of Ontario, is that the process that is in place right now, the environmental assessment and approvals process which the previous government tinkered with and, really, as a result of that tinkering, has been the subject of litigation—what municipalities and partners and environmentalists have said to us is we need to improve this process. So our government is going to establish an experts panel. We are going to inspire confidence in an area and an industry that has needed it. It has been totally lacking. There was no leadership by the previous government for the last eight years. This government has set a firm target of 60% diversion by 2008, and we are committed to improving a process to enable municipalities and other partners to reach that goal.

LANDFILL

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, yesterday

you introduced precedent-setting legislation that would prevent the use of lakes larger than one hectare as landfill sites. If this legislation is passed, it will stop projects such as the Adams mine from ever being brought to the table again. What is the Ministry of the Environment doing to ensure that communities all across Ontario will not be faced with the same uncertainty in the future when it comes to the decisions affecting their communities?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): My colleague has asked a very important question, and I know members opposite don't appreciate the significance of this. In fact, there is a community in my riding that, some years ago, had undergone a similar concern. It was a point of great worry that landfill might be sited in a former mine site in the town of Marmora.

What the legislation that we introduced in this House yesterday will achieve when passed is that in the future a landfill will not be able to be sited in a body of water in the province of Ontario. Our government is committed to protecting our water sources, and that is exactly what the legislation yesterday will achieve when passed.

Mr Colle: What is the Ministry of the Environment doing to ensure, as a result of yesterday, that the crown land adjacent to the Adams mine that is up for sale will not be sold, or why is this land for sale in the first place, and will this legislation change the disposition of this crown land?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: That is an item that is dealt with by the Minister of Natural Resources, and he will respond to that, I believe.

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I have to start off my response by saying I'm very proud to be part of the McGuinty government that's willing to make the tough decisions to protect Ontario's environment.

As many may know, the acquisition of the adjacent crown land to the Adams mine site was a requirement of the environmental assessment that had been approved three or four years ago. If this legislation that was proposed yesterday is passed, the acquisition by the proponent of this crown land would no longer be necessary.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. In March 2003, according to the Toronto Star, your Premier made an election promise to increase operating funding to long-term-care facilities by \$430 million annually. Yesterday, we hear, again according to the Toronto Star, you tried to deny that the Liberals had made such a commitment. Later in the day, you reversed yourself and you said that your government will increase funding by \$6,000 per resident. Minister, the people in this province do deserve a straight answer. When are you going to keep your commitment to increase funding by \$6,000 per resident, or is this yet another broken Liberal promise?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I acknowledged to the Toronto Star,

through my press secretary, that I'm used to dealing with the funds in another way and not on a per-person basis and so I was less familiar with the number.

I'm very pleased to say, as I did to the media yesterday, that with respect to our commitment to improving the quality of life for our seniors and vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities, we have been working hard. My parliamentary assistant, the member from North Bay, has been very involved in it. We will have additional resources for our long-term-care facilities. At the point that we're in a position to make the exact announcement, I know the member will be interested to comment at that time.

Mrs Witmer: Not only is the minister unable to commit to a timeline to flow the money, the \$6,000 per resident, but we have also now learned that they have stealthily taken some steps within the Ministry of Health to retroactively claw back the property taxes for 2003 from long-term-care facilities. This is unbelievable. This amounts to \$15 million, and it will translate into a reduction of services for our vulnerable senior citizens. Furthermore, if that's not enough, to add insult to injury, the facilities have not yet received their acuity adjustments as of April 1, since no announcement has been made. We also know that the acuity levels have increased. More funding is desperately needed for our vulnerable seniors, and yet everything this minister and this government is doing is destabilizing the long-term-care sector.

Minister, will that \$6,000 per resident be new funding, or will you simply be giving back to the facilities what you are now taking from them in the retroactive clawback?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I always find it interesting that member of the government that said it was not their plan to close hospitals and subsequently did could stand and lecture me on the state of long-term care in our province so shortly on the heels of her government having responsibility for it.

On the matters at hand with respect to the property tax issue that the member raises, the same amount of money is being provided this year as was provided in their last year for this very important initiative.

Subsequently, what I will say to the honourable member is what I said earlier and what I've said repeatedly to the media: that the challenges that we face and that our seniors face in long-term-care facilities will only be answered by a comprehensive plan, moving forward on a series of fronts. This is exactly the plan that we are working very hard on finalizing and will be delivered to the people of Ontario shortly.

1450

SUBVENTIONS CULTURELLES CULTURAL FUNDING

M. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke-Nord): C'est mon privilège d'adresser ma question à la ministre de la Culture, l'honorable madame Meilleur. Nous savons tous

que les attractions touristiques culturelles de la province ont subi une grave incidence à cause de la flambée du SRAS et de la panne d'électricité de l'été dernier. Les attractions culturelles sont moins fréquentées. Ceci a eu une incidence majeure pour les bénéficiaires des organismes gouvernementaux et d'autres organismes culturels. Madame la ministre, comment comptez-vous aider ces organismes?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Je suis très consciente des terribles incidences que ces événements ont eues sur les organismes culturels et sur le personnel de ces organismes. Depuis que je suis devenue ministre en octobre dernier, j'ai visité la plupart de ces organismes qui reçoivent du financement de la province. Les employés et les bénévoles de ce secteur font un travail extraordinaire, mais la fréquentation est à la baisse et les revenus ont diminué.

Je suis heureuse d'affirmer aujourd'hui à mon collègue que notre gouvernement a travaillé très étroitement avec les gens de l'industrie. Nous avons augmenté les fonds de marketing touristique, le fonds qui était auparavant de 5 \$ millions. Le gouvernement a accordé 33 subventions. Puis, il y a quelques semaines, nous avons augmenté le budget de 2,5 \$ millions. Ce sont des sommes dont on a besoin pour faire savoir au monde entier que les attractions culturelles de l'Ontario sont ouvertes et qu'elles sont meilleures que jamais.

Mr Qadri: What has been the response from our partners in the cultural tourism field? How much in money funds has actually been allocated so far?

Hon Mrs Meilleur: We all know that the SARS outbreak was unexpected and had a major impact on this province's health care system and its tourism industry. As I mentioned a moment ago, the people in the industry are fighting back with new shows and productions.

We are helping them with new funding. A few weeks ago I announced that seven cultural organizations in Toronto were receiving a combined amount of \$580,000. Among those, the groups are the Canadian Stage Company, Harbourfront, Massey Hall, Roy Thomson Hall, Casa Loma, the Textile Museum, North by Northeast, and the Toronto Blues Society. There is still a lot of work to be done. I know of other agencies and organizations in and outside of Toronto that will be applying for help to rebound from last year's events. This government will be there for them.

TUITION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Premier. You have frozen tuition fees. If this is true, why is the board of governors from the University of Waterloo voting on a 15% increase on deregulated programs today?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): The minister is anxious to speak to this.

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): We have good news for universities and colleges in Ontario. As I said, I think last week, good news is about to be announced and provided to them. I'm sure the member for Trinity-Spadina will also hear the news when I provide that to the universities and colleges. I hope he will also respect the fact that we are honouring our commitment to freeze tuition fees for two years, and honouring our commitment to compensate the universities and colleges appropriately. We are fully committed to accessible, affordable, high-quality education in a sector that has been strong and will be maintained.

Mr Marchese: This is good news indeed. I've got a problem: The universities don't seem to know it yet. If this is true, why has the board of governors from Wilfrid Laurier University passed a motion calling for a 10% fee hike in 2004 for the business math programs? Clearly they haven't heard the good news. My point to you is: Are tuition fees frozen or not? If they are, would you let the universities know about the good news as quickly as you possibly can?

Hon Mrs Chambers: I truly hope that politics will be set aside and the member for Trinity-Spadina will help me communicate the good news to the universities.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I'm pleased that you recently confirmed that the new four-lane Highway 69 from Parry Sound to Sudbury will be a freeway, not a toll highway. Can you confirm for the House and all the residents and businesses in northern Ontario that Highway 11 will be a freeway and not a toll highway?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I know that the Minister of Transportation wants to address this.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): We have addressed this issue several times here. I want to assure you that we are developing criteria for the toll highways and we will take one highway at a time and then compare against the criteria and see whether tolls need to be imposed or not.

Mr Miller: That really was not the answer I was looking for. Frankly, I was hoping that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines would be answering and standing up for the north. Based on his reaction, I'm sure that's probably not what the Minister of Northern Development and Mines was looking for either.

Highway 11 should be considered basic infrastructure for the north. It is an important part of the foundation necessary for economic growth in the north. Our government recognized the importance of highways in the north and invested a record \$1.6 billion on northern roads. As I brought up before, your party made the promise in the election that no road without an alternate

route would be tolled. What is the alternate route for Highway 11 from Muskoka to North Bay?

Hon Mr Takhar: We already said last week that we will not toll any highways where there's no alternative route. We will consider tolls only for new highways, and we are in the middle of developing criteria.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. My local children's aid society is experiencing an increase in the number of children in its care, while dealing with a number of financial pressures that make it very difficult for them to do their job, which is to protect children from abuse and neglect. My CAS tells me that the current funding framework has created a number of problems, including spiralling budget needs which have led to in-year operating deficits. I'd like to ask the minister, how can we expect CAS workers to properly do their job with these constant funding pressures, while at the same time recognizing that we cannot continue to bail them out every spring?

1500

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Our government, and I'm sure everyone in this Legislature, appreciates the important and very difficult work our children's aid societies do across the province. The CASs agree that the funding formulas are flawed. The funding formula is based on how many kids can be taken away. There isn't any funding in the formula for counselling and adoption etc. Even though we're spending over a billion dollars a year, the CASs still run deficits. Since January of this year the McGuinty government has provided an additional \$88.4 million to relieve them of these pressures, and we will now move forward with the CASs to improve the funding formula.

Interjections.

Mr Milloy: Unfortunately, the opposition does not care about children's aid societies. I care about them. And even though I applaud the good work that children's aid societies are doing under very difficult circumstances, I think more can be done in terms of permanent and preventive measures. In fact, the CAS in my community tells me they find the current funding framework constricting and not well suited to working toward permanent solutions to our children.

Will the minister commit today to untying the hands of our CAS workers so they can do what is in the best interest of our children?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: We will be working with the children's aid societies to do just that. We have identified many flaws, both in the funding formula and in the services, and we have appointed Mr Bruce Rivers, who is the executive director of the Toronto Children's Aid Society, to lead us in that. We have also asked them, for these new monies to relieve their pressures, to agree to certain changes in the way they work. And they have

agreed to increase the number of adoptions. We will be working toward looking at legislative changes as well to make adoptions more possible. Because even though it's fiscally the right thing to do, it's also the right thing to do for the children: give them a good family to raise them. There is also an amazing, significant number of children from our child welfare system who end up in our youth justice system. Giving them families at an early age and making it easier for children's aid societies to be able to have them adopted will also alleviate the pressures for that sector and do the right thing for the families of this province.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Today's press reports indicate that convicted pedophile Douglas Moore, now considered a prime suspect in the death of 15-year-old René Charlebois—and it was a terrible death, of course—had been living in Peel region for some time, unknown to local residents. That's our understanding. Moore is also suspected in the possible deaths of two other young men who have been missing since last December.

Our government passed legislation allowing police chiefs to publicize the name, location and photos of pedophiles if and when they were moved into communities in the province. Minister, did the Peel regional police use this legislation to warn residents of Mr Moore's presence, and if not, do you know why not?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member for the question. The answer is quite simple: Mr Moore was not registered under the Ontario sex registry act, and as a result they had no way of knowing whether he was a pedophile.

Mr Dunlop: According to the media speculation, it appears that Mr Moore may have been a serial killer and a sexual predator who preyed on young men. I believe we should be concerned that provincial legislation wasn't used, and of course you give us a reason now, to alert Peel residents of the man's presence and of the dangers he posed to the community. Minister, will you consider amending the legislation to require police services across Ontario to make this information public? I can assure you that if you do that, you'll have the support of our caucus for very speedy passage of that.

Hon Mr Kwinter: The member should know the federal government has now passed its own legislation. At one time, Ontario was the only province in Canada that had sex offender registration. We're hopeful that we can roll it all in so we have a single system, so that someone doesn't fall between the cracks where we have provinces with one and the federal government with another. Certainly it is our intention to make sure we grandfather all known sex offenders, that they are all incorporated into the act. That is our intent.

TAXI LICENSING

Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. A number of people in and around my riding make their living working as legitimate and licensed taxi and limo drivers at Pearson International Airport. However, unlicensed drivers scoop their fares illegally. Many of these illegal drivers are not properly trained, many of their vehicles are unfit, and many do not carry proper commercial insurance coverage.

I have heard of examples of Canadians and, most importantly, tourists, having been charged higher fares than are legally allowed by the Greater Toronto Airports Authority. Minister, what are you doing to combat this problem, to protect our consumers and tourists from this kind of gouging and, most importantly, to protect the livelihoods of these hard-working people?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I would like to thank my colleague from Brampton West-Mississauga. I am very much aware of this issue. The Premier is very much aware of this issue, and he has also met with industry representatives. We are working with other levels of government, like the federal government and the municipalities, to find a solution to this very long-term problem that has existed in this industry for a very long period. We are committed to taking action that will ensure that the taxi drivers who don't have the licences will not be able to operate on our roads.

Mr Dhillon: However, the drivers in my riding have been waiting for a long time for action on this issue. Their livelihoods have been hurt, and this lack of enforcement has put citizens' personal safety and their pocketbooks needlessly at risk. Can the minister provide these legitimate drivers in my riding with some timelines for action on this issue?

Hon Mr Takhar: As I said, we are meeting with our stakeholders and other levels of government to find a solution to this problem that has existed in this industry for a very long time. I also want to thank my colleague because he participated in some of those meetings with me.

Let me tell you what we have done so far. On February 6, we met with the representatives from Transport Canada and the Minister of Transport. On February 16, we met with the licensed taxi and limo drivers to discuss their concerns. On February 20, we met with the GTAA. We continue to meet with the other stakeholders so that we can find some solutions to address the issues that are of concern to this industry and have not been addressed for a very, very long time.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Michigan is rejecting Toronto's garbage, and will be more, and more because we don't have a deposit return system like

they do. Sometimes we can be very quick to criticize Americans, but they're way ahead of us on this issue, and in fact they have done the right thing. Minister, it is really clear that in Michigan you aren't allowed to send pop bottles to landfill. Are you going to implement a deposit return system here in Ontario for pop and LCBO bottles?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Certainly we are very aware of the developments in Michigan and some of their recent changes to the legislation. Just this morning, I had an opportunity to meet with the mayor of Toronto, a city that is particularly interested in those initiatives. The mayor of Toronto would indicate to me that, first of all, they're confident that, because of the blue box program and its efficiency in the city of Toronto, their city will be able to meet the new standards of the state of Michigan. He has also shared his support for our initiative to divert 60% of waste from landfill. I'm very happy that we have municipal partners who are prepared to work with us to improve the blue box program, which has proved to be so successful across this province.

Ms Churley: Minister, that wasn't the question. I must congratulate the city of Toronto because they're in fact ahead of their targets on diversion. But I'm talking to councillors there, and they're making it very clear that you need to move quickly on deposit return systems. You'll also need to bring bills on electronic waste and that sort of thing.

It is very clear that if you want to keep Michigan open for now, you have to bring in a deposit return system, just like eight other provinces have done across this country. And please don't tell me you're leaving it up to the WDO. It is your responsibility. We know they were put in under the Tories and they don't support deposit return. Minister, I'm going to ask you again, will you stand up to industry, stand up for the environment, and bring in a deposit return system now?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I would like to remind the member opposite that when they were government, they didn't bring in a deposit return system. That was not an initiative that they supported. We are going to be issuing a discussion paper in the month of May. We want to gain input from all participants—municipal, environmental sector, the industry. We want to hear what they have to tell us on how to make our diversion targets reachable. That's the initiative and that's the leadership that this government is moving on. We are focusing on diversion and we are counting on the people of Ontario to provide us with ideas on how we can reach diversion right across Ontario.

1510

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Minister, in six short months you've taken the leading economy in North America and, piece by piece, torn down the very foundation that created over

one million new jobs for hard-working Ontarians. Small businesses across the province are reeling from your government's attack on the Ontario economy.

Let's look at the record so far. On January 1, the largest tax hike in history resulted in a 37% increase in small business taxes. In March of this year, you gave municipalities the authority to jack up business property taxes. On April 1, your government slapped small business with a 30% electricity rate increase.

In your government's election platform, you committed to providing an economic climate that would help small business grow. All I see from this government is another broken promise that will chase thousands of jobs out of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Mr Yakabuski: —and choke the life out of small business. Minister, what are you going to do today to assure small businesses that you have a plan that will protect jobs, strengthen the economy and allow small business—

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Let me tell you, we're going to do a lot more than your government did. First of all, the Minister of Finance has increased the limit in terms of exemption for small business tax from \$320,000 to \$400,000. That's a big benefit to small business. I would add that the small business tax rate in Ontario is significantly lower than that of our trading partners to the south. Ontario's small business tax rate is 22.12%, compared to the Great Lakes average of 40%, so we are significantly lower than our competitors to the south.

Mr Yakabuski: The minister is very good with fudging numbers. The vast majority of small businesses fell below the old ceiling, so the raising of that ceiling doesn't affect them.

Minister, instead of jet-setting across the world on junkets to Switzerland, Germany and Japan, you should be spending more time ensuring that the future of our small businesses is being protected. In your election platform, you committed to freezing taxes on small businesses. Instead, you hit them with punishing income and property tax increases. You promised to reduce the bureaucratic workload for these employers and provide them with electronic access to laws, rules and regulations that apply to their businesses.

Minister, tell Ontario's small businesses that you are making your voice heard at the cabinet table. Tell them that you are going to give them an economic climate where they can continue to thrive—

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Yakabuski: —and create jobs for Ontarians. Tell them that from this point forward—

The Speaker: Please put your question.

Mr Yakabuski: Will you tell Ontario small business owners that you will stop breaking your promises and provide them with the support they need and expect from this government?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I think small business owners of this province appreciate that we are bringing some discipline to governing in this province, unlike the previous government. Let me tell you what we're doing for small business.

My parliamentary assistant, Tony Wong, has conducted extensive consultations with the small business community to fix up the mess you left behind when you were engaged in that red tape secretariat that did nothing for small business. We're going to bring forward some real assistance. We're going to have a Web portal where small businesses can access, one-stop shopping, all of the programs we offer for small business.

In addition, I would say to the member, the fact that I've been in Japan and Europe only speaks to the lack of presence we had around the world when your government was in power.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Cordiano: You completely forgot about how important it is to have presence in international markets. We're going to make sure that Ontario is truly represented around the world. Our voices are going to be heard, and we're going to bring home more deals.

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, you were asked a moment ago by a member of the opposition a question about Highway 11. I'd like to make it perfectly clear for the residents of Nipissing, the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, as well as the members of this House: Will there be tolls on Highway 11?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): There seem to be a lot of answers on this side. Let me get the answer. Minister of Transportation.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I think the opposition is more eager to give answers than me.

What I indicated before is, if there is no alternative route, there will be no tolls. I understand Highway 11 has no alternative route, so there will be no tolls. It also doesn't make any sense to impose tolls on Highway 11 from an economic point of view either.

CONTAMINATED SOIL

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, yesterday you made a statement in the House where you discussed cleaning up the environment with the federal government. The previous government was able to identify a very serious matter in northern Ontario whereby moving up the food chain is PC contamination on midway-range radar sites. These contaminants have been identified within lower-level mammals at this current time. We are

wondering, where do you stand in negotiations with the feds on the cleanup of site 17?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to explain and perhaps clarify for the member opposite the initiative that this government will be mounting with the federal government with respect to the environmental assessment and approvals process.

In the country right now, the federal government has a process for environmental assessment and the provincial government has a process. Those projects that would receive funds from the federal government or would be on federal lands are subject to a federal environmental assessment. Typically, what happens is that one environmental assessment must be completed before another one can happen. Our government, after discussing this issue with the federal Minister of the Environment, recognizes that this can add some length of time to any project and undue delay. Our goal is to work with the federal government on that issue.

Mr Ouellette: What's taken place in the past is that the previous government was in negotiations. These midway-range radar sites were transferred from the federal government to the provincial government, not knowing they were contaminated. Since then, the previous government was able to identify the fact that there is a substantial amount of contamination in the areas. Now the particular site between Cochrane and Moosonee has been identified as being very serious and we are moving forward on that cleanup of the contaminated site. We are wondering, are you still in negotiation with the federal government and what is your intention of cleaning up that particular site?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: This government is committed to a clean, safe, healthy environment for the people of Ontario. I'm very aware of other sites that the federal government has an interest in. There is one in my riding and there are a number across Ontario. I can assure the member opposite that this government will do all we can to work with any jurisdiction to ensure that the safety of the people in those communities is put first.

1520

HAMILTON AIRPORT

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. I know how hard you've been working, Mr Minister, to bring improvement to the John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport. I know we both consider the development of the airport to be a top economic priority for the region.

Mr Minister, on April 2 you met in Hamilton with officials from the Hamilton international airport. They presented a report outlining items to be considered by our government, in conjunction with the municipal and federal governments, to help improve the airport and its services. What was the outcome of this meeting, and

what are we doing to make further improvements at John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Let me thank the member for that very important question. I just want to say at the outset that the idea for this meeting came from our colleague the late Dominic Agostino, and I want to thank him posthumously for that suggestion, because I think this is a great initiative to commence to assist the city of Hamilton and its international airport.

It is a very important gateway for the Golden Horseshoe. We want to make certain that the Hamilton airport is a cargo and tourist hub. To that end, we took the first steps at the meeting by talking to the officials. Also present were: the mayor of Hamilton, Mr Di Ianni; some federal ministers, Mr Valeri and Mr Keyes; my good friend and colleague Minister Bountrogianni; Jennifer Mossop, the member from Stoney Creek; and Judy Marsales, who is asking this question.

I just want to say it was important because we announced, on behalf of the Minister of Transportation, new signage to the airport along the Queen Elizabeth Way, Highways 403 and 407 and the new Highway 6. This is new signage which will help direct people to the airport, and that's an important initiative.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I have a petition from 150 people from Almonte, Pakenham, Clayton, Middleville and a number of other areas in Lanark county. This is to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty stated clearly in his election platform that he is committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors and has more recently said he is considering breaking this pledge by reducing coverage for seniors;

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

"That the provincial government fulfil its promise and start standing up for seniors by protecting the Ontario drug benefit program and the vital assistance it provides to those who require prescription medications."

I have endorsed this petition.

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL PARKWAY

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate this opportunity. This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Alexander Graham Bell, renowned inventor of society-altering technological inventions, such as the telephone, greatly revolutionized the daily lives of people in Ontario, Canada and indeed the world; and

"Whereas Alexander Graham Bell's contributions to science, technology and society as a whole, were in part developed and tested while he lived in Brantford, Ontario; and

"Whereas Brantford lies at the heart of the section of 403 which runs from Woodstock to Burlington;

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

"To adopt and pass into law Dave Levac's private member's bill, Bill 44, the Alexander Graham Bell Parkway Act, renaming Highway 403 between Woodstock and Burlington as a tribute to this great inventor" and Canadian.

I sign my name to this petition and pass it to Lauren.

HIGHWAY 518

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from the residents and constituents of Parry Sound-Muskoka, and it says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11 serves the residents of the communities of Haines Lake, Orrville, Bear Lake, Whitehall and Sprucedale; and

"Whereas Highway 518 is in a deplorable condition; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has previously assured local residents of its intention to upgrade and improve Highway 518;

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

"We request that the Ministry of Transportation immediately proceed with the reconstruction of Highway 518 between Highway 69 and Highway 11."

I support this petition and sign my name to it.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a large number of petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current forest management practices in Ontario do not take into account labour opportunities for residents of Ontario;

"Whereas an important economic tax base is being lost;

"Whereas the government of Ontario does not take into consideration the residents of Ontario or their future by allowing Ontario's timber to be processed out of province;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate action to ban any harvesting of any species of tree for the purpose of transporting or processing outside of the province of Ontario."

This petition is signed by many people, including people from Tunis, Ontario.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

“Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

“Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented by Justice Dennis O’Connor’s report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

“Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of Site 41 and the nearby water sources.”

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I’ve signed my name to my petition and I agree with it. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the previous government sat on their hands and watched auto insurance rates shoot through the roof;

“Whereas this lack of restraint has led to profits for insurance companies amounting to over \$2.6 billion; and

“Whereas motorists across the province expect rates to be fair;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support government legislation to reduce auto insurance rates and ensure that cost savings in the system lead to premium reduction.”

I hand the petition over to Sarah.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have found yet more petitions from the good people of Black Creek Leisure Homes in Stevensville, Ontario. On this one, June and Norman Rattew and John and Adele Richards have signed this one that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas during the election campaign, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

“Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors’ property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

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

“The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors’ drug fees.”

I sign my signature in support.

TUITION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions from the Canadian Federation of Students. This particular one is from the Fédération Canadienne des Étudiantes et Étudiants, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

“Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

“Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and even tripled; and

“Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

“Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

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

“(1) Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels; and

“(2) Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998.”

Since I agree with this petition, I’m delighted to sign it as well.

1530

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from constituents in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Yearley, Ontario, within the electoral district of Parry Sound-Muskoka experiences frequent and prolonged power outages;

"Whereas the power outages have become a health and safety issue to the residents of the community and the students who visit the outdoor education centre;

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

"That the Minister of Energy instruct Hydro One to conduct an investigation of the distribution and feeder lines that serve Yearley, and take the necessary steps to ensure reliable energy through ongoing forestry maintenance and required line improvements."

I support this petition and sign my name to it.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition that's entitled "Stop MPAC from Sapping Sugar Shacks." These are from Marvin Chambers's operation. The wording is considerably different from similar petitions I read yesterday, as I read:

"Whereas the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) has chosen to assess sugar shacks as industrial properties, increasing assessment rates dramatically and forcing the closure of some operations; and

"Whereas the agriculture protection act clearly defines maple syrup as an agricultural product; and

"Whereas sugar shacks are used for the production of maple syrup for only a small portion of the year; and

"Whereas sugar shacks and maple syrup are an important part of the agri-tourism business in rural Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold assessment value at last year's levels until a fairer method of assessment can be developed and implemented, or a reclassification of sugar shack properties can be made."

I also join my signature to the 300 on these ones.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present another petition on behalf of seniors in the riding of Erie-Lincoln, these from Black Creek and Stevensville. Patricia and Jerry Rol and Doris McRoberts headline this particular petition, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

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

"That the Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

In support, I affix my signature.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas liability insurance is a necessary coverage;

"Whereas the rising cost of liability insurance is of great concern;

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

“To review liability insurance rates and take steps to ensure reasonable rates, now and in the future.”

I support this petition and I sign my name to it.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I would like to congratulate the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka on his Tartan Day suit today.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

“Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

“Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O’Connor’s report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the Minister of the Environment on water source protection legislation; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

“Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources.”

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREENBELT PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 30, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 / Projet de loi 27, Loi établissant une zone d’étude de la ceinture de

verdure et modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur la conservation de la moraine d’Oak Ridges.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I understand that the member for Toronto-Danforth has the floor.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I was launched into full flight and I was stopped at 6 of the clock last week when I was talking about this bill. I want to continue because it is a really important bill before us today.

I have already indicated that I support the bill and will be voting for it. I’m looking forward to its passing so it can go out for public hearings and we can get moving on it. Because overall, with some problems that I pointed out—and I’m hoping the government will be interested in amending it to fix these problems—I am supportive. Of course, the proof is always in the pudding with these kinds of bills, but it’s a very important step forward.

I talked briefly before and I’m going to talk again, just to remind the government, about the areas of concern. It is not just me saying this, it’s CONE, the Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment, Environmental Defence Canada and others who are very concerned about a number of components of this bill, although generally as well are overall supportive.

We’re worried about the highways that are still planned to criss-cross right through the greenbelt area that’s being proposed. We all know that when you build a highway, the development comes with that, so we’re concerned that a lot of this green space will actually end up turning into brown space. The government’s seeming continued commitment to those highways is a major problem.

I’m not going get into toll roads at the moment. I’ll leave that to my colleague from Beaches-East York later. I want to talk about the environmental aspects of this.

The other thing that we are very concerned about, and something has got to be done to prevent, is what we refer to as leapfrog development. That is, you’ve got your defined green space, you’ve got the area all mapped out and you know where it is, but within that green space—and I’m sure that you really are interested in knowing this, Mr Speaker, because I know if you could vote on this and speak to this, you’d support my position—what it means is that there will be patches, big swaths of land in the middle of this green space, that are left out. The Simcoe area and other areas as well are not included in this plan. That’s why we call it leapfrog: There will be one here and another over here. That means it’s kind of like highways: It could result in sprawl that is even further away from existing jobs, shopping and communities. Building within the existing urban envelope, the one we now have, is the key to environmentally friendly development. This goes a long way to getting us there, but with these particular problems, it’s not going to work. We’re hoping that with deputations from environmental and conservation organizations, and from us, some amendments can be made to fix these problems. There are a few others, but these are the two main areas where we need to see amendments.

1540

What I want to dwell on and speak in particular about is the proposed Castle Glen development in the town of The Blue Mountains. I raised a question in the House, I made a statement and I'm still urging the minister to deal with this problem.

Speaker, in case you, and people who may be listening, are not aware of this, the proposed Castle Glen development—actually, it's a disgrace. For the first time since the province began regulating land use on the escarpment in June 1975—for the very first time—we have a proposal, which has actually moved quite far, to build a year-round town, not just a little seasonal development which, here and there, have been approved by various Niagara commissioners. What happened—and the previous Tories started this; I'll give you that—is their appointees, three days before their appointments were up, voted to let this go ahead, and there was a settlement with the town.

What I called on the minister to do, and what CONE called on the minister to do—on March 9, 2004, they wrote to request that the zoning order within this bill we're talking about today be amended to include the Niagara Escarpment plan area to keep this from happening. We need to do that, because this has gone before the OMB. We're trying to prevent that from happening for a number of reasons.

I asked the government, and they said they weren't going to interfere with the OMB process. As you'll recall, Speaker, when you were sitting over here in opposition and your then colleague Mike Colle in particular asked a lot of questions about the Oak Ridges moraine and OMB hearings, that was the answer the Tories gave the Liberals. Now they're giving the same answer to us, and they know better. This is a problem, and something can be done to stop it.

What I'm hearing from people from the area who are fighting this proposal—and the OMB hearings have started—is that not only is it going forward but there is a concern that because an overall agreement was reached between the town and the developers, and the new Niagara Escarpment Commission members perhaps might not have voted for this—I hear there are actually some very good, green people on that commission now—but are reluctant to overturn a decision by a previous board. So it's going before the OMB.

The other big problem, though—and this may not mean a whole lot to people who aren't involved a lot in these planning issues—is that they've divided this particular hearing into two parts. Over 29 years or so, the way that development proposals for the area have been dealt with is not piecemeal but in one part, so the plan is seen as a whole and you have a sense of what the environmental impact and the other impacts will be. I believe, and many others believe, that what's happening here—I believe the OMB is in discussions about that now—runs completely contrary to the purposes and objectives of the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, because they are looking at it in a

piecemeal fashion. I'm not sure why that has been done, except that the proponent, the developer, knows that this is coming and there's going to be a lot of pressure on the government to keep this from happening. In other words, what the developer is doing is trying to proceed without the benefit of the comprehensive planning context.

This does not constitute good planning for any area—for a city, for any urban or rural area. You need to be able to see the complete plan. You allow a bit of it to go through, and then the next stage comes up—well, that's already there, so in order to support this infrastructure, we're going to have to build the school or the whatever else to support what we've already built here. That's what happens when you do it in piecemeal fashion.

I believe very strongly that if the Liberal government doesn't step in and do something about this and stop it, include it in the zoning order right away or place a ministerial zoning order on it—whatever. It's in the power of the government. As they know from the fight with the Tories, when they were in office, over Oak Ridges, they can do it if they were really committed to doing it.

It's really, really important, if the government wants to move forward in a positive way with this particular bill, that this be done, because it will become, mark my words, the Liberal government's Oak Ridges moraine nightmare. The same thing will happen. It hasn't caught fire yet, but I urge all members to take a look into this, because conservationists and many of the people who live in the area are outraged that this is going ahead and are saying to me—and I'm sure members of the government are also getting this information—that should the government allow this to go ahead, it will betray the very principles that are imbedded in this bill before us.

It is critical not just in terms of protecting the Niagara Escarpment and protecting the environment and all of those things, but I would say that it's critical for the government for political reasons, because as it grows out there and more and more people know about it, the government's going to hear more and more about it. There's going to be very little discussion about the good things in this bill, which are many. I can't use the word that I want to use—it begins with an "h", but I'm not allowed to use it—but that's the way people will see it.

That's a shame, when the government is bringing forward, generally, with the exceptions that I made earlier—which are very important points, but I believe there is some hope that we can get those amended to fix those problems; if not, then the bill will be incomplete. But to allow something like this to go on at the same time, to ruin politically their chances to move forward on their commitment to green space and the environment—as I pointed out earlier, if there was a silver lining at all in the Liberal government finding out after being elected that stopping those 6,000 homes from being built on the Oak Ridges moraine, as promised in the election campaign, was turning out to be a lot easier said than done, as a lot of the promises that the Liberals made—and this is one that the government found, under the circumstances,

they had to break. You got such a lot of grief over that, didn't you? I believe that the silver lining is, there was a decision to try to make up for that, and I believe that's a good thing.

Here we are debating this bill, and generally, I support its direction. I'm more or less obsessed—in fact, I'm pretty obsessed right now; I'm talking to people every day who are trying to stop this, so I'm not going to let up. I realize that in question period meetings I might not be able to get on a question about this every day; there are other important issues of the day every day. But it's something that I will find ways to raise time and time again, and so will some of the environmental groups and conservation groups who are supporting you.

1550

What we're talking about here is an international treasure. We are talking about a UNESCO world heritage site. As I said, just so you understand how important this is, for the first time it is happening under—and I know the Minister of the Environment—and I know this is not her area; it's the Minister of Natural Resources' area—would be interested in hearing about what's happening here and perhaps trying to intervene and stop the Minister of Municipal Affairs from going ahead with this, because it is allowing, under a Liberal government that proclaims to be green, the province, for the first time in all of those years, to build a year-round, whole town on a very environmentally sensitive area of the Niagara Escarpment.

In fact, I was surprised to see, given that the government didn't include it in the act before us today, that the minister—I'm going to see if I can find it here in all of these papers—the Minister of Natural Resources, I believe, actually has something called a big picture, mapping the province's most threatened environmentally significant areas. Guess what's on that map from your own government's Ministry of Natural Resources? Guess. Say it with me: Castle Glen properties. It's right there, in the middle of that map of one of the most environmentally sensitive areas.

I know that there are, perhaps, difficulties in stepping in. The minister just did it with the Adams mine, and I did congratulate her on that. I think I'm one of those opposition members who doesn't have trouble saying to government members, when I support the work that they're doing, sometimes fully, sometimes partially—on Adams mine, I think you did the right thing, despite the fact that you were getting a lot of criticism from the Tories and from the mayor and others in the area, the proponents, and from some of the media. It's tough to do these things sometimes, but it was the right thing to do. Perhaps, partly, you did it to save David Ramsay's seat. I was there when he said he'd resign if it didn't get stopped. Whatever the reasons, it was the right thing to do. To put an end to that, even though the government's going to have a hassle for some time dealing with the ramifications, legal and otherwise, was the right thing to do, and now we can move forward. Of course, I will be critical and ask questions about where we go from here in terms of how we deal with our garbage and our

resources, but I did say and will say again that I was very pleased to see the government make that move.

I'm saying again that I'm very pleased to see the government move forward with the Greenbelt Protection Act. I'm not allowed to say the minister's not here, but I'm sure he's watching on TV. I did raise it before and I'm hoping that he will get in touch with the area people who are opposed and the conservation groups, the environmental groups, and find a solution to this problem and get it stopped now, because I'm going to make sure that it is raised time and time again until it is stopped.

What they've applied to do is to build 1,600 new residential units plus 300 commercial accommodation units and three golf courses on 620 hectares in the municipality of the town of The Blue Mountains. I actually do think it's scandalous. I do. I can't believe that this is going on while the government is introducing this bill. The Liberal government did promise to stop sprawl and protect the environment. If you allow this to go ahead, it is going to make that promise seem awfully hollow and it's going keep on haunting you like the Oak Ridges moraine did to the previous Tory government.

I'm going to come back to the bill in my few minutes left here. I wanted to talk a bit about the Ontario Realty Corp. The Ontario Realty Corp right now owns real estate—sorry, I'm just trying to get my thoughts straight here. Ah, yes, the Liberals' commitment to the new toll roads will cost consumers, but it's also going to cost the environment. I said earlier that I wasn't going to go into the whole issue about the minister's responses. I believe we have a whole new area today where we might see toll roads. It'll cost consumers, but it will also cost the environment. The Liberal intention is to speed up the building of the expressways, it sounds like, by tolling them. Some days we hear they're going to toll them and some days we hear they're not going to do it.

I wanted to focus for a minute on the extension of Highway 404 north toward Lake Simcoe, which is going to be particularly and especially problematic as it will, as I talked about earlier, facilitate this leapfrog development, such as the massive Queensville development, which is planned to ultimately house, I believe, around 30,000 people. Just imagine that. You build this right in the middle of this so-called greenbelt and this will push development even further from existing jobs in other communities, thereby adding to their commuting times. You can't be using this new greenbelt legislation, this greenbelt area as an excuse to move development further and further out.

What we need, and what we say over and over again, is new thinking about the way we develop. We need to develop in a more compact urban form. We have to stop this madness. If you create a greenbelt and you push the extension of Highway 404 even further, then the development starts leapfrogging outside that greenbelt. The next thing you know, you've got more urban sprawl growing and causing all the same problems and you've got all these commuters trying to drive to their jobs or whatever. That's not only an environmental problem, as

we know very well, any members who don't live right in downtown Toronto—fortunately, I can ride my bike to work, if the weather would get warmer again soon. I'm lucky in that way, but I hope most people here take public transportation. I really hope they do. But if you're forced to drive from time to time, as you might be, you know what it's like sitting in that traffic for hours. It's bad for the economy. It's not only bad for the environment; the more we develop further and further outside the boundaries of the city, outside the greenbelt, the further people are going to have to get in those cars and drive. When you build in these outskirts way, way out, there's not a lot of infrastructure money for public transportation and all of the other things that have to be built up. There are real problems around extending these highways and allowing this leapfrog development to happen.

I hope very much that, as we debate this bill—as I said, we want to see it passed. We want to see it go out for the final consultations. Hopefully, the government will accept the amendments. We want to get moving on this. It's really critical. I understand that. In the meantime, though, I would again urge the government, if it wants to be able to stand up and speak very positively and be proud of this bill before us, they're going to have to make those amendments and they are going to have to stop this development on the Niagara Escarpment.

It is absolutely critical that those of you who are as concerned about this as I am, perhaps some of you even more so now that you know about it, will go to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, will go to the Premier, and say to them exactly what I'm saying to you today, that if we don't stop this development, it will be a very black mark against your own government. It will haunt you from day to day right throughout the passing of this greenbelt bill and you will never get the credit you deserve over this because that will fly in the face of your intention to protect the environment and green space in this province.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr Brad Duguid): Questions and comments?

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act is asking the Legislature for a time out. The time is needed to develop a strategy so that we can coexist in terms of the urban and rural structures that we now have. Current land use planning seems to be more focused on urban development at this time and not on the preservation of farmland and environmentally sensitive lands. While growth shoots up in many directions at the same time, for no logical reason, no control, often against the wishes of municipal councils, and with no vision for the future, we have a problem. We need to look closely at the development of policies that define and regulate what is intrusive growth and what is normal community growth. Carefully thought-out urban-rural planning means that we can have adequate development and preserve agricultural land at the same time.

As a former municipal councillor, I can remember the practice by developers of buying up farmland, acre after acre, for no other reason than speculation. You might say they leapfrogged, as the member for Toronto-Danforth likes to say; but in this case, they leapfrogged out over residentially zoned areas and into agriculturally zoned areas. They did this with the intent of going before council later and applying for a rezoning, and they left the former owners of that farmland as tenant farmers on what are class 1 and class 2 lands. I think what happened then is that there was a conflict between the people who live in those houses and what are normal farm practices.

So this legislation asks us to take a step back, and it gives us the time to do that so that we can develop a win-win—

The Acting Speaker: More questions and comments?

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond to the comments of the member for Toronto-Danforth and a bit to the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and her response to the member for Toronto-Danforth's comments.

I think the member for Toronto-Danforth was absolutely right when she talked at the beginning of her remarks about the circumstances from which this legislation was born. Because you remember, in the early days of the Dalton McGuinty government, the Premier had drawn a very strong line in the sand that there would be no homes built on the Oak Ridges moraine, and in fact he reiterated that pledge for weeks after the election campaign. Only, once he came into office, he backslid, flip-flopped, erased that line in the sand and retreated. In fact, there are now almost 6,000 homes being built on the Oak Ridges moraine, contrary to what was campaigned upon by Premier McGuinty and his members in that area. So I think in response to that, as part of their backsliding and trying to do what they call "issues management," they threw out the greenbelt legislation.

Granted, greenbelt legislation, as we have said on this side of the floor, sounds great in principle to protect our green space. How can you argue with any notion to preserve green space, which is a value that I think every member of this House would share? The point we're making, though, is that there is a lot of devil in the details.

The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex spoke just before this, and I know with her experience in agriculture and being a former member of the OFA board, it won't be lost on her or other members of this Legislature the significant jeopardy that this puts farmers in the greenbelt protection area under. For example, if a sour cherry farmer in Beamsville finds that the price for his or her product has plummeted because of subsidies from Washington state or overseas, what recourse do they have? What is the agricultural framework or support to allow them to continue farming?

I plan on speaking more to that point about agriculture, and I hope to see the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and others do likewise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Thank you for your contribution. Further questions and comments?

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is my honour to stand here and to comment on the speech made by my colleague the member for Toronto-Danforth. She has stated, I think quite correctly, our party's position, that we supported the main thrust of this particular bill. But she has brought up two very important points that need to be reiterated again and again and again. If you are going to be an environmentalist, if you are going to try to protect a green space, then you need to do it throughout the length and breadth of Ontario, particularly in the Niagara Escarpment, in the Oak Ridges moraine and in environmentally sensitive areas. You cannot go out with a bill such as this, as laudable as it is, and take two other contrary positions, or positions which you have not formally thought out.

On the Castle Glen development in The Blue Mountains, we recognize it's before the Ontario Municipal Board; we recognize that certain procedures have taken place within the local municipalities. But this government has an obligation, I would suggest even stronger than an obligation, a duty and a right, to stop this development as quickly as it can do so, notwithstanding the Ontario Municipal Board and notwithstanding the other safeguards and legal precedence there. They have done so before.

Governments of all stripes have taken actions in the past to stop development which is not warranted. Having been the last mayor of East York, I know only too well how a previous government, a Conservative one, stopped the Bayview ghost. They did so for a good reason. I'm asking that this government do the same for this.

I'm also asking this government to look very carefully and very strongly before you proceed to widen and lengthen the 404 north to Lake Simcoe. This may not be an environmentally sensitive thing to do.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to stand today and speak in support of the Greenbelt Protection Act. This act is an important first step by our government. The proposed greenbelt will protect 100,000-plus acres of environmentally sensitive land and farmland within the Golden Horseshoe, where some of Ontario's best agricultural land is located. By creating a permanent greenbelt, the act will contain sprawl, encourage a better growth management strategy and improve our quality of life.

Both as a Toronto member and as a girl born in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, I know that we all need to work together to protect our key rural and farmland in this province. We all benefit from having productive agricultural land protected, because once it is lost, it is gone forever.

Those of us who live in urban centres benefit from our opportunities to go out into the rural communities. Rural farmers and farmers across this province are providing food to our table each and every day. In my own riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, we benefit from having the Foodland Ontario terminal in our riding, one of the

centres where food products come from across this province and are spread out across the GTA.

You need to go there one morning at 5 to see the benefits of having Ontario farmers work hard each and every day, and that we need to protect that farmland in this province. You will be amazed by the diversity of the products that come through our province and are distributed in the Ontario Foodland terminal.

As a Toronto member I applaud this first step. I think we all need to work toward ensuring that future generations have farmland protected across this province.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Toronto-Danforth has two minutes to reply.

Ms Churley: Thank you. You're a very good Chair, by the way. It's nice to see you there.

Mr Hudak: What about his tie?

Ms Churley: Yeah, nice tie.

I wanted to thank everybody for their comments. I'm always particularly interested to hear from people from rural Ontario. Even though people think of me as from Toronto—which I am, I represent a Toronto area—I grew up in Labrador. There were no roads in or out, so I hardly knew what development meant, but I certainly understand what is going on environmentally in Ontario: global warming, smog, bad air, pollution, asthma. All these things come together. They're all a piece of the puzzle here and this is a very big piece of it.

I do want to say that I found it interesting that two of the Liberal members who spoke did not say anything or respond in any way to the issues that I raised as concerns. It's easy to get up and read out the notes provided about what's wonderful about this bill. It's good to let people know, but there are some real problems.

I would like to know what Liberal members think about the issues that I raise, particularly around the development, the proposed Castle Glen development—we need it stopped; we must have it stopped—and the extension of the 404 into the Simcoe area.

I've got to remind Liberal members that when they were in opposition—new people might not know this, but Mike Colle, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, mentioned it enough—they were going to get rid of the OMB when they got into government. Now we're hearing no more about that. Instead, we hear the Minister of Municipal Affairs and other ministers say, "Oh, it's before the OMB. We can't do anything about it." What gives here? I want to see this government speak the same way they used to speak when they were in opposition and fix this problem.

1610

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): It is a privilege, on behalf of the government side, to speak in support of the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003. With your permission, Speaker, I would like to share my time with my colleague the MPP from Scarborough Centre, Mr Brad Duguid.

There are a number of things to say about this bill, but in particular I'd like to salute at least the spirit of the

NDP's representations today in their general support of this bill. I would also like to formally address some of the objections or concerns and let the members in the third party know that this bill will in fact be going to committee, and of course that is the just and appropriate place to bring forth any amendments or suggestions or recommendations.

When we're talking about the Greenbelt Protection Act, I wish at one point that my own riding, the great riding of Etobicoke North, had its own version of a Greenbelt Protection Act. It was not that long ago that my riding was full of farmland, verdant, virgin fields and greenery everywhere. But with urban sprawl and industrial development, we are paying somewhat of a price for that. So I think we really need to salute the spirit of this Greenbelt Protection Act.

What is the greenbelt, in fact? The areas encompassed include areas in Toronto, Durham, York, Peel, Halton, Hamilton and the Oak Ridges moraine. As my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore pointed out, this area affects materially the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe. This bill in particular is about maintaining a coherence of policy, a moratorium for study, for public consultation, essentially allowing us—those in government who have been entrusted with the assets of Ontario—to listen to our stakeholders and to fulfill our commitments to the people; in particular addressing and really safeguarding, shepherding, some of the best agricultural land in North America. That's really what the creation of permanent greenbelt protection in the Golden Horseshoe is all about, dealing of course with lands that are vastly threatened.

It's a matter of dealing with green space, with quality of life and what I'd like to call smarter growth, to distinguish it from Smart Growth of days gone by, whether we're dealing with population growth or growth in industry or agriculture, and in particular to contain the Tory-sanctioned urban sprawl—the congestion—whether it was of traffic or of population or high-density housing. It's about maintaining economic opportunity and jobs and investment, and of course culture, tourism and recreation and resource management, as well as maintaining infrastructure, be it man-made or natural. At the end of the day it's really about changing the direction of government and delivering real and positive change; maintaining a strong economy while at the same time maintaining a clean and green environment.

As my colleagues have shared some of the details, we are looking at imposing a moratorium on the development—the further denuding, I may say—of something on the order of 600,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land and farmland within the Golden Horseshoe. The idea is to contain sprawl, yet maintain smart growth and as well as maintaining that permanent greenbelt which, at the end of the day, as I've represented here, will affect materially our quality of life.

This Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003, is really an important first step on this continued and unfinished journey. This act would in fact give us a time out for dis-

ussion of important issues that would really help us to take into account what it means to develop intelligently with a view to the economy as well as the environment. It's a discussion of key rural and agricultural protection, things, assets that we cannot afford to lose so easily and without so much as a second thought.

We must remember, as my colleagues have stated, that once this green space is lost, for all intents and purposes it is lost forever and impossible to reclaim.

Some comments about the farmland in the Golden Horseshoe: Farmland makes up something on the order of about 45% of the 9.2 million acres from Niagara to Northumberland, and north to Haliburton and Georgian Bay. In fact, some of the most productive agricultural areas lie within this Golden Horseshoe, and this, of course, is precisely the area where the development pressures are the greatest. We have urban boundary encroachments, non-farm uses, land speculation and new residential subdivisions which really have consumed that prime agricultural land, some of the best agricultural land the world has to offer.

What are some of the benefits of this agriculture? Well, agriculture is responsible for something on the order of about 15,000 direct and 35,000 indirect jobs in the York, Peel, Hamilton and Durham regions. This is a real money-maker for the province. Ontario exported, for example, \$7 billion of agri-food products in the year 2001. In fact, the sector employs something like 600,000 people in Ontario.

Just as a quick example from the realm of biology, an average hectare of corn removes something on the order of 22 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the air. So it seems that the Golden Horseshoe is doing its part to fulfill the Kyoto Protocol.

Farmland, of course, provides linkage with wildlife needs to survive in urbanizing areas, and urban dwellers, in turn, benefit from living near fresh produce. The farmland provides a buffer between urban areas and significant natural areas. For example, if you travel to places like New York City, you can actually be on the highway on some major thoroughfare, and within the space of literally 10, 15, 20 minutes, you can be in virgin countryside. We need to preserve that capacity, that capability, that wonder of the environment here in Ontario.

Part of the prime agricultural areas, in fact, contribute not only to rural and agricultural and natural heritage, but they also really emphasize or deal with the character of the greenbelt area itself. This is another incentive for us in the government to preserve it and actually move forward with this Greenbelt Protection Act.

One of the other aspects, of course, is food security and the benefits of supplying food to an ever-increasing population trend, the increases of which really know no end. This is, of course, part of the idea, the philosophy of managing growth intelligently.

I would like to speak for a moment about the Niagara tender fruit and grape lands. As I've mentioned, this is some of the best agricultural land available. This act will

help to include the tender fruit and grape lands in a proposed protection scheme, because these lands must be available to us over the long term.

For example, Niagara's tender fruit and grape lands have long been regarded nationally as a unique resource. The sand and silt soils overlaying clay in the Iroquois plain, combined with the moderating effect of Lake Ontario, Lake Erie and the Niagara Escarpment, make this area ideal for farming. That's really part of the agricultural or the environmental, the natural heritage that, really, the environmentalists tell us is another reason for us to move forward with this protection act. Half of Niagara's land is actually farm, and this is a marvellous resource. More than a resource, it is an essential asset that the government needs to preserve time going forward.

I need not speak and dwell extensively on the fact that the Niagara area is also, of course, one of the major tourist draws worldwide. Of course, the preservation of lands, access route, smart and intelligent developments, and containing what we call compact urban development, is something that we must also move toward.

In summary, this bill is about changing the direction of government, delivering real and positive change, preserving green space and maintaining our quality of life so that at the end of the day, we in the government of Ontario can go back to our stakeholders, can go back to the people of Ontario and, in particular, the individuals who live in the Golden Horseshoe, and tell them that we have done our part, moved forward in our mutual journey to preserve not only a strong economy, but at the same time, maintaining a clean and green environment.

1620

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm delighted to join the debate on the Greenbelt Protection Act. This is indeed a very important act for our government and for the province.

Why are we doing this? There are a number of reasons. One is, plain and simple, that people like green space. I look at my own community and see the Rouge in the east end, one of the most treasured areas in all Canada in terms of preservation, an area that people use for recreation, an area where young people in the urban areas can go to see deer, coyotes and all kinds of interesting wildlife right in the city. People can go there and fish. People can go there and just take a walk and smell the wilderness. It's something that I think a lot of urban people, particularly urban children, really need to experience.

We also have Highland Creek in my area, a revitalization and naturalization project that the member for Scarborough Southwest approved some time ago when he was on Scarborough council with me. We've invested millions of dollars in revitalizing a corridor of Highland Creek, so that people can enjoy and experience the quality of life and nature in their own urban environment. So it's very important. That's one reason it's important that we look very carefully at this greenbelt area: to ensure that areas that should be preserved are preserved.

Another area is smog. We've certainly had a record number of smog days in urban areas across Ontario, and I understand the smog warnings go all the way up to Algonquin Park. It's important that we get a handle on this issue. I look at our community in Scarborough, and it's the same right across Toronto. We've had a record number of admissions to our local hospitals for respiratory illness. It continues to grow each and every year. It's an issue that I think we have to get a handle on, and curbing urban sprawl, if you want to call it that—it's called many things—is one way we can try to tackle that problem. It's important that we try to tackle it, because it's an essential part of our commitment to make this province healthier.

Third, we have to protect our waterways. Ensuring the cleanliness of the water we drink is something that benefits all of us. It's something that I think is a core value the people of this province have. We've all learned from Walkerton. Walkerton was something we wish never had to happen, but we've all learned from it. That's why it's so important that we protect those waterways.

I think back to my days as chair of works for the city of Toronto and the wet weather water flow master management plan we approved as a city, which protected the flow of water through the city and made sure that the water that flows into the lake is as clean as possible. We have a long way to go on that. We have many years and billions of dollars of investment that are going to be required if we're to accomplish that goal, but this is a good first step in ensuring that those waterways that eventually flow down into Lake Ontario are well protected. It's a very important part of ensuring that the beaches, not only in Toronto but right across the northern part of Lake Ontario, are looked after so our residents can enjoy them for many generations to come.

Another reason it's important that we really plan growth over the next number of years in the Toronto area is to try to deal with this gridlock problem. This is a very serious issue. It affects us economically, as businesses try to get to and from Toronto. More important than that, it affects our quality of life as we try to get to and from work. So it's important that we plan our future communities around Toronto very carefully, to ensure that we take full advantage of what we've learned over the years.

Fifth, preserving prime agricultural land: It's extremely important that we have good agricultural land near some of the markets they serve. We've got some prime land in this area, from the Niagara region to the Holland Landing area, some very important pieces of agricultural property.

It's important as well, because there have been some concerns expressed in the development sector and the aggregate sector about where we're going with this. Whenever there's a little bit of uncertainty that comes forward, it affects areas like the development industry.

It's important, I think, to point out that this greenbelt legislation is not anti-development legislation by any means; it's pro-good development legislation. It's look-

ing toward planned development, which is very, very important. Development and growth have to take into consideration our key agricultural lands, our environmentally sensitive lands, the lands that we want to preserve for recreational purposes. That's just planned development. It's good development. It's something that I think our development industry recognizes.

But at the same time, as we put a freeze on development throughout this area, there's some uncertainty related to that. I think it's important that that industry recognizes that our government understands the importance of that industry. We understand that construction is a \$30-billion industry in our province. We understand that it employs over 270,000 people across Ontario. We understand that our economic health as a province depends very much on a healthy development industry in Ontario as well.

Our housing starts have been very healthy over the last number of years; 62,500 housing starts last year. That's considerably higher than 10 years ago, when it was around 25,000. So it's a healthy industry right now, and it's important that we send out the message that this legislation should not impact that industry. It's important that in fact, as we move forward and determine what pieces of property within the greenbelt are good for development and what pieces of property are not, we'll be lending further certainty to development in the 905 and greater Toronto area as a result of this legislation.

It's also important as well that we acknowledge the importance of our aggregate industry. The aggregate industry, of course, serves the construction industry. It's billions of dollars in aggregate every year that comes out of the greater Toronto area. It's an important part of our economy, and it's important that we recognize that as we move forward with this exercise as well. There are 7,000 people directly employed in our aggregate industry; 34,000 people indirectly employed. That's a lot of jobs. It's something that I think we have to be very conscious of, and in fact we are. It's important that we take that into consideration.

It's even an important part of our public sector work. Our local aggregate industries have to contribute to something like 53% of the roads and highways that we construct here, so that's important as well; and 60% of the product that goes into our transportation costs actually comes from our local aggregate industries. So this is an industry that this government must pay close attention to. It's an industry that you must be sensitive to. It's something that we'll be balancing very, very closely with our needs as we move forward with our changes to the greenbelt.

One thing we've done that's very important is that we've appointed a Greenbelt Task Force that's very representative of all of the stakeholders, whether it be environmentalists, agriculture and rural land use, farm representatives, ecologists, the aggregate industry, as I talked about earlier, developer representatives or legal representatives. All of those stakeholders are on this task force playing a key role. That's important. That's part of

how this government is showing that it's reaching out to all stakeholders as we move forward with our policies. We're not just blindly moving forward and doing things by the seat of our pants. We're planning these things out and consulting with people to make sure that the important initiatives we move forward with take into consideration all of the sensitivities of those stakeholders; that at the end of the day, the primary interests we're serving are the interests of the people of Ontario.

I think people are looking to this government for leadership in this area, and I think we're showing that in moving very boldly, something that's never been done before in this area. We have one chance, one opportunity as a government, to make this right, because if we do not get a handle on the overall planning issues in the greater Toronto area now, it will be too late five, 10, 15, 20 years from now to right that wrong.

That's why we're taking a big-picture approach to planning in the greater Toronto area. I think it's in everybody's interest. I think it's in the local municipalities' interests that are impacted; it's in the developers' interests and the builders' interests; and it's definitely in the environmentalists' interests to make sure that we do this right, that we make every effort to ensure that we preserve the land in this area that should be preserved, the land that is environmentally sensitive, and that we free up the land in this area that is good for development, because some of this greenbelt will have to be developed. We know that. We've known that from the beginning. That's not new to anybody. It's part of what the task force is looking at right now. So we're looking forward to moving forward. We're looking forward to seeing the work of this task force. We'll ensure that it's done in a timely manner so we can return certainty to the development industry and return certainty to the communities around the 905. I'm very pleased to have taken part in this debate.

1630

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I just barely made it back for my comment. First of all, I thank you for allowing me to take part today in this comment. I've had a lot of discussions on this bill with my colleague and seatmate Julia Munro from York North, who has some very strong concerns about this particular piece of legislation.

One thing that I'm really concerned about is the actual lines that have been drawn in the greenbelt space. I don't think anybody questions the need for smart growth, for legislation to protect our green spaces, but one of the concerns that we have in Simcoe county is—Ms Churley for Toronto-Danforth mentioned it earlier—leapfrogging. We think that is exactly what could happen here to Simcoe county. I'm not so sure the planning community—I'm not sure even the county wants a great deal more growth than we've actually seen in the past. People want the rural quality of life. There's nothing wrong with the small communities like the Bradfords and the Allistons etc growing at a controlled pace. There's

nothing wrong with that at all. But we're really concerned about long-term negative environmental effects on the county of Simcoe. I look forward to these types of comments, not only in the hearings but throughout the rest of the debate, because I think that although you try to protect one area of the province, you may in fact be having a negative effect on another part of the province, and with our strong economy and Ontario being the location where many people in the world like to live, it's something we have to take very seriously.

Mr Prue: I listened intently to the two members who spoke, the members for Etobicoke North and Scarborough Centre. I have to tell you that with much of what they said one could not find fault. They are talking in general terms about how much we all need to do work for the environment, how we need to protect our farmland and how we have to go slowly in development to make sure we do not cause any harm to the very precious resources that we have here in Ontario. I thank them for those thoughts, but I have to say this, in particular to the member for Scarborough Centre.

Yesterday was a landmark decision in this province when the minister stood up and announced that we were going to stop the development of the Adams mine. I commend the minister for having made that statement, but I have to question the member for Scarborough Centre and his commitment to this whole process of the environment. As I remember, only a couple of years ago, he was one of the lead speakers in favour of the Adams mine at the city of Toronto. In fact, he was in favour of that to the extent that he spoke to it day after day while we were trying—at least I was—to shut it down. So I have to question where the commitment is around all this, although the words, I must suggest, were very nice.

I hope that the new atmosphere of Queen's Park and of the province has brought some sense around this issue. It certainly seems so from what I heard today. I want to remind all members that the province has a stake in stopping developments like Castle Glen. Just a couple that come immediately to mind in the Toronto area: the Spadina Expressway—

Ms Churley: Bill Davis.

Mr Prue: Bill Davis—the Brickworks by Lily Munro and, again, the Bayview ghost that was happening during the time of John Robarts. It can be done; it needs to be done. Please address this in committee.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I'm delighted to speak briefly on Bill 27, the Greenbelt Protection Act. As a rural member—Perth-Middlesex is the largest rural riding in southwestern Ontario, Mr Speaker, as you well know as a neighbouring riding—we are on the other side of the greenbelt act. We are on the other side of the line. What I wanted to talk about is that balance that we need in rural Ontario, the balance of rural versus urban. I tell people that, though I grew up in the small town of Trenton, my wife's family is from the even smaller village of Marmora. People say, "Are you rural?" I tell people, "If you're doing your dishes and you look

out the window and you see a cow, then you know that you're in rural Ontario."

I know that even in the great city of Stratford, where I live, within two kilometres of my house, the centre of the urban part of Perth-Middlesex, you're bound to find a pig or a cow or a chicken, because we're at the heart of that. What's important for us in rural Ontario is that there is a balance. I'm proud that our government is keeping the commitment that we made during the election in regard to drawing a line across Ontario, where we say that we're going to contain urban sprawl, because urban sprawl eats up that rich agricultural land that we all need so desperately so that we can have food self-sufficiency, so that we can have safe, secure, affordable food, grown right here in Ontario. That is the security that we need as a society.

So I'm very, very pleased that we're doing something about this balance, because that will be the template that we can use across Ontario as we deal with that point of friction that is always between the urban and the rural parts of Ontario. I'd like to commend both the members for Etobicoke North and Scarborough Centre for speaking so eloquently on the bill, and thank you for allowing me to participate in the debate.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is indeed my pleasure this afternoon to speak for the next minute and a half, which I guess is my time, on Bill 27. In fact, I put on the record here, to start with—I will be speaking in some detail in a few minutes—that you really can't look at this planning intrusion, this land use intrusion by the now Liberal government, without looking at both bills, 26 and 27. I know there's some argument, and there has been for almost a decade now, about provincial planning policy. The argument, from the NDP forward, basically has been the debate around the whole issue of "have regard to" planning policy or "consistent with." That has really been the essence of the whole debate. I can tell you that there's still much division with respect to whether the government should impose its centralized thinking, urbanized view of the world on all parts of Ontario. Is it much more important to allow them some degree of flexibility?

Now, that being said, every member on this side puts the environment first. We created the greatest network of Lands for Life in this province. It was Bill Davis who put the escarpment commission in place and it was we who put the Oak Ridges moraine act in place. Let's not forget that history is the teacher of what we've put in place. It's been our government, the Conservative government of Ontario that's built the strong province. It's under those principles that we've also allowed the degree of flexibility, which is only respectful of local and regional levels of government.

The implication with much of what I'm hearing from the current government, the Liberal government, is that it's going to be run from the minister's office, whether it's health care, George Smitherman, Bill 8; whether it's—who else would it be over there—Gerard Kennedy, for instance, on education. It's all going to be run from

Toronto. I can tell you, the people of Durham are fed up with it. We need to have some flexibility to respond to our own particular needs.

1640

The Acting Speaker: You have two minutes to reply.

Mr Duguid: My thanks to the members for Simcoe North, Perth-Middlesex, Beaches-East York and even the member for Durham for his comments, negative as they may have been. Let me start off by suggesting that I was surprised by the member from Durham's comments, given the record of his government over the last number of years when it comes to wholesale, free-for-all development outside Toronto—whatever the developers wanted, they got. I spoke about the importance of the development industry, and I think we all understand and recognize that. But at the same time, there have to be controls and the public interest has to be the first priority.

It was obvious over the last number of years that there was no control over what was being suggested. It was a piecemeal approach that I think, frankly, would have cost generation upon generation of Ontarians not only their clean air, not only their water, but their quality of life. Thank goodness we have a Premier and a government that recognize the importance of getting a handle on development in the greater Toronto area and working with the development community, the aggregate community, the agricultural community and environmentalists to do what is in the best interests of the people of Ontario. That's change that the people of this province are looking forward to.

I will say we have some serious challenges in front of us. We've got 115,000 people coming to the greater Toronto area each and every year. We've seen 2.3 million people settle here between 1981 and 2001. That's a lot of people we have to adjust to. It's like a small town locating in the greater Toronto area every single year. It's going to take some time and some effort. This Premier and this government are up to it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for permitting me the opportunity to speak on this important bill.

I will only say that most of my experience in this area will be of a general nature, stemming from my time in local and regional government. In fact, I think my privilege to being here is that all politics is local. All policies should respond first to the people and the area you're elected to represent and then look at the greater good for the greater number. That's the broad public policy discussion that should take place here; in fact, this is the right place for it.

For those viewing this afternoon, we are specifically dealing with order G27, the adjourned debate on second reading of Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act. They'll probably have to amend it, because one of their election promises was that they were going to cancel all development on the Oak Ridges moraine. Yeah, right. Another broken promise—that's no surprise.

But as I said in my short time before this, one can't look at Bill 27, which is the greenbelt issue, without looking at Bill 26, which is really the fundamental bill, and that bill's title is An Act to amend the Planning Act. I'm going to start by giving a small, respectful statement with regard to the debate adjourned earlier on Bill 27 and to my good friend the member from York North, Julia Munro.

Julia Munro, basically, has been a stalwart, consistent contributor on behalf of her constituents and, I believe, to the broader debate on this issue of planning and community building. She's put forward a number of extremely important observations and recommendations, and I think the other side of the House should at least listen respectfully. Often I'm discouraged, because I thought they were going to be the new form of government and, to this point, it has been somewhat disappointing for us. There are ways to fix this problem, respecting the rights of landholders and the development industry as a "bad" industry.

I guess the point for me is that we recognize the province of Ontario is expanding. Growth and population are expanding. To some extent, I understand and agree with the intensification argument; that is, we should make better use of infrastructure and land that are currently developed and serviced. Putting it bluntly, I think that intensification is intensifying the human condition: more people in less space. There is a place for that. Urban communities need to make efficient use of space—no question about it—and we should have regard to our environment because, as I said earlier, that's the agricultural land that grows the food we eat. I don't disrespect any of those arguments. In fact, the Niagara Escarpment is a testimony to having green space protected permanently for posterity, as well as the Oak Ridges moraine act, which we enacted, the Lands for Life program that Chris Hodgson, when he was minister, brought forward as well. So there have been many good things done. In fact under the Planning Act—I'm going back to Bill 26 now—under the pressure of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Ontario Municipal Association, a large city group, we responded to them by giving them flexibility. The NDP planning guideline on policy was that it must be consistent, rigorously consistent, with wetlands or other issues. The municipalities, both lower-tier and upper-tier municipalities, wanted some degree of flexibility.

I, for one, respect the lower tiers of government. They're closer to the people and they in many respects—I think of David Crone, who's the director of planning, and Gregory Georgieff, who was the director of planning for the region of Durham—are people who do put their community first and the appropriate use of land first. I think the mayors and other councillors do have regard for their unique needs within the community. I could also go on and say that Bill 26 takes that autonomy, I think disrespectfully, away from lower tiers of government. I don't know whether they have it right. I think time will tell how much of this will have to be resolved in some

court or in some litigious manner. That, again, adds more cost to the taxpayer.

I'm going to read Bill 26 just to show you some of the implications with the Planning Act here. The preamble to Bill 26: "The purpose of the bill is to change the criteria that must be met when any decision, comment, submission or advice is made or provided by a municipality, local board, planning board, the provincial government or a board, commission or agency of the province government that affects a land use planning manner." So they're in the box there. They must be consistent. "The decisions, comments, submissions and advice must be 'consistent with,'" as I said earlier, "policy"—provincial policy—"statements issued by the minister." So the minister has taken back, Mr Gerretsen has taken back, complete control, as George Smitherman has in health.

It's going to be run from Toronto, so that's the Liberal way. In Ottawa they run it from Ottawa and they don't pay any attention to anyone else. The issue here is "having regard to." I don't think the debate is over. I think once you do it, you may think you're doing the right thing. I see that many members here have served as mayor and other roles: Brad Duguid, and certainly the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge as well.

The bill also provides and increases the time period for making decisions, before appeals may be made to the Ontario Municipal Board, from 90 to 180 days. So they've doubled the length of time in the big vacuum of consultation or dispute resolution. "Clauses 22(1)(b) and 22(2)(b) of the act are amended to remove the deadline of 65 days in which a municipality or planning board had to file official planned amendments.

As most people know, all of these land use decisions take rigorous amounts of time locally. There's application for a rezoning, there are public hearings, then there's a submission, and there's subdivision or whatever actual use is going to be made of that land. So there is due diligence there. They do look at the specific terrain and other implications with the property and its ultimate use.

But I say to you that I am speaking today in support of lower-tier and upper-tier municipalities. They are elected people, they are accountable, they're closer to the people and they're not in some Toronto office. I believe that they should be held accountable. I believe there should be a disputes mechanism, and that's called the Ontario Municipal Board. Reform it if you wish, but I think it is disrespectful to take that elected decision and privilege away from them. I could go on at some length with Bill 26.

Bill 27: It's important to look at what this is actually doing. I'll just read a small bit of the explanatory notes here, "The power of municipalities in respect of land use planning matters is restricted in relation to land in the greenbelt study area that is outside an urban settlement area." It goes on a little bit here, "Similarly, no applications may be made in respect of these matters and all applications, referrals, hearings, appeals and procedures

before a joint board under the Consolidated Hearings Act or the Ontario Municipal Board with respect to these matters are stayed."

1650

They've overridden the courts, technically a quasi-judicial body, the Ontario Municipal Board; another centralization of authority and control right back to Dalton's office. Actually, the centre runs it all. That's the sad part here. I see it becoming more and more a concentration of power right in—well, I don't know whether it's Dalton's office or Greg Sorbara's. I think Greg Sorbara, the Minister of Finance, has probably more authority than the Premier. He's the guy who recruited most of the new members here and he's the guy who was president of the party. He's the guy who was the chair of the audit committee of Royal Group Technologies. I think he's kind of running it all, technically.

I think, in fact, without imputing any kind of motive, the Sorbara Group is very heavily involved in land development, land holdings and land management. I just bring that to the people here to see if this control—I know the authority he had under the Ontario Securities Commission has been given to Mr Phillips, and I'm wondering if maybe he should absolve himself of some of the municipal stuff in cabinet.

Now, how much acceptance is there for this Bill 27? The first reference for me is always the municipal people. That's where I came from, and that's where each of us here, to the greatest extent, came from. Mr Hardeman was a warden and reeve. Almost everywhere I look around—

The Acting Speaker: Would the member please take his seat. I just wish to remind the member that it's inappropriate to refer to a member by his given surname. I would ask him to use the members' riding names, as he knows.

Mr O'Toole: I do respect that and I appreciate that, Mr Speaker. In fact, you're right. It just shows the genuineness of—I take this very personally, and I'm now speaking for the region of Durham; I'm actually speaking on behalf of Roger Anderson and his response to Bill 27 and Bill 26. I'm going to read it, because I wouldn't want to impugn any kind of motives here. He's the chair of the region of Durham. Now, he's not elected, but that's a debate for another day. We'll leave it at that.

This is actually from the This Week paper, which is kind of a Metroland, a subtext Toronto Star kind of paper. I understand that. February 27, 2004: "Chair Upset over Greenbelt Snub." It's the snub that implies the real arrogance that I see emerging here, and very early in the mandate too. It's that smug snub, that arrogance.

"Roger Anderson isn't happy with the committee that's going to make recommendations on a permanent greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe. The Durham region chairman is upset the task force is being chaired by the mayor of a municipality that the Oak Ridges moraine doesn't even run through, Burlington mayor Bob MacIsaac. Also upsetting to Anderson is that there are no other politicians on the task force and there is only one

representative from Durham. 'It's just a poor committee with no representation, and certainly not capable of making decisions that affect eight or 10 or 12 municipalities,' Mr Anderson said." That's a direct quote. I'll be sending this, so if there's any interjections here, I'll be citing you and sending it to Mr Anderson, who at the moment is not elected, but he certainly is the chair.

"It's just a poor committee," as I said before. "The McGuinty government announced a 13-member Greenbelt Task Force last week. The appointment to the task force followed the introduction of the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act in December, which, if passed, would create a greenbelt study area—a stall mechanism; that's code language—"on the Golden Horseshoe, imposing a one-year moratorium on new urban development on rural agricultural lands within this area and clarifying the transition provision on development applications relating to the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act. Mr Anderson said, "The act takes power away from lower-tier municipalities...." Shameful.

This is another quote: "We should be able to decide where our greenbelt should be,' he said. 'You can't give the municipality the ability to plan and then take it away. It would certainly have an impact on the way municipalities plan their futures.'" He said one of the province's decisions, the one-year moratorium, "prevents further development across Ontario. This would stall growth in Durham, where municipalities such as Pickering have essentially run out of urban land."

I could go on in this, but the whole point is, I was at a public meeting, and the point being made was this: These were new residents, new constituents of mine whom I'm flattered to represent. I'd encourage you to contact my office regardless of your political affiliation, because we're there to serve and listen.

They were saying they were surprised that the prices of the lots just around them had doubled. This is the immediate impact of the second or third decision. They raised the taxes in Bill 4, they've raised the electricity rates in another bill, and the list of raising taxes goes on. In fact, what they're doing now is raising the price of land. I'm going to put this simply for you. If you raise the price of the land, you are raising the assessment base. Then you apply the tax rate to the assessment base and you know what happens: Your taxes double. If what you owned was \$30,000, now it's \$60,000, and the tax rate stays the same. Your taxes have just doubled.

When you dry up the supply of serviced land and you dry up the supply of affordable housing, house prices go up. This, to me, has implications far beyond the debate I've heard so far. What it's saying to me is that the Premier of the province is actually increasing the cost of housing, and he's increasing taxes without ever saying he's increased taxes. So this is the chicanery of it all, this is the treachery that I say is implicit in much of the bill here.

This is the regional spokesperson, Mr Anderson, that I put on the table. I have a great deal of respect for Mr

Anderson. He is a very capable spokesman for the region. I do listen and it's a privilege to work with him.

What I'm saying here is that this is the position of the town of Whitby. The mayor there, whom I have a great deal of respect for—a good friend of mine, actually; well, a friend in that he's municipal and I work with him—and a great spokesperson for the community of Whitby. With respect to the Planning Act—because as I said, these two are united; 26 and 27 are sort of under one cover—at a meeting of the council held on March 8, 2004, the council of the town of Whitby passed the following resolution:

"That the planning director's report, item 47-4 be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs as the town of Whitby's input on Bill 26;

"That the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO, be advised that the town of Whitby does not support the amendments to insert the new phrase 'be consistent with.'"

There it is. They don't have any respect, and this is the frustrating part of participating in these debates. I'm getting the sense that they're not listening now. They didn't listen to the member from York North; they're not apparently listening to what I'm saying. It leaves me with the question and the sense of vulnerability that they're not listening to the people of Ontario. My constituents aren't being heard.

In fact, I'm aware of a small application that isn't at the plan of subdivision level yet, a small piece of property, which I would call a hamlet infill. Some of you who have worked at the municipal level would know what that means. It's a parcel of land with houses on both sides but across the road it's never been developed; there's never been a development application on it. This person was going to build sustainable homes, using the latest technology for energy efficiency; a small entrepreneurial engineering guy whom I met with; a great family.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): What's the zoning?

Mr O'Toole: The zoning is residential because it's in a residential area, and it was a rezoning application. There's no question that that's first, and that was passed by the town. Then, bingo, this thing comes in, and these environmentally friendly houses cannot be built. This is as a direct result of the Minister of Municipal Affairs interfering unnecessarily and without much description about his overarching authority. It's just a permanent freeze. As I told you, in the preamble of the bill, all of these applications are nullified. What kind of authority is he taking on himself? Now, these 10 properties, where people were interested in purchasing and building sustainable homes, have been thwarted. It's just unconscionable. In fact, I've been looking through a number of magazines here, the Ontario Corn Producers and Farming Today magazines, and I don't see any group that's particularly impressed with this whole bill, 26 and 27.

I really did meet with the head of the Ontario Home Builders' Association, who happens to be one of my constituents. I have a great deal of time for him because he builds quality homes. How important is this aspect of the economy? Well, I'll tell you. Last year, I believe the home builders of Ontario built something in excess of 85,000 homes. Each one of those homes represents a certain number of man-hours, but they also build jobs and communities.

1700

The Ontario Home Builders' Association made a submission to the pre-budget hearings. They've made submissions on Bills 26 and 27. They've made some suggestions on these bills—and in my two minutes I'll probably have enough time to respond—that there needs to be less intrusion into people's lives by this government. The rules can be clear and consistent where it's inappropriate to build, but municipal leaders—councillors, mayors, regional councillors and regional chairs—know their communities. They've been elected locally. They have a three-year term, and the people can turf them out if they don't respect the environment.

What I'm actually concerned about here is that we have a government now that has become so centralized and so bureaucratic that they're taking all of the control away from the people of Ontario in energy. Now that their energy is going up, what recourse does the consumer have? Very little. I'm seeing the same thing in education, health and municipal affairs. I think there are going to be tolls on Highway 69. I think there is going to be re-testing for driver's licences. The drug benefit plan is being removed. Is there no end to the litany of inflicting of hardship on the people of Ontario?

I'm moved almost to tears when I think that the people of Ontario voted for something and they didn't get it. What they got is a Toronto-centred cabinet. Eight ministers in that cabinet are from Toronto. David Miller has more control than the people of Durham, and I'm opposed to that.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Churley: I'm almost in tears, too, but for different reasons. It's always a pleasure to listen to the member for Durham—I mean that—but we are so on opposite ends of this issue that it really does almost bring me to tears.

Mr O'Toole: Did you ride your bike in today?

Ms Churley: No, too cold.

The interesting thing is that there's a contradiction in some of the views, depending on how you figure it's going to affect you and your constituents, and I know the member is trying to stand up for some of his constituents.

Let's talk about intensive hog farms for a moment. The Tories and in fact the Liberals support this as well. They have agreed that the province should be in charge of that kind of land use; that you take that away from municipalities like Huron and outside Ottawa and other areas I'm hearing from, and not allow the municipalities in those jurisdictions to make those very important decisions for the land use in their own area. So on one hand, from one side of the mouth, you hear, "In this case,

you shouldn't take the powers away from the particular jurisdiction," but on the other hand, when it comes to huge intensive hog farms, they're saying, "That's OK; the province should set the rules for that and take that kind of land use planning away from the municipalities." I don't think you can have it both ways.

The reason why it's important that the province have control over our land use when it comes to protecting the environment is because of what has happened over many years. We brought in a new green Planning Act; the Tories threw it out. There was this big vacuum; all these bad things happened. This is a step to try and fix some of the problems that we've seen building up over the years. That's what's going on here.

Mrs Van Bommel: At some point or another, I think the member from Toronto-Danforth and I will have to have a discussion about intensive livestock operations, but at this point I'd like to address the member from Durham and his concerns around the task force and the makeup of that task force.

The task force is made up of a broad section of stakeholders.

Mr O'Toole: That's in your notes.

Mrs Van Bommel: I was actually involved in the selection of some of these people, so I do know how some of them came.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I think that is imputing motive here. She interfered in an appointment process.

Mrs Van Bommel: No, I didn't.

The Acting Speaker: Parliamentary assistant, conclude your comments.

Mrs Van Bommel: I do have knowledge of who these people are.

Mr O'Toole: Greg Sorbara had knowledge of who—

Mrs Van Bommel: Oh, dear. I think I'll have to pick my words very carefully for the member from Durham, obviously.

He has concerns about leadership. He mentioned that he was concerned about Mayor MacIsaac. I think Mayor MacIsaac has a very strong voice on behalf of municipalities. Municipalities are being represented, as are other stakeholders. They're all being invited to participate in meetings and workshops that are being done.

Actually, one of them has already been done in Durham, and others are scheduled for Niagara, Caledonia and Oakville. These will take into consideration and hear from the stakeholders, so that everyone has a chance to voice their opinions on how they feel about the greenbelt. I think that's what we wanted to do. The task force is there to help facilitate that kind of participation from the stakeholders.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm so glad to have this early opportunity to comment on the speech. I thought it was rather interesting, because as my good colleague the member from Riverdale—

Ms Churley: Toronto-Danforth.

Mr Bisson:—now Toronto-Danforth; Riverdale, the old riding, is where we really identify the member for Toronto-Danforth, but that's another story.

There's really an interesting debate about this, because the reality is that the Tories are diametrically opposed to the position that both New Democrats and Liberals have taken on this particular issue. I think it's rather interesting to watch, as debate unfolds from that perspective, that the dynamics have somewhat changed.

Also, I remember the election we had somewhere around six or seven months ago. The Premier promised Ontarians that if elected to government, there would be no new development on the Oak Ridges moraine. Do you remember that promise? I remember that promise well. What happened after the election? Not only did he break that promise, but he did it times four by four by four, because he allowed 6,000 new houses to be built on the Oak Ridges moraine.

I want to comment, because that's part of what this bill is all about, kind of indirectly; and because it does deal with the Oak Ridges moraine, I want to say that this is yet another election promise broken by the Liberal government when it comes to the commitment it made to the voters of Ontario on no development on the Oak Ridges moraine.

I know that my good friend Mr O'Toole, the member from Durham, wanted to say that in his speech. But because he was limited to 20 minutes because of the rule changes the Conservatives made to the standing orders that limit our time in debate, he didn't have a chance to talk about that. I know now that if he had the opportunity, he'd like to revoke those rule changes so we're not limited to 20 minutes and have far more time to debate. I know Mr O'Toole, the member from Durham, if given the opportunity, would certainly have talked about the broken promise the Liberals made when it comes to the Oak Ridges moraine, if he had had enough time.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one further question or comment.

Seeing none, I recognize the member for Durham. You have two minutes to reply.

Mr O'Toole: To the members for Toronto-Danforth, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Timmins-James Bay, who had the courage to respond, I appreciate it.

Just in passing, I think there is a difference between the NDP position and our position, and that's fair. That's what this debate is about. I believe the opposition has a role to point out weaknesses in proposed legislation. That is our duty, not to say I don't support many of their ideas.

More importantly, I commend the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for making a strong voice for the agricultural committee, because she knows of what she speaks. I have read her resumé and realize that this is important.

I am disappointed that Marcel Beaubien, the former member, is not here as an elected member. But I can tell you that he is here today. He's making a presentation in committee room 2. The work he's done on property

assessment is something you should pay attention to. The CLT group is meeting there today.

But I think there was another meeting yesterday—I know this isn't related to the bill. It's quite interesting, for those who are new here, that yesterday the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors was here. The Association of Ontario Land Surveyors brought some very important points to the table.

Mr Wilkinson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: When the member from Durham actually gets up in the House and tells us he's not going to speak to the bill we're debating, surely to God we could ask him to speak to the bill.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member to conclude his comments.

1710

Mr O'Toole: It's actually information for the just-elected members who don't know anything more than the crib notes they're given to read.

I would say that the land surveyors do have the mapping of Ontario, which is all part of planning and land use. They made a presentation yesterday, and I encourage you to pick up their kit, because it is instructive in terms of some of the minute questions in land surveying and portions of property that aren't properly surveyed. These records are integral to the whole assessment system, and in fact to the whole issue of the use of property, its zoning and ultimate end use, and to the service of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I will be sharing my time with my colleague the member for Don Valley West. Let me speak on behalf of the people of Thornhill and Concord. But before doing that, let me say thank you to Mr Colle, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. Prior to the election on October 2, he took the time to come to Thornhill and speak to the people about the greenbelt issue, when the Liberal Party was looking at shaping a policy that would address a major problem in the greater Toronto area; that is, to deal with growth that was taking place all over under the Conservative Party of Ontario.

Bill 27 is an act to establish a green belt study area. Of course many of us, in particular in the 905 area, have always looked for leadership from the provincial government on this. As all of us know, one of reasons the people in the 905 area want to see a greenbelt area preserved is so our community will be able to do better planning and plan future development in areas where services can be provided.

Bill 27 will impose a moratorium on applications that permit urban uses on rural and agriculture land outside approved urban boundaries within the study area. It will also enhance our quality of life by containing sprawl and encouraging smart growth inside a permanent greenbelt. It will also give the minister the power to halt ongoing proceedings before the Ontario Municipal Board if greenbelt lands are at issue. Bill 27 is important because it will create 600 acres of Golden Horseshoe greenbelt from Niagara Falls to Lake Scugog and beyond.

As I was saying before, in the area I represent—that is, Thornhill and Concord—we are experiencing significant gridlock, a shortage of hospital beds and a shortage of social services. One of the reasons is that in the past construction has taken place all over without proper controls. Bill 27 will make a major plan for many years to come.

At the municipal level, contrary to the provincial level, we usually plan for 20 to 25 years to make sure that what takes place will make sense in the long term. This bill will allow us to do exactly that. We will take a significant amount of land outside what's considered the 905 belt and allow the government to do all the planning necessary so that whatever is allowed will be planned properly and will get leadership from the province of Ontario instead of allowing municipalities all over the area to make their own decisions without an overall plan for the entire area.

In planning for the long term, we must make sure the services that will be provided are consistent with what the municipalities in question enjoy at this time. One area we unfortunately lack, as I said, is social services; in particular, hospitals, public transportation and all the services that people in an urban area normally expect. I believe that when the province establishes areas where development can take place and areas where development should not take place, we must ensure that planning for those social services and infrastructure that I'm referring to must be paid by new development. I believe that the time the government will take will allow that to take place.

We must convince the development industry that any new development must pay for needed services. Therefore, it must be part of the local area. Those costs must be forced, must be implemented within a new local area for any municipality that will be affected. In particular, I'm referring to public transportation and hospital beds. There is a need in new areas to provide that transportation and those hospital beds. The municipality cannot afford to come up with the funding to provide those facilities. At the same time, in my opinion, it is not proper that the province must pay most of those costs, because in fact those costs should be part of any new area which is built.

There are benefits to building new areas and some of those financial benefits must be shared with Ontarians. Therefore, funding must be provided, potentially, in what I call a lot levy. This is a process that many of us have spoken of in the past. It isn't there yet, and of course I encourage my party and all of us in the House to speak out on those issues that are so important for new areas such as Thornhill, Concord, the city of Vaughan, the town of Markham and every other municipality within the 905 belt.

It isn't proper any more, in my opinion, to expect that the province of Ontario pays all those costs, or that the municipality pays all those costs, because we just don't seem to be able to afford that. But if we can come up with a policy whereby new development will absorb a

certain share of those costs, then surely we will be doing a service to the entire province, both to those affected who are lacking services today because of that and of course to Ontarians who shouldn't be paying for those services. Those services should be paid by those developers, in particular those developers who are getting a financial benefit by getting additional lands available for development.

I can say to the House that in the past the people of Thornhill and Concord have spoken strongly about the pace of growth itself. I expect that all of us will pay significant attention to the position that the people of Thornhill and Concord have shown. In particular, I think a levy on public transportation must be given significant attention. We are looking at providing bus lines, we are looking at providing subway lines in some areas, and those costs will be significant. We're talking about billions of dollars of expenditure which will provide more efficient movement of people and goods, which will be good for the economy and which will give all of us an economic benefit.

At the same time, grid lock has been caused, in my opinion, by additional development which is not planned properly, all over the GTA in particular. Therefore, a levy that would be allocated for public transportation purposes is a must and must be taken very seriously. I believe that if discussion takes place among the beneficiaries of all that, I can see many people seeing the benefits of building a measure of public infrastructure that would allow us to open up new areas and at the same time provide the density that is necessary. We cannot afford to just build homes. We need to build a complete infrastructure with transportation but also with commercial, manufacturing and industrial developments, so that together we will not only build a city which is complete by creating jobs and providing affordable housing, but at the same time we will provide public transportation which allows people to go back to where they used to live, to move from one area of a municipality to the other, to move from region to region or municipality to municipality. It is all possible as long as we concentrate on it. Of course, Thornhill and Concord, the area I represent, want those types of services, and I encourage all of us to pay the attention needed to achieve that.

1720

The Acting Speaker: Carrying on, I'm pleased to recognize the member for Don Valley West.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm happy to speak to Bill 27, the Greenbelt Protection Act. I see this legislation as an opportunity to change the way we think about development, to change the way we think about land use. I believe what this bill will do is strengthen the communities of the GTA, promote their vibrant economies, and safeguard our and their precious resources.

I've been following this debate quite closely, and I must say that I've been particularly disappointed by the analysis offered by the official opposition—not that that

is a group I look to for vision. But the member for Durham responded, not today—

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): You can always hope.

Ms Wynne: Hope springs eternal. The member for Durham, in his original comments, talked about this bill as mere government interference. What he said was, “What I see in this bill is more government interference.” So I asked myself what exactly this bill will do that could possibly be interpreted as “more government interference.” What I read is responsible policy.

Here’s what Bill 27 will do, if passed: At a time when, as noted by the minister, the land already designated for development is sufficient to allow for some 15 to 20 years’ worth of development, this bill places a one-year hold on the zoning of more land for development. That year will allow the time needed to study how best to use the land, what to protect and what can be developed.

This bill will allow the government to promote the public interest by working for the protection of our ecosystem, the retention of excellent farmland needed to ensure our ability to produce the food we eat, and the devising of a well-thought-out plan for the development of the GTA. “Well-thought-out” is the key here. That’s what this bill will allow, and that’s what the member for Durham calls government interference. It seems that, by his account, the promotion of all those important things—a healthy environment, a secure source of food, sustainable development of the region—are not the government’s role. Instead, the role of the government on this file should be to ensure the unfettered ability of anyone who owns land to do with it as they will, according to their own time frame.

I see it a little differently. I don’t call this bill interference; I call it a step in the direction of more responsible planning. Toronto has been referred to, first by Robert Fulford, as the “accidental city,” and I think it’s time to change that. It’s time for this forward-looking legislation that will build stronger, more livable, more environmentally sustainable communities in this province, because this bill sets a framework in place that can be used in other parts of the province.

For me, though, the extent to which a positive vision for change is lacking across the way was made most painfully clear in the remarks of the member for York North. The member for York North offered us the following:

“I think there’s no question, certainly speaking as a member from the northern part of York region, that none of us likes sprawl for its own sake. I think there’s common agreement on that. We’re also very unhappy with the ancillary effects of that: the gridlock, pollution, rundown infrastructure and waste of land.

“I think there’s a great deal of agreement on this, but the problem when we look at this particular piece of legislation is that it’s not the way to deal with this. The greenbelt legislation is not a restriction on sprawl; it is an end of development.”

The amazing thing about the remarks of the member for York North is that she can identify the problem; she just can’t lead us and herself to the logical conclusion of her own observations. And she’s right: Sprawl for its own sake is bad. Its ancillary effects—the gridlock, the pollution, the rundown and, I’d add, unaffordable infrastructure, the waste of land—are all bad.

But what is her solution to this? Do nothing. Stick with the processes already in place. The member recognizes that the current policies do not work, she identifies the myriad problems they create, and yet she recommends that we retain them. Her words, I believe, were the following: “They should have followed what was done previously by the PC government with Smart Growth.” With all due respect, I’m forced to ask the House, was what the previous government was doing on this file working? I think the answer has to be a resounding no, and for the many reasons the member from York North herself identified.

The failure to impose an outside boundary on the GTA has led to urban sprawl. That has led to long commutes and gridlock in communities that can’t meaningfully be served by public transit; it has led to costly and crumbling infrastructure; and it has led, and unless stopped will continue to lead, to the destruction of some of the best farmland in the province and natural features important to our ecosystem.

Beyond the lack of vision, what did we hear from across the way? We heard scaremongering. I think we have to be attentive to this kind of scaremongering, which really does not reflect the truth. The member from York North suggested that this bill would bring “an end of development.” That’s not what the Greater Toronto Home Builders’ Association is saying. In their March submission on this bill, the Greater Toronto Home Builders’ Association called on the government to promote intensification as the way to offset the decreased amount of land that may be available to development. This makes sense. We have to keep developing homes; we have to keep building places for people to live. But we have to do it differently.

Now I ask, when the home builders’ association is calling for zoning that will promote more intensive development, does it sound to you like they’re worried that this bill will spell the end to development? I don’t think so. No one is suggesting that building can stop.

Finally, the member from York North went on to suggest to this House that the result of this legislation might be that everyone but the rich will be living in towers of 20 and 40 and 50 storeys. There are a lot of housing options between 50-foot frontage and the 50th storey. If the effect of this legislation is that we have more townhomes, more condominiums, more multi-residential apartment buildings that don’t have to be 50 storeys high, that will be a good thing. That would signal a change of direction in the way this city is developing, and I would argue that change is long overdue.

As it happens, I have 50 years’ experience of the corridor between Toronto and Newmarket. When I grew

up in Richmond Hill, between 1953 and 1971, we were in a small town. It was a town of 16,000 people. My dad practised medicine. We went to Newmarket when he did his rounds at the hospital. We came to visit my grandparents at York Mills and Bayview. There were a lot of cows for the four kids in the back of the car to count on those Saturday and Sunday drives.

That has completely changed. The land between Toronto and Newmarket is unrecognizable compared to 50, 40 and 35 years ago. I'm not looking at that through rose-coloured glasses; I'm not taking a romantic view of this. The fact is we cannot afford to continue that style of development. I agree with my colleague from Oakville that that pattern of development was not adopted maliciously. I agree with him that the people who built this region, and who continue to build this region, do important work.

We have to ensure that the GTA is home to a development climate that allows our developers to continue to build affordable housing and strong communities in the region as it grows. But we also know that we do not have an infinite amount of land to play with. We know that if the GTA eats up a further 1,000 square kilometres of prime farmland, that's land we will not have to grow the food we need.

These observations lead to one conclusion, which the previous government was not willing to reach: We have to develop a denser, more efficient pattern of development across the GTA. I share the hope of the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association that as our government moves to protect the land surrounding the GTA, we will also show the leadership needed to promote a denser approach to development.

Denser communities require less public infrastructure investment per capita. They're more easily serviced by comparatively cost-effective and ecologically friendly public transit. By reducing dependence on the automobile, they're an important weapon against gridlock. If they include smaller average dwelling sizes, that's a good thing too; they benefit the environment by reducing pollution.

1730

I believe we don't have any choice in this. Changing the way we understand our relationship to the land is not something we have an option about. We have to do it. I believe this legislation is a step in the right direction toward that. Ultimately, the culture change that tells us we need to reduce our ecological footprint, that we need to use fewer resources, not more, that doing so will bring us economic as well as ecological benefits, is a culture change we must make. Providing the leadership needed to move to that culture in which we ask whether we can achieve our goals using further resources rather than where we can find additional resources is among the greater services this government can provide to the citizens of Ontario. I support this bill as part of that culture change.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I want to congratulate the member for the fine rendition of the legislation. I totally agree with the premise that we need to do all we can to protect the farmland and the undeveloped part of the province for the purpose for which it was originally intended, rather than to keep building out—the urban sprawl, so to speak. But I do have a little problem with the analysis that we should support this bill and that it will do what it's supposed to do because the Toronto home builders are in favour of this bill. I just want to point out that there's a bit of a vested interest on behalf of the Toronto home builders. Obviously, as soon as we decide that we're not going to allow people to build anywhere else, everything that the Toronto home builders have now in their ownership will become much more valuable, so of course they see this as a wonderful bill.

The people who are involved in the area that the greenbelt is going to apply to are not nearly as pleased with this legislation. They have trouble getting any revenue from this land that we're talking about. The government does not do enough to look after the farmers. The farmers are saying, "There are other things we could do with this land that will serve the people and will make it much more valuable to us." But here we have a government saying, "No, we're not going to let those local decisions stand any more. We are going to tell the local people what they're going to do with the land in order to increase the value of the building area in the greater Toronto area so they won't go into the rural parts."

I think this bill would only serve the people of the province well if the government would come forward and help the farmers stay on the land and make that a profitable venture, as opposed to restricting development anywhere else. I would encourage the government to do that.

Mr Bisson: I want to take a bit of a different approach and commend the comments from the member for Don Valley West, because most of what she said, I can agree with. My only point is that I wish it was in the legislation.

I agree with her in all of her assertions that we need to look at ways, when it comes to municipal planning, to do infilling, as I call it, so that we don't encourage urban sprawl. It's much more efficient to make sure our cities work by providing good, basic services so that cities are able to work and function in a way that makes some sense, and not to encourage urban sprawl. I'm with her on all that.

My problem is, as I read the legislation, the bill basically does two things. "The purpose of the bill"—and I'm reading out of the explanatory notes in the bill—"is to establish a greenbelt study area.... The power of municipalities in respect of land use planning matters is restricted in relation to land in the greenbelt study area that is outside an urban settlement area.... Similarly, no applications may be made in respect of these matters and all applications, referrals, hearings, appeals and pro-

cedures before a joint board under the Consolidated Hearings Act or the Ontario Municipal Board with respect to these matters are stayed.” So this is all about giving the minister some power to not allow municipalities to do development on those sensitive areas.

The problem is, we don’t have a good Planning Act by which to do that. We had a Planning Act that was amended back in 1991 by then-Minister Dave Cooke, who undertook a very long consultative process with municipalities and other partners in order to develop a Planning Act. The Tories got elected, took the Planning Act, which did all those things that the member from Don Valley West says should be in the Planning Act, and threw them out the window.

This bill doesn’t put them back in. What it does is buy you some time. Let’s not say this is far-sweeping legislation. Those are the comments that my good friend from Don Valley West made, that these are far-sweeping changes being made in legislation. All this does is give a stay so that the government can go away and hopefully revive good planning in this province, something the Tories did away with and something we’ll support you on if you decide to do that.

Mrs Van Bommel: I’d like to address again the whole issue of the purpose of the greenbelt legislation. It is intended to buy the time that we need to look at the process of better planning. We want to develop good planning for the greenbelt area.

I’d like to also address the issue that the member for Don Valley West brought up in terms of intensification. In this country, we’ve become accustomed to the idea that we have a lot of land. We’re in Canada and we see ourselves as having lots of land. It doesn’t take us long to see, when we go outside our urban areas, that we have that. What we don’t quite understand is the fact that we don’t have a lot of good agricultural land. We need to look at other jurisdictions such as Europe to see how they have handled that issue of intensification and increasing the densities of their population.

As I said in my earlier address when I spoke to this bill, only 5% of Canada has good agricultural land. That’s 5% of an entire country the size of Canada. Of that, half of it is in Ontario, and that still only comprises 12% of the land base we have here. A lot of the very unique soils are in the Niagara area. We have the moderation that comes from the lakes and the Niagara Escarpment that allow us to grow products there that we can’t grow anywhere else in Ontario.

I think it’s important that we have legislation that sets out boundaries and allows us to say that we will have some kind of co-existence between urban and rural areas and work together to preserve the land we need for food production. That’s the important part here.

We’ve talked about how it’s important to have product that’s grown in Ontario. We believe that very much. As a producer of product, I want to make sure that people are consuming product and that they know what’s in their product when they buy it. That’s why I feel it’s important to do this.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I’m pleased to add some comments to the debate on Bill 27, an Act to establish a greenbelt study area, and the speech made by the member from Don Valley West. I have to agree with some of the comments she was making with regard to the need for denser development, as was also supported by the member from Timmins-James Bay, talking about infilling.

I believe that here in North America, in Canada and Ontario, we need to look more to the European model of development, where we have cities designed for people, where we have more thought for walking, for pathways, for bikeways, where we’re concerned with aesthetics in development, where we protect the environment and where we protect farmland. I certainly think that’s very important.

In a province the size of Ontario, we also need to realize that 80% of the land mass is northern Ontario, and there the problem we have is a declining population. We have problems with youth leaving communities. So we can’t forget the north. We have to remember to build the important infrastructure. That’s why I’m glad that this week the government has finally confirmed that there won’t be tolls on Highway 69. This is basic infrastructure, necessary to see economic development in the north. And finally, today, we’ve had confirmation that there won’t be tolls on Highway 11 either as it’s four-laned to the north.

I think we need to realize that these are basic infrastructures for the north. We have to remember the north as we look to our ever-expanding population here in Ontario and do things to make it possible to succeed and see real economic development and prosperity occurring in the north.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Thornhill has two minutes to reply.

Mr Racco: I want thank the members from Don Valley West, Oxford, Timmins-James Bay, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Parry Sound-Muskoka for their comments.

I think it’s important to note that a mix of housing types must be available in the market so that anyone can buy the type of housing they choose. At the same time, I think all of us tend to agree that a denser area is better for everybody, not only because it would allow more land to be left available for farming, but also because it’s going to make our cities, our municipalities more economic and more efficient, and of course they will require less infrastructure because less land needs to receive that infrastructure. All those things will be taken into consideration during the discussion, if Bill 27 is finalized. The study will look into those areas and will be able to provide what the community has been asking for; that is, more efficient development.

1740

Some people made reference to housing. In other cities, such as in Europe, where if you go to many cities—for instance, I just came back from Israel, where you look at four-, five- and six-floor housing. You can

walk to the local store, work in the community and feel comfortable that there are people on the street. There are facilities in the community. You don't need an automobile; you can walk or ride a bike, and you feel comfortable doing that. It's that type of housing that municipalities have been looking to provide, and I believe Bill 27 will allow for that possibility.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hudak: I'm pleased to rise on Bill 27 to comment a bit on what I've heard in this debate in the chamber to date and, I think very importantly, to give some perspective from the Niagara Peninsula, particularly the riding of Erie-Lincoln, which I am privileged and proud to represent.

As a first blush on the most recent comments, just because something happens in Europe, do we have to adopt it in Canada? There are a lot of things that happen in Europe that I certainly would not want to adopt as part of Canada. We have our own separate culture and history. Just because something is happening in Spain or France or the UK doesn't mean it's good for Canada, for Toronto, for the Niagara Peninsula. Why can't we make our own policy decisions?

I think the culture here in Ontario, while similar in some ways, is substantially different from what you're going to get in Barcelona or Paris or London, England. Therefore, I think that taking a cookie-cutter approach to those countries and applying it here is short-sighted and a fundamental misunderstanding of Canadian culture and history.

I think there's an alarming naïveté in this intensification debate that if we set up this greenbelt as a moat, then all of a sudden people will be able to find homes in the brownfield areas in the city of Toronto. First of all, the city of Toronto has a lot of strong attributes, but there are a lot of people in Erie-Lincoln and Waterloo-Wellington who prefer the attributes of those communities. There may be people who don't want to live in an intensified development in downtown Toronto and who prefer, even if they work in Toronto, to have more space to raise their families. They prefer having a backyard for their son or daughter and don't want to live in a heavily developed area or on the 30th or 40th floor of a condominium. It fits some people's choices and a lot of people do live that way, but there are a lot who do not want to adopt that lifestyle and prefer to live in the GTA surrounding areas or in Erie-Lincoln.

In fact, the Urban Development Institute estimates that if you developed all the brownfields, if you intensified to a maximum, it could only take up a maximum of 30% of projected growth in the central Ontario region. So I'm worried that this is being offered as some sort of panacea where all the development is going to occur, because I think it's a false assumption. I don't think it reflects the values of a lot of Ontario taxpayers, nor, if 100% of them chose to live there, could they all be accommodated—by no means. Less than a third of them could, at maximum.

By way of example, take the old Greenwood Racetrack facility, which is one of those brownfields we

talk about. A popular site in the heyday of horse racing in the province of Ontario, it closed some years ago and is now being developed. The average price of a home in that brownfield area, where we could all live if we set up this greenbelt, is between \$800,000 and \$1 million. Now, there are people who, by their own wealth, their skills and how they're rewarded in the marketplace can afford that, but the vast majority of Ontarians would never dream of living in an \$800,000 or \$1-million home.

The notion that new immigrants who are coming to Canada to make good, to earn a good income, provide for their families that want to live in the Toronto area—you're not going to cram them into an \$800,000 to a \$1-million property area, brownfield development. New families who are starting out, moving away from their parents' home, looking for a place to live close to work—the notion that you can cram them all into areas of this nature, I think, speaks of the naïveté of this panacea of brownfield development. Sure, it'll help in some senses, but it ain't the whole loaf, or anything close to it.

There are people, by their nature, who are going to want to drive to work, to have larger spaces to raise their families, and one major omission of this piece of legislation is a supporting transportation strategy. Sure enough, if you set aside these areas where no development can take place, no home building can take place, people are going to want to look for some place to live. The notion that the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has used on a couple of occasions, that we put a freeze into place—what we've called a time out, so to speak—you may have called time out on the land under the minister's zoning order of December 15 or whatever it was, but the market continues; the demand for homes continues; new people moving into the greater Toronto area continues. The housing market continues. New jobs, hopefully, will continue to grow in the province of Ontario. So the market continues to function, but it has been jammed up in certain areas, resulting in significant price spikes for vacant land in the affected areas, and I think it will expand out beyond the greenbelt into places like Kitchener, Waterloo, Guelph and Barrie.

If you do the greenbelt legislation, if it passes—and it sounds like most of the government members are voting in support of it, so it will likely become law—what is that transportation strategy to help address the needs of people who are living on the other side of the greenbelt to get to work, to facilitate their drive to the office, to the workplace? By way of example, in Niagara Peninsula, there's been an outcry. While it's not universally supported, I've got to tell you, 70% or 80% of the people, I would wager, support the mid-peninsula corridor, a new highway through southern and western Niagara.

If you want to take some of the pressure off the QEW corridor through the tender fruit lands, as this bill purports to do, it's the highway. You need to build that parallel route that would start just somewhere just after the Peace Bridge through Fort Erie, go through southern and western Niagara, then link up into another major highway, whatever the government chooses, whether it's

407 or 403 or 401 or QEW or what have you; nonetheless, the point being that we need to have that transportation support, which will then take the pressure off of the tender fruit lands.

If you want the greenbelt strategy to be a success, you're going to need the mid-peninsula corridor as a transportation—you can't just build a greenbelt as a moat. You're going to need these transportation routes through the greenbelt to make sure people and goods can get back and forth to markets, to support our economy in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: I said that it's not universally supported. We had Liberals who said they were against the highway. You had Liberals, like my opponent Vance Badawey, who said they're going to build a highway immediately, but what have we heard from the Minister of Transportation today? Absolutely not one word on progress on the mid-peninsula corridor, an essential element of the successful preservation of green space area. Any kind of strategy has to have the highway.

I know I'm belabouring this point, but I want to put that on the floor that I suggested, if members truly believe in the greenbelt, if they truly believe in maintaining green space in the Niagara Peninsula particularly, they need to support the mid-peninsula corridor at once. What we've seen is gridlock in decision-making. In fact, we have seen this government slam the brakes on the mid-peninsula corridor and then put it into reverse.

The next point I want to bring up is with respect to supporting municipalities. I represent several municipalities that will be impacted by this legislation, or just outside of my riding. Municipalities that will be mandated by the province from time to time to bring forward new programs are mandated by their citizens to expand government services.

1750

One issue that we're looking at recently in Niagara, for example, is the transportation system. Taxpayers rightly will be concerned if they see their tax rates increasing from the municipal council, so they look to expand their tax assessment base. They look to have more homes built, more businesses and more commercial development in their area so they will have the revenue coming into support important municipal services, or just to fix up the roads and sewers. So if you box them in, if you say that there are no more development opportunities in these areas—and there may be some brownfields but it's not a panacea—what kind of compensation is there going to be for municipalities like Lincoln, Grimsby, Niagara-on-the-Lake or St Catharines when their development opportunities are effectively frozen in perpetuity? One option is—

Mr McMeekin: They're not dense enough.

Mr Hudak: The member says they're not dense enough. It's that kind of attitude that says that the province knows best and municipal councils cannot make

the right decisions. There's no doubt that this underlies the theme of this bill.

Mr McMeekin: We're defining the provincial interest in this bill.

Mr Hudak: However you describe it—you're defining the provincial interests or not—I think all members recognize that a substantial authority in making these types of decisions will rest with the Premier and the cabinet ministers of the executive council. It's very clear from this bill, as well as Bill 26. I don't think anybody can deny that. However you mask it, whatever description you use, surely you must agree that with Bill 26 and Bill 27, there is substantially more authority at the provincial level for deciding local planning. You can't argue with that. You may take issue, I say to the member, with some my comments, but you can't—

Mr McMeekin: You didn't do anything.

Mr Hudak: Now he says that we didn't do anything. I'm trying to provide some constructive criticism to assist you with this bill. If the bill passes, and it sounds like it may, with the number of votes you have across the floor—but if you truly believe—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Can I have order in the House? We've got nine minutes to go before I adjourn it.

Mr Hudak: If you truly believe in a greenbelt strategy, not only do you need the supporting transportation routes so that people and goods can get to market, not only do you have to recognize and move off the brownfields as a panacea that's going to solve all these issues, because, despite the minister calling a time out, markets continue to function and cause spikes in prices in a number of areas, and will cause job loss as well.

You need to help out the municipalities. One suggestion may be that if you're going to box in St Catharines, Lincoln or Grimsby, perhaps use the consolidated revenue fund to help compensate for that, because the province as a whole would benefit from increased green space. I think on aesthetic value, people will support the notion of maintaining green space, but if certain municipalities and the taxpayers of these municipalities are paying the price for that, whether they're seeing the prices of their homes going up or seeing municipalities forced to raise tax rates, I think it's a fair argument to say that the rest of the province as a whole should help contribute to those municipalities who are making the sacrifice on the development side. I got a half-nod across the floor, so I'm making progress on this.

So with respect to municipalities like those I have the honour of representing, I think, as well, you need some sort of framework to support municipalities, some incentives, whether they're financial, economic or something through the assessment system, to help them continue to grow and provide services, if you plan on boxing them in through a greenbelt process.

Another major concern is the impact of this legislation on the agricultural community. No doubt we all like the bucolic view of what the farm is and our opportunity to

drive to farms—especially if you live in urban areas—and enjoy the beauty. There's nothing quite like it, whether it's a farm or sitting on the deck of a winery down on the Niagara Peninsula on a nice autumn afternoon with a chardonnay in your hand enjoying the view. That's something that people from the city as well as locals enjoy doing. So if you want to preserve this view, this agricultural land, whether it's to support agriculture or whether it's for the aesthetic value of having the land in agriculture, you need to support the farmer. If you want to preserve the farm, you need to support the farmer. A major piece missing is what kind of agricultural support system the government has planned to help out the farmers.

Granted, I think there's a lot to be said for helping to preserve the tender fruit land in Niagara. This bill preserves all farmland in the designated area by the minister's zoning order, so whether it's actually something that's producing a high-priced grape, for example, or whether it's producing peaches or sour cherries, or whether it's land that's in oilseeds or in farm animals, it's all covered.

By way of example, and I used this a bit earlier, if a sour cherry farmer sees the price for his or her product plummet as a result of competition from overseas or perhaps a subsidy from the state of Washington or Michigan or other competitors, that farmer is going to say, "I have no financial wherewithal to continue farming," and will look to do something else with the property that he or she owns. There is no support system to try to keep that in farming as part of this legislation. How are you going to help out the sour cherry farmer? Are you going to allow them to sever off a piece of land? It doesn't look like it, and if they were, it would be at the desk of the Premier, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the rest of cabinet.

I think it's a good question for debate that some of my colleagues will return to, whether that's the best way of having local decision-making, whether larger political issues and the time frames associated with those decisions are going to catch up local decision-making in a prolonged process of debate at the cabinet table. No doubt for a small piece of land that could be decided locally rather expeditiously, a lot of other issues will come into play at the larger cabinet table, including large stakeholder groups that are going to lobby piece by piece of land and, I think, bog up the system in this decision-making.

Back to the farmers. There's one solution that would help out tremendously with the grape-growing community, which is an important aspect—it's certainly not the only aspect of agriculture in Niagara, but the member asked me for some suggestions in addition to the CRF I had talked about in transportation networks. I would say that Bill 7 before the Legislature today, the VQA store legislation, would be an excellent way of ensuring a new revenue source would come down to the wineries, to the grape growers, and to the associated farming and tourism community.

Mr McMeekin: Whose bill is that?

Mr Hudak: He asks whose bill it is. It's actually a bill from the member for Erie-Lincoln, who is speaking right now. He likes the bill, and I do hope I have enough support. Whether it's a private member's bill that makes it through third reading or whether the government adopts this as their own initiative, kudos to them. I would like to see this become reality. In fact, it was on the floor of the Legislature before the election. We did have support of the Liberals at that time for this bill.

The Ontario grape growers were here just last week and had promoted this concept and called upon the government to institute VQA wine stores in the province. To help explain that, these would be stores that would help showcase particularly our small craft wineries. Only Ontario VQA, 100% Ontario-grown grape product, would be on the shelves. I would suggest they start out in tourism areas and try to expand that market and increase sales, because not every winery can get all their products on to the shelves of the LCBO and, secondly, a winery can only sell its own product at its winery, so market access is limited, particularly for the small and medium-sized wineries. This would give them that needed market access. But again, that is just one suggestion, an important one that I hope does become reality, but one suggestion for one segment of the agricultural market, so what are the other assists, whether it's tender fruit or other types of agriculture in the peninsula or across the province? I think if you really want the greenbelt to be successful, you bring in the agricultural support system to make sure it pays to continue to farm, that you help preserve the farm by preserving the farmer, and you bring the important transportation networks into existence as well.

Secondly, what kind of flexibility will the legislation or the execution of this legislation allow municipalities for associated agricultural use? Not all of the land that's protected by this bill is going to be prime-A agricultural land. It's one vast swath in the treatment of this bill on agriculture, so what kind of associated uses will be allowed? I'm greatly concerned that they will be severely restricted or will have to go through a number of steps to get to the minister's office and to the cabinet table before they're approved.

By way of example, in Jordan, a farm operation that was set to go, a farm implement store to help support the agricultural community, to help them become more competitive, more productive, and keep the land in agriculture, has been effectively halted by this bill. Now, maybe the minister will entertain an exemption for this, but I would argue, is that the best process for this example to go through, where one by one there would be a ministerial exemption? Or, better yet, is it something that's best left in the hands of the municipality, where they could make a more prompt decision and probably one more reflective of local needs and values?

As well, in the property tax assessment system, what opportunities are there to give tax incentives to farmers if they bring in that associated industrial use? Wineries are

one example of that. Cherry-pitting operations that add preservatives or take the pits out of cherries, to sell up-market, is another example. I greatly fear that those opportunities for economic growth and expansion of the farming community will be inadvertently sidelined by this legislation.

In conclusion, while I think the voters and those watching at home in the riding of Erie-Lincoln appreciate the notion of keeping the green space around them green, they're going to demand that transportation networks are in place, that there are incentives in place to protect

farmers and keep the land in farming. They want to know that municipalities that are making the sacrifice by limiting their growth are going to have other opportunities to bring in revenue to support local services. There is a great deal of devil in the details that I have yet to hear appropriately addressed from across the floor.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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