



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 22 April 2004

Jeudi 22 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

Thursday 22 April 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 22 avril 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

HEALTH INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT
(INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2004
LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ
(POMPES À INSULINE POUR
DIABÉTIQUES)

Mr Gravelle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act /
Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-
santé.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr Gravelle, you have 10 minutes.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Bill 55 is a very straightforward, simple and quite short one-page piece of legislation. However, if this bill is supported by my colleagues today and subsequently receives the support of our government, the impact its passage will have on the lives of thousands of people with diabetes will be nothing short of dramatic.

While I have for some time now been aware of the lobbying efforts of the Canadian Diabetes Association and of several of my colleagues to have the provision of insulin pumps and supplies for the pumps made an insured service under the Health Insurance Act, it is only since the introduction of my bill two weeks ago that I have become fully aware of the phenomenal difference the pump can make to the quality of life for people with diabetes.

Hundreds of people have phoned or written to me describing what their lives or the lives of their children were like before they went on insulin pump therapy and how their health has dramatically improved since the pump became a regular part of their lives. For that outpouring of support, I am grateful to the Canadian Diabetes Association for getting the word out about my bill and encouraging people all across the province to tell their story.

In particular, I want to acknowledge and thank Suzanne Sterling, regional director for the association in

northwestern Ontario, and Alexis Mantell, head of communications and media relations for the association in Toronto, who have joined us in the gallery today. They are also accompanied by 16-year-old Keiran Quan, who has been on the pump for only a few weeks now and has already noticed important improvements in the management of his diabetes. Let's welcome Keiran as well. He has noticed important improvements in the management of his diabetes and glucose readings in the morning that are now regularly within the target range set out by the association's clinical guideline, something he never saw before. The good news about that is what makes the insulin pump so valuable. Keeping your glucose readings in control is what helps prevent the long-term complications of diabetes. Not only do you have an improved quality of life, but your need to access the health care system is dramatically reduced.

The value of avoiding these long-term complications cannot be overstated. While people with diabetes make up only 6% of Ontario's population, they account for 32% of heart attacks, 43% of heart failure cases, 30% of strokes, 51% of new dialysis patients and 70% of amputations. As a result of these complications, there is the startling fact that only 50% of people with type 1 diabetes will live to the age of 50, and only 2% live past the age of 65. The exciting news about the insulin pump is that if it was available to all those who could benefit from it, these cruel statistics could change.

Having said that, the insulin pump and the supplies associated with its use are, relatively speaking, quite expensive. The pump costs about \$6,000, and the supplies needed can cost between \$3,000 and \$4,000 a year. As a result, only families with private health insurance or those who are somehow able to make major financial sacrifices are able to access the pump. This legislation today, if it is supported by my colleagues and subsequently supported by our government, can eliminate that restrictive access to the pump.

Let me say at this point that I am grateful to the Minister of Health, the Honourable George Smitherman, for not discouraging me from bringing this legislation forward. Although there cannot be a provincial ministry with more financial pressures constantly thrust upon it by a variety of worthy causes than the Ministry of Health, I have been encouraged by the minister's clear understanding of the value of insulin pump therapy.

With regard to the up-front cost implications of this legislation, they are not insignificant, but I think we should bring them forward. I want to refer to a well-

researched document prepared by Jill Milliken, a tireless advocate who I believe may be with us today, and Ian Bulmer, which is a proposal for funding of insulin pump therapy under the assistive devices program. It not only shows the short- and long-term cost savings of insulin pump therapy but also realistically pegs the yearly cost of the provision of this insured service at less than \$20 million a year.

It's also worth noting that not everyone who could access the pump would do so. In jurisdictions where access to the pump has been publicly funded, the rate of usage, for a variety of reasons, has not been more than 20%. I want to share this particular document with the minister, and if my bill receives passage today and I am able to bring it forward before the standing committee on justice and social policy for more discussion, I hope we can look at this proposal in more detail.

While it is important for us to acknowledge the costs associated with the provision of the insulin pump as an insured service, it is virtually impossible to not return to and re-emphasize the significance the pump has on the quality of life for people with diabetes. And while we have focused on the value it has on people who encounter diabetes at a young age, it is important to point out that insulin pump therapy can also stop or reverse complications in adults who have lived with the disease for many, many years.

Today we have in the gallery Mr Paul Beckwith, a constituent of my colleague from Simcoe North, who went on the insulin pump just six years ago. Diagnosed with diabetes in 1966 at the age of 13, Mr Beckwith spent 30 years struggling to manage his condition, with decidedly mixed results. At the time he was able to finally access the insulin pump, he was in grave danger of having his foot amputated and he was not able to work regularly. The situation did not look good. However, once he began insulin pump therapy, his quality of life improved dramatically. The amputation was averted and his health has been such that he tells me he has not missed a day of work since that time. It's a nice story, isn't it? As a result of this, Paul has become a fierce advocate for insulin pump therapy, and may I also say, a pretty good advertisement for potential cost savings to the health care system.

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But even with Mr Beckwith's remarkable and instructive story, there is still nothing more heartening than learning of a young life that has been altered, if not saved, as a result of the insulin pump. We know Keiran's story. He's starting it today.

Many of the most touching letters I received over the past few weeks came from parents of young children with diabetes who either couldn't afford the pump or who were keen to tell me what a difference the pump had made to their child's life, and even more impressive were the letters sent to me from the young people themselves who are now on the pump.

I will conclude my remarks at this time by quoting from a letter sent to me by a young constituent of mine,

16-year-old Derek Lawrence, who went on insulin pump therapy two years ago. I met with Derek recently and saw just how the pump worked. It is quite remarkable and surprisingly unintrusive. Derek's life, like so many others, has improved dramatically since he went on the pump. He tells me in his letter how his life has changed since his life on the pump began:

"Since then, my life has felt almost normal. I'm able to go out with my friends without any planning. I can sleep in on the weekends and even miss a meal if I have to. The pump has, most importantly, kept my blood sugar readings in the targeted range, with very few lows or highs. Because of this I am feeling well and no longer miss out on many things I was unable to do before. The pump has also enabled me to play high school sports. I play on the senior basketball team without any problems. I just adjust the rate of insulin prior to the game, and for several hours after.

"I feel that the pump has given me my life back and given me the confidence to lead a much more normal life"—just remarkable. "It has given me the chance to live a much healthier and longer life, keeping all the complications that come with diabetes at bay. I know that I am very fortunate as my parents have been able to make the pump available to me, but not all families can afford to do this due to the costs. I hope that changes can be made to the government health plan, to enable all people with diabetes access to the pump."

What more can I say? I have many other letters I could read, and perhaps I'll have an opportunity at the closing to do so. But that, I think, tells a story like no other: a young man whose life has been changed.

As a result, I will conclude my remarks by simply asking all members of this House to support this bill so that people like Derek and Keiran can have their lives back as well.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm really pleased to be here today with my colleagues. Our caucus of course will be in full support of Bill 55. We appreciate the fact that you've brought this forward so early in this Parliament. With this kind of timing, surely we can get the bill passed in this term to be covered under the Health Insurance Act of Ontario.

I want to apologize, first of all that our former Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer, couldn't be here today. She sends her regrets. She had another important function. But she's in full support of this bill. It came up when she was the minister and it's slowly working its way through the system.

To Mr Gravelle: I want thank you for being persistent in this matter in doing that. I also want to welcome Paul Beckwith. Although Paul missed some time at work in his early time with diabetes, I'll tell you that he is a persistent human being. Paul has been at my office a number of times. I'll be sitting at a spring diabetes forum with him tomorrow with the Canadian Diabetes Association. It's a very important proposal.

I would like to read a letter into the record that I think Mr Gravelle received, just a couple of comments from the insulin pumpers.

“Insulin Pumpers Canada is a volunteer not-for-profit corporation made up of hundreds of people who have had their lifestyle, physical and emotional health or their children’s profoundly and positively changed by insulin pump therapy. We have over 400 members in Canada and about 200 in Ontario by way of affiliate groups in Barrie, Hamilton and Belleville. Insulin Pumpers Canada is not affiliated with any insulin pump firm or other diabetes management equipment firm.” It’s just people who are supportive of the plan.

I’d like to read another couple of quotes from their letter:

“Insulin Pumpers Canada internal estimates indicate that the passage of Bill 55 will save the Ontario health care system a net minimum of tens of millions of dollars per year! This is only accounting for costs of three complications. There are over 30 recognized complications requiring clinical treatment.

“We feel that once the reduction in incidence of all complications is realized, the net health care savings to the province will be over a billion dollars per year.” And that’s just a phenomenal amount. “Some gross savings to the province may be recognized immediately and probably fully recognized within 20 years or less....

“We believe insulin pump therapy to be a therapy of necessity, not ‘choice.’ We believe the health and economic arguments for the passage of Bill 55 are irrefutable. This bill will save lives, with the side effect being significantly reduced long-term health costs for Ontario.”

That’s signed by Darrin Parker, the co-chair of Insulin Pumps Canada, which is situated in Orillia, in my riding.

With that, I just want to say to the members of the House that, this being National Volunteer Week, we realize that many of the people in the audience today are volunteering their time for this very, very important proposal. Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence—and I don’t want the Sergeant at Arms to take this away—I want to just show you what an insulin pump is. It looks like a cell phone and it’s worth about \$6,000. It’s a spare one that Paul had with him today. That’s what these citizens are requesting be covered under the act. I hope we can all get together, work with the Minister of Health and the government, and somehow find the funding to cover this, hopefully in this budget, or in a future budget, so that many more people like Paul can have their lives restored and work. I understand he hasn’t had a day off work since having the pump.

These types of things are so important to our economy, to our health care system and to the quality of people’s lives. With that, I thank you for the time this morning. Again, we will be supporting this bill, and hopefully we can see it right through to final passage.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): First of all, I want to say on behalf of the New Democratic caucus of Ontario that we will be supporting this bill. We think it’s a good bill, and I think it’s a demonstration of what can be done when members individually, as Mr Gravelle has done, find an issue in their constituency or somewhere in the province and work with stakeholder groups in order to try to find solutions. Obviously, this is a long-standing

issue. I know in all of our constituencies we have the same situation, where there are other services that are uninsured, and this is an attempt to insure such a service.

For the record, I just want to have a little discussion about the way this bill is written, because I thought it was rather neat. When I saw it last week, I looked at it and said, “This is a money bill. This is rather unfortunate,” because it could have been ruled out of order. But as I understand it, that’s because it’s really going to be up to the regulations to decide if the amount of money is going to be attributed to paying for the pumps. That’s really where the rubber meets the road. As I understand it, the legislation calls it an insured service, saying insulin pumps will be put under as an insured service but, at the end of the day, it will be up to the cabinet to decide if it is an insured service. At this point it is zero if we pass this legislation. Even if we passed the legislation today and we were to get third reading and royal assent tomorrow morning, it would not change anything. What we really need—and I imagine you’ve been talking to your colleagues in cabinet—is to have cabinet move to change the regulations to determine to what degree it becomes an insured service. I just want people to know that this is a good step and a good start in the battle, but we need to go to the next step.

I am more than prepared to support this legislation, as my colleagues are. We see this as a good thing, but we really want to know that at the end of the day there is some commitment on behalf of the government to actually insure the service. It’s good enough to say, “Yes, this is an insured service,” but without the change to the regulations, nothing will happen. So I’d like to hear the member, at the end when he has his opportunity to comment for two minutes, let us know what he intends or thinks is going to happen with regard to the conversations he’s had with the Minister of Health, and if they are prepared to insure, are we talking about 20%, 50% or 100% of the cost? That’s the other thing we need to know. That will not be conditional on my support. We’re going to support this anyway because we think it’s a good thing, but I just wanted to put that on the record.

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I want to take this opportunity, however, to talk about diabetes in northern Ontario. As the member from northern Ontario knows, there’s a huge amount of diabetes in northern Ontario, and there’s a whole bunch of reasons for that, specifically in First Nations communities.

If you look at the communities in Kenora-Rainy River and Timmins-James Bay—I imagine it would be the same in Mr Brown’s riding and your riding, Mr Gravelle, where you have First Nations communities—the level of diabetes has really been on the increase over the last number of years. There’s a whole bunch of reasons for that as well. The thing that has been very disappointing to me is the way the federal government has been responding to what is a crisis in those communities when it comes to health care, diabetes being just part of it.

I want to give the former government some credit here. We had been working very hard at the Weenee-

bayko hospital in Moose Factory, that services the James Bay, to put in place a dialysis unit. The former Minister of Health had announced, I believe it was about this time last year, that they could go forward and do the planning in order to get insured dialysis services at the hospital.

Recently, the Minister of Health, in conversations I had with him, had actually come forward with the funding. So the Tories started the process, said yes to the whole process, "Go ahead and buy the capital side, build your retrofit that you have to have to the hospitals. Go out and fundraise and get your dialysis units." The last piece that needed to be put in place was the funding, and I'm very glad to note that the Minister of Health, Mr Smitherman, has come forward and are actually funded the three dialysis units in Moose Factory, which is going to go a long way to helping those citizens.

Applause.

Mr Bisson: You can applaud your minister. It's okay, it's allowed.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): It's good news.

Mr Bisson: Yes, every now and then. I'm a firm believer that our job in opposition is to hold the government accountable. If they do something right, there's nothing wrong in saying they'd done something right. In this case they did. All the credit to the government on that one.

The only other thing I want to say with regard to a couple of things around health services on the James Bay—some of you in this Legislature have had the opportunity—not many—to travel to northern communities, and I really encourage all of you. This is an invitation I'm putting out: Anybody who wants to come into the riding of Timmins-James Bay and travel to the aboriginal communities on the James Bay coast, you will be my guests. Every time I bring somebody into one of those communities, people are absolutely surprised at the conditions that people have to live in on the James Bay coast, as it is in other places across northern Ontario when it comes to isolated reserves.

To the federal government, I've got to say this: We have nothing to be proud of as Canadians in the way we've treated our First Nations people. It is really abysmal. They are having to deal with very little when it comes to resources, health services, housing, water, sewer systems, roads, transportation, you name it. It is really in bad shape.

I was having supper last night with a good friend of mine, Norm Wesley from the Weeneebayko hospital. We're having a bit of a chat about that whole thing. My comment has always been we are extremely lucky that the Mushkegowuk Cree are a very patient people, because most people having to live in that circumstance would be up in arms. Quite frankly, the situation is desperate.

If you look at communities like Attawapiskat, you've got 15 and 20 people living in one house. How does a young child trying to study in school find themselves in a position to be able to study when you've got another 15

or 20 people in the household and the house is inadequate? You have dirt on the roads because there's no pavement. You are having to live with the mud and the dirt and the dust, outside of winter. You've got very little when it comes to health services.

I know that James Bay General does a phenomenal job with the resources they have as a provincial institution in providing acute care services and some long-term-care services in the hospital in Attawapiskat, but they need far more support to be able to do the things that need to be done. There's an initiative in place right now between the Weeneebayko hospital, which is a federal hospital, and James Bay General in the communities, to merge those institutions together, so that we can move to one unified health system on the James Bay coast. I know that most people in the James Bay support that.

I will be coming back to this Legislature, probably in the fall, with a private bill to set up the structure to be able to have a unified hospital board and hospital system on the James Bay coast. I'll be looking for the support of all members in this House when it comes to the bill.

I just want to say, with the few minutes I've got left, there's a lot of work that has got to be done on the James Bay coast. My point is this: We can't wait for the feds no more. The federal government, for 130 years, has abandoned First Nations people. It is without question, that's been the history of our nation.

I think we as a province have to decide, are First Nations people citizens of this province, yes or no?—I say yes—and if they are citizens, we owe them the responsibility of making sure we treat them no differently from the way we treat somebody living in London, Hamilton, Timmins or Thunder Bay. They're entitled to health services. They're entitled to education. They're entitled to family, child and youth services. They're entitled to infrastructure, as any other community should be in Ontario.

One of the things I'm hoping this Legislature will deal with is how we move to that step. It's going to be a difficult process because it means that a mindset has to change in First Nations, because they see the crown as the one that has the fiduciary responsibility, not the province.

So we need to do a bit of educating the communities and say, "You might be better off working with us than with the feds," and then making sure, if we negotiate issues with the feds, such as the transfer of the Weeneebayko hospital over to the province, that the feds don't walk away with the \$4.5 million they're now putting into the budget at Weeneebayko hospital and say, "We're out. No more money." They do have a responsibility. We should use their \$4.5 million, along with what we have, and supplement to make sure that all citizens on James Bay can participate in a health system that is basically as complete as that in any other community.

If you're living in Peawanuck or Attawapiskat and you're a senior who needs long-term-care services, more times than not you've got to go to Timmins. How do you separate families by hundreds of miles, where there are

no roads, because there are no long-term-care services? Many of the health services are just like that. When it comes to diabetes, at least we now can go to Moose Factory, which is a great step forward. But how do we do satellite systems in places like Attawapiskat and others? I believe we can do that in a unified hospital system on the James Bay coast. I'm looking forward to the work they're doing now, and that we're going to continue doing over the spring, summer and fall, moving toward that step of trying to get to an integrated system, but then bringing the province to the table in order to take over health services so we can augment the services that we have now. Thank you.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): It's a pleasure to speak to this bill. I first of all want to thank Mr Gravelle for putting it forward. It's a great bill and it's in character for Mr Gravelle. It's a very caring bill.

It isn't many blocks from here that insulin was discovered. This bill gives us a wonderful opportunity to take one more step in the treatment of diabetes. Diabetes is a kind of insidious disease that we have no cure for, and the treatments that we take now with needles are relatively crude. The body is given shots of insulin, so there are spikes in the treatment. The insulin pumps present us with the opportunity to mimic the body and give regular impulses of insulin into it.

The bill is asking for funding for treatment that's preventive, and it's always difficult to justify preventive treatments when governments are struggling financially. But I would suggest that the investment in these pumps will save the government considerable amounts of money over future years. If we think about the side effects of diabetes, heart attacks, I understand, cost our health care system about \$100,000 the minute a citizen enters a hospital. Pumps at \$5,000 or \$6,000 start to look pretty attractive just from the financial viewpoint. But there's much more to this than the financial viewpoint. If the concern is money and we can prevent a heart attack, then that pump has paid for itself.

Kidney problems, the cost of dialysis clinics: Again, just strictly in dollars, the dialysis clinic costs are more than offset by the cost of these pumps. I would even suggest, if we fund these pumps, that the cost of them will actually go down due to the quantity involved and cost savings.

The leading cause of amputations in our province: diabetes. Loss of vision—and when I say loss of vision, I'm also talking about loss of independence, and if we talk about dialysis, we're talking about loss of independence. The costs of the loss of vision to society are substantial. So the initial money that can go into these pumps I believe is more than offset by future savings to the health care system.

Let's set aside the costs and look at the quality of life for people with pumps. You know it's difficult being a kid, period, but being a kid and having the freedom a kid enjoys are part of growing up and maturing. Having to do a treatment with needles limits the enjoyment and quality of life for a child—not that these pumps are just for

children. But thinking of a child, an amazing amount of freedom comes with this. These pumps are programmed to give different amounts during the day and night and for special activities. The amount of freedom the young person will get access to by having one of these pumps alone would justify the cost.

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Our government is committed to not having two-tier medicine in Ontario, but the reality is, when it comes to insulin pumps, we have two-tier medicine. There are families in this province that have the benefit of perhaps their own personal assets or, in most cases, insurance companies that will fund the cost of the pump. Without exception—and I've also received the e-mails that Mr Gravelle has and I've met with some of the children who have had access to the pumps—it's hard to describe without getting emotional about the quality-of-life change they have experienced once they have this pump.

But for others there simply is no access to the funding. You can have two kids in the same school, one with the pump and one without, and I would suggest that, indirectly and unintentionally, we have two-tier medicine when that exists. We truly need to level the playing field and provide the opportunity for everyone in Ontario to have the greatest quality of life and to have a greater assurance that they're not going to face health problems in their future years.

If you don't have your health, you don't have anything. Everything else becomes irrelevant. We've seen over the last few years that the tax cuts by the previous government have cost us some health care services, and this is an opportunity for us to strengthen the system back and protect our citizens. It just doesn't make much sense not to do it.

I understand the financial challenge facing the province; I know what we inherited. But I believe we have people in this province who are very knowledgeable and committed to this program with whom we can enter into dialogue and find a way to implement it. Maybe we can't do everything the first year, maybe we can't solve the problem in the next month, but we need to start down the road with a plan that will allow us to implement it, identifying priorities, looking for additional resources and looking for priorities as the weeks and months go by.

We have a very real opportunity here to truly make something better, and I'm thrilled, first of all, that the opposition parties are supporting this. But I believe every one of us came to this Legislature to do the right thing and make things better for Ontario, so it is in character that every one of us will support it. I applaud the other parties for their support, I applaud Mr Gravelle, and to all the members, we have a unique opportunity to make a difference today for the people of Ontario.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've been speaking to the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North and I just want to indicate that I'm supporting his bill, the Health Insurance Amendment Act (Insulin Pumps for Diabetics), 2004. I just want to put that on the record.

The Deputy Speaker: That's an interesting point. Thank you.

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): It's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise today to speak in favour of the passage of Bill 55, a private member's bill put forward by the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North. Bill 55 calls for the amending of the Health Insurance Act, which would allow the inclusion of insulin pumps and supplies for the pumps to become insured services.

I would like to take a few minutes today to relate to you my reasons for supporting this bill. On January 30 of this year I had the pleasure of meeting with Mrs Brown, a constituent of mine whose children have diabetes. The Brown family, like many families in my riding, is finding the costs associated with the care of their children's medical problems related to diabetes increasingly difficult to bear. In fact, she has had to quit work in order to look after her five-year-old daughter, who is a brittle diabetic, and she has had to buy a car in order to travel to the nearest children's diabetic clinic, which is located in Peterborough. We would like to see a satellite children's diabetes clinic located in Lindsay.

Although she spoke to me about a number of concerns with regard to this issue of the treatment of their children, the increasingly expensive costs of health care and the difficulties of travelling, the biggest request was for recognition that the insulin pump and supplies should be covered under the Health Insurance Act. As a result, I wrote to Minister Smitherman on February 11 and related to him the problems of my constituents and the needs of the Canadian Diabetes Association. I'm happy to see that the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North has brought this forward.

I've also spoken to and received e-mails from Ron and Cathy Millen, whose son is a diabetic and uses the insulin pump. The pump has allowed him to meet his demanding university schedule and has eliminated his chronic high and low blood glucose levels. They're paying many thousands of dollars a year to assist their son's medical needs and are hoping that Bill 55 is passed.

As well, George and Dott Heath, who are both diabetics and do volunteer work for the Canadian Diabetes Association, have e-mailed me. They are hoping that Bill 55 receives support and passes.

As a registered nurse in the province of Ontario for over 20 years, I can relate first-hand to these important statistics that show the rise in the percentage of population over 20 years of age with diabetes and our growing seniors population with diabetes. I've had many friends in high school that benefited from the pumps to control their insulin levels.

For many Ontarians, coverage under the Health Insurance Act would mean healthier and more productive lives. It would mean lower costs in the long run to the health care system because, as we've all heard for decades now, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This will result in a reduction in heart and kidney disease, amputations and blindness. This will save money

in the health care system that will far outweigh the cost that will need to be covered by the amendment to this act. Over 850,000 Ontarians suffer with this diabetes. This bill will directly help thousands of them.

My involvement in politics dates back many years, helping my father, Bill Scott, who served as the MP for Victoria-Haliburton for over 20 years. I learned that much of what we do is partisan, but sometimes it's important to put aside those differences and support what is good for Ontarians. Support for Bill 55 is one of those occasions. I am proud to respond to the needs of my constituents, the needs of other Ontarians and the people in my riding—Mrs Brown, Ron and Cathy Millen, George and Dott Heath—and applaud the many people present today who belong to the Canadian Diabetes Association for pushing forward this initiative. All of us in this Legislature should support this legislation. I am proud and happy to add my support to your bill.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to rise in my place in support of my colleague the wonderful member from Thunder Bay-Superior North, who, like I hope every other member of this House, understands, gets that link between the head and the heart that we talked about a couple weeks ago.

I'm pleased that he, along with a number of people here, has been tirelessly working away at the need for a collaborative, comprehensive diabetes strategy along with the Canadian Diabetes Association and people like Dr Peter Clarke, who, with his working group, the Ontario diabetes guidelines implementation issues working group, has a goal of trying to close the gap between the guidelines and the care that currently exists in Ontario, and they note "including insulin pumps."

I have maybe a bit of a conflict here. I'm a diabetic. I know first hand the blessings of science and technology and the impact that having access to that can have on one's life. But in a few minutes I want to talk a little bit more about somebody else I know.

I want to begin by talking about juvenile diabetes, which usually strikes children and young adults. While there's no cure, there's hope. I understand there are an estimated 60,000 people in this province who struggle with type 1 diabetes. They're dependent on daily insulin injections and numerous blood tests every single day, simply to live. The science is available to assist here. These insulin pumps, which deliver insulin in a very specific way, much more precisely and safely than everyday numerous injections, in fact allow users to participate more normally and more safely in daily activities.

1040

As I said, and the members opposite may want to know, it does hit close to many of us. Bernadette, one of the staff people in my office, who's in the west gallery with us—hi, Bernie. Her young son Shawn has been coping with type 1 diabetes since he was two. And I can tell you—because Bernadette probably wouldn't—that before the insulin pump arrived, life could be hell: visits to the school, emergency calls. Ten-year-old boys don't always take as good care of themselves as 55-year-old

men who understand they've got a problem. Bernadette describes the insulin pump as a godsend. Not only does it allow 12-year-old Shawn to have greater control over his medical condition, for which both his doctors and his family are eternally grateful, but it also allows him some normality in life. He's able to engage in life free of the burden of his disease, at least relatively.

Shawn's a brilliant young defenceman. He's got a poster of Bobby Clarke up in his room. Bobby Clarke, now the general manager of the Philadelphia Flyers, by the way, has fashioned his team along the same lines that he used to play: tenacious.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): He's dirty.

Mr McMeekin: He may be dirty too, but he won several Stanley Cups.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Are you a Philadelphia sympathizer?

Mr McMeekin: No. I'm hoping that although the team has been fashioned in his image, the Maple Leafs don't experience that over the next week or so.

Anyhow, young Shawn is really an inspiration to all of us, and the insulin pump has really helped him to do that. His parents, fortunately, were in a position where they were able to scrape together, by saving some bucks, the \$6,000 that was needed. But do you know what? As the earnest member from down east, Prince Edward-Hastings, said, not everybody can afford that. It really is a model of inappropriate two-tier health care, so thank you for that observation.

You have to see Shawn to appreciate this. I've seen this little guy, this all-star defenceman, who has just been part of winning two championships, by the way, and his dull, sullen, tired eyes magically transformed into that rascalion sparkle just because of this wonderful device. It's tragic to see those dull, sullen, tired eyes and to know that there are kids and others out there who don't get a chance to be transformed and have the quality of life they want. Shawn can go to birthday parties now. He can go to sleepovers at a friend's home. He can do a lot of things that he couldn't do before.

Just moving way ahead here to the end—there are lots of great quotes but I won't go into those, but just to say, why we are here in this place? We're here on a good day to give expression to common sense and to the public good, to indicate that on a good day, science ought to be in the service of humanity, not the other way around. What the hell good is having research and all the discoveries we make if people don't have access to them? I would say on the cost side, where else but here can you get a 30-to-1 value-for-dollar comparison? On the cost side, there may be some giant obstacles, but as the member for Thunder Bay has so appropriately noted, what the heck are giant obstacles except brilliant opportunities cleverly in disguise?

I stand with your other colleagues in the House, Michael, to applaud you for your initiative and to express my thanks personally, professionally and on behalf of all the children and people in the province of Ontario.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure indeed to stand this morning and thank the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, first, for taking the time to listen and, second, for drafting a bill that supports people who are obviously in need of government to take action and be supportive. I want to put on the record very clearly at the beginning of my remarks that I do support the bill without any hesitation.

Just one small technicality, Mr Speaker: Normally a private members' bill is not allowed to require government to spend money. Now that's very important, that it's not a government bill. A private member's bill cannot require government to spend money. What it could do is change the Health Insurance Act to require the government to consider it as a schedule. As such, it will still take an intervention by the Minister of Health, Mr Smitherman, as well as Mr Sorbara, to initiate any funding, even if it does pass. It is a technicality that private members cannot require government to spend money.

That being said, I want to put a face and a name to the constituents of my riding of Durham. As has been said by many speakers, the cost is sometimes a barrier to good health and to quality of life. In the sentiment of supporting the bill, there's no question that I want to be on the record. Mr Jim Souch is now deceased but was an original founder with the Charles H. Best Diabetes Centre, which serves Durham region. It has approximately 800 children and young adults with type 1 diabetes. The centre promotes positive integration of disease management in children's daily lives, as well as the daily routines of adolescents, young adults and their families.

By the way, the centre is celebrating its 15th anniversary. It was the first of its kind in Canada when founded in 1989. Of the 800 people being served by the Charles H. Best Diabetes Centre, only 8%—that's about 82 people—are actually on insulin pumps. An insulin pump is considered to be the best tool available for achieving normal blood sugar levels. I might add that the Lakeridge Health hospital centre board is a principal funder of that very important Charles H. Best Diabetes Centre.

The benefits have been clearly outlined by previous speakers, so I won't go over those. But when you look at the high degree of risk of type 1, youth, it's tragic. It's not something that most families have to deal with, but that disease itself is actually growing in Ontario.

I commend the Canadian Diabetes Association as well for their constant effort to inform and educate members. I have their recent correspondence to me of April 19. "Over 850,000 Ontarians—7% of the population—have diabetes." It's very important not just to look at the big numbers but to look at the consequences for those people, their families and loved ones. I'm pleased to state on the record that the Canadian Diabetes Association is here today, with Gary O'Connor, the executive director for the GTA/central south region, which serves our area.

Again, Mr Gravelle, you should be commended.

To put a real face on it, just recently I met with a young artist in my community, David Gillespie. He is

putting together a show that will be at the visual arts centre in Bowmanville sometime later this year. David and his wife, Sylvia Gillespie, have a son, Cameron, who has diabetes. He is one of many Ontarians who would benefit from an insulin pump. He is quite aware of this new technology and has a desire for me to support it.

Tracy and Gary Madgett are also constituents in the riding of Durham. Their daughter, Allison, uses an insulin pump. In their statement, the family has found it offers much more flexibility. Thanks to an insulin pump, children do not rely as heavily on specific schedules for when and what they eat. These are just two of the families who understand the benefits of Bill 55 and how it would improve the quality of life not only for children but for their caring adults.

The insulin pump has been described as acting more like the body's natural processes. It allows the user more flexibility in their meals and, more importantly, it gives more precise control of their blood sugar level. In the long run, it will reduce the complications and improve the quality of life for diabetics.

The marvel of the technology is that it can provide insulin in increments as small as one-tenth of a unit. It's a microcomputer that is about the size of a pager worn around the user's waist. It's similar to this kind of device here. The pump is programmed to deliver a continuous infusion of background insulin. Whenever food is eaten, the user delivers an additional surge of insulin that enables the diabetic to have a more precise control of blood sugar level.

Over two million Canadians have diabetes; 6% of Ontarians, as I said before. If left untreated or improperly managed, it can result in very dramatic complications, including, as has been mentioned, heart disease, kidney and eye disease, as well as nerve damage and, more dramatically, amputations.

1050

The good news is that people with diabetes can look forward to healthy, vital, active and independent lives if they make a commitment to managing their condition. The insulin pump is an excellent preventive medicine tool.

I encourage the Minister of Health and all members here to support this bill. I would hope that in the coming budget, on May 18, Mr Sorbara really does put life to this, because it affects the quality of life of the most vulnerable. This is not something someone induces on themselves; it's a condition they are born with.

On a long-term basis, preventive medicine reduces the cost of health care and, more importantly, it saves lives. By making insulin pumps and supplies an insured service, the province of Ontario has a unique opportunity to show leadership and innovation. As I said, Bill 55 has the potential to save lives and improve the quality of life for thousands of Ontarians. I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation so that the concept of insulin pumps as an insured service can be further considered and approved in the upcoming budget. Again, I leave that as a positive remark.

I know our health critic, Elizabeth Witmer, has spoken on this before. I'm confident that if it was incorporated in the budget, it would be supported. I would encourage members to bring that to the attention of Health Minister Smitherman and, of course, Premier Dalton McGuinty, as well as Greg Sorbara, who would be instrumental.

I want to thank the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North. Again, we on this side of the House are in support of the bill. Thank you for bringing it to our attention, and we look forward to the vote later.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): First of all, it's a pleasure and an honour to have the opportunity to speak on this bill. I want to congratulate the member from Thunder Bay, Michael Gravelle, for bringing this forward.

I want to share with you that, as a newly elected member, there are things you'd like to bring forward in your first term. This happened to be one of the things about which I was hoping to have the opportunity, so I was extremely excited to see this bill being brought forward by the member from Thunder Bay.

It seems like only yesterday—and I remember it so clearly—when I was first elected to city council in Niagara Falls. There was a long-term member on city council named Patrick Cummings, whom I grew to love and respect. Patrick had diabetes. I can remember sitting with him at all the meetings we had at city hall, watching the difficulties he went through with diabetes. I remember when we used to go in at 4 o'clock and have meetings sometimes till 11 o'clock at night. They'd bring in dinner for us during the course of our meetings. There were those of us who were sitting having dinner, and Patrick was sitting there and having to take his needles. I remember talking with him, to try to understand what this was all about. I remember the operations he had, the two amputations he went through, and I can tell you that was something that has always stayed with me.

Since then, it's been something I've taken to heart. I've learned a lot about it. I have a number of friends who are diabetics, and I wanted to just share this quickly because so much has been said so eloquently by all the members who have spoken about this terrible disease and the opportunity we have to have the insulin pump therapy covered.

I have received a number of e-mails and hundreds of phone calls, but there's one e-mail in particular from a lady, Wendy Anderson, that I wanted to mention and read into Hansard today. What Wendy had said to me was:

"I urge you to support Bill 55 which would add to OHIP coverage insulin infusion pumps and their supplies. The passage of Bill 55 is a life-and-death issue for me.

"I am one of the many persons in your region who does not have private health care insurance. Thus I personally absorb the cost of approximately \$3,000 a year for insulin pump therapy. This is a therapy of necessity for me, not choice.

"The above costs of pump therapy do not include an additional \$5,000 a year I must spend for other diabetes management supplies such as test strips and prescription drugs to control the complications of this disorder. Had I had the financial and medical support to have obtained an insulin pump years ago, I believe I would not require the expensive medical treatments, medical attention and drugs that I do today. If not for insulin pump therapy, I feel I would now be on long-term disability and possibly dialysis, which would cost the Ontario government over \$50,000 a year...."

"It is my belief that insulin pump therapy will practically eliminate such health complications for the newly diagnosed children with diabetes ... but only if they can afford it.

"Since starting the insulin pump three years ago, I have totally eliminated chronic high blood glucoses and frequent severe low blood glucoses. My A1Cs ... dropped within the first three months from 9-14 to 5-7!" Wow. "Normal range tests for the first time in 27 years!" I'm asking you to "please support Bill 55 and do what you can to have other MPPs" in the House support this bill.

I'm so excited about the fact that everyone who has spoken on all sides of the House has come out and said they are in support of this. I'm also pleased about the fact that the bill is going to the standing committee on social justice. I have the opportunity of sitting on that committee, so I intend to continue pursuing this. I hope that somewhere in the near future, this bill will be passed and those who need the coverage will receive it. I thank you for having the opportunity to speak on this.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Thunder Bay-Superior North has two minutes to reply.

Mr Gravelle: I am so grateful for the support that I've received from all my colleagues in the House today. I want to give specific thanks to the members who have spoken: the members for Simcoe North, Timmins-James Bay, Prince Edward-Hastings, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, Durham and Niagara Falls. Each of you spoke so eloquently, and I think re-emphasized the point that this legislation, if it does go through, will make such a huge difference in the quality of life for people with diabetes, whether we're talking about a young person who is contracting it for the first time or somebody such as Paul Beckwith, who, as a middle-aged man, is able to go on the therapy. The value is extraordinary, and obviously the cost savings are extraordinary as well. I'm also grateful that the Minister of Health was here in the House and, as indicated, will be supporting the bill later on when we come to the vote.

I guess what needs to be said is that, listening to the people speak, almost everybody has a personal story they can tell; almost everybody has relatives or friends or family—I was particularly touched by the member for Niagara Falls in terms of the story he was telling of the fellow councillor that he was very close to. I guess what we're hoping is that if we're able to get the support we need for the provision of this service under the Health

Insurance Act for insulin pump therapy, many of these things will be avoided in the future. With the research that's been done out there, it certainly seems to be the case.

I have been touched by the hundreds of e-mails that I've received. I've spoken to a number of people in my own constituency. I want to thank the Canadian Diabetes Association and all the people who are here to support this legislation today. And may I say in particular that I thank Derek Lawrence in Thunder Bay and all those in Thunder Bay-Superior North who wrote me in support of my legislation and my private member's bill. I'm very grateful for that, and I look forward to moving it on to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: That matter having been dealt with, orders of the day.

1100

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the outstanding effort and support given by families to their members, and volunteers to their organizations, saves the government billions of dollars and humanizes the face of Ontario, making the province the jewel of Canada and the envy of the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr. Peterson has moved private member's notice of motion number 8. Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr Peterson, you may have 10 minutes to begin.

Mr Peterson: Approximately 18 years ago my wife and I made a choice of where we would live. We chose Mississauga South because of the strength of family values there and because of the very active and proactive volunteer groups we have in Mississauga South.

My parents, in raising me, passed on the following comments: "Love, joy, happiness cannot be given away. They always come back to you magnified." In terms of volunteerism, they said, "It is all of us who want to do our little bit. All of us want to light a candle, not just curse the darkness."

In recognizing families and what they have done, I must recognize my family first. I think most of you know that my brother defeated 42 years of Tory government rule. My other brother is Jim Peterson, the trade minister in Ottawa. But the family values were set by my father in his volunteerism in London, Ontario, where he helped build Westminster College, helped build the London Little Theatre, helped finance a YMCA, and helped rebuild a country club.

These were the values with which I was raised. These are the values we find in Mississauga South in the Pallett family, who came there in 1829 and now have about seven or eight different groups of Palletts, who have made huge contributions to Mississauga South: to the Living Arts Centre; the agricultural museum; the Dixie Arena; and the agricultural hall of fame. Drew Pallett is currently the chairman of the Living Arts Centre. I could

go on and on about the Pallett family and what they have accomplished.

Another outstanding family in Mississauga South is the Williamson family, headed by Laurie Williamson, a car dealer who had an autistic child who died prematurely from cancer. Laurie continues his benevolence through supporting hockey. He was named volunteer of the year in Mississauga.

Another family that you know is very famous, Hazel McCallion's family. The real volunteerism in Hazel's family was an award set up by Sam McCallion. Every year the Sam McCallion award is given for the outstanding volunteer in Mississauga. This year it was Elsie Thompson.

Another member who has done outstanding work as a volunteer is with us today, Mr Ron Lenyk, the publisher of the Mississauga News. Ron Lenyk's newspaper published a full-page article on volunteerism and what it means to Mississauga South. You should also know that Ron Lenyk is known as a Ukrainian humorist and performs at no charge at benefits all over Toronto. He has been awarded the Community Living volunteer of the year award; it was roasted. He also won the Citizen of the Year award in Mississauga.

As we go forward and recognize the volunteers, we have many other people in our gallery. I would like to recognize them today. We have Margaret Hughes and her husband, Brigitte Zacal, Brad Shoemaker, Linda Baker, Hugh Baker, Stan Woronko, Silvana Porto, Mike Psodorov, Rada Psodorov, Pat Maloney and Doug Maloney.

All of those people have faced, as volunteers and families, challenges which have required a maximum amount of effort and input and have made both their families' lives and our society's lives better. I will probably not address all of their efforts properly, but let me try briefly.

Brigitte Zacal is a strong advocate for home care for seniors in their homes and is a strong advocate that seniors should be allowed the choice of being cared for in their homes by their loved ones.

Silvana Porto has a severely disabled daughter and has done an excellent job of maintaining her lifestyle with great love and care and financial sacrifice over and above what most of us could afford and yet continues on relentlessly with a smile, asking us to encourage her, and seems to be often just pleased that we are recognizing her problems as she goes forward with very difficult struggles.

Linda and Guy Baker are tremendous advocates for better servicing of seniors in seniors' homes and have been advocates for setting up family councils in seniors' homes so that the ones we love can be better managed and cared for, as they get older in life and as their problems become too acute for them to stay in their homes.

Pat Maloney and Doug Maloney have similar problems, with severe disabilities in their families, and they continue relentlessly to work on behalf of their family members.

There is a category in all of Peel, not just Mississauga South, called the Fair Share for Peel. We in Peel face discrimination caused by geography and fast growth. Most people would say those aren't reasons for discrimination, yet our social services are underfunded by 50%, compared to any other jurisdiction in Ontario. You may ask, "Well, with all that wealth being created, how do you survive?" It has fallen on the backs of volunteers to keep our social services intact at 50% less funding than other areas of Ontario.

I will be making this information available to all members during the legislative session, but I've already had meetings with the various social services committees who understand that this problem was not caused by any ill will, it was caused by the fast growth. When governments froze funding for social services approximately 14 years ago, and our area grew by 50%, it meant that our people in need are getting 50% less funding than other parts of Ontario and Toronto. So we look forward to your collective efforts to help us correct this difference.

The Fair Share for Peel is a group of over 70 organizations in Peel that are fighting this cause. It is headed by Jennifer Grass.

As a member of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, I was able to tour the province and listen to the concerns of many of the people and their social organizations who have not received any increase in funding in the last 10 years. The concern of these people is not for themselves, it is for other people.

I refer specifically to people like Sandy Milakovic at Peel Alert, where she is dealing with very difficult problems of mental health and the support of mental health. She has set up a facility where people can come in, they can be accepted, they can build with confidence and participate and reintegrate into mainstream society. Their organization requires more funding from us to help them continue the outstanding job they are doing in supporting people with mental disabilities.

This government has undertaken the largest and most comprehensive pre-budget consultation of any government in the history of Canada. It is not to avoid making tough decisions, but rather to collect the best information from families, volunteers and stakeholders who have built a wonderful province.

Therefore, I ask all of you to support this resolution. Thank you for recognizing the people from Mississauga South who have joined me today. As we go forward, we should look to these people for the way to most effectively and compassionately govern and build programs for this province.

1110

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to speak in support of the resolution put forward today by the member for Mississauga South and say a word of welcome to the guests who are present in the chamber to hear this debate.

I'll begin by saying to the member for Mississauga South that I agree with the premise of his resolution. To paraphrase the idea that I think he's conveying, helping

others in one's family and helping others in your community by volunteering is very important and, yes, volunteerism does make Ontario the jewel of Canada, as his resolution points out. The question becomes, what will we, as members, do, including the member opposite and his Liberal colleagues. What actions will we take to support volunteers in our cities, towns and rural municipalities all across the province?

As the Conservative spokesperson for citizenship and immigration, I was glad to speak on Monday, April 19, in this House, along with members of the other two parties, about National Volunteer Week and why volunteering is so important to communities and the whole province.

Volunteering is important and has such a profoundly positive impact in large part because of the principles of freedom and service; that is, men, women and youth who volunteer and invest freely of their time, talents, experience and expertise. To put it another way, they get the job done so well because they care so much about what they're doing and whom they are helping, be that a family member, a senior, a disabled person, a child, a patient or a person who needs food or clothing to supplement subsistence living.

Volunteers enhance our quality of life. Without them we would never be able to make that high standard in Ontario second to none in the world. Further, volunteer service is not only given in the spirit of freedom in our democratic society but it also enhances the enjoyment and fulfillment of that freedom for all of us who are residents of Ontario.

That is why I mentioned on Monday, and I'll say again, how much I appreciate the sacrifices made by soldiers and all volunteers, men and women who gave to their country to bring us victory during the wars of the 20th century. I want to remind members of this House how important it is to recognize that service by remembering the 60th anniversary of the D-Day invasion in Normandy in Nazi-occupied France, which is coming up this June 6.

It is a challenge in a peaceful time for those of us living in Canada, and with a peace that we hope and pray will someday be enjoyed by the whole world, to explain to young people how important civic responsibility and volunteering is. While we dearly appreciate the sacrifices of the generations before us, volunteer contributions are, quite frankly, more a matter of choice than of necessity these days. Yes, that choice makes the contribution valuable and very effective, but ensuring a strong future for volunteering must involve planting the seeds of volunteerism in our children and our youth.

I think of the example given to us by Gail Martin, the editor of the Elmira Independent newspaper, in a recent story that appeared about the crews of volunteers who worked all night and into the morning to prepare for the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival earlier this month. She talked about Lavern Brubacher and his mall crew, Sue Jacobi, Lee Ann Caudle and her daughter Jenny, who worked all night alongside an energetic and enthusiastic group of teen volunteers called the Venturers who made a

contest over how fast they could complete their task. The article noted that the volunteers who make this festival happen work hard for months on end and are quite content to do so with little or no public recognition.

I enjoyed my time at the maple syrup festival this year, again serving pancakes on the 9 o'clock to 11 o'clock shift.

Then there's Mary Jansen, a retired health care aide at Chateau Gardens nursing home in Elmira. She retired eight years ago but continues putting in two shifts a week for the Woolwich Community Services organization in Elmira, working at the organization's thrift store in the Birdland Plaza. She sorts through items donated to the store, ensuring they're in good condition. She also returns to Chateau Gardens every day to help a 100-year-old lady get dressed in the morning and she's there to help her get ready for bed at night. Mary also loves to babysit her two youngest grandchildren. I think she's a wonderful example for volunteers of all ages.

I also want to mention my own experience volunteering as a Big Brother and that I had a little brother from 1987 to 1990. His name is Harry Lefler. That experience helped me to understand the rewards of providing guidance and service over time and appreciate the need for those services. The member for Mississauga South may also recall my total commitment to Ontario's Promise, a program aimed at helping young people reach their full potential by making and keeping five promises to them. He will recall that the former member for his riding, his predecessor, my friend Margaret Marland, one of the finest MPPs, who served with great distinction in this House from 1985 to 2003, was minister for children when she helped launch Ontario's Promise in November 2000, along with Premier Harris and retired US General Colin Powell, who of course now serves as the Secretary of State in the United States of America.

Here are the five promises that Ontario's promise promotes: (1) a healthy start for all children; (2) an ongoing relationship with a caring adult; (3) a safe place with structured activities during non-school hours; (4) marketable skills through effective education; and (5) giving back through community service. This program brings together the government, good corporate citizens who donate money and even their employees' time, and the volunteer agencies, all with the common goal of making the future better for young people and for the province. This endeavour was well thought out, and I want to emphasize again for members of this House my sincere belief that the government needs to continue to keep these promises to children and youth alive by continuing to support, and by expanding, Ontario's promise. The fifth promise is essential in keeping the spirit of volunteer service alive; that is, providing an opportunity to give back. This way we demonstrate how volunteering is truly a two-way street. It's a message that we've said to our young people holds true for volunteers of all ages.

Volunteer fire departments are essential in rural and small-town Ontario. These communities rely on them.

Without volunteers, the property taxes needed to pay for full-time firefighters would be prohibitive, to say the least. I say to the member for Mississauga South that it's not just rural communities that benefit from these services; it's people from our cities and suburbs who own vacation properties, cottages and farms in rural Ontario and who would likely find out that volunteer firefighters are the first on the scene for a fire, car accident and other emergency calls in rural Ontario. Volunteer fire departments are strengthened by the service of local citizens and by firefighters who also work in professional departments while serving as volunteers back home. These firefighters have become known as double-hatters.

In some cases, a young firefighter first joins the fire-fighting service as a volunteer. He or she gains valuable experience, as the volunteer fire department spends considerable time and resources training that person. The firefighter finds out whether or not he or she wants to do this for a living. If their commitment strengthens, that volunteer firefighter may be hired, usually as a full-time firefighter in a city or suburban fire department. This is a tradition of long standing in Ontario and demonstrates that volunteering in this province is a two-way street. The training is earned in the volunteer department and the professionally trained double-hatters give back to their community in their own free time.

The problem is that in recent months there continue to be instances where double-hatter firefighters are being told by their union leaders that they must quit as volunteers, that if these people try to give back to their community, they will be barred from the union or thrown out. Either way, that may mean losing their full-time job. This is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario and it is a threat to public safety. Action must be taken by the provincial government.

In May 2002 I tabled Bill 30, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, in response to this problem by protecting the right to volunteer. Bill 30 had two days of public hearings before a standing committee of the Legislature and had support from all the major stakeholders involved in the fire service, save and except the professional firefighters' union. It had a record amount of debate for any private member's bill in the history of this province. Although it wasn't passed into law, I reintroduced it as Bill 130 on the last day the House sat before the election, and a third time earlier this month, now as Bill 52. I believe this bill is a solution to the problem which has been created by the firefighters' union leaders.

1120

Despite an effective one-to-one lobby campaign by the union against my bill with MPPs during the last Parliament, all members of this provincial Parliament have to be reminded that public safety in rural Ontario is not a city-versus-rural issue; it's about public safety. It's an Ontario issue. The MPP for Mississauga South's predecessor, Margaret Marland, knew this. She not only voted for my bill but also helped to obtain the full and highly effective support of Mississauga Mayor Hazel

McCallion, who came to a press conference I organized and spoke in favour of action to protect double-hatters through Bill 30.

In sum, while I will support his resolution this morning, I will also ask him and all MPPs of this House to support Ontario's interest in public safety that is provided on a two-way street by our double-hatter firefighters. I would ask you to support Bill 52.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? I'm expecting a rotation, so the member for Mississauga West.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I wish to thank and acknowledge the member for Mississauga South in this, Ontario's volunteer week, for introducing a motion that recognizes volunteers, and also the voters of Mississauga West for allowing me the privilege to stand in this place and speak on a subject that is very near and dear to me.

We normally associate volunteer work with charity work, with community groups, with taxpayers' and ratepayers' associations, and with environmental causes, and rightly so. These people work hard, they're well motivated and they achieve great things. I salute them and I salute their contributions. But this morning I'd like to talk about two types of contributions that are often overlooked when we speak about volunteerism: settlement and integration, and human rights.

If we scratch the surface of most Canadians, it doesn't take too many generations to trace most of our lineage somewhere else. If we listen to the family histories of most Canadians, we find an immigrant, a newcomer at some point. Whether it be one or two generations, many of those stories consist of a struggle to get established in Canada and to be in a position to prosper and to contribute to the nation that so many new Canadians have chosen to call home. It's been the efforts and the sacrifices of volunteers that have not only helped new generations of Canadian newcomers find their way to independence, but it has been the efforts of volunteers whose contributions have kept so many lives from falling apart and so many people from quitting after they have come to this country.

I mention in particular from my home region of Peel two organizations, the Peel Multicultural Council and Intercultural Neighbourhood Social Services, both of which I have served as a volunteer down through the years. One program in particular stands out in one of the ways that it brings in volunteers and newcomers to Canada, and that is conversation circles. Conversation circles bring newcomers together with people who have lived here or have grown up here. Conversation circles enable newcomers to take their new language out of the classroom and bring it into their lives. Working with volunteers in conversation circles overcomes the temptation to take the language that you've learned in the classroom and to retreat from it into a cocoon of the familiar, going back home into what is a microcosm of the old country in its language and its customs. Conversation circles help many of us in the mainstream walk back a few generations and gain some insight into some of the

problems our forebears may have had as they came here and struggled to get established. And one of the first challenges in getting established in the new country is to learn the language.

In this vein, I have one story that I recall. At one time I was asked whether I would round out the critical mass and be part of a group that learned introductory Arabic at one of the local community centres. For me, it wasn't going to be my second language—pour moi, ma langue secondaire est le français—but it was a challenge. When I went in and spent eight weeks learning Arabic as a third language, I then realized first-hand the challenges that so many newcomers have to overcome, because when I went in there, I couldn't read, I couldn't write and I couldn't speak. To the limit of the teacher's ability, it was all done in Arabic, which is a language as foreign to me as any could be. When I left, I had a whole new perspective on what it took to come here, not being able to speak English, not being able to walk into a store and read the price on the food you intend to buy, not being able to read a street sign, not being able to look at a shop and read the sign on the shop, and how hard it was to get past that point where you could at least walk out into the sunshine and prosper in Canada.

I also want to talk a little bit about an unlikely topic when we discuss volunteerism, and that's human rights. Yet it's nonetheless a vital contribution that Canadians make. It's a contribution that benefits not so much those of us who live here in Canada, but many people abroad whom we've never met and may never meet.

I'd like to illustrate this point, if I may, in a tribute to a Mississauga family whose efforts and sacrifices during an entire decade have contributed enormously to the development of a democratic government in the Republic of Croatia. Josip and Vivienne Gamulin, who live on Clarkson Road in Mississauga, in the riding held by the member from Mississauga South, have contributed enormously, through themselves and through their family, to the development of democracy in Croatia. That has been primarily through their work on human rights.

The member's motion says volunteerism "humanizes" our province and makes it "the envy of the world," and that is certainly true of the contribution made by the Gamulin family. Dr Gamulin graduated in medicine from the University of Zagreb before coming to Canada. While he and his family, a very large family, could have lived a prosperous and comfortable life, they remained concerned about the abuse of human rights back in the former Yugoslavia. Long before the world focused on the brutalities inflicted on the peoples in the Balkans and long before we all learned the phrase "ethnic cleansing," Josip Gamulin poured his free time and much of his personal funds into a campaign to make the world aware that in his former country, people were being killed just for being what they are.

Not long after I met him, he asked me if I would come down to speak at a demonstration at Toronto city hall. He told me it would be important for a non-Croatian to speak. I trusted him and I agreed. I spoke out in favour of a dissident from Albania. I spoke as forcefully as I could

at the time. Some time later, at a party at his home, he introduced me to a man and said, "This isn't the man you spoke in favour of, but this is someone like him." That man said to me, "Were it not for the efforts of those of you in the West who stood up when you didn't have to stand up and who spoke out against the abuse of human rights, I'd have been dead and so would many others like me."

I'll say this for Josip and Vivienne Gamulin: It was their sacrifice that brought a measure of democracy, freedom and fairness in the treatment of their countrymen to the Balkans. Not many Canadians would have benefited from it, and nobody among the group that helped them organize got rich while they did it. Mostly, their efforts have passed unrecognized. But in the Legislature of the province of Ontario now, I recognize those volunteers, like Josip and Vivienne Gamulin and their children, who have taken their time and have stood up and said, "Enough is enough." They have said what's right and what's wrong, and have spoken in favour of human rights and have spoken out against the systematic abuse of it.

I'd like to share my time with other members of my caucus. I thank you for this opportunity to stand and speak on volunteerism during volunteer week.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Volunteerism is really about community-building. In fact, in my time allocated in support of this resolution by the member for Mississauga South, I really just want to take the time that I am permitted here today to respectfully mention the community builders in my riding of Durham.

Service clubs we are all familiar with, such as Rotary, Lions, Kinsmen and others, certainly serve as an example to community builders who have time to add value to the lives of others in many cases. John Bugelli, 10 years with the Newcastle Lions Club; Muriel Burgess, 20 years with Community Care Clarington; Shelley Etmanskie and June Heard, 10 years with the Orono Horticultural Society; Wayne Burrell, Tom Wilson, Maurice Patterson and Rob Rice of the Port Perry Lions Club—all community builders, all people taking time from their lives to give generously to others.

1130

The sporting community, of course, is replete with persons making contributions to young people's lives. There are countless hockey, figure skating, speed skating, volleyball, swimming and soccer coaches, and the list goes on, Mr Speaker. You would know that.

Eleanor Colwell last night held the Port Perry Lions Club agricultural appreciation night. In fact the deputy minister, Frank Ingratta, spoke at that meeting in a volunteer capacity to bring respect to the agricultural leaders in Durham, of which there are many.

Jenny Walhout was just recognized by the Hospice Association of Ontario, not just for Durham but I believe she received the Caldwell award for all of Ontario for hospice work with those in the latter stages of life.

Magda Zoelman of Bereaved Families of Ontario has been widely recognized and is a personal friend, a person

who in her own life experienced tragedy with the death of her son, Dennis, but also and more importantly goes on to make a positive statement about their own personal tragedy.

It's people like Mary Lou Townsley, Jill Haskin, Norma Lewis, Les Trotman, Roger Wharmby, Mary Taylor, Pat Griffin, all members of the hospital auxiliary in Bowmanville. I would be remiss not to mention Greta Brown, an elderly lady who still, to this day—I believe in her late 80s or 90s—is serving in a volunteer capacity with the hospital auxiliary.

Joan Gordon, president of the auxiliary in Port Perry, and Gail Kerry have arranged countless fundraising events, all giving back to their community.

Lois Yellowlees and Alma Langmaid with the Solina Women's Institute have served over 50 years, and people like Vi Ashton, Donna Barkey, Bernice Watson, Blaikie Rowsell, 30 years with the Solina Women's Institute. Women's institutes were one of the original founders of strong rural communities, making a statement not just about the rights of women but the protection of women and family and the values that make Ontario what it is today.

Minnie Zegers from the Orono Horticultural Society has been making their community beautiful—30 years with the horticultural society. Orono is a beautiful little community just off Highways 35 and 115 on the way to the city of Kawartha Lakes in my riding.

The visual arts centre—I note Jean-Michel Komarnicki, chair of the visual arts centre in Bowmanville—has had exhibits here at the Legislative Assembly, maintaining not just the history of the monument of the visual arts centre but also all of the art workshops that go on and putting their time and talent into other people's lives.

Jean and Brenton Rickard are two people who are remarkable for their contribution to many aspects of the community. I think they had 50 years together, and that's each of them; that's 100 years of service, two people in Newcastle, Ontario, the home of the Massey family. They were really the guardians of the community, the builders of the community.

Pauline Storks is a woman who has given not just to the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority, but is widely respected in local distribution companies, the municipal electric associations. She's served locally and provincially and is a strong voice even in retirement. I think she's nearing 80 years of age and still giving.

Shane Harbinson has just put on an information forum at Queen's Park on the Ontario Volunteer Emergency Response Team. These are people who voluntarily take time out and take training to use in the search and rescue of lost children, some of whom have been in the news in the last while.

Harold Yellowlees, Don Samis and John Buddo have served Big Brothers and Sisters of Clarington relentlessly and tirelessly. Volunteers go on.

Community care strikes me when I think of people like Ernie Roberts, who was just recently recognized for

15 years, retired from General Motors and now continues to have almost a full-time job as a driver.

Mary Lamb and Marion Larmer have 25 years with community care in Port Perry. Marg Tippins from community care in Clarington as well, I believe, has 10 or 15 or more years in community care, which is Meals on Wheels and providing support services in the community.

More importantly, the fair boards, the rural agriculture fairs like the Durham Central Fair: Charles Harris serves as the fair board president.

The list goes on. I would be remiss not to mention the hospital boards. Anne Wright, who's the chair of Lake-ridge Health, a volunteer position, spoke here just recently on Bill 8, Mr Smitherman's bill on wrecking or taking away the power of these volunteer boards. I'm sure he'll relent on that. I'm hopeful he will give the boards their due.

Sitting in the Legislature here today, I have to respect the work that teachers and schools have done. I am happy to introduce my own page from my area, Michael Fattori. Michael is a page from the riding of Durham. Pages are serving in a volunteer capacity in the Legislative Assembly today. I think it's remarkable that when we were in government, we required students to contribute, over their high school years, 40 hours of community service. I think it's just an example of training people or giving them the encouragement and infrastructure to go out and give back to their community.

With respect to Mr Peterson making this resolution here today, I am supportive. I see volunteers as community builders. It is the right thing for each of us to do. I know people in public office are often pressed to go and support organizations—whether it's Big Brothers, or Heart and Stroke, or the Terry Fox run—but all people in any community have not only a right but a duty to serve their community with all the skills and compassion they have, because you make other people's lives better with volunteer contribution.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to say that New Democrats support this resolution. How could we not?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): It's private members' hour.

Mr Marchese: It's private members' hour, you're quite right, and we are free to do what we want, aren't we? Liberals are quickly learning that you're free to do what you want, especially with private members' bills. You are liberated to do that, so don't allow your whip to say, "No, you can't; you've got to be in solidarity with the caucus." OK? So that you know.

Speaking to this particular resolution, we say it would be very difficult to oppose it, really. It's a friendly motion, it speaks to the whole issue of why it is that we would support volunteers. And why wouldn't we, really?

Why wouldn't we support members of families who support each other, particularly when they face so many problems, some in particular, where families have children with Down syndrome, as I do—a cousin of mine. I

look to them with a great deal of admiration, because the sacrifices they put into servicing the needs of that child—it's just unbearable, unthinkable. I don't know how they do it, but they do it because they are mothers and fathers, and they have brothers and sisters, who obviously want to do it. It's just not something that you question; it's something you do because it's your family. For families who have to deal with issues of autism, which creates incredible stress on the entire family, not just mom and dad but on that individual who suffers the problem and everyone connected, it's an incredible burden. Why wouldn't we praise each and every one of those individuals who commit themselves to the development and the support of their family members.

Yes, we support volunteers—men, women, young and old—who put in a great deal of their time at the service of creating a decent and civil society. We say that democracy would be severely diminished if we didn't have the level of volunteerism that we do in society. We say that people doing good for their families, their neighbours and their society, without the expectation of monetary reward, is one of the foundations of a civilized society. Yes, it is profoundly important for social solidarity and, we are observing, it is becoming more and more important for governments because it saves governments huge amounts of dollars. In fact, volunteerism contributes \$6 billion worth of time. No wonder governments, whether they be Conservatives before them or Liberals—and probably New Democrats if we were there—stand up to say that it saves us a whole lot of time and money and it relieves governments of the burden of having to worry about replacing that volunteer time, because if they did, it would cost a great deal of pecunia to make up for it.

1140

Yes, volunteerism is important for a civil society and social solidarity, and, yes, it saves money, but my worry is the trend that governments are involved in, saying, "We've got to find ways to promote more volunteerism." I suspect that recent governments have seen that in the year 2000, 25% of Canadians devoted their time to volunteerism, and in 1997, it was 32%, meaning fewer people in the year 2000 were doing volunteerism than they were in 1997.

There's a reason for that, I suspect, and the reason has to do with the fact that more and more people are working double and triple time to make ends meet. More and more women are working in the workforce because they have to. It's a necessity for many of them. It's not something some would love to do if they could avoid it. You've got people, men and women, working overtime, triple time, and few of them are finding the time to be able to volunteer.

When the member for Waterloo-Wellington says, "Volunteers do it as a matter of choice, not out of necessity," I've got to tell him that a whole lot of people are doing it because it's necessary. When governments shirk their responsibilities, people get into the field of volunteerism to fill in the gaps. So some do it out of necessity, because without them, nobody else would be doing it.

We're seeing it in the field of education: \$36 million raised by parents alone to fill in the gaps of less government involvement and less money going to our school boards. As a result of that, parents are raising money for essential supplies. We say it's not right. Governments might want to thank people like Cathy Dandy, Cassie Bell and Chris Glover from the Toronto Parent Network. I thank them and governments thank them, but they do it because if they weren't there and if they weren't lobbying governments, it would probably be worse and there would probably be less money going to our school boards. I praise these parents from the Toronto Parent Network. I praise them because if they weren't there, they would be raising \$72 million or \$100 million to make up for government's lack of adequate funding for our school boards and our students. Yes, I worry, and yes, I thank volunteers, but I'm worried that governments are shirking their responsibilities and their social obligations when they put less and less into our school system.

I worry because we have more Out of the Cold programs than we ever did before. More and more volunteers are involved in Out of the Cold programs to help the homeless, to feed them and to house them. It's not right. I praise those volunteers, but I do not praise governments that allow more social organizations and volunteers to run Out of the Cold programs because governments are not in the field of providing the service, presumably because they don't have the money. I have nothing but praise for volunteers, but criticism for governments that are shirking their responsibilities.

I look to the fact that there are more and more shelters in our midst, in Toronto and other places, shelters that are overfilled, and some cannot be housed because there's no room. I praise the volunteers all right, but I attack governments for not keeping up with their social responsibilities.

In nursing homes, we have more and more volunteers filling in because we're giving less and less for staffing purposes. It is said, for example, that hospital patients are more and more reliant on family and friends, not only visiting them, but bringing necessities like toilet paper and Kleenex. It's wrong. I attack governments for shirking their social responsibilities. I praise the volunteers.

I say to this government, yes, we support this resolution, but don't try to go after volunteers to fill in the gaps. Don't go after user fees to try to fill in the gaps. You need to find the money and the courage to go after high-income earners who earn over \$100,000, and bring in the money that you need to make up for those problems that I mentioned. Volunteers cannot do it alone.

Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I am absolutely delighted to support this resolution brought by the member for Mississauga South. This resolution recognizes the enormous contribution that volunteers across Ontario make to the well-being and health of our communities.

I know that Mr Peterson practises what he preaches. His volunteer activities are well known and well respected. I can also tell you from first-hand experience

that Mr Peterson is one of those people who makes volunteering a memorable and enjoyable experience.

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): A real leader.

Ms Matthews: He's a real leader.

I also know that the culture of volunteer contribution, the notion that contributing to one's community is simply what all people can and should do to the best of their ability, without regard for personal gain, is a culture and value that is learned from your parents and passed down from generation to generation.

I know that this is certainly a value that the Peterson family shares and actively engages in. Mr Peterson's parents are constituents of mine, I'm proud to say.

Interjection: Pete and Marie, excellent people.

Ms Matthews: Pete and Marie Peterson. They have passed this value down, not only to their children, but to their grandchildren. I'm also proud to say that this is a value that exists in my family as well.

In my riding of London North Centre, many of the services that support our most vulnerable people simply could not exist without volunteers. Matt Read from London, a student trustee and active volunteer, is with us in the gallery today.

Last Friday, I spent the morning in old east London. Those of you who know London will know that is an area of real interest to me and to many in the volunteer sector. I spent the morning visiting some of the services there that simply would not exist without volunteers.

I visited Cooking for Kids at Lorne Avenue school, where parents in the community gather together in the kitchen and prepare food for the students at the school. I visited Ark Aid, a drop-in centre for street kids. I visited Global House, which is a place that supports our newest newcomers to Canada. In fact, many people spend their very first night in Canada at Global House. I visited the Sisters of St Joseph Hospitality Centre, where people not only get a warm meal, but they get a warm welcome as well. I visited the Unity Project, an innovative housing project, mostly designed for young people. I visited the London Intercommunity Health Centre, which provides superb health care for a most vulnerable population.

None of these organizations could survive without the tireless army of volunteers who raise the money, provide the direction, roll up their sleeves and do the work that so desperately needs to be done. I am delighted to have this opportunity to recognize and applaud the volunteers who make my community and communities across Ontario the fine places they are. I could talk for some length on this, but I'm going share my time with the member from Stoney Creek.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I am always awed and amazed when I go out into my community, and other communities, and I see the work of volunteers. We sit in this House and we wrestle with how we're going to find the money, the resources, the understanding, and the expertise to fix a problem, solve a problem, deliver a program. The volunteers are just out there doing it, and

they're probably doing it in a way that no matter how long we wrestle with it, no matter how long we try to come up with all the nuances, we will never be able to deliver it with the same level of humanity, the same level of caring that volunteers bring to it. It's remarkable and it's invaluable.

1150

The member for Mississauga South mentioned that his family instilled in him that the love and joy and happiness you give out comes back to you magnified. This is something I've experienced first-hand as a volunteer and that I know all of us have as volunteers. It's something you have to experience at first hand to really believe. I encourage everybody who's never been a volunteer in their life to be a volunteer, because you will be giving yourself the greatest gift you possibly can. It will enrich your life in ways you cannot possibly imagine.

One of my personal experiences was with the Big Brothers' in-school mentoring program. I was told when I joined that I was going to be a window on a world for this little girl, a window on a world that potentially she couldn't even imagine existed or that she could become a part of. Well, she became a window on a world for me that I hadn't really imagined, and in some ways, thankfully, I had not been a part of. But in other ways, it was an amazing world. It was a world where volunteers were literally keeping her life afloat in so many ways. Her strength and her spirit were instilled in her by all the people who gave freely of their time and their energy and their lives to her, and I was awed by that.

I have a little favour to do here for the Minister of Health. Minister Smitherman came over, and I'm going to try to get this quote right, because it was a good quote. He said, "Wherever you have the delivery of a social service, the human touch, the gift of the volunteer magnifies the positive impact of that service."

Just this past week, I was at the lunch of the volunteers of Deer Park Villa in my riding in Grimsby—it's a long-term-care facility—and the contribution of those volunteers, the difference they make in the lives of the residents of a long-term-care facility is unimaginable. Many of the people in the long-term-care facility know they are on the final leg of their journey in this life, and that's a very tough reality to face. The volunteers are able to touch them, keep them in connection with their world in a way that the staff just don't have the time to do. So it's an enormously valuable gift that they give those people.

I'm sharing my time as well, but I just want to wrap up by saying—and we've all given examples of volunteer experiences we've had personally—that really the way in which volunteers and strong, caring family members enrich our society and characterize our society with their gifts is countless and priceless, like the stars.

Mr Patten: I have a very brief moment to support this resolution, and I asked if I might make a comment or two because this is an absolutely fundamental issue in our society and a distinguishing feature of a democratic society. If you think about it in those terms, then it

certainly places the responsibility on any government to nurture and support, to encourage and applaud from time to time, the activities of people, the distinguishing factor being that in a free democracy, giving of your time, giving of your resources, giving of money freely wherever you want that to go and to whomever you want that to be expressed in terms of your community is distinguishable.

There are many countries in the world, believe me, where you'd be put in jail for volunteering to fight for human justice or argue against a particular government. We are blessed, to a certain degree, but I take this as a message to all of us, particularly our governments. One of the weaknesses we have in many of our voluntary organizations today is because of some of the inadvertent—not intentional—arrogance of governments thinking they best know how to support something in a community. They launch a program in days when they have lots of money and destroy the fabric of many community-based organizations. Then policies change and they withdraw that, and the community is weaker. So it seems to me that the fundamental premise, which I think probably everyone supports—and I support Mr Peterson for putting this forward—is that we must always ask, is the community, with any of our actions that we take, stronger or is it weaker by virtue of what we do and how we relate? I would hope it would be the former, that indeed we are there to help strengthen the community, to be independent from government as much as possible. I believe the assumption under this is that people in the community know best what services they need, how they can do that and, when they're not there, they give freely of themselves.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Mississauga South has two minutes to reply.

Mr Peterson: May I thank all who spoke on behalf of this motion. As the third Peterson of my generation to enter politics, there was some doubt about what I could accomplish. But with the support of the NDP and the Conservatives, I think my future looks extremely bright.

As we go forward, may we do so in the faith of what volunteers and families have accomplished, a faith that the sum is greater than the total of the parts. As we go forward as the legislative institution that governs Ontario, may we find the most effective and satisfying solutions for the people of Ontario by using the strengths, insights and compassion of families and volunteers.

As encouragement to those families and volunteers who have contributed so much to Ontario, may I offer the words of Shakespeare:

“The quality of mercy is not strain'd,

“It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

“... It is twice blest:

“It blesseth him that gives” and him that receives.

Thank you for your support today.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for private members' public business has expired.

HEALTH INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT
(INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ
(POMPES À INSULINE POUR
DIABÉTIQUES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We'll deal first with ballot item number 13, standing in the name of Mr Gravelle.

Mr Gravelle has moved second reading of Bill 55, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

VOLUNTEERS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will take the second order of business.

With regard to ballot item number 14, a notice of motion by Mr Peterson, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

We'll call in the members for ballot item number 13. I remind you, this is a 5-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1158 to 1203.

HEALTH INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT
(INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ
(POMPES À INSULINE POUR
DIABÉTIQUES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Gravelle has moved second reading of Bill 55, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act.

All those in favour will please stand.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	O'Toole, John
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Ernie	Patten, Richard
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hudak, Tim	Peterson, Tim
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Phillips, Gerry
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Runciman, Robert W.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Scott, Laurie
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Sterling, Norman W.
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol	Yakubuski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 63; the nays are zero.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96—

Mr Gravelle: Mr Speaker, I would ask that my bill be referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy. We have to get to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The committee on justice and social policy? Agreed? Thank you.

All matters with regard to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30.

The House recessed from 1206 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): Grey-Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor. The hospital serves a vital role in response to motor vehicle accidents and also responds to the seasonal needs of the area's active skiing community.

For the residents of Grey Highlands, the hospital offers 21 beds for in-patient care, an obstetrical service, general surgery and plastic surgery and employs 89 staff members. These services are provided in a building that is functionally obsolete. Parts of this hospital are over 50 years old and will only be sustainable for five more years. Four accreditation surveys have recommended its replacement. Patient safety, patient confidentiality, operational efficiency and care delivery constraints are driving the need to rebuild.

A new structure is planned for the Grey Gables site. Planning is underway with the county to maximize the benefit of sharing resources between the two health facilities. The community has supported the creation of physician clinic space and has attracted the first new physicians to the area in the last 10 years. The Centre Grey General Hospital Foundation is leading the re-development campaign to replace the current hospital with a building that is efficient, will meet the current and future needs of the community and will serve to retain health professionals in the community.

The community has launched an ambitious fundraising campaign to raise its \$12-million share for a new hospital. I call upon the Liberal government to do its fair share for the new hospital, and I ask the residents of Grey county to give generously to the new Markdale hospital.

COMMENTS ON RADIO

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): For over 25 years, I have taken great pride in shepherding my constituents in the riding of York West and the many wonderful people who make up our community. I therefore rise today to

express my disgust at CFRB's Bill Carroll's contemptuous insinuations against residing in the Jane-Finch area. Such an insensitive, flippant comment made on the air on his morning show is evidence of his blatant lack of respect and lack of understanding.

Our community cannot, and will not, be identified by the criminal element our society objects to and is fighting against. Our community, taxpaying citizens and decent families, desire to live fulfilled lives and to create a better future for themselves and their children.

People such as Dwight Drummond from CITY-TV, Lien Tran from the Vietnamese community, Almaz Reda and staff at the Jane-Finch Community Family Centre, Patricia Williams and staff at the Jamaican Canadian Association, retired 31 Division superintendent Jim Parkin and the community police liaison committee, the Salvation Army and an army of volunteers, religious leaders, such as Pastor Richards and his congregation, the sisters of the Minime order and many others, take their good work outside their walls to reach out to the most needy.

I salute and applaud them all and remind our radio show host Bill Carroll that if influence has been given, I say put it to good use for the betterment of our society so that positive changes can be effected. The choice and privilege we have is the legacy we can choose to leave behind in the lives of others.

SMOKING BAN

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to rise today to bring to the attention of the Liberal government the important issue of making all public and workplaces in our province 100% smoke-free.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of premature death, disease and disability in this province. Every half hour, someone dies as a result of a tobacco-related illness. The bottom line is that the province should show leadership on this issue—

Interjections.

Mr Tascona: Mr Speaker, I cannot hear myself trying to speak. The government House leader is just drowning me out.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Mr Tascona: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The bottom line here is that the province should show leadership on this issue and not only ensure that this Liberal government lives up to their commitment to make "all public and workplaces in Ontario 100% smoke-free within three years" but also ensure that they speed up this promise.

Why wait? Why in three years? Why not do it today? Each day that passes, people are subjected to second-hand smoke. On an issue as important to the health, lives and well-being of Ontarians, I urge this Liberal government to take action today and ban smoking in all public and workplaces.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek

unanimous consent to allow the member from Oxford a chance to rebut the previous member's statement.

The Speaker: I heard a no.

PURIFICS INC

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I want to congratulate Purifics Inc, located in London-Fanshawe, on recently being awarded a contract to supply the NASA space agency with a water and air purification system. The system is to be used on the International Space Station.

Purifics was incorporated in 1993 in London, Ontario. They are 100% Canadian owned and export 80% of their product. They hold six US patents. It's a knowledge-based company that serves the nuclear, petrochemical, agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Their mission is to develop, manufacture and supply purification systems for air, water and soil that provide environmental and economical benefits.

Their first client was New Brunswick Power, which is using Purifics technology to clean heavy water from CANDU reactors.

All their technologies are built from scratch. They are known by many, including the US navy, as the best available technology.

I congratulate Purifics co-owners Brian Butters and Tony Powell on their recent success. I am proud to have a forward-thinking, knowledge-based company like Purifics in my riding of London-Fanshawe. I know that we will hear of more successes from this company in the future.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise in the House today to remind the new McGuinty government of their promise to cut auto insurance rates by 10% within 90 days of forming government—or is it really 20%, as was mentioned during the recent election campaign by many Liberal candidates?

This morning, I read with great interest an article by the Toronto Star's Richard Brennan entitled "Drivers Fume at Rate Hikes." Mr Brennan mentions in his article that Finance Minister Greg Sorbara now claims that the 10% figure is really just an average. Try telling that to hard-working taxpayers in this province whose rates are going up by 20%, 30%, 40%, and 50% more.

In September of last year, our leader Ernie Eves, who at the time was Premier of this province, warned insurance companies to lower premiums for the drivers an average of 15% or legislation would be passed to roll back rate hikes.

Richard Brennan further writes in his article, "The then government introduced regulation changes allowing companies to pass on savings to motorists, but the Liberals 'sat on them' for six months and the companies went ahead and increased premiums. It wasn't until

January that the Liberals started putting the breaks on premium rates."

If the Liberals meant what they said during the election, the 10% reduction would have already been in place by the end of January 2004. Not only did they break their election promise on cutting auto insurance rates, but the Liberals also tried to conceal the fact that they had recently approved a 28.5% average rate increase for the industry-run Facility Association. This is the only option for insuring drivers who cannot get coverage through regular insurers.

Then there's the question of the other 10% of the 20% rate cut that made Liberal candidates proud as peacocks during the election. Apparently, motorists were expected to deliver this 10% cut themselves by reducing their own coverage.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I would like to take this time to recognize National Volunteer Week. Without a doubt, many of us have seen the tremendous things that can happen when kind souls volunteer their time for the sake of others.

Within my riding of Mississauga East, we have many organizations that embrace all of the qualities that reflect true community heroes. Groups such as the Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre, the ICNSS, the Volunteer Centre of Peel, the Square One Older Adult Centre and so many others are all contributing to the growing community within Mississauga.

I'd like to say thank you to all of the volunteers living within Mississauga East. You have helped to create not only a stronger community but also a stronger province. Your efforts are invaluable and will always be greatly appreciated. As you are all aware, this government is about growing strong communities. We will not be able to do this without the involvement of volunteer organizations that continue to provide outstanding services.

To my fellow members: I ask you to take this opportunity this week and in the future to meet and support the many volunteers who help to keep Ontario the best province to live in.

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SERVICE DE DIALYSE

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Je vais prendre l'occasion de soulever une question que je pense est assez importante pour les résidents de la région de Hearst au nord de l'Ontario. Comme on le sait, on a passé un projet de loi ce matin qui regarde toute la question autour du diabète pour mettre en place ce qu'on appelle « insulin pumps » pour ceux qui en ont besoin. Un problème à travers la province est que ceux qui ont besoin des services de dialyse ont parfois de grosses difficultés d'accès aux services.

Je veux amener à l'attention de l'Assemblée, comme je l'ai fait déjà, la situation de Hearst. On a, à ce point-ci,

environ cinq ou six personnes qui ont besoin des services de dialyse. La seule place où on peut avoir la dialyse dans cette région est à Kapuskasing, pour les gens qui ont besoin des services et qui ont besoin de se déplacer au-dessus de 500 kilomètres pour se rendre à leur traitement au moins deux fois par semaine. Le problème, comme on le sait, est que les routes ne sont pas toujours les meilleures, spécialement en hiver. C'est pour ça qu'on travaille sur une initiative pour mettre en place pour la communauté de Hearst, à l'Hôpital Notre-Dame, un service de dialyse.

Je vois mon ami le ministre de la Santé, qui est ici, et je demande au ministre s'il est capable d'accélérer la recommandation qui était faite par les services de santé régionales pour assurer qu'on mette en place les services de dialyse à la ville de Hearst où l'on en a besoin.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Last night I attended a public meeting in my riding where about 100 church leaders and concerned citizens gathered to discuss regulation 170 of the Safe Drinking Water Act. They came to the Hebron United Church to talk about the cost of the engineering reports, the regulation demands, to wade through its confusing clauses and voice displeasure about what they see as generally unreasonable regulation. There were many questions as to why rural churches had to abide by regulation 170 because those facilities use a single private well, not unlike domestic wells at their homes, which are exempt and can provide safe drinking water with simple ultraviolet treatment.

The minister stood in this House yesterday and told us she agreed the regulation is flawed, and that she has directed staff to provide her with recommendations on how to remedy the situation. Yet, staff continue to enforce this regulation in rural Ontario when their minister knows it doesn't work. Hebron United is facing a \$12,000 bill to meet ministry demands, and other church leaders at the meeting told me these costs are far beyond what they can manage.

Minister, I urge you to immediately inform rural communities that you will not enforce regulation 170 until the government is ready to implement recommendation 84 of the O'Connor report and provide funding to these rural churches and halls so it will not be your actions that close these facilities.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to mark the 89th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. April 24, 1915, was the start of a planned and systematic campaign to eradicate the Armenian people from present-day Turkey, the last century's first case of ethnic cleansing. One and a half million Armenian men, women and children were brutally killed.

At the time, the world community sat idle and did nothing. Thus, the stage was set for other genocides and

human tragedies. In fact, upon unveiling his final solution for the Jewish people, Adolf Hitler noted to his aides that the world would not lift a finger because, in his words, "Who today remembers the Armenians?"

This Assembly in 1980, along with the National Assembly in Quebec, recognized this tragic event. Yesterday the House of Commons did the same thing. This open wound cannot heal without achieving justice, justice cannot exist without the truth, and the truth must be recognized.

On April 25, many of my colleagues from this assembly and I will be in the Armenian Community Centre in Toronto to commemorate the first genocide of the last century. I urge you and all of us to commemorate this event with the Armenian community of Toronto. I'm proud to be a member of this assembly that has long spoken out on this issue and I commend members from all sides of the House, past and present, for their leadership on this matter, in particular the member from Don Valley East, David Caplan, and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, Gerry Phillips, who have long spoken out on this issue.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of personal explanation: Honourable members, last week when I left the Chair, I made certain gestures to the member for Erie-Lincoln that subsequently have become the subject of a point of privilege in this House. My intent was, in fact, not to call out the member, but rather to invite him behind the dais to explain why I'd ruled the way I had. This was in response to his repeated requests to cite the rule.

I certainly intended no disrespect for the member or for this House. Having said that, I regret that the gesture has clearly been interpreted otherwise by the member for Erie-Lincoln.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Time for oral questions. Oh, I seem to be pushing the day along too quickly.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LCBO DEPOSIT AND RETURN ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LES CONSIGNES ET REMISES EXIGÉES PAR LA RAO

Mr Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act to require the Liquor Control Board to establish a deposit and return system / Projet de loi 61, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les alcools pour exiger que la Régie des alcools crée un système de consignes et de remise.

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

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It being Earth Day, I thought it appropriate to introduce this bill. The bill amends the Liquor Control Act to require the Liquor Control Board to establish programs to ensure that all liquor sold to the public on or after July 1, 2005, is in containers for which a deposit is charged at the time of sale and refunded on the return of a container.

There are many successful return programs across the country, including British Columbia, and I see this as a first step toward a comprehensive deposit return system to reduce waste going into our landfills, reduce litter and reduce emissions and other pollutants.

WASTE DISPOSAL SITE 41
IN THE TOWNSHIP OF TINY ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LE LIEU 41
D'ÉLIMINATION DE DÉCHETS
DANS LE CANTON DE TINY

Mr Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 62, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at Site 41 in the Township of Tiny / Projet de loi 62, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets sur le lieu 41 dans le canton de Tiny.

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

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Again, on Earth Day, the bill prohibits the disposal of waste at site 41 in the township of Tiny, which is located approximately four kilometres north of the village of Elmvalle and four kilometres south of the village of Wyevalle. The bill revokes an environmental approval that has been issued in connection with the possible disposal of waste at the site. The bill extinguishes certain causes of action that may exist in respect of the site, and the bill entitles the county of Simcoe to compensation from the crown with respect to certain expenses if the Legislative Assembly authorizes the payment of compensation. This bill parallels the Adams Mine Lake Act that was introduced recently.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

EARTH DAY

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): It is a pleasure to address the House on this very special day for the people of Ontario, the people of Canada and people around the world as we recognize Earth Day.

Earth Day began as a spontaneous grassroots protest in 1970 against the abuse being heaped upon the environment. The first Earth Day focused on pollution teach-ins at dozens of college campuses. It was the birth of the

environmental movement and inspired the creation of clean air and water laws across North America.

Today, Earth Day is actively celebrated by 500 million people in 180 countries around the world, with 6 million in Canada alone. This morning I joined students in Scarborough to plant trees that will improve their local environment and remind them that their actions can change the world. The environmental movement has come a long, long way. Environmental protection is now a shared value and this government is committed to promoting conservation in our water and energy, and reducing the waste we produce.

When Ontarians voted, they voted for change. They voted for bold initiatives on environmental protection and natural resources management. We have been charged with reversing the course set by the former government, whose policies led us all to question whether the water in our taps was safe to drink, to worry about the effects of increased smog and to doubt there was a long-term plan for overflowing landfill sites and mounting garbage.

Our efforts start by ensuring that the air we breathe is clean and the water we drink is safe. That is why it is time for bold initiatives.

We are working with all interested parties—environmentalists, scientists, researchers, ratepayers, our youth and people in the business community—to protect the environment. There is so much at stake. For example, the sickness and health effects from smog and poor air quality cost Ontario taxpayers and business \$1 billion annually in lost productivity and health care system resources. Imagine the benefits to our society if we cut smog by one quarter, which I believe is readily achievable. What impact would that have on our economy, on health care and on our government deficit?

The McGuinty government is committed to environmental protection and leaving this province better than we found it. This requires curbing urban sprawl, fostering healthy communities and supporting community involvement in planning. It means making the preservation of our water, air and land central to our daily discourse, debate and decisions. It means a new way of thinking for everyone.

The McGuinty government is moving rapidly to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink, and to ensure our waste is handled properly. We have introduced the Adams Mine Lake Act that would, if passed, end the uncertainty and long debate about that project. The local community has repeatedly voiced concerns about the Adams mine landfill. For this government, the protection of our communities is of paramount concern.

The previous government left many programs and departments without resources for too many years and the Ministry of the Environment was a favourite target. The ministry was orphaned, its funding decimated, its staffing cut severely.

We cannot change this overnight, but one of my first actions was to announce a 25% increase in the number of water inspectors. In his Walkerton report, Justice O'Connor was clear that source protection is fundamental

to ensuring safe drinking water, but for too long source protection was missing from Ontario's water policies. Not any more. Source protection, making sure our lakes and rivers and underground wells are safe from contamination, is the hallmark of our approach.

This government has taken a significant step to end the reckless giveaway of Ontario's precious water resources. We placed a one-year moratorium on new or expanded permits to take water for uses that remove water from watersheds. This moratorium buys time to review and improve the process for issuing permits to take water. We will not grant new permits until we are certain there is enough water in the watershed for this and future generations. The blank cheque days of taking this precious resource are over.

We are taking steps to establish a greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe that will limit urban sprawl, protect and preserve the quality of life in our communities, provide public access to greenspaces, protect both water quality and quantity, and improve the quality of the air we breathe.

We are also taking action to improve air quality. We are committed to shutting down the coal-fired generating plants that produce smog-causing pollutants and greenhouse gases. It will not be easy, especially given the shambles of Ontario Power Generation and the strains on our power grid, but there are alternatives. I am heartened by the success of projects such as Toronto's first windmill.

The McGuinty government is also getting tough with polluters. I have warned industry that we will have zero tolerance for spills and illegal emissions. I sent the environmental SWAT team to Sarnia to examine the petrochemical industry. Earlier this week, I introduced the Industrial Pollution Action Team that will give me expert advice on what needs to be done to ensure there are no more spills.

This government has also taken a different approach to waste disposal. The amount of waste we produce is still growing too fast, yet we are recycling and diverting far too little. Our recycling rates, though improving, are too low, especially compared to some other provinces. We can do better, and we will. Our goal is to divert 60% of waste from landfills, or about double what is being diverted today. Together we can reach this target by 2008.

We recognize it will not be easy. It will require decisive action to promote recycling and other waste diversion. We need to look beyond merely finding a place for the waste we produce and focus on producing less waste in the first place. We need to value conservation over consumption. We need to work with our partners and provide them with the tools that will be effective for them to achieve our goals. Our long-term waste management strategy will be sustainable and it will protect the environment.

Clearly we face significant challenges, but we also have exciting opportunities to create unprecedented safeguards for Ontario's air, water and land. For too long this province's natural environment has suffered and we

have suffered. It's now our turn and our responsibility to change that, and we gladly take on that role.

1400

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): Today is a significant day on the environmental advocacy calendar. Today is Earth Day.

More than 100 countries are celebrating Earth Day. Earth Day's mission is to improve the state of the environment by encouraging individuals and communities to develop effective partnerships and action plans.

On Earth Day and during Earth Week, which runs through Sunday, April 28, Ontarians and all Canadians are invited to reconfirm their well-documented personal commitment to the environment. People across the country and around the world are participating in community events, such as tree planting, cleanups, concerts, workshops and parades. On behalf of the official opposition, which has a stated commitment to ensuring our tax dollars are wisely and effectively used to protect the environment, I invite all members of this House to take part in today's events.

Over the last eight years, Ontario became a leader on the environmental front. I trust that the tradition of respecting the air we breathe, the water we drink and the land we cherish will continue. Ontario has come too far to turn back the clock. Our environment is our future. In the spirit of Earth Day, we look forward to working together on this issue of utmost importance, despite the Minister of the Environment's perspective on the environment.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind all Canadians that it's only through individual actions that our children, our neighbours and our communities will be encouraged to continue to work toward making every day Earth Day. And I would just note that there is an Earth Day celebration this Saturday at the Samuel Wilmot Nature Area.

Earth Day is a commitment that is shared by all. I would like to congratulate all who are going to take part in Earth Day today and celebrate this Earth Week.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I also wish to address and to be part of this province's celebration of Earth Day—and, in some cases, Earth Week—this Earth Day, April 22. With respect to the nation of Canada, it's the 15th annual recognition of Earth Day, truly a day to not only celebrate our environment but to bear witness and to realize and to communicate to others how important it is to protect and cherish what we have in this great province of Ontario.

We recently have been debating recycling, as the minister made mention, and debating the so-called Adams Mine Lake Act. After 15 years of debate and environmental assessment, communication and consultation with key stakeholders, communication between both government and the private sector, it has come to this: It looks like the Adams mine will not be a landfill. The province of Ontario will continue to shift well over a million tonnes of trash to the state of Michigan, about 125 tractor-trailers a day.

Michigan and that part of Michigan in Sumpter township and subdivisions of Detroit are not having a good Earth Day. They are seeing garbage coming from Canada. The political will in Michigan is resisting this trend to the extent that the Democratic contender for the presidency, John Kerry, has indicated that if he becomes President, with the assistance of the Kennedy family, he will review the importation of garbage to Michigan, a Great Lakes state, within the first 120 days of his reign as President.

This government, and I will mention the NDP as well, has decades of recognition and a record with respect to environmental legislation. I will say that both the NDP and the PCs have done the heavy lifting with respect to legislation. We raised this question in debate two days ago. We posed the question to the government: Name one piece of legislation passed by provincial Liberals in the province of Ontario. There's a list of NDP legislation, a list of Progressive Conservative legislation. We put the challenge on this Earth Day: Name one piece of Ontario Liberal environmental legislation. I hear no response.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On behalf of New Democrats and of our environment critic, the member for Toronto-Danforth, Marilyn Churley, I am pleased to take part in this celebration of Earth Day and in rededicating ourselves to saving our Earth.

Clean water, clean air and unpolluted land are not things we can take for granted. They come about because citizens and governments take action. The result of neglecting the environment is not just bad for the environment but lethal to human health. We found out at Walkerton just how vital protecting the environment is to public health. When tax cuts are placed ahead of investments in water systems, sewer systems and good, well-enforced pollution laws, catastrophe can result.

There are a number of environmental issues on the agenda of the province today, and the Liberal government will be judged on whether or not, and how well, they deal with them.

On water, the refusal of the Liberal government to pay its fair share has meant that new water regulations have been a serious financial burden on small towns, rural municipalities, trailer parks and property owners in general. We have already seen trailer parks and community halls shut down because they cannot afford the new regulations financially and the province refuses to help. The Liberal refusal to help out has been quite evident. The minister was very clear in response to the member for Toronto-Danforth and the member from Nickel Belt: People and communities are on their own. The government should be ashamed. The Liberal government must take responsibility for safe water instead of dumping the cost onto communities that can't afford it, which was the Conservative solution.

On air, the Liberal position before the election was: "All coal-fired plants will be closed by 2007." Now, after the election, the Minister of Energy tells his Bay Street friends at the Empire Club that the coal plants will only be closed when the government "is totally satisfied that

adequate alternatives are in place before we replace coal." I think we know what that means: It won't be 2007, it won't be 2008, it won't be 2009 and it won't be 2010, either. This is sounding more and more like the Conservative policy.

The truth is that the Liberal government is fiddling while coal burns. In seven months they have done nothing to replace even one kilowatt of coal capacity. In fact, all they've done is hire the same consultant the Conservatives hired. And do you know what? He's going to give the Liberals the same advice he gave the Conservatives, which means we'll see the same Conservative policy all over again, but this time in a red package.

This government has also announced a conservation plan, but one that looks like more spin than substance. The government is putting in only a small fraction of the money that's needed for incentives to consumers. They say they're relying on so-called smart meters. The problem with smart meters for residential consumers, as we saw in California, is that they deliver very small savings at a great price. They require a great deal of effort and expense to put them in place, but they deliver very little in terms of energy conservation. The government should put that effort and that money into ensuring that every home in Ontario has a home energy audit and that there are financial incentives for people to undertake aggressive retrofitting, so that real energy efficiency and conservation can happen.

To wrap up, the government has done the right thing on the Adams mine, but they have failed to take responsibility to help Toronto and other municipalities find a solution for their garbage; they have introduced green-belt legislation but are allowing a new town to be built on the Niagara Escarpment; they have said they're in favour of cleaning up brownfield sites so they can be redeveloped, but they haven't provided municipalities with any money to enable them to do that.

Yes, there is a long way to go on the environment. We, as New Democrats, will be keeping a close watch on this government, because despite their many promises, it looks like a lot of Liberal spin.

1410

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Let me draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery. We have with us today a delegation of health officials from the Republic of Kazakhstan, led by the Honourable Erbolat Dossayev, Minister of Health for the Republic of Kazakhstan and Mr Samat Zhanabay, Consul of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Toronto. Please join me in welcoming them warmly to the assembly.

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Under Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice, I refer to page 312, where it entitles members to

make personal statements, so I wanted to do so at the first opportunity. I wanted to apologize and congratulate the member for York South-Weston and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade on the occasion of the victory of the Toronto Maple Leafs over the Ottawa Senators, and to make good on my bet—could I get a page? I also wanted to extend my sympathies to Jacques Martin, who has joined the 25,000 unemployed Ontarians today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order, of course.

ORAL QUESTIONS

USER FEES

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday Dalton McGuinty said that in the pre-budget consultations the people of the province said, "Yes, we should be paying more user fees." Can you name me a single Ontario taxpayer group that said that?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I appreciate the question from my friend, simply because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the unprecedented level of consultation and the success of the consultations that we had prior to this budget. I think people around the province know about some of the town hall meetings that gained some profile in the daily and weekly press. I personally had an opportunity to participate in 14 pre-budget consultations, each one of them offering new insight into the mood and the predisposition and where the people of Ontario looked for us to lead as we present the budget.

We didn't write down names, but I'll just tell you in terms of—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sorbara: We didn't put, "Recommendation: user fees, name." Just let me say that there is a marvellous degree of goodwill, and the people of Ontario look to us to do the following things, sir: to improve the quality of public services, to repair the finances of this province—and I see you're standing, so I'll wait for the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Exactly. Supplementary.

Mr Baird: I'm not just shocked; I'm stunned. The Minister of Finance today has hung the Premier out to dry. He can't name a single person, he can't name a single group, who came before any public hearings anywhere in the province and said, "I want more user fees." Dalton McGuinty believes that the people of Ontario want more user fees. Minister, do you believe that the people of Ontario want more user fees?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I will neither agree nor disagree with my friend's comment that he is stunned. I will just leave that out there, and I'll have others comment on that. But I will tell him, to sort of revive him and bring him back to consciousness, that there were many people in

the consultations who, when considering public services, said, "Yes, it would be fair if we paid the true cost of that service," whether it be water or whatever, because we provide a wide variety of services. That was a theme that occurred from time to time during the consultations. What the Premier said yesterday simply reflected what we heard during the course of the consultations.

Mr Baird: I learned in school in Bells Corners in Nepean that if you couldn't use a specific example, the teacher would say you had made it up.

I have in my hand the all-party report of the standing committee on finance. This is a committee of MPPs of all parties who travelled the province and heard from literally hundreds of individuals and groups representing millions of people in Ontario. Not one single person, not one single group, said anything about wanting more user fees.

Let's look at the report. Page 3: "Many of those proposing tax increases called for a progressive system, rejecting ... user fees..." Page 14: "Many witnesses urged the government to resist ... imposing user fees..." Mr Speaker, look at the recommendation made by your members of Parliament: Recommendation 34 recommends abandoning the notion of user fees for seniors. There isn't one single person who recommended this. All parties agreed on this report after touring the province. Would you not be honest with the people of Ontario and admit that Dalton McGuinty simply made this up yesterday?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'll be honest with my friend from Nepean-Carleton. During the course of our consultations we heard not only about the financial deficit left to us by the previous administration; we also heard about the infrastructure deficit, we heard about the social deficit, and we heard about the deficit in education and in health care. So I want to tell my friend that he ought not to stand up and preach any doctrine espoused by him and the previous administration.

As far as the report is concerned, I have read the report and I think the parliamentary committee did a magnificent job. The work of that committee, along with the other consultations, will result in a budget being presented—I invite my friend to be here on May 18—that will begin to repair the damage done to this province by eight years of Tory administration.

Mr Baird: The thing about this parliamentary report is that all the meetings were conducted in public and there's a verbatim transcript of everyone who appeared. Unlike you, who can't remember a single soul who was begging for new user fees, this report doesn't lie, and your members of Parliament endorsed the report.

During last fall's election, Dalton McGuinty looked every Ontario taxpayer in the eye and said, "I won't raise your taxes." Let's look at your record over the past six months. You've broken your promise and raised hydro rates; you've increased taxes on our small businesses; auto insurance rates are up; and taxes on seniors and working families are up as well—all after Dalton McGuinty spent \$4 million to run TV ads when he looked

every Ontario taxpayer in the eye and said, "I won't raise your taxes."

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member clearly implied, and said directly, that the finance minister lied, which in my understanding is not parliamentary language and is completely false. I would ask you, Mr Speaker, to review Hansard, and if the member did, then he ought to withdraw the implication.

The Speaker: What I heard the member state, and I can check Hansard, is that "this report doesn't lie." I will check the record.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Should Hansard reflect differently beyond that, I will get back to you on the matter.

Mr Baird: I have a simple question to the minister, one on which he owes a direct answer to the people of Ontario. I want to know, taxpayers want to know, vulnerable seniors want to know, do you believe that a new user fee is a tax? Will you answer that question directly, Minister?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Firstly, Mr Speaker, as to the point of order, I am not concerned about it. I have never found the member's questions to be very deeply rooted in the truth, so we'll take the question as he presents it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister, I think you know that was unparliamentary. Would you mind withdrawing the comment?

Hon Mr Sorbara: They're rooted in the truth. The question is, how deeply?

To get to my friend's question—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Let's settle down a bit.

Let me start again. Minister, I heard some unparliamentary words. Are you ready to withdraw that comment?

1420

Hon Mr Sorbara: Certainly, if it was unparliamentary, I will withdraw it.

I want to say to my friend, apropos, first of all, the consultations that we heard, that the level of concern about how a province that went through eight and a half years of very strong economic growth under your administration could leave such a horrible deficit in terms of the quality of our public services: If there was any theme that connected all the submissions we heard, it was that theme as well. The fact that we inherited a \$5.6-billion deficit is only one element of the deficit that we will begin to repair and turn around when we present the budget.

Mr Baird: I say to the minister opposite, boy, have times changed and, boy, has the tune changed since you folks were on this side of the House. When your band of rat packers sat on this side of the House, let's look at what you said: You called user fees "insidious." Sandra Pupatello, our good friend from Windsor, said, "You can call them taxes or you can call them user fees."

Would you now admit, Minister, that your plan about introducing massive new user fees is all about quenching the thirst for new spending and big government, and that it violates the trust the people of the province of Ontario placed in you? Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'll tell my friend that if he is using this forum to suggest that we are going to bring in a budget with massive new user fees, then he is misrepresenting not only the consultations that we've had, but the budget that we'll be presenting.

I want to tell my friend about user fees. I want to remind the people of this House and this province about the extent to which university tuitions, for example, skyrocketed in the eight and a half years that they were in power. I want to talk about the charges for seniors living in long-term-care facilities.

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): The 407.

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend the Minister of Natural Resources mentions the 407. I could spend the rest of the afternoon on Highway 407 if he wants to talk about user fees.

Mr Baird: Six years ago in this place, Dalton McGuinty said, "Taxing our seniors with new drug user fees" puts us on a pathway "to destroying some of the things that have made this province a great province." And in the leaders' debate on December 23, McGuinty pronounced, "We will not raise taxes one cent on Ontario families."

Minister, I have a direct question for you: What do you say to the senior living on a fixed income in Ontario who feels that she has been misled by you and your political party?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I would say to all seniors in the province that, as they listen to the budget, they will see themselves reflected in the budget and they will see that we are taking steps to redress some of the damage that has been inflicted on their lives over the course of the past eight and a half years. Not that we will be able to do it all, but I want to tell my friend that the extent to which, in any area of public policy, we have got to start to turn this province around—I'll just take one; I'll just take health care for a moment. The deficits left in our hospitals over the course of eight and a half years: \$850 million in deficits left by their administration.

Those folks over there worshipped at the altar of tax cuts. They destroyed the revenue base of this province and they allowed public services, during a period of great economic growth, to deteriorate to unprecedented proportions. That is their legacy, and that's the one we're going to turn around.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday Mr McGuinty indicated that the government intends to produce a Conservative copycat budget on May 18. Under the Liberals, the well off will get to keep the 35% tax cut

they got under the Conservatives, but everybody else will be hit with new user fees, copayment fees, administrative fees and anything else that you can hit lower- and modest-income people with. Last week it was the \$3.99 breakfast; now we find out it may be more highway tolls, it may be driver's licence fees, marriage licence fees, birth certificate fees.

My question is this: Why does the Liberal government think it's so important that the well off keep their 35% tax cut, while you go after those with low and modest incomes?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): The Minister of Finance will respond to this.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I can simply tell my friend from Kenora-Rainy River that the Premier, as we speak, is speaking on education, and the improvements we will begin to see as a result of the initiatives already taken in Ontario and about to be taken under the umbrella of the budget will be very impressive indeed.

We have already begun, for example, to assist in public transit in the city of Toronto. Is he against the revenues that we gave the TTC to avoid a fee increase there?

I don't think my friend from Kenora-Rainy River is going to talk about the impact that his government had on, for example, hydro or the insurance industry. All I can do is invite him to be here on budget day, and I think he will be duly impressed with the measures that we take.

Mr Hampton: The question was this: The Premier warned yesterday that your government is looking at all forms of revenue and fee increases. Now, if you want to debate that, you can debate that with the press gallery. Good luck.

The point is this: We're seeing already in the province higher water fees, higher hydro rates, higher auto insurance rates, municipalities forced to raise property taxes because you weren't there with the two-cents-a-litre gas tax. For someone with an income of \$100,000 a year, all of these fee increases—copayment fees, administrative fees, user fees—may not matter, but for someone who has an income of \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000, these are unfair taxes; they are regressive taxes.

So I ask the question again: I thought you said "choose change" in the election. Why are you promoting a budget where those who got a 35% tax cut, the very well off, will keep it; meanwhile, those with the lowest income or a modest income will be hit harder than ever? Why do you look very much like the government you replaced?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I know my friend from Kenora-Rainy River would like us to become involved in a debate and speculation on what is or is not going to be in the budget, and I'm probably the only member of this House who really can't participate in that. I simply will tell him that our objective from the day we were elected was to bring forward a balanced budget, to begin to put this province's finances back in order.

I have said on other occasions that we are looking at ways of raising non-tax-based revenues, and we continue

that search. I know my friend engaged in the speculation on the \$4 exemption to prepared meals. I can tell him simply and straightforwardly that that measure never really got past first base, never really passed first muster, but there was a lot of hoopla about it, so we made an announcement that it had fallen off the radar screen quite some time ago.

I will tell him that when we present the budget, sir—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Again to the Acting Premier, McGuinty math is sweeping the province, except it doesn't add up for people who have to renew their auto insurance. Instead of the 10% or 20% reduction in insurance rates that the Premier promised before the election, people open the envelope and, surprise, surprise, it's a 10% or 20% increase. Renewal notices tell us that McGuinty math doesn't work very well.

Can the Acting Premier explain this new McGuinty math to Zygi Fila, to Keith Simpson, and to thousands of other people who are getting insurance notices where there's no 10% reduction; there's a 10% or 20% increase? Can you explain how a promise to reduce auto insurance rates has become an increase in auto insurance rates?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Since the Minister of Finance answered this question yesterday, I will ask him to answer it today.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Far be it from me to be an adviser to the member from Kenora-Rainy River, but I just do not think he has any credibility at all on the issue of insurance rates. My friend from Kenora-Rainy River was part of a government that changed automobile insurance premiums in this province in 1994 in a dramatic way, which led to the beginning of almost 10 years of rate increases. They made those changes, and the system has been under attack ever since. And then in the interim, he came again to the electorate and proposed public automobile insurance, the models adopted in other provinces where the benefits available to accident victims are a quarter of what they are in Ontario. I just tell him that we will not be adopting the proposals made by him. We will continue with our program, which will result in dramatically reduced rates for auto insurance premiums in this province, but not at the cost of victims' rights.

1430

Mr Hampton: You can recite all that Fraser Institute claptrap you want. The fact of the matter is, it was your Premier who said that first you would freeze rates and then you would reduce them by 20%. My question is, what's happening to that promise? Because it looks now like it was a con game, a sham.

Let me give you another example. Christopher Horsup of Hanmer, Ontario, has a perfect driving record. He

received his renewal notice in just the last few days—a 12% increase. When he asked his broker why his rates went up instead of down, he was told, “Insurance rates are rising across Ontario.”

It is now six months since you assumed power, and drivers across Ontario continue to get the double-digit increases. I ask you again: According to McGuinty math, how does a promise of a 20% rate reduction become a 20% increase for people?

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend the leader of the NDP is right. We promised to freeze rates as soon as we came to power. We froze rates as soon as we came to power, on the first day. We promised to take measures to reduce those rates by, on average, 10%. As of April 15, rates are coming down by, on average, 10%.

Co-operators insurance company: exactly a 10% rate reduction. ING Canada: a 12.4% rate reduction. Pilot Insurance Co: a 10.2% rate reduction. Allstate insurance: a 10.9% rate reduction.

I simply want to tell you that my friend does not have credibility on this issue. We said we would do something. We did, and drivers in Ontario begin, as of this month, to benefit from lower rates.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): In the absence of the Minister of Education, I put my question to the Acting Premier. It’s my understanding that directors of education and school board trustees today are the latest group of stakeholders who have been broadsided by his government. Interestingly enough, the Premier, who is well known for breaking promises, chose today a character communities conference to make an announcement. The announcement he’s making is with regard to capping classroom sizes for JK to grade 3. We find it interesting that an announcement that obviously the government considers so important was not made in the House today. For a government that considers it important that this place be the site of important announcements, I find that interesting.

But here’s my question: Why did the Minister of Education and the Premier today fail to announce any financial commitment? What they have failed to tell the people of the province is that they’re so desperate to make this announcement, they’re willing to impose split classes and impose literally thousands of portables on our school system in the province of Ontario. The question that parents should rightfully be asking is, how can this government justify doing something like this to the education system in this province?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): The Premier and the Minister of Education are in a school community today. They’re there because they want to be a visible presence, not only to that school community but to the people of Ontario, to demonstrate that they care what happens in our schools, and that they will work with the education community, the teachers and the parents to provide them with the tools they know

are necessary for good education in the province. We are going to reduce class sizes in the primary division. That’s the change the people of Ontario voted for, and that’s the change that’s being delivered in schools today.

Mr Klees: We know full well that the reason for this announcement today has nothing to do with the quality of education and everything to do with the desperate need of this government to spin some information to people in this province. That’s what it’s all about. They didn’t have the decency to make an announcement in the Legislature today. What it’s all about is politics.

What the people of this province want to know is where the billion and a half dollars is going to come from that the Ministry of Education estimated this is going to cost. What is going to be sacrificed by this government to fund the billion and a half dollars? Is it going to be health? Is it going to be transportation? Is it going to be the environment? Where is the money, the billion and a half dollars for this program, coming from?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Only a member of the Tory opposition would open a question with, “How dare you lower class size?”

That demonstrates our commitment to improving the quality of education in Ontario. I’m very happy to explain that in addition to our commitment to lower class size—and when you speak with teachers in the primary division, they wholeheartedly support this initiative—we are also going to be placing lead teachers specially trained in literacy and numeracy in our schools. We are going to establish a platform for performance to establish peace and stability in our schools, something you decimated, something you totally destroyed in our schools.

We are advocates of better education. The Premier has indicated that that will be our strength as an economy going forward, and today is a first step to building that strong economy.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. It’s about transportation issues in my riding of Oakville.

My first question is about public transit. We have many people who rely on public transit to commute to work and also people who use transit to come into Oakville. It’s important to my community that we provide them with a modern and reliable system to get to and from Oakville. Minister, can you tell them about your plans and your recent announcement about public transit in Oakville?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I am pleased to inform my colleague from Oakville that this week we made some announcements on behalf of GO Transit to upgrade the Bronte station and also to refurbish 12 buses. This money will go toward renovations in the station and the repair of buses in the fleet. Construction will start in May and finish in December. We are absolutely committed to making transit our top priority.

Mr Flynn: My second question deals with transportation in my riding as well. Around the corner from the Bronte GO station is a new interchange at QEW and Third Line. Yesterday, the member from Oak Ridges made some statements about this project and its timing. Was he correct in those statements?

Hon Mr Takhar: Let me say that I think the member from Oak Ridges is looking for media attention. I want to assure the member from Oakville that the allegations he made yesterday were not really right or true. There have been no orders to slow our hard work on this project, or on any of our hard work across this province. This contract was awarded in 2002. In spring 2003 some minor changes were made in this contract. There is a dispute, which normally happens with these contracts, between the contractor and the government. We are working toward resolving it. We are absolutely committed to completing this project in 2005.

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RENT BANK PROGRAMS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): In the absence of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, with responsibility for seniors, I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Finance. Your government three weeks ago announced the provincial rent bank program and its expansion, yet you did so without announcing any clear guidelines or giving any assurances to municipalities about the quantum of the administrative costs in order to implement this program.

We have received correspondence from the first of many municipalities, Kingston in particular, the home riding of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. They raise a serious question about why your government would be announcing a program without clear guidelines and without assurances that—as they put in their resolution, they're not prepared to proceed unless the province of Ontario is also willing to assume all direct and indirect costs that municipalities will incur as a result of these programs.

Municipalities are allowed to make up their own guidelines and determine whether or not they would like to participate. I have a constituent of mine, a single parent with three children, who has been given an eviction notice and been told they're not eligible for the program. Will you advise on the admin costs, and will you give the municipalities assurances that you will pay the admin costs and that you'll have proper guidelines in place?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I should tell my friend that we're quite proud of that program. We think it will give assistance to those in the province who are most vulnerable. It's timely assistance. Just to clarify, the rent bank makes available to individuals who are experiencing temporary difficulty the ability to draw on the rent bank, to use that to keep current with the rent.

My friend mentions the participation of municipalities and the rules associated with the rent bank. They will be

coming forth shortly. I should say to him that he ought not to go on too long about the plight of municipalities. The work that their administration did on municipalities, the transformation of funding and the amount of down-loading on municipalities was a history of eight and a half years of taking expenses and putting it on municipalities, many of which could not afford to bear those expenses. I just want to tell him that the guidelines will be out shortly and we'll deal with the municipal issue.

Mr Jackson: The minister didn't listen to my question. I raised the question on behalf of a citizen of Ontario who has several months in arrears. The sheriff is visiting their door and throwing the children out on the street, not the municipality. My question is about the individual being thrown out on the street under your program.

The same is true of your hydro rate relief program. It has come to my attention that municipalities are now taking advantage of the fact that with the rate relief program they can increase the surcharges for tenants in social housing, which is owned by the very municipalities themselves, and increase those costs for air-conditioning and laundry facilities. They then can take the money from this limited \$2-million program, which works out to \$2 per person under the poverty line in our province, and pay off those bills.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question.

Mr Jackson: I have a case of a constituent, Carl Lutz, who called me yesterday, concerned when he heard Dalton McGuinty say, "You know, you should try and live without your air-conditioning." He advises me that with his severe emphysema, he will die unless he has full air-conditioning and air-filtering systems, yet you're going to give him a 28% increase in his hydro bill. How is your program helping these people?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Jackson: When will your guidelines for municipalities so that they can help the most needy—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Finance.

Hon Mr Sorbara: When I hear any member of that party talking about help for the most needy, my blood boils. Let's talk about Ontario's most vulnerable. Let's talk about people who need the Ontario disabilities support program to feed themselves and pay their rent. Let's talk about the fact that there has not been an increase in that program in 10 years. Let's talk about people on social assistance. Let's talk about the fact that there has not been an increase in that program throughout the entire eight and a half years that they were in power.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Let's talk about some order. Can you just wrap it up in 10 seconds?

Interjection.

The Speaker: I just asked for some order and the member from Burlington was shouting as soon as I sat down.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I understand the concern of my friend from Burlington. He has always been an advocate

for the most needy. I want to tell him that we are proud of the program we put forward over the course of the past six months. I want to tell him that when he sits in this House and listens to the budget, he will hear for the first time a budget directed in substantial measure toward those most vulnerable in this province.

HERITAGE PROGRAMS

PROTECTION DU PATRIMOINE

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Culture. Madam Minister, recently I received a publication from the Ontario Heritage Foundation, the Doors Open Ontario 2004 guide. The Doors Open program allows Ontarians to tour stunning heritage sites across the province that may not necessarily be open to the public, all free of charge. The guide provides heritage site information, including a two-page outline of historic sites in my riding, giving information on a calendar of events, travel information and the top 10 touring tips. I believe this program is of utmost importance to Ontarians who want to understand their history, and also for the heritage sites that so wish to receive much-needed publicity. As the guardian of Ontario's culture and heritage, can you tell me what other programs this government is supporting to protect our heritage and promote the heritage industry?

Hon Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): First, I want to thank my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. I am very pleased to tell this House today what our government is doing to protect and promote heritage in this province. Doors Open Ontario is the first province-wide initiative of its kind in Canada. It launches its third successful season this Saturday, and the doors will remain open until October. This is an innovative program with a proven track record, but, more importantly, it also encourages us to take pride in our heritage and recognize the significant contribution it makes to our quality of life in Ontario.

Let me tell you about some of the many other initiatives we are undertaking through the Ontario Heritage Foundation to preserve and promote heritage. The Ontario Heritage Foundation continues to unveil provincial heritage plaques. There are more than 1,200 of them. It is the Ontario Heritage Foundation's oldest and best-known program. The foundation owns 22 built heritage sites and over 130 natural heritage sites.

Mr Brownell: Minister, I applaud your commitment to Ontario's heritage. I have been a strong promoter of heritage and history in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. I believe we cannot understand our future unless we know our past. Programs such as Doors Open Ontario allow many Ontarians the opportunity to come into contact with sites they may not necessarily experience.

Minister, yesterday in this House you announced new amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act. These amend-

ments finally update the existing act, which has not been changed since 1975. Can you elaborate on how these amendments will aid cultural institutions and programs such as Doors Open Ontario?

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L'hon. M^{me} Meilleur: Hier, nous avons présenté des modifications à la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario qui, si adoptées, changeront sensiblement la façon dont l'Ontario perçoit et protège son patrimoine.

Nous savions depuis longtemps qu'il fallait changer la loi existante parce qu'elle était inefficace. Des bâtiments et des lieux patrimoniaux uniques et irremplaçables disparaissent à un rythme alarmant sous les assauts des bulldozers et des boulets de démolition.

Le gouvernement McGuinty propose des modifications d'envergure à la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario dans le but de renforcer et d'améliorer la protection des biens patrimoniaux de la province.

If adopted, amendments to the Heritage Act will give municipalities in the province the tools to preserve existing heritage sites. If passed, our proposed revisions to the Ontario Heritage Act will significantly change the way Ontario views and protects its heritage. Ultimately, it's about safeguarding our heritage and the contribution it makes to strong communities and a better quality of life for all Ontarians.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. On April 5, I raised the case of Jordan Boufford of London, who turns six on May 5 and whose IBI treatment will be arbitrarily cut off. In response to my very specific questions about discrimination against this child, you said that Ron Scarfone, vice-president of the London chapter of the Autism Society of Ontario, endorses your plan and says it's absolutely the right thing to do.

In fact, Mr Scarfone said no such thing. He wrote to the Premier and said, "Penalizing families for advocating and discharging children because they turn six, are human rights violations and quite frankly, just morally wrong!" He wrote to the London Free Press and said, "Cutting children's IBI therapy off at age six regardless of their needs is simply wrong. I firmly believe that all children with autism should have access to IBI therapy based solely on their needs, not their age."

Minister, why did you misuse Ron Scarfone's name and position to try to justify your discrimination?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to clarify her misinterpretation of what I said. What Mr Scarfone said—and not to me; to the London Free Press—was that our plan was in the right direction. I at no time said that he agreed that after the age of six—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): You left the impression.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: No, I did not. What I would like to say is what our government will do for these children with autism. We will support these children from preschool age right through to high school. We will actually double the funding for children with autism in this province. We will put \$10 million for the pre-school program for IBI therapy, we will double the number of transition coordinators and we will spend \$30 million to train teachers and educational systems and parents in ABA/IBI in the classroom.

Ms Martel: I say to the minister, you should re-read the transcript, the Hansard. I asked two specific questions about discrimination. You used Mr Scarfone's name. That's what prompted his letter to the London Free Press, Minister. It was your answer in this House. You shouldn't have used his name in that way and you shouldn't be implying that experts support ending IBI after age six. Dr Adrienne Perry was seconded by the former government in 1998 to help set up the IBI program. She testified as an expert witness for your government at the Deskin-Weinberg court case. On December 9, 2003, she was asked, "So could you tell me what is the empirical basis for cutting off IBI on a child's sixth birthday?" She replied under oath, "I'd say there is not an empirical basis for that particular decision.... As I said in my report there's no very good evidence on that question, in general."

Minister, you don't have any experts with any evidence who support cutting off children after the age of six. Why don't you end the discrimination against these children just like you—

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: The only one who's misinterpreting what I said is the member opposite. Dr Adrienne Perry was standing right beside me in support of our autism strategy. Dr Peter Szatmari, child psychiatrist, world-renowned specialist, was right beside me when I was announcing our strategy. Dr Janice Tomlinson, superintendent of special education at one of our school boards, was right beside me that day.

And this from Shelley McCarthy from the Family Counselling Centre of Brant, unsolicited this morning in the Brant newspaper, said that this strategy, "will help bring kids off the waiting list and into the program. It will provide training"—

The Speaker: Order. New question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As you should be well aware, the auto sector is the largest employer in our great province. General Motors, as a matter of fact, is the largest employer in the region of Durham and receives in excess of a thousand trucks each and every day, let alone all the feeder plants that receive trucks as well.

These groups are very dependent on the infrastructure in the area. General Motors, as a matter of fact, is currently investing in excess of \$1 billion in a new paint

shop located on Stevenson Road in Oshawa. There was a full interchange taking place and moving forward on Stevenson Road with the 401. Others, including GO users and merchants were very dependent on the infrastructure and that interchange moving forward. We haven't heard too much about the Stevenson Road interchange lately. Can you inform us as to what's taking place with the Stevenson Road interchange?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): My understanding is that this interchange is moving ahead and it's scheduled to be completed in spring 2005.

Mr Ouellette: We're very appreciative of hearing about it moving forward. One of the other areas of concern which I'm sure the municipalities and the region are both concerned about is the capping issue on the expenditures on that. Can you ensure us here today that the capping agreement is going to remain in place for the Stevenson Road interchange?

Hon Mr Takhar: I am not aware of the capping arrangements, so I will check into that and get back to the member.

QUINTE HEALTH CARE CORP

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The Quinte Health Care Corp received over \$4 million as part of the package you announced in February to cover hospital deficits and increase base funding. As you may know, on April 1, Quinte Health Care Corp recently provided an increase in salary to its senior executives and managers in the 10% range. I am not pleased about your decision, and I've made my feelings well-known on this issue. I feel that this money should have gone to hiring more nurses and front-line staff because it's exactly what the hospitals there need. What message does it send when a hospital receives \$4 million to cover a deficit and uses part of that money to cover a 10% increase in salaries to senior managers and executives?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to answer my friend, who I know takes a keen interest in the operation of health care, as all members do, and has a strong involvement with the community hospitals in his riding. In a word, I'd say that the government is disappointed with the idea that a time of restraint provides any hospital in Ontario the opportunity to provide 10% increases to management. This is counter to the message of restraint. It's also counter to the priority that we have with respect to health human resources and hospitals.

We've made the point very, very clearly to hospitals, and I don't know how Quinte missed it: Nurses are a priority, with more of them on the front lines, more of them having full-time opportunities, and rebuilding the foundations of nursing, which I think everybody agrees is badly needed. With respect to the priorities that Quinte

Health Corp has undertaken, I'd say they need to be reviewed.

Mr Parsons: How can we ensure that future funding to hospitals will go to where it's intended to go rather than to enormous increases in the salaries of hospital executives?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member for Erie-Lincoln likes to heckle from outside of his seat, but he doesn't like to live up to the reality that when his party was the government, they dedicated \$400 million to an initiative to enhance the percentage of nurses working full-time and achieved next to nothing for that. I think the message that this government has sent to health care partners all across the province makes an important point: that in exchange for the precious resources that we're able to dedicate, particularly to new initiatives, we're going to expect that they achieve the result that was intended.

I think the answer to the member's question is very clear: We're going to work increasingly hard to hold to account those transfer payment partners who receive precious resources, to make sure they go for what they are intended, and nurses certainly are our priority.

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. When you were sworn in last fall, I congratulated you when you left the chamber. I also handed you your first letter as the Minister of the Environment, urging you to take action to deal with environmental matters on the four-laning of Highway 7 in eastern Ontario, near Ottawa.

As you know, the previous government committed \$85 million to this project. Area residents who travel this highway between Highway 417 and Carleton Place know how critical the four-laning work is to saving lives and improving traffic flow. Unfortunately, progress has stalled. A couple of requests for bump-up of the environmental assessment have been frozen in your ministry. These requests for bump-up are straightforward, yet your ministry has been sitting on them for over six months. The environmental assessment study took less time than for you to consider the bump-up request.

Minister, enough is enough. Can you confirm for me and my constituents today that you have dealt with these bump-up requests so construction can begin?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Since the question has come from a former Minister of the Environment, I'm sure he's very aware of the comprehensive process that bump-up requests initiate. Staff at the Ministry of the Environment have significant documentation to consider, to consider the environment.

For this government, the environment is a priority. We are going to ensure, before any project is embarked upon,

that all the environmental concerns and issues have been taken into account before a final decision is made.

Mr Sterling: Minister, I might buy that if this was a new environmental assessment. I must remind you that the main environmental assessment, which was done five years ago, was approved. All we are now dealing with is an updated environmental assessment on minor design changes to the road.

I have raised this matter with both you and the Minister of Transportation, yet all my constituents can get out of your ministry is stalling.

Minister, more of my constituents will die along this heavily used stretch of highway without the four-laning. Again, you have had this file on your desk and in your ministry for over six months. This time span is longer than we are prepared to accept. I cannot and will not accept any longer delay. Lives hang in the balance, Madam Minister, and they are on your neck.

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I have to say that I am very surprised with the tone that has been shared in this Legislature from a former Minister of the Environment and Minister of Transportation whose record in office, as both Minister of Transportation and Minister of the Environment, was less than stellar in terms of responding to correspondence. I placed before you projects in my riding for which I am still waiting for a response. I never even received them.

I told the member opposite the day he gave me the letter, as I left this Legislature—I committed to him that I would be as committed to the issues in his riding as he was to the issues in my riding when he was Minister of the Environment and when he was Minister of Transportation.

Mr Sterling: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Am I to take from this minister's answer that she is going to treat my constituents based on a personal relationship between me and her? I find that an abomination of a minister's responsibility to the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I don't regard that as a point of order. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I presume when I say "order"—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Don't presume when I say "order," it means talk on. When I say "order," I'd like to get some order in the House.

I don't regard that as a point of order.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question today is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As a northern member, I'm very concerned about some of the content of the report of the panel on the role of government, chaired by Ron Daniels. The report recommends that we phase out regional economic development programs and look at retraining programs so we can move our people out of remote communities. The

report refers to some of our northern communities as “at risk.” It goes on to suggest that our northern communities are unsustainable and that we should abandon all support.

I know that you are, as am I, very concerned about retaining our youth in our northern communities. We’re very concerned about regional economic development. Do you agree with the statements in this report?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I understand my northern colleague’s concerns with the report. Rest assured, we’re not going to turn our backs on northern communities. Our government believes that rural and northern communities are vibrant and rich in potential. One of this government’s most important priorities is to work with other levels of governments, our partners and our stakeholders, to build strong communities, the kind of communities that we all want to see throughout this beautiful province.

Let me tell you, there is an abundance of potential in rural and northern Ontario. We have amazing natural resources. That creates amazing economic potential in both rural and northern communities.

Ms Smith: I appreciate your support for the north and for my community. We in Nipissing are working diligently to improve the infrastructure and the economic development of our community. The Friends of the Waterfront, in my community, have developed a vision for the development of North Bay’s waterfront that is nothing less than inspired. Volunteers in my community have worked incredibly hard to raise over \$18 million for the building of our regional hospital.

Both of these initiatives have moved forward as partnerships between community volunteers, municipal government and provincial support. This report in no way reflects these exciting initiatives in our northern communities. What other actions will our government take to ensure the growth and sustainability of northern Ontario?

Hon Mr Bartolucci: First, let me say that I find it very interesting that this report comes from the former government, which saw more than 8,000 job losses in northern Ontario throughout their mandate. They tried to kill the northern economy, and then commissioned the report in an attempt to drive the final nail into the coffin.

Rest assured, we have taken immediate action to ensure the prosperity of rural and northern communities. This government committed in the throne speech to provide a direct link between the minister and northern communities, through the establishment of northern development councils.

One of the first issues that these councils will deal with is the youth out-migration problem we have in rural and northern Ontario. It’s interesting that under the previous government, census figures indicate that there was a 24% net youth out-migration in northern Ontario. We will work to stop that. We want our youth to remain in and come back to northern Ontario.

1510

PLANT CLOSURE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. As you know, the Weyerhaeuser mill in Sturgeon Falls has been closed for over a year now. While you were in opposition, we in the New Democrats were very frustrated by the refusal of the Conservative government, which took no action in helping that struggling community to find a buyer and force Weyerhaeuser to the table so that the mill would not be sold but would stay open, and assist in saving those jobs. You’re the government; you’re the local member; you’ve been in power for six months; what have you done to save those jobs?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I’d like to thank the member, one of my northern colleagues, for the question. I have had several meetings with the officials of the municipality of West Nipissing, where Sturgeon Falls is located. We have been working together in trying to attract proponents to locate in that particular municipality, and looking specifically at value-added industry so that we can create those jobs and replace those jobs that were lost from that unfortunate closing of the Weyerhaeuser plant. I continue that work. I met with the CAO last Thursday evening and spoke to him about our progress on that, and we continue to work with the people in the community and the workers there. I spoke to the workers’ rep on Thursday night also, and we’ll continue to work on this project.

Mr Bisson: Minister, nobody disagrees that we ought to do some value-added work when it comes to finding jobs in northern Ontario, but that wasn’t the question. The question was, while you were in opposition, my leader, Howard Hampton, myself, the local community and you were on the same side, and we said, “Let’s force Weyerhaeuser to the table in order to sell that mill to somebody who’s prepared to keep it open, to save the jobs at Weyerhaeuser.” What I just heard you say is basically that you’ve given up. Are you prepared today to reverse the position you just stated in this House and work with us to find a buyer, to work with Weyerhaeuser to help them force the sale of that mill?

Hon Mr Ramsay: I think what the member needs to understand is that, unlike the leverage I would normally have with other forestry operations, where the crown controls the timber allocation, as you know, this particular plant did not have a timber allocation at all. It was basically a recycling facility for used cardboard, so there is not that leverage that we would normally have, where we can direct the development to certain communities.

As I said to the member before, I’m continuing to work with the community and various proponents who are interested in locating in that area, and we’re going to continue that work.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I'd just like to say at this time that I believe I misspoke when I responded to the member opposite from Lanark-Carleton and said how his concerns would be treated. I want to indicate very clearly that I will do my very best and treat them better and deal with them better than they were treated when I was a member of the opposition.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Mr Speaker, on the same point of order: This minister, on two occasions now, has withdrawn a water-taking permit from a company that employs over 300 people in the riding I represent. Her statement today indicates that this minister should no longer be the Minister of the Environment, that she should resign right now, because she is not exercising her judgment with the impartiality that she should.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I was sitting next to the member and heard very clearly the minister remark that—you should review Hansard, Mr Speaker, but it seemed to me the member remarked that she was going to treat this member's constituents differently than she would other constituents across the province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I think the minister got up and explained herself. The member may not feel that was a full explanation. It seems to me there's a view of differences that is happening between both.

I don't regard yours as a follow-up on the point of order anyhow.

PETITIONS

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): This is yet an additional several hundred to the thousands of signatures that Joan Faria of Hamilton has been able to secure. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"To immediately commit to action and funding to ensure the rights and protection for our senior citizens living in nursing homes and retirement homes in Ontario."

It has my signature of support.

TAXATION

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): We continue to receive these petitions. As a matter of fact, we received several hundred pages yesterday. It reads as follows:

"Whereas every day 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

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

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

I've signed my name in agreement.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every day 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

"Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

"Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

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

"Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4."

I've signed this petition and I agree with it. I want to thank Art Kovacs of Alliston for collecting so many names.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to read a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, MPAC, and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourist economy, without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

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

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I'm pleased to sign this in support of my constituents across Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas every day 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

“Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

“Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

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

“Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4.”

That is signed by thousands from Welland and other parts of Niagara region. I’ve affixed my signature as well. I send it to you with a page, Joseph.

HIGHWAY 518

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

“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 Spruce Dale; 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.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have a petition slightly adjusted from one the government members bring forward. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

“Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly criticized the actions of the Conservative Party and is now” a candidate “for the federal Liberal Party; and

“Whereas the budget should be beyond reproach and should not be presented by a member of the executive council who has any perceived or real conflict;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the budget is not read by a finance minister that is under investigation by the Ontario Securities Commission, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or any other law enforcement agency.”

I affix my signature.

1520

TAXATION

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas every day, 1.5 million Ontarians, including seniors, health care workers and students, purchase a basic meal that costs less than \$4; and

“Whereas a new 8% tax on such meals will disadvantage low-income Ontarians; and

“Whereas adding a tax for the first time on a glass of milk, a salad, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee will affect a total of 1.5 million Ontarians each and every day in restaurants and cafeterias across the province;

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

“Do not impose a new 8% tax on basic meals under \$4.”

It’s signed by hundreds of my constituents. I obviously support this petition as well.

TILLSONBURG DISTRICT
MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by well over 2,000 of constituents from my riding and around my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital has asked for ministerial consent to make capital changes to its facility to accommodate the placement of a satellite dialysis unit; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has already given approval for the unit and committed operational dollars to it; and

“Whereas the community has already raised the funds for the equipment needed;

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

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care give his final approval of the capital request change from the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital immediately, so those who are in need of these life-sustaining dialysis services can receive them locally, thereby enjoying a better quality of life without further delay.”

I affix my signature to it and ask Jessica to bring it to the table.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government has said in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors and are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors;

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

“To halt the consideration of imposing an income test, delisting drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit plan or putting in place user fees for seniors, and to maintain the present Ontario drug benefit plan for seniors to cover medications.”

I have signed that, as I agree with the petition.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the parliamentary tradition in Ontario of presenting annual budgets in the House of the Legislative Assembly has existed for decades; and

“Whereas the previous Speaker of the Legislative Assembly criticized the actions of the Conservative Party and is now running for the federal Liberal Party; and

“Whereas the budget should be beyond reproach and should not be presented by a member of the executive council who has any perceived or real conflict;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the budget is not read by a finance minister that is under investigation by the Ontario Securities Commission, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or any other law enforcement agency.”

I'd be pleased to sign my name to that too.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): We're now up to over 5,000 signatures from my area of Halton alone.

This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors; and

“Whereas prescription drugs are not covered under the Canada Health Act unless dispensed in a hospital; and

“Whereas the federal Liberal government refuses to acknowledge this as a necessary health service despite the Romanow report's strong support for a national drug program;

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

“To immediately and unequivocally commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program; and

“To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications; and

“To instruct Premier Dalton McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more funding and user fees from seniors.”

This has my signature in support as well.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to be able to present a petition in sequence today at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents of the riding of Durham.

“Whereas in Ontario, adult adoptees are denied a right available to all non-adoptees; that is, the unrestricted right to identifying information concerning their family of origin;

“Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

“Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario;

“Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents, and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact revisions to the Child and Family Services Act and to other acts to:

“Permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information;

“Permit birth parents, grandparents and siblings access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18;

“Permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children;

“Allow adopted persons and birth relatives to file a contact veto restricting contact by the searching party;

“Replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling.”

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of my constituent Julie Jordan and others working for this important initiative.

LANDFILL

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition 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.”

It is signed by several hundred people from my riding and, in particular, the riding of Garfield Dunlop, because this proposed dump is right on the borderline between our two ridings. I want to congratulate Mr Dunlop for his efforts in this regard.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of seniors from the riding of Erie-Lincoln, these from Stevensville. It 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 are now 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.”

Beneath those of Edith and Robert Brown, I affix my signature in support.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I’m very pleased today, on Earth Day, to present this to Minister Dombrowsky.

“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 am very pleased to sign my name to this on Earth Day.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Pursuant to standing order 55, I rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week: Monday, April 26, 2004, Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising; Tuesday, April 27, Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters; Wednesday, April 28, Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the

disposal of waste in lakes; and Thursday, April 29, Bill 56 once again, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters.

ADAMS MINE LAKE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LE LAC DE LA MINE ADAMS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 20, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the disposal of waste in lakes / Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets à la mine Adams et à modifier la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'élimination de déchets dans des lacs.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I think the debate was with the member for Haldimand-Norfolk Brant.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I would like to pick up where I left off last Tuesday and continue today, on Earth Day, to challenge the so-called Adams Mine Lake Act, also known as the No Landfills in Liberal Ridings Act. As I explained on Tuesday, while this government fiddles with redefining open pit mines and iron ore mines as lakes—I assume they're redefining and labelling gravel pits, sand pits, quarries and irrigation ponds of a particular size as lakes, and who knows what precedent this sets across Ontario—a very real crisis is threatening to hit this province from the Michigan border with the impact of 125 tractor-trailer loads of Toronto garbage. You will recall I outlined that battle lines are being drawn by southwestern Ontario mayors, elected Michigan officials at both the state and federal levels and even the Democratic presidential candidate, John Kerry, who says, "We shouldn't import trash from other countries."

We know that presidential candidate Kerry is backed by the Kennedy family, and I know the provincial Liberals across the way make reference to that family on occasion. John Kerry further promises, if he becomes President, "To review this issue in the first 120 days" of his presidency—120 days. That's hardly close to the 15 years it took to discuss, analyze and come up with the most recent government decision to close the Adams mine—120 days, from a possible future President of the United States. We have to be ready with a plan today, should Toronto's million-plus tonnes of trash be turned back at the Michigan border tomorrow.

I ask a question I've asked before, that many nervous people in Ontario are beginning to ask themselves and that they're beginning to ask their municipal councillors and their MPPs: Where would that garbage go? What municipalities would have to bear the brunt of Toronto's trash trucks? It does have to go somewhere, and yet this government seems content to close down any viable options that may be out there. This act is shutting down 15 years of debate, 15 years of due diligence, and this act

is closing down one of the few options left. We've heard that Keele Valley will not be reopened.

As I mentioned on Tuesday, we realize that the Liberal method of governing with respect to environmental issues is government by NIMBYism—not in my backyard—as was mentioned just a minute ago. Governing by NIMBYism essentially rules out 71 ridings from possible landfill, including any proposed expansion of landfill in the Minister of the Environment's backyard, so just where is this stuff going to go? Rural Ontario, northern Ontario, continue to be nervous. We have asked the minister this exact question four separate times, and I will repeat: Where is your plan? Where will Toronto's trash go? Each time, the minister makes it clear that this government has absolutely no plan; there's no plan for Toronto's trash.

I will say that they have a 60% waste diversion commitment, but even that is a moving target. When this commitment was first announced in this Legislature last December, the waste diversion target of 60% was to be reached in the year 2005. Please check Hansard. Now we are told the diversion target has been moved back three years, to 2008. What's next, 2010?

At the same time, I would mention that there are a number of municipalities that are rolling up their sleeves. They are willing to tackle this work toward high diversion. I had a chance to attend a symposium yesterday by the Municipal Waste Integration Network in Peel. I was honoured to speak on the future direction of waste management. It was attended by public works officials, elected representatives from Waterloo, the Hamilton area, Peel, of course. There were no Liberal MPPs on hand, I might mention. Yesterday, we took a look at a large number of innovative techniques and programs from other communities that are doing what they can to divert waste from landfill. In particular, I'd like to congratulate the township of Southgate for programming that has led to average diversion rates of well over 50%.

I was equally impressed by the important work going on in Brampton's brand new—I think it's six months old—Noranda corporation recycling plant. We had a tour of the plant yesterday afternoon. It's a state-of-the-art recycling facility for electronics, cell phones, photocopyers, computers that have reached the end of their lifespan. It's a very interesting process and relatively simple. Workers manually dismantle them. They take out the toner packages, for example, they take out the lithium batteries by hand, and then the rest is sent through shredders, where metals are separated out. This is a business that Noranda knows. They know how to explore for metal. In this case, rather than going through the mining route, they are recycling electronics to recoup metal—steel, obviously, copper, aluminium—and plastics and various finds that you would find within cell phones and computers and photocopiers. All told, this facility can produce 12 million pounds of end product a year, so there's 12 million pounds of metal and plastic not going into landfill. Again, this type of effort must be

commended, and I encourage the minister to find the time to tour that Noranda site. It's really quite enlightening.

Unfortunately, the diversion rates recorded in the township of Southgate are far from province-wide. I would submit that it doesn't really matter how many communities meet the 60% target by 2008—it is now 2008, and if anyone's readings Hansard from last year, that target has been delayed and postponed. I continue to ask, where is the government's plan?

There's another very important issue that no doubt has raised the eyebrows of the legal community across the Dominion of Canada, and that's the one of property rights and legal rights. I do want to address what I consider the unprecedented retroactive power grab that this act represents—truly an affront to the legal rights of Ontario citizens. I suppose retroactivity isn't all that unprecedented. Ontario Liberals, for example, have already exposed parents of students who attend independent schools to a very similar backward-looking measure when the tax credit was clawed back. That decision was made late last year, retroactively. It was clawed right back to January 2003. Of course we already know that clawback will not even come close to the \$500 million that Liberals told voters during the election they would save by cancelling that tax credit. That's a whole other area of promise-breaking. We'll leave that as a debate for another day.

1540

As I was saying, through this Adams Mine Lake Act, the Minister of the Environment in my view has put the government above the law and robbed individuals of property rights in this province, has robbed people of their fundamental right of action. What kind of business would consider operating in a province where the government, at the stroke of a pen, can remove their fundamental right of action? For a government to sign away an individual's rights and perhaps cover it up, perhaps justify it by offering a modicum of compensation, is not a jurisdiction that much business around the world would be interested in.

I'd like to read you a portion of a news release that was sent out the day the legislation was introduced. This says it all:

“The legislation would void any approvals and permits related to the Adams Mine project”—I note they don't call it the Adams Mine Lake here—“issued by the Ministry of the Environment prior to the date the legislation comes into effect. The legislation would also nullify any applications for permits under consideration by the Ministry of the Environment as of the date the legislation comes into effect.” Further on, I read: “Any related legal action against the crown that may exist on the date the legislation comes into effect would be extinguished by the legislation. The legislation would also prevent any further legal action being taken against the crown as a result of the legislation.”

So the government of Ontario is now above the law. It raises the question: Is this the type of democratic renewal

the people of Ontario were promised during this recent election?

As I listened to the minister introduce this bill, it really made me wonder if she, as a minister of the crown, or anyone on that side of the House for that matter, believes landowners have rights. Do iron ore mine owners have rights? Do farmers have rights? Do property owners have rights? Do people have property rights in Ontario when government can come in and retroactively remove the legal rights of property owners?

To me, it speaks, as we know, to the lack of property rights in Ontario, rights we lost when Canada adopted the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I realize the Ministry of the Environment—we know this—always has had the power to take away water permits, for example. But I'm disturbed that the minister has now seen fit to have the power to take away land, to take away property, and to take away legal rights. Apparently, under what I consider a dictatorial approach, the minister not only has these powers, but she can wield them like a samurai sword, slicing through the basic democratic rights of Ontario citizens.

Members present, I pose the question: Where do we go from here? I feel the Ontario Legislative Assembly should consider the advantages of rail haul for non-hazardous solid waste, non-recyclable solid waste, to distant environmentally sound landfills. That's my proposal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Questions and comments?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I paid close attention to the comments of this member and I found them interesting.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: I'm going to have a chance to speak to the bill myself in around eight minutes' time, Mr McMeekin, and I'm looking forward to doing that. I'm looking forward to addressing these matters as they impact, I appreciate, not Toronto and the rail line—or highway is even more a tragedy—up to Adams mine, but, for instance, how smaller-town Ontario deals with this.

I am going to be asking for the leadoff to be set aside so that Ms Churley, who's our environmental critic, can do it. That means I'll only have 20 minutes. So, folks, here we are at a quarter to 4. We're going to be doing 10 minutes of questions and comments. That will take us to around five minutes to 4. Then I'll have 20 minutes.

If folks want to hear what small-town Ontario has to say about these kinds of things, as compared to people here in the big city of Toronto, I invite them to tune in. I realize that the competition is stiff. At around 4 o'clock we're competing with Jerry Springer, among other things. But, then again, there's stuff that goes on in here that tops Springer any day of the week. I'm looking forward to that, looking forward to hearing, in particular, what Ms Churley has to say to say to it.

Finally, the position of the Conservative Party is most interesting. I'm looking forward to more participation in the debate by them. I'm also looking forward to whom

they can come up with during committee hearings. I think that will be some interesting commentary.

Make no mistake about this: The bill purporting to be what it is, at the end of the day lawyers are going to make a fortune and judges are going to make case law. There's no two ways about it. This is problematic. I'm going to speak to that in 10 minutes' time.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant had some acronym fun at our expense the other day, referring to NIMBY, NIMTOO, LULU. I just want to report that we had an overnight contest in ADFA, to come up with some acronyms for the Tories. We came back with some good ones: BOO-BOO, LOCO, OHOH, OHNO and GOTTAGO.

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: Well, I wish I had time.

But the best one, the winner was, ONTGETSIT: Ontario news, terrific government elected, tossing out slippery, irresponsible Tories. That was the winning entry. I go there, not because I necessarily want to, but because of the disrespect that was shown with the frequent reference to NIMBY, not in my backyard.

I don't know where everybody else is at on this, but I try to teach my kids that it all starts in their backyard. Everything from, "Clean up your own mess that you make," to "No, honey, the paint doesn't go in the water system, we don't dump toxins there," to "Don't pee in the pool," to "Be careful about the chemicals you use on your front lawn." Right? It all starts at home.

It occurs to me that on the issue of energy supply the government opposite practised a form of BANANA: build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone ever. If the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant had spent a little more time at NIMBY, in his own backyard, giving serious attention to that, maybe we could expedite the closing down of the coal-burning plants there that are killing, according to the Ontario Medical Association, some 2,000 Ontarians every single year.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to make a few comments on Bill 49, and on our leadoff speaker, Mr Barrett.

I found the last comments by the member from Ancaster very, very interesting. He said that we were disrespectful. I've never seen so much disrespect in my life as I've seen from the Minister of the Environment in this House today towards the citizens of Lanark-Carleton. That was awful.

I hope she's considering her resignation. What happened today is very, very serious. I can tell you that she should give serious consideration to how she treated the citizens of Lanark-Carleton.

I have a few comments on Bill 49 and what I call the pork-barrelling bill. I haven't seen pork-barrelling in the Liberals since the Paul Martin-Sheila Copps episode in Hamilton.

But if you are actually interested in protecting the environment, why would you pick one site—the Adams mine lake is what the minister calls it—why would you

take that site only, with all the other approved sites across the province that people have environmental concerns with? Why would you not look at any other site except that one? The reason is simple: It's because of Minister Ramsay. Minister Ramsay did not want the site at Kirkland Lake, so he announced earlier last year that he was planning on resigning if the site was approved. So that's what you call democratic renewal over there: Cancel a proposal, don't look at any other proposals across the province, and introduce a bill.

Now you've still got the same problems. All the other landfill sites that are approved in this province need to be reviewed because of the Walkerton inquiry. And the minister is not doing it. That's plain and simple. Instead, she's insulting the people of Lanark-Carleton with the type of nonsense we've seen here today.

So I look for a lot of comment on this. I look for a lot of opportunity myself to speak on site 41, another mistake by the Minister of the Environment.

1550

The Acting Speaker: Response from the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Mr Barrett: I appreciated the comments from the member for Niagara Centre. I look forward to his reasoned arguments. Perhaps we will get a bit of history. I was not in the Legislature in the early 90s, but I know at the end of the Liberal era, environmentalists were very disappointed in the environmental record of the Liberal government of that day.

The member opposite made reference to acronyms. I wish I knew the acronym for your riding. I don't have time to name all the various municipalities. We did raise the oft-used term NIMBY. Those of us who have been involved in the environmental movement have been using that expression for years, going back to the 1980s. I do use that term with respect. Where I come from, when people make reference to another group, you do it in a very polite, respectful way or oftentimes you end up on your back on the floor if you don't. That's the way it works where I come from.

I don't need to explain what NIMBY stands for—not in my backyard—as reflected by the constituencies represented by both the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of the Environment. The other reference across the way was NIMTOO. That refers to "not in my term of office." A NIMTOO is a political NIMBY. The member from Simcoe North made mention of our Minister of Natural Resources. The story has it that he threatened to resign if this went into his constituency. I make reference to the Richmond landfill site, which was being stalled by the Minister of the Environment. Again, two examples of NIMTOOs, not in my term of office. Clearly, they've reached the definition of a political NIMBY.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I'm seeking unanimous consent to defer the leadoff so Ms Churley

can attend and speak for the modest 30 minutes allowed the third party.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Kormos: New Democrats are going to support the bill, make no mistake about it. Having said that, I want to explain why I was a little bit late yesterday at the commencement of the House at 1:30. I had gone back down to Welland and was at Confederation high school, a French-language high school in the city of Welland with students from grades 7 through to the final year of high school, grade 12 now. It's been a tremendously successful experiment, putting grades 7 and 8 young people in together with high school people.

They were having their assembly in preparation for the May 5 Walk Against Male Violence. Other high school students are doing it in Welland as, I'm sure, across Ontario. I had a chance to participate in their assembly, to speak to them briefly and, amongst other things, congratulate those students at Confederation high school, the student body, the faculty and all of the staff—not just the teaching staff, but all of the staff—at that school for their tremendous commitment to this incredibly important issue.

I just wanted to explain why I was a few minutes late yesterday and wasn't here quite at 1:30. I didn't get in until maybe five minutes into members' statements. I'm just so exceptionally proud of those students at Confederation high school. I wished them well yesterday for their march as they marched with other young people, women and men, in Welland, joining and acting in solidarity with young people across the province, as they committed themselves to saying no to male violence, raising money for support of women in Afghanistan and raising money for local centres of refuge for beaten and battered women.

The Adams mine: I've been here in the Legislature long enough to have been here at the genesis of the debate. It's interesting that we may well see some finality to the debate. I've read the legislation carefully. I don't begin to suggest—and the Attorney General's here and he may want to stand up and speak to the likelihood of there being no litigation around the formula in here for damages. You read that, didn't you, Speaker? Because I know you've got some legal background. It looks so slick, so neat and so wrapped up with a bow, but you can bet your boots that it's an ABC sort of formula—where are we here?—“A+B-C” as a determination of—what do they call it in legal circles? The quantum, is that what they call it? The quantum of damages to be paid to the numbered corporation: “shall pay compensation ... in the following amount:

“A+B-C.”

Then of course they define A, B and C. It just looks so neat and clean. I presume it's attempting to, at the very least, leave the impression, or attempting to pursue the goal, of it being as neat and clean come courtroom time. I suspect not.

The Attorney General has a whole lot of smart lawyers; he does. He's got high-priced lawyers over there on Bay Street, but the corporate entities that are going to be

using the butt off the government when all is said and done have got high-priced lawyers too. My money's on the Attorney General because I think, if push came to shove, the Attorney General himself could go to court and, with one arm tied behind his back, with all of his law books glued shut, he could clean up on all those high-priced Bay Street lawyers without even working up a sweat.

I know that previous Attorneys General have tried that. I remember one. He'll remember, too, a previous Attorney General tried going to the Supreme Court of Canada. He was going to make a name for himself. He made a name for himself, all right, because if you'll recall the press reportage of that, it was to the effect of—Mr Attorney General, what's that old adage?—“A person who is his own counsel has a fool for a client.” But the former Attorney General all on his own was going to go to the Supreme Court of Canada and clean up. The press reportage was sad. But he's making a comeback, I'm told. I'm told he's seeking the leadership of the Conservative Party, and we'll see what happens.

But in any event, there's going to be litigation and it perhaps, hopefully, puts an end to the—one of the other observations is there's big, big money in garbage. It's no accident that Tony Soprano is in, amongst other things, the waste management business. There's big money in garbage.

Down where I come from, in a border area, we are all the more sensitive because of the potential for the lakes and the Niagara River, along with other watered areas, as being dumping grounds for waste. We've seen the toxicity of the waste that's been pumped into the Niagara River—primarily from the American side, but Canadians aren't blameless in this regard—and the impact on the Niagara River and Lake Ontario and, as well, the impact from border communities—and again, Ontario isn't blameless in this regard—on Lake Erie.

But down where I live, down in Welland, we're a community that's part of the regional municipality of Niagara. Let me talk to you a bit about the smaller town perspective. A crisis erupted prior to the election date of October 2—quite frankly, during the provincial election campaign—over our landfill site down at the end of Feeder Road. Feeder Road is called “Feeder Road” because it runs alongside the Feeder Canal which, of course, fed the Welland Canal with water from out Dunnville way, past Dunnville—Port Rowan, if I remember correctly—where they brought in water from Lake Erie to feed the Feeder Canal. Mr McMeekin might be familiar with that grand history. It was a conduit, a way of carrying traffic.

1600

The Feeder Road dump had reached capacity. Among other things, what happened was we underwent regionalization of our landfill sites down in the regional municipality of Niagara. Then you had a regional council, where you had large cities like St Catharines, with many representatives, choosing, to the dismay of folks, let's say, in Welland, that the Welland landfill site was going

to become the destination of the garbage from their communities as well. Do you understand what I'm saying? Wrapped up in the argument and justification for regional government, it looked like just another sound regional decision, but what it did was basically tell St Catharines, let's say, "It's OK, because you can just use the Welland landfill site."

As a matter of fact, applications were being made to extend the height of the Welland landfill site. That's an old landfill site and, I've got to tell you, people down in the St George Park area were nervous. People were afraid that the leachate from that site was impacting, amongst other things, on the very old swimming pool in St George Park, where kids for generations have been going to do summertime swimming. People were concerned that the drainage ditches, the waterways around that Welland Feeder Road landfill site, were carrying runoff from that landfill site. In fact, the best of efforts on the part of the region still didn't prevent the occasional backup and crisis when there was inappropriate leakage—and some significant leakage—from time to time. This was documented during a number of public hearings.

Where I'm getting to, Mr Speaker—and I appreciate that it's late in the afternoon and you've been working hard all day. You've been here in the chamber since 10 am this morning, and I admire that. You show a fortitude that men half your age are hard pressed to demonstrate. I say to you, Speaker, that for a person your age, you're pretty impressive in your ability to work a full eight-hour, 10-hour, 12-hour day, I suspect, from time to time.

What concerned me was that none of the discussion, none of the debate, around the Welland landfill site addressed the issues of the reduction of the amount of waste, the classic approaches to solid waste around issues of recycling and reusing.

One of the problems small-town Ontario has is that our blue box—and now we have grey boxes. Grey boxes have replaced blue boxes, because the blue boxes are for non-paper. And we've just begun a compost program. So we have blue boxes and grey boxes. Those are expensive and the fact is that they operate at a net loss to communities. They are expensive to run. They operate at a net loss in terms of the here and now; certainly not at a net loss in terms of running out of capacity for putting this stuff in landfill sites.

I appreciate the goal and the intent of Bill 49 and I think my caucus colleagues do too, but what I have greater concern about is the failure of our government, of this province, to lead the way in aggressive waste reduction, recycling and reuse programs, amongst other things. We need, finally, really aggressive campaigns around glass, tin and plastics, and small-town Ontario needs the resources to enable them to do it.

One of the things that regional Niagara has had to do is reduce the number of blue box pickups to once every two weeks as compared to once a week. I have great pride in my neighbours and in the people who live in the communities I represent, because they're pretty enthusiastic blue-boxers and now grey-boxers. But at the end of

the day, when they only come around once every other week compared to once a week, the commitment to the program can become challenged, and the utilization of green garbage bags can become an attractive alternative to coping with numerous and full blue boxes—or now grey boxes—sitting outside your back door or on the back porch or in the garage, wherever they might be.

The fact is that if we want to be really serious about blue box, grey box and composting programs, we've got to up the frequency of collection, and that means that we have to make the investments in doing that, and that means that the province has to be there. The province has to be prepared to help.

The other crisis that Welland has, along with other old industrial communities in Niagara, and quite frankly a whole lot of other parts of Ontario, is in the rehabilitation of brownfields. Welland, Port Colborne, Thorold, St Catharines, these old industrial communities—Pelham is probably very much the exception, although you'll find, I'm sure, some very small, modest amounts there. But you know, these communities—Maclean's magazine, around nine months ago now, carried a cover story of, I think, five communities across Canada that had made the municipal investments in brownfields with great success. Well, sure: Toronto, Winnipeg, inner city, big city, the high retail prices for property—in those cases, the city can afford to rehabilitate those brownfields because the value of land is high enough—the value of land in Toronto is extraordinary—that you can justify the cost, the expenditure.

Down in Welland, you can't do that. South of Welland, in Port Colborne—and I'm eagerly awaiting this government's action on the support and compensation and acknowledgement of the victims of the Inco nickel contamination in the city of Port Colborne. We're talking about family after family who have been displaced from their homes, who are suffering the ill effects of nickel contamination. We're seeing incidents of cancer that are running rampant.

Regrettably, the application for a class action was denied by the courts. The courts determined that there weren't the proper circumstances under which these folks could organize themselves as class action plaintiffs. They're depending upon a lawyer, most of whose time is being donated to the cause. They've been fighting not only Inco, but they've been fighting the government: They've been fighting the Ministry of the Environment.

I say to you that if indeed this government was about change and is to be about change, then this government should change its tune, or at least change the tune from that of the previous government to the people being poisoned by Inco's nickel dust and other toxic chemicals down in Port Colborne, particularly on the east side. I would, while pleased to see this bill pass, be more pleased, even more pleased, to see legislation passed that would clearly identify the rights of those victims of nickel contamination to compensation, to justice, to fairness. Frankly, many of them are frightened, and the facts speak for themselves, that they're going to be long

dead before there's any success in the courts. That's not to blame the lawyers or the court or the judges. Those are costly and time-consuming exercises.

So I speak to Bill 49 on behalf of communities that very much want to address the whole phenomenon of landfill, who understand that landfill is probably the last way that one or any community or member of any community wants to dispose of solid waste. But they need support. They need specific, clear programs.

One of the propositions that reared its head over the course of the 15, 16 years or so that I've been here is the participation of the LCBO in recycling programs. I can tell you that the workers at the LCBO are more than eager, more than pleased to create a recycling program. One commentator suggested that it was the lack of uniformity amongst bottlers of various spirits—especially from the point of view of, let's say, reusing, recycling, rather than simply crushing of bottles and using that glass and plastic waste to create new glass or plasticized glass, as in liquor containers.

The problem is that the cost of not doing it is greater, because the cost to communities—communities like Welland—and the consumption of capacity of landfill sites and the incredible—look, landfill sites down in communities like Welland are literally in people's backyards. One of the things that people in Welland found darkly funny, darkly humorous, is that the region responded by investing in a \$100,000 program to hire a firm to send out hawks to beat up on the seagulls who attend at the Welland landfill site, as if somehow that were a response or an answer to the concerns and the grievances of historic neighbours of that landfill site who have seen that landfill site increasingly encroach on their backyards—literally.

1610

I'm sorry, not in my backyard has some reality to it, and some reason to it, when the landfill site was way over there, when you built your house with the promise and the commitment that it was going to stay way over there, but then as it increased in size, it ends up being, well, literally in your backyard. The folks down in that end of town—I know them; it's down in Welland south. I mention St George Street amongst others; Broadway. These are hard-working folks, a whole lot of them immigrant families, people who've built their homes with their own hands, raised their kids, helped raise their grandkids. They built St George Park themselves. They're interested; they're eager; they're enthusiastic; they plead for a government that's going to give their community support in dealing with landfill. They appreciate that they don't have the drama of the Adams mine issue. They appreciate that they don't have all the dark and sinister wheeling and dealing that went on around Adams mine. They appreciate that the big money hasn't changed hands.

I would love to have been a historical fly on the wall in all the meetings, in all the dealings, in all the transactions that took place around Adams mine over about—almost two decades now, Mr Colle? We're talking almost 20 years? Look, Jacobek would look like

at piker—25 grand in the basement of city hall is nothing compared to the cash that I conjecture has changed hands over Adams mine and its utilization as a landfill site. I have no hesitation in saying that. Jacobek is talking chump change compared to the cash that one can reasonably conjecture has passed in suitcases, valises, briefcases, brown paper bags, manila envelopes, who knows what number of numbered bank accounts in offshore jurisdictions. That's why, as I say, Mr Soprano is in the waste business: because there's so much money.

Welland pales in comparison, but I tell you, there are a whole lot of Wellands out there and small-town Ontarios that need the same attention and same focus of the people who live in the area and rightly protest and object to the Adams mine site, the artificial lake that's been created there, being used as a dump for Toronto's or anybody else's garbage. The real solution is for this government to provide real leadership, with the right investments in the real reduction of waste, in really strong recycling programs for not just big-city but small-town Ontario too and in landfill relief for cities like Welland, along with real investments in brownfield rehabilitation and remediation.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I was listening intently to my colleague from Niagara Centre. He talked about the not-in-my-backyard concept.

This was quite an extension of that concept of not in my backyard. In fact, I think if people 50 years from now look back on this proposal and see that a city like Toronto was going to ship their waste into northern Ontario by rail and put it in some mine and then pawn this off as some kind of environmental project, I think they're going to laugh that this was even considered.

It just shows how desperate, I think, we are in some ways, in terms of dealing with our waste. We really don't have a plan, haven't had a plan. We're finally starting, I think, as a government, to come to grips with these schemes like this Adams mine scheme, which really was almost like a Ponzi scheme. That's what it was. In other words, there was nothing there and they got all this financial involvement and interest in it, and it became this solution to a waste diversion problem. It really made no sense—I mean, the emperor had no clothes—that we were going to ship garbage by rail up to northern Ontario.

I go back with this about 15 years. I remember when this first came by our desks at the city of Toronto, at Metro council, and the funny thing is that this thing was like Dracula: No matter how many times you tried to kill it, it came back. It came back because it was this Ponzi scheme that supposedly was going to make a lot of people very rich. Finally I can say I hope this thing is dead, that it will never rise again, that we put a silver bullet in it. Dracula is gone and dead and buried up in the Adams mine.

Mr Barrett: The member from Niagara Centre made reference to landfills in the Niagara region. We can learn from the past. In the 1970s there was tremendous concern with respect to industrial waste: industrial waste that

wasn't being treated properly in the first place and industrial waste that really had no home.

That was back in 1981, when the government of the day established the Ontario Waste Management Corp. They got ahead of themselves, in a sense, even before they were fully organized. They took a look at the Niagara region and at the Haldimand-Norfolk region. They made a premature decision. They decided either on the South Cayuga site at that time or to fast-track the South Cayuga site. Then, in their wisdom, they conducted some hydrogeological studies and discovered some shortcomings, and within a month or two the board of the waste management corporation voted unanimously to reject that South Cayuga site. So we can learn from some of this history.

However, as I recall, they continued to look in the Niagara region. There were two sites in West Lincoln that were being considered. There were two sites in Niagara Falls, which seems odd. I'm not sure how far it was from the Niagara River. I know South Cayuga was close enough to the mighty Grand and Lake Erie itself. They looked at two sites in Milton, and through their deliberations focused on one final site in West Lincoln. I'm not clear exactly where that landfill is, I know there is one in that area, but we can learn from this history.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I listened intently to the member from Niagara Centre, who spoke to Welland and Welland South and small-town Ontario.

I have to tell you that Pickering, as part of my riding, used to be part of small-town Ontario. There's a major landfill site, now closed, called Brock West that was the predecessor to Keele Valley. Along the way, both sites were opened in the Brock West landfill site, not unlike what you would have in Welland or other small towns in Ontario. It sits on top of Duffins Creek and is probably the best cold-water fishery in the greater Toronto area. It's recognized nationally for that and feeds right down into Lake Ontario, within a kilometre or two.

That land site has all of the implications for small-town Ontario that many do throughout the province, particularly in light of the fact it was home to metro Toronto's garbage. The trucks rolled down the highway. At some point I hope to be able to speak more to the bill in its entirety. But the member from Niagara also spoke about some of the principles of reducing, reusing and recycling. We were caught up, I think, at times in the box, the blue box and the grey box. We've got to back ourselves up a step or two to the reduction factor.

I think about Christmas or about times of the year when you need a gift, and you go out and buy a new shirt. You take it home and open up the cardboard box with a nice cellophane front. You're going to recycle the cardboard box part, and the cellophane portion you can't, that doesn't recycle, but you get rid of the box anyway. Then you say, "I've got to open this thing up. It looks great. I've got to try it on." So you start to open up the shirt and you take the plastic clips out of the collar. Those go to one place. At this point, that's in the garb-

age. You can't recycle those. Then you get the cardboard piece under the back part of the collar. There's really no great spot, so you put it in your blue box. Then you've got all the pins, and you start pulling the pins out of it.

We really have to give thought to the backstream part. Let's start the reduction in the use, and then we can work our way forward.

1620

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Kormos: I listened to the member talk about how 50 years from now it'll seem incredulous that garbage was going to be railed, or even more tragically, trucked, to the Adams mine. I appreciate the sense in which you say that, but come down to Stevensville with me, where there's a huge warehouse of garbage that has been trucked from any number of destinations. It's a dispatch centre. It's a warehouse. You poke around in there like Arlo Guthrie, down in the dump in Stockbridge, looking for, leaving behind the evidence.

You'll find garbage of all sorts from southern Ontario that's being warehoused. It's being warehoused in an enclosed space so the neighbours don't get overly—the neighbours are very concerned about the growth of this warehouse, but garbage is—I appreciate what you're saying, but people had better be more vigilant than to think that merely shutting down the Adams mine project is going to end the appeal of shipping, trucking, railing—railroading—garbage. It's being shipped huge distances now. The matter is at the point of desperation.

We need aggressive, tough leadership coming out of Queen's Park. We need support for communities so that they can be brought along in the plan. Small-town Ontario can't do it on their own. They can't afford the cost. They've been beaten and battered for eight-and-a-half or nine years now.

Property taxpayers cannot bear any more burden on that flat, regressive tax. They've been exhausted. This province, this government, has got to be prepared to make the investments necessary to make it happen, rather than simply engage in the polite, trendy rhetoric that sounds good but achieves little if it's the rhetoric standing alone.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): Just before beginning, Speaker, I'd like to let you know that I would like to share my time with the honourable Kevin Flynn, the MPP from Oakville.

There are a number of aspects I'd like to share, but before I do, I'd like to commend the MPP from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for actually supporting a good liberal Democrat, and that is Senator John Kerry. We welcome that support from the Tory caucus. We wish him well in that selection.

He also made reference to one of the world's most noted environmentalists, and that is Bobby Kennedy Jr, whose family of course has made noted contributions to the political structure of North America and beyond. To quote Bobby Kennedy, he said, with specific reference to the Adams mine project itself, "Putting garbage into the

Adams mine was a slow way of throwing it directly into Lake Ontario.” Elsewhere he’s written, “Environmental injury is deficit spending. It’s passing the cost of our generation’s prosperity and loading it on to the backs of our children.” That is something that the McGuinty vision, the McGuinty government, the new McGuinty Ontario will not tolerate.

I’d also like commend, first of all, the MPP from Niagara Centre, Mr Peter Kormos, for his support of this bill. I’d also like for a moment to quote him. He said, “I would like to be historical.” I’d like assure the MPP from Niagara Centre that in a relic sort of way he is already of historical, I might even say, archaeological interest, not unlike a well-preserved fossil from a bygone era. But we nevertheless welcome his support on this particular bill.

The other thing to mention is that the recently manufactured concern for the environment, the recently acquired concern by the Tory caucus is a little bit remarkable and modestly ironic. This, of course, from a caucus, from a government that in eight years, step by step, almost dismantled the Ministry of the Environment, lowered industrial standards, fired meat inspectors, fired water inspectors, and is really I think trying to retrofit their newly acquired concern for the environment. But I must say, it’s almost like purchasing clothing that’s just a little bit too large: It doesn’t fit and doesn’t wear very well.

In this bill, Bill 49, there are a number of issues that we’re attempting to present. It’s a matter of amending the Environmental Protection Act. It’s a matter of intelligent waste management. It’s a matter of bringing real and positive change to Ontario and displaying strong and enlightened leadership.

In particular, it’s saying no to landfilled mines, which are essentially lakes in training, essentially mixing groundwater with garbage, leading to the toxic soup that the MPP from Niagara Centre so eloquently referred to. It’s a matter of displaying environmental sensitivity and really protecting what is, after all, a sacred trust and a sacred asset, not to be toyed with lightly, certainly by the government of Ontario. It’s a matter of protecting groundwater, which is a very precious resource. Ultimately, it’s about protecting communities and protecting the people of Ontario and their quality of life.

Bill 49 will actually prevent the disposal of solid waste in the Adams mine site and extend that same protection to all potential landfill sites and lake sites in Ontario larger than one hectare in size. This is a very far-reaching strategy. Of course, the millions of tonnes of garbage produced municipally, industrially, commercially, institutionally, from construction, from demolition sites and so on is immense. So it is a very real—and clear and present—danger, if you will, that we must deal with. This is the first step in dealing with this type of waste management.

I’m pleased to say that our government, the Ontario provincial government, is moving forward in a federal partnership—that too is something new in the history of Ontario for the past decade or so—and we’ll be seeking

to fundamentally entrench a new Environmental Bill of Rights, in particular prohibiting the disposal of waste not only in the Adams mine, but also amending the Environmental Protection Act to disallow the use of any lake over one hectare in size as a landfill site.

This is clear evidence of the delivery of real and positive change that will help to make Ontario strong, healthy and prosperous. How? By ultimately protecting and maintaining clean, safe, livable communities and really safeguarding the health and well-being of our citizenry.

This is a comprehensive plan for managing Ontario’s waste, a plan that will focus on waste diversion, address these landfill issues and improve our overall waste management strategy. Ontarians have said to us clearly in our consultation processes that they want cleaner communities which will ultimately improve their quality of life. That’s why we’re acting on reducing this waste disposal, because, frankly, we are running out of landfill capacity.

One of the important messages that we are attempting to share and broadcast to Ontarians is that we have a very aggressive waste diversion target. Our goal is, in fact, to divert 60% of waste from landfill by the year 2008. Basically, to that end we’ll be releasing very shortly a discussion paper that will actually bring forward options that will help to achieve this goal. Of course, this is not something that’s just hatched in the ivory towers of the Queen’s Park bureaucracy. This is something that we’ve gone to Ontarians on, consulted with them and found out what all the different stakeholders involved are thinking, whether it’s from industry, from the mine site owners or, of course, in particular the northern communities who actually have to bear, perhaps, the real and ultimate cost of these types of initiatives. Why? Because we feel that it’s important to consult with all stakeholders, especially those who are directly involved. In this manner, we are able to ensure that municipalities’ waste diversion plans are sustainable and environmentally sound and that we have the very best plans for balancing community needs and environmental protection.

For this reason—the preventing of the disposal of waste in the Adams mine site, the far-reaching strategy for dealing with waste management on a province-wide scale—I’m honoured to support this bill.

1630

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It certainly is a pleasure to follow the member for Etobicoke North today as we speak to Bill 49. There couldn’t be a better day to talk about it. Earth Day is a day in itself that brings issues such as this into focus and makes us think that we need to address these issues together, that they’re not particular to any one political party or political philosophy. There are issues that need to be addressed. The future of our society is at stake if we don’t address them.

It’s always interesting, as a new member of provincial Parliament, to listen to some of the people who have graced these chambers for a good many years more than I have—some of the more experienced members, some of

the older members. It's interesting to hear about some of the things that may have taken place in the House before and how people like to rehash them. You hear things like, "In 1981 you said this to me, I remember that," or, "In 1989 you supported this," or, "You didn't support that." As entertaining as the viewing public and the media may find it, I suspect that what the people of Ontario, especially southern Ontario, want and need today is a solution to a problem that they're facing, a problem that is facing many communities today, and that is a problem with waste and how do we manage that waste?

This speaks to the Adams mine lake and landfill sites, but it's really about building a community, and when you think about what it takes to build a proper and solid, sustainable community, it really is common sense. For some reason, in the past—and all of us have been guilty of this, those at the local level, those at the provincial level and even those at the federal level—we haven't always applied that common sense to our community building.

When you look at some of the ingredients that you would want to see in a community, you know you want clean air. You know that the air within that area has to be of the quality that will sustain life, that it won't cause illness or increase asthma in our children. And, quite frankly, as we look back, we realize that some of those ingredients aren't there. All it takes for me is to take a drive in from Oakville to Toronto on a summer day. It simply is not clear. There's a haze hanging over the GTA that is simply unmistakable. I don't think you can blame it on any one particular environmental cause, but certainly we'd be foolhardy to ignore it. It stands out like a sore thumb, and it's probably the number one topic of conversation on the QEW and Gardiner Expressway: "What is that cloud over there and what is it doing to us?" We need to address issues such as that.

When you take a look at water quality, one of the things that sustains life in an urban setting as much as it does in a rural setting is clean drinking water. Look at some of the problems we've had in Lake Ontario. Take a look at the algae buildup. What is causing that? Where is that phosphorous coming from?

When you look at the population growth in our urban areas, it's very, very simple: People create waste and will always create waste. We're trying to minimize that waste. I think it's an environmentally responsible way to go. We simply need to get serious about it. We're still creating the waste and we're still allowing our communities to grow. The 905 area is booming. There's building all around the 905 area. These people, as they move into homes, expect garbage pickup, and that pickup is granted. What we don't have is a plan within our own communities that will allow for the proper management of that waste. We're pretending that waste doesn't exist, or pretending that somehow, if we put that waste in the truck, it will go somewhere else and somebody else will take care of it. That simply is not a sustainable way to approach things.

We're part of a global problem. I was talking to a gentleman the other day who had spent some time in China. He was telling me how China is beginning to deal with its waste problems. And when you take a look at urban Ontario, southern Ontario, the GTA, remember that we are the third- or fourth-largest urban area on the North American continent. First, of course, is New York, second is Los Angeles, and then, depending on who you talk to or maybe what month it is, either the GTA or Chicago comes in third, but I think what you can't ignore is that we are living in and are responsible for a major urban area in the world.

Look at the way the United Nations is addressing the problem. They're very concerned about how China is going to manage its waste problem. Quite frankly, there is a fear that they may go to low-tech incineration. When you think about the impact it has on the globe, you start to realize that we are part of a global problem that needs to be solved and that urban areas simply have to come to grips with their waste.

We need to address the problem, and I think we are starting to address it, by recommending the passage of this bill. It clarifies the situation, in my opinion. This is saying that if this bill is passed, the Adams mine landfill will simply become a bad memory. It will be something that some people proposed and that another government looked at and decided was not going to be a part of our future, that it was not a sustainable way to go, that it was not a sensible way to deal with our waste problems.

What we are going to do, and what we think this bill is proposing as a solution, is that a waste management strategy will be implemented. We need to look at this in a strategic manner, we need to look at it in an orderly manner and we need to look at it in a sensible manner that brings in the best advice that is available and the best technologies that are available.

What we hope to achieve by 2008 by the passage of this bill would be a 60% waste diversion. That's extremely aggressive, and I'll tell you why I know that's aggressive. I come from the riding of Oakville, as you know. It's part of the great region of Halton. About 15 years ago, we were in exactly the same position that the city of Toronto and other regions in the GTA find themselves in today. Our landfill site was nearing capacity. We kept producing the garbage and we needed someplace to put that garbage.

At that point in time, we went to the other municipalities and the other regions surrounding the GTA and said, "We're running into a bit of a problem here. We're seeking a solution. We think we're going to find a solution to the problem, but in the interim we would like to use a little bit of your landfill capacity. Once we solve our problem, we will allow you to have some of our capacity once we get the landfill site established." We didn't get any takers. I think we approached just about every region. We approached the city of Toronto, I know. We asked if we could use that capacity and it wasn't forthcoming.

It put us in a very difficult position as a community in that we had to face up to some very harsh realities, and in the interim, because we didn't have that problem solved, we were trucking our garbage to the Walker landfill site in Niagara. We were trucking it to Buffalo, I think it was to the Hooker Chemical plant, and it was being incinerated. Just yards across the border from Canada, we were having our own waste incinerated by a different country under different rules. We realized that wasn't the long-term solution to waste management in the region of Halton.

After an exhaustive process—I will tell you that we realized we were going to have to address this problem somewhere in the early 1970s—we finally got approval for a landfill site in Halton in the late 1980s. So it took anywhere from 15 to 20 years to get approval to build a landfill site. That simply does not work. That needs to be addressed, that needs to be changed, and we realize that. Eventually we were able to come to an agreement with all the communities within Halton on a landfill site. Today we have a landfill site that was originally going to give us about 20 years' capacity, but because of the waste diversion programs we have been able to implement in the interim, we have been able to move that to about a 47-year capacity.

When I look at the problems that are being experienced by the other regions, towns and cities within the GTA, I know exactly what they are going through and I think I know what it takes to solve that problem. But what the region of Halton would not like to see, of course, is its own landfill site being used as part of that problem.

1640

I'm very glad to see that we're going to implement a waste management strategy that will allow towns and cities to implement a waste diversion system that will provide a 60% diversion rate by 2008. That's going to have to include an organics program. Anybody who understands the landfill issue understands that you don't get 60% diversion without including something to do with organics.

This waste management strategy that we will implement as a result of this bill, should it pass, will set some province-wide diversion objectives, as I've said, of 60%. It will also set diversion targets for residential waste that could be achieved through improvements to municipal blue box programs and increased composting. It will accelerate and expand centralized composting in Ontario's largest municipalities. It will develop a financing strategy for centralized composting, including cost recovery mechanisms, municipal revenue generation, public-private partnerships, shared infrastructure agreements and provincial assistance in the form of either grants or loans. It will look at the feasibility of even phasing in a ban on organics and other recyclable materials in Ontario's landfill sites.

We need to get serious if we're going to achieve that 60%. We can't be putting compostable material or recyclable material in a landfill site that is to be used

simply for anything that can't be recycled. It just doesn't make sense and we can't afford to do it.

We also need to introduce new options that help residential homeowners and commercial operators to implement source separation. Industrial, commercial and institutional sectors could be part of the solution if they were able to separate at source.

We also need to consider new and emerging waste management technologies. That, if you look around the world, is an example of how other communities are dealing with their waste. People talk about Europe, how we need to look at the European experience, how they're dealing with their waste. We do need to look at it. It may not be for the province of Ontario or the GTA but, simply put, it's time to get serious about this.

I appreciate the work the Minister of the Environment has put into this bill. It's worthy of support. It's a first step on a long journey toward sustainable communities.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a Thursday afternoon here it's a pleasure to respond to the government's statements on Bill 49. Just to remind viewers, I will be speaking in a few minutes. If they want to get their VCRs tuned up to record it, that's perfectly permissible.

I don't have anything particularly profound to say but I was somewhat surprised, when the member from Lanark-Carleton, a former Minister of the Environment, was asking a very respectful question to the Minister of the Environment, that her response was really to cut short the previous minister, Mr Sterling, in fact denying what I consider fair and objective representation for the people of Lanark-Carleton. I was quite surprised. He was Minister of the Environment.

In fact, the bill we are talking about—we need to always be accountable, and in this case I, in my remarks, will be making the point that it's very much in a position of judgment—not disrespect for the arguments being made on Bill 49 which are on the record and will be made part of my remarks, but the minister's record on this file is somewhat suspect, as was brought to our attention by the member from Lanark-Carleton earlier today during question period.

On the whole, no one on this or any side of the House would disagree that there is a serious challenge before us in terms of managing the waste that we all contribute to the province, whether individually, in our families or the business we are involved with, and there need to be solutions. The solutions I've heard aren't very clear. What we have is the closure of one site, as has been mentioned by the member from Simcoe North, and that means an opening somewhere else to put that waste.

I'll have more to say on this in a very few minutes, Speaker. With your indulgence, at this time I've used up pretty well all my time.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to say for the second time since I've been here in the Legislature, since 1990, that I will be voting in favour of

banning the Adams mine as a site for the disposal of Toronto's waste. I thought in 1991-92, when we brought in legislation that banned the use of the Adams mine, that it was the right thing to do, and I will now in the year 2004 do the same.

I'm glad to have the opportunity to do it twice, in the sense that I've been re-elected, but in the other sense I'm a little bit disappointed at how long this thing has gone on because it's been quite a toll on the community. I think most members will recognize that it is the communities of Earlton, New Liskeard, Kirkland Lake, Timmins and others that have had to deal with the effects of what this project is all about. It's been a huge amount of mobilizing on the part of many volunteers in the communities of Timiskaming.

I think of all the people. I don't want to use one name because it would be really unfair to even name one. Really, it was a community effort of literally thousands of people, who when the previous Conservative government scrapped the NDP legislation that banned the use of the Adams mine site—once the Conservatives banned the NDP legislation, revoked the NDP legislation, it allowed this project to come ahead yet one more time.

Thousands of people in northern Ontario in and around Kirkland Lake, as well as thousands of people here in Toronto, protested, went to city hall. At one point we held up the ONR train by camping on the tracks, if I remember correctly, for almost a week. There was just a humongous amount of community effort at the grassroots to stop this.

I want to say to the government that I could take a shot and say this is the third position you've had on the Adams mine, but I won't do that. I won't talk about how David Peterson was for, then McLeod was against, and then you were for and against again, but I'm not going to do that in this speech. I'm just going to say hooray. It's the right thing to do and we'll support it as quickly as we can get this thing through the House.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I'm pleased to enter into the debate. There is a saying the Lakota people, the First Nations people have, and I think it really infuses what we're going to talk about, which is that we do not inherit this planet from our ancestors, but rather we borrow it from our children. I think if we're thinking about our children, about the future, about what we're leaving to them, that is what inspires this bill.

We're looking at a site that's been proposed for years and years by private interests as a way of making money on the fact that we have communities that decide not to deal responsibly with their own waste because it's easier to take something you don't like and move it someplace else, put it some other place in the province or even send it down to the state of Michigan, rather than deal with it.

I want to give the example of my community of Stratford. Our landfill site has, like every landfill site, a certain amount of time. You can only use it for so long. It fills up. Our community dealt with that issue. It was projected that our landfill site had very few years left. We brought in the blue box program, and that has extended

the life of that landfill for many years into the future to give our community the time to deal with planning ahead, because we don't receive this planet from our ancestors; we're just borrowing it from our children.

I want to commend the Minister of the Environment, because I think that inspiration is what led to this bill, the ability for us to say to people that waste is something we have to deal with in the here and now to protect our children, and that waste, as I've learned, can actually be a resource, particularly in our agricultural communities where they are taking nutrients and turning that into a resource for the generation of energy. So I'll be proud to support the bill.

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise to make a few comments on this piece of legislation as well, and to the previous speakers. What the member from Perth-Middlesex just said was interesting. He made a statement. I believe it was that we don't inherit this planet from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children. I found that interesting because I think that's a very true statement.

However, I have to look at this piece of legislation, and there are a couple of things on which I hope, when we get to committee, we'll get some strong explanations from the government, from the minister, on what she actually means. I guess I can't understand why she excludes parcels under a hectare in size. You can't put it in the Adams mine. You can't make a landfill out of the Adams mine. You won't put it in the ocean. You wouldn't be able to put it in Lake Ontario or Lake Erie or Lake Couchiching or Lake Simcoe, but if you've got a small, one-hectare property, which is equivalent to roughly two and a half acres and about 100 by 100 feet, why would you be able to create a landfill there? I just can't see why that's in this piece of legislation.

I hope we're going to get that explanation from the staff of the ministry or from the minister herself. But for some reason that's there. Is it to cover up a bunch of little landfills somewhere else in the province that have been approved? We don't know. But certainly it's extremely disappointing when we hear the minister talk about her passion for clean water to allow a parcel, 100 by 100 square feet, that could be considered a small lake, to be used as a landfill in the future. That's what this piece of legislation does. It's very interesting that she hasn't come up with an explanation. In fact, I can't even understand why it's there in the beginning. But I look forward to Mr O'Toole's comments as well.

1650

The Acting Speaker: The chair recognizes the member for Etobicoke North for a response.

Mr Qadri: I would like to thank all my honourable colleagues for speaking to this bill, in particular the MPP for Perth-Middlesex, Mr John Wilkinson, for his very well-taken remarks about our safeguarding the sacred trust, the lands and waters of Ontario, for our future generations. I'd also like to thank the MPP for Oakville, Mr Kevin Flynn, for his very eloquent and studied remarks about the various details of Bill 49. As well, I'd like to welcome the support from the MPP for Timmins-

James Bay, Mr Gilles Bisson, and welcome his support from the third party, as yet unrecognized. I would also like to mention that in the spirit of environmental protection and air quality, I would recommend some antibiotics for the extremely nasty cough for the MPP for Timmins-James Bay.

The MPP for Durham, quite rightly, invited members of the viewing audience to tune in by video. I would agree with him. I think the reruns are in fact better than the live action, and perhaps it's also possible to dub over the sound. There's not that much that's value-added for listening to him in person.

I'd like to thank as well the MPP for Simcoe North, Mr Dunlop—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke North, will you withdraw that? Where are you going with that comment?

Mr Qaadri: I withdraw.

The MPP for Simcoe North brought forth his concern, quite legitimate, that he can't understand why lakes of particular dimensions are cited in this bill and others are not. I think the long answer will be provided in committee. The short answer is probably "size matters."

Having said all that, I think that this bill amending the Environmental Protection Act and bringing forth an intelligent waste management strategy and saying no to landfill mines, which are lakes in training, as I've stated earlier—these are reasons enough to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: It's a pleasure, as always, to speak in the House on a government bill which goes a long way to achieving the goals of the minister, as she sees it. I think it's important for the viewers today to realize, I believe, that there needs to be a serious look and examination of how we deal with the waste, not just of Toronto, but that each of us produces in the long run.

It's very appropriate as well to be speaking on one of the few days allocated during the year to Earth Day. In fact, I just want to draw to your attention that in my riding this weekend we will have Earth Day celebrations at Samuel Wilmot Nature Trail. Allan Hewitt is the chair. We'll be unveiling the Lovekin commemorative cairn. It begins at 10 o'clock, and all are welcome. In fact, there's a conflict in my schedule, I notice. I'm not sure which Earth Day event I can attend, but I will be making every effort. It's Earth Day at Hampton's citizens' association. There's a street cleanup, followed by a chili luncheon. It's beginning to sound more attractive. In fact, it's a little closer to where I live.

On a more serious note, it's appropriate in that context, then, to be addressing Bill 49. Bill 49, in my view, has a couple of strong sections. It has a couple of sections I'm quite worried about, and I think it's been brought up by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. The member has pointed it out, as I will as well.

I think for the viewers it's important to look at the explanatory note in the legislation. It's very specific. The bill was introduced on April 5, 2004, and it says, "The

bill prohibits the disposal of waste at the Adams mine site, an abandoned open pit mine located approximately 10 kilometres southeast of the town of Kirkland Lake." During the last decade, most of lobbying has been done—Joe Mihevc I think was the mayor of the city of Kirkland Lake and was very much an advocate, if I understand it properly. So there was always a willing-host appearance, from what I heard. They felt they could take the waste, sort it, re-divert it, reuse, recycle and in fact enhance the Northland Railway infrastructure, and had other reasons outside of handling waste. I thought they could see it as a growth opportunity.

But here is the important part: "The bill revokes certain environmental approvals that have been issued in connection with the possible disposal of waste at the Adams mine site." So what it does is revoke certain legal procedures that have occurred, and there again we have the shadow of retroactivity, which is troublesome to me in a legal sense.

Also in the explanatory note it says, "It also renders of no force"—that's a legal term—"or effect certain agreements that may have been entered into with the crown"—that is the people of Ontario—"relating to lands described in the bill that are adjacent to the Adams mine site...." That part renders certain agreements of no force. These are agreements made with the crown, with the people of Ontario, in good faith, as most legal agreements are. That's pretty onerous, retroactive, regressive; I'm not sure what the spirit is here. That's not saying I support the outcome. I think due process is important to each and every one of us. It's a matter of our privilege and our right, which are being taken away here.

As a matter of fact it goes on to say, "... that are adjacent to the Adams mine site, as well as any letters patent that may be issued in respect of those lands." There again a legal entitlement is being removed with the stroke of the minister's pen.

It sounds very much like several of the actions taken by the government are rather centralist, bureaucratic and overarching, grasping control of the Ministry of Health, or the Ministry of Education in terms of the announcement today, forcing school boards to have classes of exactly this size, which will mean triple-grading or double-grading of primary grades—probably the most regressive move I've heard in some time—overstepping the directors of education who really, at the end of the day, are there as professional educators, as opposed to Mr Kennedy, who is a professional politician, as we all are here.

There is another section in the preamble that says, "The bill extinguishes certain causes of action"—these are court procedures—"that may exist in respect of the Adams mine site or the adjacent lands." "Extinguishes": The choice of word there is like stomping it out or revengefully taking action. That's the impression I get. The tone here is—I hope it's not been directed by the minister.

I'm just going to take a little bit of time out here for a moment. The Minister of the Environment—I'm aware

of two issues that I've seen in the Gazette. One was the water-taking permit at the Tay River, which was in Mr Sterling's riding. You'd have to look at that as an intervention in a water-taking permit. I'm not sure of the details on this but I thought it was a bit trite, a bit political. I wouldn't like to suggest for a moment there could be political interference. Then today, during question period, there was a response, which is in Hansard today, April 22. People listening or reading Hansard later on should account to the question by the member from Lanark-Carleton to the Minister of the Environment with respect to an environmental assessment process on a road widening which would prevent accidents. If she had stuck to the script in her response, she would have been fine, but she went to add the little stick, the little barb, the little expunge, the little extinguish, the little, I say, arrogant term—maybe it's not more than that, but the arrogant term—back to the Minister of the Environment. Mr Sterling—been here for 25 years; a former Minister of the Environment, a lawyer, an engineer and a hard-working member for his constituents—was snubbed, was put down. The constituents, in my view, will be treated as second class. I think more will be said on this in the very near future, because the prior minister is very strongly informed.

1700

But I'm going to go back to Bill 49, on which I think there's so much to say that I shouldn't be wasting the time on these personal events of the day that have shaken me, shaken my confidence in a minister's ability to lead objectively a minister's action. It has shaken my confidence.

The bill extinguishes certain causes of action—very surprising. Also, the bill entitles a numbered company, 1532382 Ontario Inc, to compensation from the crown in respect to certain expenses. Well, as has been said earlier—I think it was by the member from Simcoe North, or it may have been the member beside me from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, a practising lawyer of some note, I might say, in labour law primarily. But Mr Tascona did say to me that these people will be in court and there will be big money, and people should know it's taxpayers' money that will be at stake.

I believe the issue here is the closing of the Adams mine site once and for all. It's clear to me that this is going into the courts now. The garbage, the boxes and boxes of waste, or paper, will be created by the lawyers, for the lawyers, and they'll have to create another dump site to actually deal with all the waste.

“The bill amends the Environmental Protection Act to prohibit a person from operating a waste disposal site” in any part of the site.

Here's the whole point. This thing here, Bill 49, doesn't go very far. It deals with the Adams mine site, but everyone knows we have a garbage crisis. It's not just Toronto. I think earlier actions by the ministry and Waste Diversion Ontario were to encourage, incent and motivate, encouraging communities and families to reduce, reuse and recycle.

I'd have to compliment Durham region. They've gone a long way in setting very high-level targets on wet waste. I know that in our household we do participate in the green pail, wet-waste program, composting. I think that's extremely important, as is glass and paper, which has been done for some time. I know we can each reduce. We have to look at source reduction. There's no question of that. I won't disagree with that at all.

In fact, I drive home pretty well every night. Sometimes I take the GO train, when time permits. I drive up some of the main streets and there's paper blowing all over the place in the city here, in Toronto. Then I think of the numbers in Toronto. Where are they going to put it? Keele Valley? Are they going to reopen that? Are they going to put it out at the old Brock West landfill site that the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge—that's just not acceptable.

That leads me to the whole point. You've closed off the rail north option. That debate's been had for quite a few years. I am not in a position to say whether it was good, bad or indifferent. We had the mayor from Kirkland Lake and other community leaders who were for it, and we had those who were against it. We saw that all play out in Toronto council, when there was the great hoopla where they finally signed the contract with Michigan to truck our waste to Michigan.

How incomplete is that responsibility? I think it completely avoids making the difficult decisions to manage the waste. It also leads me to think of the history of the waste debate. In the very limited time—I only have about eight minutes left—I want to go through a bit of the history, however incomplete it might be.

If I go back to when Mr Bradley was the Minister of the Environment, I was a councillor at that time in what was then the town of Newcastle, now the municipality of Clarington. The Liberals had a plan, which was looking at trying to identify appropriate sites, encouraging municipalities and planning staff to work to try to manage their own waste. In fact, it was a long way along until the NDP came in under Ruth Grier. Some would say it was their undoing.

I'm reading an article here in the Environmental Science and Engineering magazine, November 2003, and it is available at www.esemag.com. The heading is “Could Even Dr Johnson's Wit Cope With Toronto's Ongoing Garbage Crises?” It says: “Currently, Toronto faces its most serious garbage crisis. If it were made into a film it could be an environmental remake of *From Here to Eternity*, a veritable triumph of ecological evangelists over professional engineers and chemists. In the 1990s, the Ontario NDP, under the then Environment Minister Ruth Grier, created the Interim Waste Authority”—the infamous IWA—“which spent some \$80 million seeking a waste disposal solution without a single bag of garbage ever being interred.”

There you are. In all honesty, I think the final expenditure—Walter Pitman was the head of that and I participated as an elected councillor at the time—was over \$100 million and they never sited one bag of garbage. The

purpose of the Interim Waste Authority was that each region—York, Peel, Durham and the city of Toronto—all had to find their own host, go through a whole environmental assessment led by Walter Pitman, a remarkable former NDP member, giving the dog-and-pony show, getting the little bit of money to run the IWA—blah, blah, blah—a political appointment, a remarkable man, former president of Ryerson, I think, but nonetheless he didn't site one bag of garbage with all the money.

It's a tragic waste. I look at the Ottawa siting task force on radioactive waste at Wesleyville and the town of Port Hope. They have been trying to relocate that for about the last 20-plus years. They have spent probably into the hundreds of millions of dollars, certainly \$100-million-plus, and they haven't relocated one teaspoon of waste, not a thimbleful.

I've just responded to the crisis facing Toronto, not by my words; these are the words of an article here. I've got another article here. This is by another person, an environmental reporter on CityTV—in fact, he ran for the Liberals—Bob Hunter. This article is June 8, 1995. He says, "After all, Bob Rae had published a position paper called Greening the Party, Greening the Province, which called for rather radical action, all things considered, on the eco-front."

This article is worth referring to because it's a rather castigating article, a very critical article. It goes on to talk about the Interim Waste Authority. But the other causes of those kinds of regressive steps in managing waste—I'm going to cite a couple of them. I'm reading on the second page of this article:

"Yet as we come down to the wire in this election, most environmentalists are wondering what the hell happened"—pardon my language, I'm quoting—"to the NDP on the way to green Jerusalem.

"I think the whole dilemma was summed up, probably inadvertently, by Bob Rae when he commented that if either the Tories or Liberals get in, environment will be 'even less of a priority' [than] it was under the NDP."

Imagine that. He's saying that under the NDP it was a low priority. I don't think they ever wanted to find a solution in the Interim Waste Authority, or any other solutions.

In the current discussion in the very few minutes I have left, this article is from the Toronto Star, the Liberals' briefing notes as far as I'm concerned, on April 20. Its title is "Don't Dump on Us, Halton Pleads." There's Halton region, very much a mirror image in many cases looking a lot like Durham, saying that they don't want Toronto's garbage. In fact, "The minister has the power in an emergency to direct that Toronto's garbage go to a municipal landfill site such as Halton's." The minister is quoted here, "But 'it's not something she expects to be using.'" It's not very reassuring that the minister is not expecting to. What if Michigan actually shuts down the border? What if there's a certain incident out of order that cuts that down? Where are they going to put the garbage? It's going to be, as Mr Barrett, the member for

Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, said earlier, NIMBY, not in my backyard.

1710

The Interim Waste Authority found, I think, five sites in Durham region. It was a very difficult, upsetting process for the residents of those communities. In Newtonville I can recall one site specifically—a great deal of unrest near Graham Creek, actually, where people were outraged that this could possibly end up in their backyard. In almost any location the neighbours, people who live nearby—the environment, the whole thing is a tough decision. I put to the government in my closing remarks, what is the plan? It's fine, the rail north option?

I'm going to put something on the table that might be quite new. As we might recall, the NDP put a moratorium on incineration. I'm not saying that incineration or gasification or energy from waste shouldn't be one of the considerations—or should; that's up to them. Being government is more difficult than being opposition. But it's my understanding, and I've seen reports from Holland, that they have a program which is called EFI, energy from waste. They direct certain waste streams, wet and otherwise, and use biomass, gasification and very high temperatures that actually molecularly change the components of garbage. At the end of it there is still a certain amount of ash, fly ash or leachate left, as there is in a regular, normally engineered dump site. There's going to be decomposition and leachate that accumulates and must be managed wherever it is. It wouldn't matter whether it was in Kirkland Lake, Halton, Peel or York region. York perhaps will be host to its own site. Who knows what the Liberals will do?

I put to you that they have no plan. They really don't have a plan other than taking action against the rail north option. One option that I think could be discussed in an all-party setting is the role of incineration—appropriate, environmentally accountable and meeting all the thresholds for clean air. Otherwise it's going into dump sites, into the ground, it's decaying and creating leachate, leachate is going into groundwater and eventually everything that's on the surface of the earth goes into the water. This is a tough issue. I don't think this bill has any substance other than that it's punitive to the city of Kirkland Lake.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm happy to speak to this bill on the protection of the Adams mine site. I want to pick up on a couple of things that the member for Durham said. The first one is, "What is the plan?" I think it's quite clear from everything that we're doing in this House that our plan is to protect the natural resources of this province. That is our plan. We are going to protect the water and the green space and we are going to conserve energy. This bill is part of that plan. I think the reason there isn't substantive argument in the House today is that you really can't argue against protecting water. You can't argue against not taking a risk of tainting water. That's what this bill is about. We're not going to take that risk; we're going to protect this site.

I have a daughter who's just about to graduate from the University of Victoria with an environmental studies degree. I think what we have to do is use our children as touchstones on these issues. Can we justify the legislation that's going through this House to our children? If we cannot, and I don't think we could justify legislation that wouldn't protect the Adams mine, then we should not be enacting that legislation.

I'm proud to support this legislation. I'm proud to be able to justify it to my children and your children and to preserve this site.

Mr Bisson: Hence the reason why you should never have the rump sitting between two opposition parties. You get the point.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: That's why we should bifurcate you guys. Anyways, that's another story. We'll deal with that later.

It's interesting, because when it comes to the debate around garbage, there's a certain amount of politics that's played around this whole issue, and unfortunately who gets caught up in the crossfire is the public.

That's not to say that this legislation is political in the sense that the government is trying to play politics. That's not the point I make. But if you look at the entire issue of garbage, we have been dealing with this now for the better part of 15 years. We're no closer today than we were 15 years ago to finding a way to deal with waste in the GTA. If we had continued the process we started some 15 years ago, we'd at least be in a position today of having made the decision of where those sites would be. At the end of the day some people would be unhappy, there's no question. As the people in Kirkland Lake were unhappy to have a garbage dump created in an aquifer in a mine, so would people be in other areas that would have a garbage dump created in their backyard. Nonetheless, we need to find a way to deal with this.

My only point is that it's unfortunate that the politics around the Adams mine has really turned back the clock about 15 years when it comes to the possibility of finding a solution. What are the solutions? I think members here have talked about them to a certain extent. It's all about reduction, about how we try to lessen the need to put things into a dump. Trying to develop new technologies is a whole other issue. Do we need to revisit policies that were made in Ontario over the last 20 to 25 years that may or may not be a solution to the garbage issue in the GTA?

I want to say, in the last couple of seconds I've got, that sometimes we get caught up in the politics of an issue so badly that we're probably doing a bit of a disservice to the general population, and I think that's what happened with this one. The Adams mine is dead. Let's move on. Let's not go back and try to redo 15 years—

Mr Colle: You think it's dead?

Mr Bisson: It had better be dead.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Oshawa.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I look forward to commenting on the member from Durham's comments.

It's a matter of the new government being in power and they've made a decision on what to move forward with. But as mentioned by the member for Timmins-James Bay, what's going to take place with the garbage? How is it going to be dealt with?

Our local mayor and the council at that time: Those individuals who were opposed to the site were defeated at the last municipal election and those who supported the site were elected back into office. I don't know what the polling was for the member from that area and how they did in that area, but that may say something about the immediate area. They saw jobs in there.

My own personal belief on that would have been that a processing plant to process anything before it goes in to ensure there wouldn't be any environmental impacts would have saved a substantial number of problems in that area. But as the member for Durham stated, what are you going to do with the garbage, and how is it going to come forward?

The other thing is, I would have hoped the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge had had input on this bill when it came forward. It specifically states in Bill 49 that waste could not be put in there. So what takes place in other groups—I'm sure the member from Durham knows very well—they do a process and they convert waste material to processed material. So is there an opportunity for processed material, as is currently being used—oh, I don't know—for SoundSorb or some of the other commodities out there, possibly going to be allowed, through this legislation, to be put in that site? That is something you should be very cognizant of. If you don't realize it, a processed material may be allowed to be put in as it is no longer waste as has been used in other ones.

I look forward to Mr O'Toole's comments in wrapping up.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Kathleen O. Wynne): The Chair recognizes the member from Nipissing.

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Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams mine site. As you know, the Adams mine site is relatively close to my riding. Certainly, it was a topic of much debate in my riding during the election, with many of my constituents raising concerns with respect to whether or not the mine shaft was containable, and whether or not there would be leakage from the mine. I met with a former miner, who now resides in Astorville, who raised his concerns with me in a very passionate way, and was very concerned about the development of this mine as a waste site. Many of my constituents were very concerned about bringing Toronto's waste north.

We are very proud to live in the north. We are proud of our natural resources, we are proud of our heritage in the north, and we were very concerned that bringing the garbage of the south to the north would just decimate our beautiful landscape and what we have grown to enjoy and what many in the south come to enjoy in the summer as part of our tourism industry in the north.

The member for Durham made a number of interesting comments, as he usually does, using terms to define our government as regressive and retroactive, which are really terms that I've only ever used in reference to his previous government. He was also very concerned with respect to legal entitlements that are being removed. I would just remind the honourable member for Durham that section 6 of the act clearly outlines that the crown, in right of Ontario, shall pay compensation for various expenses incurred by the developer of the Adams mine.

I agree with member for Don Valley East, who spoke of the need to reduce our waste. I think we need to start with our young people and our education on reduction of waste, and start talking to our manufacturers about the extent of the packaging that we use in today's society and how we could reduce that in order to reduce the waste that we are developing in all of our communities. So I am pleased to speak in favour of this bill and very proud to be from northern Ontario.

Mr O'Toole: I want to thank the members for Don Valley West, Timmins-James Bay, Oshawa, and Nipissing for their comments, because it is exactly what we're here for, which is to bring different points of view. I think the member for Oshawa has a much deeper insight than the other comments that were made, and I compliment the fact that he brought to the attention of the viewers that there was a lot of work done by the Protect the Ridges organization dealing with the spreading of biosolids on to land. I would hope that the minister would work on that, because there are other options that have been brought to my attention from Durham; that is, the use of the Wesleyville site, that current site owned by OPG near Wesleyville. Most people would know that as a future use for some—but I want to comment as well on the work done by the member for Oshawa and myself and others in the all-party committee, the select committee on alternative fuels.

Just a couple of the recommendations here are worth putting on the record. It does talk about the use of all sources of power or fuel. One of them is that the Ontario government, in association with the agricultural industry and livestock producers, shall commit to demonstrate a program for the collection and use of livestock-derived biogas as power in the province of Ontario, as well as switchgrass and other products. It also talks about waste, wood chips from forestry and other forms of waste being utilized in the production of energy.

As the member for Timmins-James Bay said, new technologies—and I'd encourage members to be patient. The whole idea of plasma burn, gasification and intense heats in the use and destruction of materials—ultimately all waste decomposes, either faster by using heat or some other chemical means, or slower by putting it in a dump. It all has residual waste that could be potentially hazardous to people, but it must be managed. I think looking at the past, you've got to look to the future and come up with new solutions.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I am very pleased to have an opportunity to speak in support of the Adams Mine Lake Act, 2004, which, if passed, would ensure that the Adams mine lake would never be used as a landfill site. I'm pleased today to share my time with the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

My grandmother taught me a long time ago that you should take good care of what you've been blessed with and leave this world a little better place than you found it. So on Earth Day, I'm very pleased to have a chance to talk about a piece of legislation which I think will make the world a little better place than we found it, and it will be taking good care of our environment.

Bill 49 is also part of our government's plan to create clean, liveable communities across Ontario by starting to deal head-on and in a responsible and innovative way with waste diversion. Our goal in this endeavour is to divert 60% of Ontario's waste from disposal by 2008.

Our government is developing a comprehensive waste strategy to deal with the mess that has been left by our predecessors. It's clear, as a member from the greater Toronto area, that no one is happy with the fact that our garbage is going to Michigan. As a province we want to show leadership and work with municipalities to help them find long-term solutions to this problem. In early May the minister will release a discussion paper seeking public input on ways to increase waste diversion from disposal to 60%. The current rate is about 30%. So that will provide each of us in our own community an opportunity to go and talk about the issue of waste diversion.

In my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, the issue of taking care of our environment is an important one. Last evening, I had an opportunity to participate with my whole community in an event that brought forward all the volunteer groups to talk about what they did. There was a number of volunteer groups that participated that look after our environment, look after the lakeshore, make sure our waterfront is clean, and volunteer their time to participate and clean up our parkland. I think I mentioned earlier that this weekend my colleague from Etobicoke Centre, Donna Cansfield, and I will be participating in a friendly competition of cleaning up a lot of the garbage that exists in our community, to celebrate Earth Day along with the many volunteers I know will come out.

One of the other components we will be bringing forward as part of this comprehensive waste diversion strategy is appointing an expert panel to review the environmental assessment process that's been left in limbo by a court decision that ruled the old approach was wrong and has left several landfill sites unable to expand. We're going to take advantage of the great deal of expertise that exists across the province, bring those people together and talk about how we can better the environmental assessment process to make sure it works for all of us and that we're all working in the same direction to ensure, once again, that our waste is better managed, in a more responsible and innovative way, and that we deal with environmental assessments across the province.

We're going to be asking that panel to recommend changes to the Assessment Act that will provide municipalities and industry with certainty, which is an important factor as we move forward and hope to have increased initiatives across the province. That will also shorten the process for them—again, they'll get that certainty in a quicker period of time—and at the same time will continue to protect our environment.

We also view as important and will be working in cooperation with our federal partners in Ottawa to streamline the process so projects that require environmental assessment under both provincial and federal laws are not tied up in lengthy hearings and that we co-operate. If there was one message that resonated as I had an opportunity over the last number of months and before that to talk to people in the community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, it was that all levels of government should work together when they're working on the same initiatives: "Don't make business jump through hoops with the province and jump through hoops with the federal government. Don't make us, as community activists and folks who want to do good things in our community, fight on all fronts."

Under our proposal, we would propose that hearings with both the federal and provincial governments be held at the same time. Those are some of the important strategies that we are bringing forward as part of this comprehensive waste diversion plan.

Improving the management of solid waste and aggressively exploring waste diversion is an important topic currently throughout North America and around the world. In the city of Toronto, waste management has been a much-discussed topic for several years, much of it by necessity, perhaps. Innovation is sometimes motivated by the necessity to deal with a situation. But we've had rising disposal costs and increased recognition that we need to protect our environment. We need to start developing an integrated solid waste management plan that examines all the aspects of air and water pollution and energy consumption, which may be either enhanced or negatively affected by waste management.

Some colleagues today have talked about issues of waste diversion. We also need to seriously examine the issue of waste minimization or waste reduction. Some of the current diversion programs that exist in the city of Toronto include the green bin program that diverts organic materials from landfill and turns them into compost. Phase one began in Etobicoke in September 2002. By the time the city fully rolls out that program by end of 2005 the green bin program is expected to drive diversion rates up to 42%, because organics make up more than 30% of household garbage. Rather than putting that in a landfill we can collectively compost that together.

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New waste diversion collection programs for government agencies and small business include the yellow bag program, familiar to many of you who have businesses in the city of Toronto, which has been diverting approximately 200 tonnes of organic material each week.

Implementation of continued recycling programs to 100% of multi-family buildings: There have been many years when it has only been single homes that have instituted recycling programs.

Something else we recently saw in Etobicoke-Lakeshore in the city of Toronto was the ban on grass clipping collection. Although many of my neighbours in the community at first were startled by the fact that we could no longer put our grass clippings out on the curb, it forced each one of us to deal with our own waste, to find a way to use that in our own gardens and compost and recycle those grass clippings ourselves, rather than simply dump a bag at the curb and expect that someone else will deal with the waste you've collected.

Another changeover that happened was changing from clear plastic waste bags for compostable materials to the compostable kraft paper bags, or using rigid containers. It kept the compost cleaner and didn't contaminate it with plastic product.

Lastly, the city of Toronto has also established a mandatory recycling bylaw.

All those things have been moving us toward an increase in waste diversion and recycling that material. I know the city is looking at additional plans that might include testing systems to be able to collect organics from apartment buildings and condos. Currently, it is only city homes that do that work. Also, expanding the scrap metal collection is underway.

As a province, this legislation that I'm proud to support is demonstrating leadership. We know that most of the waste going to Michigan from Toronto is from Toronto and other parts of the GTA. We're confident that our government working together with the city of Toronto will do everything it can to encourage the city's commitment to waste diversion. That commitment and the city's is consistent with our own commitment to better manage our waste and find solutions and work with municipalities to move forward.

Ontarians desire cleaner communities that will improve the quality of life, and I am confident our waste diversion plan will deliver that. We're going to work with communities to further educate them with respect to recycling, to considering issues of mandatory diversion, to looking at banning recyclables and organics from landfills.

All of those options will be considered in the full context of really wanting to live by the principles I started with today. My grandmother taught me, "Take good care of what you have been blessed with; leave the world a better place." On Earth Day, I'm proud to support a piece of legislation that is the start of a government that is going to take a real effort and a real direction with respect to waste management and diversion.

Mr Colle: It's an honour to follow my colleague from Mimico, New Toronto, Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and her very compelling comments about her grandmother. I think that in many ways, as much as we sometimes hear it is important to look to children to lead the way in terms of finding some interest and involvement in environ-

mental issues, we should also look to our seniors. I know that in the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence—I know the pages here probably don't know where the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence is, because some of the pages are here from James Bay, Stratford, all over the province. The road called Eglinton is quite a rare main street. It goes through most of the former municipalities of the once-called Metro Toronto. It goes through Etobicoke, York, a little bit of North York, East York, Toronto and Scarborough. It's one of the only streets in Toronto to go through all of the former municipalities, so you get a pretty good idea of what ordinary people are doing. That's about 2.3 million people. If you go to a main street like Eglinton and you see how they react to what government is doing, you understand that sometimes governments should look to ordinary people to find solutions.

If you look at the seniors who live at Eglinton and Lawrence, along Eglinton Avenue—I'm sure it's the same thing if you look at the seniors down in Mimico—there's hardly anything in their blue box. The blue boxes are sometimes completely empty. It's not like some people in other parts of Toronto, where all you see in the blue box is LCBO bottles—which, by the way, should not even be there in the first place. But if you watch seniors' garbage, they're lucky if they put one little Honest Ed's plastic bag out. They actually don't buy packaged food products. They buy, believe it or not—my colleague from Chatham-Kent will understand this, being a farmer, the only farmer, I think, in the Legislature. He will tell you that they actually might be advised to buy fresh. You actually go to the vegetable market and buy real spinach, not in a package. You buy carrots that aren't in a can. These are amazing things that seniors do. I think seniors understand that you should not waste things and that packaging is waste.

Packaging costs us a fortune. Packaging literally is costing the city of Toronto—and you know, the pages here from all over Ontario should understand. The city of Toronto pays \$50 million a year to truck its garbage—it's called garbage; it's not really garbage—and to my colleague from Thornhill, I think they're part of it too. They give us some garbage too, to go along to Michigan. It costs \$50-million-plus a year in trucks to put our waste into some hole in a farm in Michigan. You know, that's about a five- or six-hour drive down the 401 and QEW. If you live up in James Bay, can you imagine spending \$50 million a year trucking garbage? That's what we're doing right now. We really have not found a solution to how we reduce, how we divert, how we don't essentially create waste.

Talking about creating waste, as the member from James Bay, who's been here forever, it seems, will tell you, this is not the first attempt by a government to put this Adams mine scheme to bed. I remember, going back to the Metropolitan Toronto council, back to 1988, when I first saw this scheme come before us to use trains and rail lines to take our waste and truck it up to Kirkland Lake. Pages: 600 kilometres. We were going to put gar-

bage on trains that would run all day and night with our waste up to a mine in Kirkland Lake. Can you imagine doing that? How much would that cost? I'm sure it would cost about the same, \$50 million, \$60 million, \$100 million a year to do this. This is what we were going to do with Toronto's waste: put it on trains.

We are begging to find public transit or train travel to put people on, yet we can afford, or the Adams mine scheme was going to find, millions of dollars to put garbage on trains. We should be putting people on trains, not our waste. This was the Adams mine scheme that kept on reappearing. Local councils in Toronto kept reappearing in this Legislature for the last 15 years. Do you know why this keeps reappearing? Because this scheme was going to make a small group of people very wealthy. There was more money spent lobbying governments, especially the previous government, who were supporters of the Adams mine scheme—they spent literally millions wining and dining people for the last 15 years, because this Adams mine scheme was going to make some people very rich. That's why it's like Dracula that keeps coming back out of its coffin.

I hope to God this is the last time that this ludicrous so-called plan or scheme ever comes before any kind of elected body. It's got to be over with. I know members of the former Conservative government across the way know it's a foolhardy scheme that had so many proponents—shipping our waste up to Kirkland Lake by rail haul. A total waste of, you might say, of money.

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Finally, I think the Minister of the Environment has put together an end to this scheme once and for all. It's done, it's over with. All the concoctions, the buying of crown land by mysterious numbered companies, that's finally over with. I hope that we, as citizens of Toronto, as citizens of this province, understand that we now face the tough work ahead in terms of dealing with our waste, the diversion and reduction of our waste. Up until now, we have not really had a good record in reducing our waste, whether it be the city of Toronto or Ontario as a whole. One reason the previous government walked away from any waste diversion funding for municipalities was because the former Premier had one idea: he wanted the waste to go up to the Adams mine. That's why everything else was off the table, so we had no waste diversion strategy in Ontario for the last eight years because everything was supposed to go to the Adams mine.

Now, the work at hand is most challenging because it's not going to be easy to stop trucking the garbage to Michigan, which we shouldn't do. But that's going to take a completely different mindset for ordinary Ontarians. That's why, at the beginning, I mentioned that we have to start to look at our seniors in small communities like Mimico and the city of York, or big communities like Woodbridge, where the seniors can actually eat, breathe and have a very good life and they don't produce this waste. How can they do it? Why is it that everyone else is so in love with packaging that we have to spend

all this time and money packaging, which then has to be trucked to Michigan? Why do we have to have this Ontario entity called the LCBO, which cannot do what The Beer Stores do and recycle bottles? We have to truck LCBO bottles to Michigan too. That's ludicrous. It's about time that we started to come to grips with this.

This bill is the first step where the McGuinty government is saying, "We are now going to invest in waste reduction and diversion strategies which are meaningful, and we're not looking for these magic, foolhardy schemes like the Adams mine. That's done with." But it's not going to be done easily. We've tried this before in the past. It has not been successful. It's going to take dedication and a lot of commitment by this Legislature and by citizens of Ontario to reduce waste, to reduce packaging, to make an incredible commitment to saving our environment, saving our resources, saving our money, getting rid of all of this duplication of packaging, and remembering that this is something that has to be done because there aren't going to be any more silver bullets like the Adams mine. Michigan is eventually going to have to come to a stop. We're going to have to deal with it in a comprehensive way. This is the beginning of this comprehensive approach to reducing our waste in Ontario. That's why we should support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to add some comments about the discussion of Bill 49 today, this being Earth Day, and to the members for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Eglinton-Lawrence, who were making some remarks.

The government has set a target of 60% diversion of waste from landfills for a few years from now. Today on Earth Day, I introduced a bill that I'm sure the member for Eglinton-Lawrence supports, and that's the LCBO Deposit and Return Act, 2004. The idea of that bill is to provide a deposit-return system on wine and liquor bottles and basically keep them out of our landfill sites. I say this is a first step, and this will help the government meet its target of 60% diversion, but it's a first step.

We need to look at British Columbia, where they have a deposit-return system on virtually all beverage containers and all packaging, and they just have great success. First of all, the system makes money. I think the gross revenue on the non-alcoholic containers is \$76 million, roughly. The costs are about \$71 million, so they make \$5 million on it. But then there are other great benefits: space saved in landfill sites; a huge difference in the litter in the province of British Columbia, something like a 50% reduction in the amount of litter; reduced consumption of barrels of oil—178,284; reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

So I really think the province of Ontario needs to look at the other eight provinces in Canada that already have a deposit-return system and move toward that type of system, because I believe it can make a huge difference for this province in terms of meeting some of its waste diversion targets and dealing with the waste of this province and of this country more effectively.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bisson: Madam Chair, welcome to the Chair.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, sir.

Mr Bisson: It's pleasant to see.

Applause.

Mr Bisson: It doesn't take much to get people going here on a Friday afternoon, or a Thursday afternoon, I should say. It's like our weekend, Thursday. We go back to the constituencies on Thursday, so our Thursday is like Friday for everybody else.

I actually want to commend the comments by Mr Colle, the member for—

Mr Colle: Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Bisson: Eglinton-Lawrence. Thank you. I didn't want to look down, because by the time I found it on the sheet, it would be the end of my time.

I actually wanted to commend some of the comments he made, because I think they're in keeping with some of the problems we have had around the whole issue of the debate on garbage. I know the member was on Toronto city council prior to coming here. It was Toronto city council? Yes. So he understands well what the issues are from both a municipal and provincial perspective. It's not an easy issue to deal with. It takes some political will and a bit of courage on the part of politicians to deal with it, because it's the type of issue that flares people up pretty darn quickly.

I understand how difficult it is for a government, because I was there. I remember sitting in the Bob Rae government when we went through the cancellation of the Adams mine. At the time, if you remember, Metro Toronto wanted to do it. We passed legislation similar to this to cancel it. There was a huge organization against our cancellation of that because of what it meant to Toronto and in Kirkland Lake—those who wanted it. I also remember the Interim Waste Authority and the difficulty around that.

I'm just saying that I don't envy the job the government has got to do now. You should have let us do the Interim Waste Authority; at least we would have worn it. But now you're going to have to wear it, is all I'm saying, because the reality is that we're going to have to deal with this, and you're not going to call it an Interim Waste Authority. Basically you're going to do the same thing that the Rae government was faced with early on in the 1990s. I just say good luck, because it's a difficult one. We'll support you as best we can because we understand this is a tough issue to deal with.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to rise. I want to commend the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who took a very complicated subject and in a short time encapsulated very pertinent opinions, and the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, who can, as always in this House, bring something to the debate on all occasions.

I want to comment on the fact that he thought that the street that runs through his riding is very long. I'm told that Yonge Street actually begins in northwestern Ontario in a small town called Emo. I've been to Emo, and the

people there told me that Yonge Street begins there and travels down here to Toronto.

Both members talked about packaging and diverting our waste. Packaging is an interesting conversation in itself. I know that when you go to the meat counter on many occasions, when you go to buy your meats for your barbecue this season, perhaps, you'll find that it's on a Styrofoam tray wrapped in plastic. I've watched most customers do this, and I admit that we do it as well. We then grab a plastic bag and put the plastic-covered meat on a Styrofoam tray in a plastic bag. Then we go to pay for these food items that we bought, and the cashier takes the meat that's on a Styrofoam tray wrapped in plastic that's been put in a plastic bag, and puts it into another plastic bag. So here we have this item wrapped three times. We have to give some thought to this, I think, on how to control the proliferation of what then becomes a waste product. We diversify in much of our municipality. We separate glass, plastic, tin; we even, therefore, separate clear glass from coloured glass. We even separate some plastics from other plastics.

1750

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to make a few comments on the comments of the members from Eglinton-Lawrence and Etobicoke-Lakeshore today, and I hope you do well in your cleanup day tomorrow with Mrs Cansfield. I can't remember her riding.

I think there's no question that people here in this room are all very concerned about the environment. It is kind of appropriate that we're talking about the Adams Mine Lake Act on Earth Day. I know in my interest in the environment—I could throw this at the people here in this room. I don't know how many people actually belong or have your constituency staff do it or you do it yourselves—I wonder how many people actually look after a section of road and clean up the garbage. That's fairly important in our part of the province, and a lot of community organizations and individuals will actually pick up the garbage along a section of the highway. My wife and I look after about five kilometres in an area. We've already got our section cleaned up for the year and it's nice, but it's discouraging when you see the kind of stuff that's thrown out into the ditches: pop cans and liquor bottles and things that should not be going on the side of the road, because who wants it to be sloppy?

I do want to compliment both Mr Colle and Mr Miller for their commitment. I'm a supporter of that potential legislation in the future. I know there are some obstructions at the LCBO—I've been told that has been going on for a number of decades—but I would really like, in this

Parliament, to get that bill passed one way or the other, whether it's a government bill or whether it's Mr Miller's bill, and actually see a recycling program and a reuse program put in place by the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. I know it's going to be difficult, but I think here on Earth Day it's worth commenting on that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore has two minutes to respond.

Ms Broten: I think our government acknowledges that a 60% waste diversion plan is an ambitious target, but we need to take an ambitious step forward. I'm proud to be talking about the fact that we are going to take an ambitious step forward.

If we look at other jurisdictions, we can compare ourselves in Ontario to other jurisdictions that have been much more successful with respect to waste diversion than we. Ontario currently diverts only 25% of waste despite guarantees in the past that we would be moving to a 50% diversion rate. Communities like Edmonton and Halifax both divert 65% of their waste. So it is possible, it is plausible and it can be achieved if you show the leadership.

My friends opposite were paying quite a bit of attention as I spoke about my grandmother. I want to talk about the fact that not only did she teach us these lessons, but she led by example. My colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence was talking about looking at seniors in our community. I can look to my own grandmother, who led by example. She was a leader in reducing, reusing and recycling. My grandmother is 99 years old right now and lives in the community of Edmonton, which is currently diverting 65% of their waste. She lived through the drought, she lived through difficult times, and she was someone who recycled all those plastic bags, recycled that newspaper, reused those containers, whether in her garden or elsewhere.

If you go back to a time when we really did consider what we were throwing out—and it was much more difficult to throw garbage out because you had to take it yourself. We've perhaps become complacent over the last number of years; it's easy to put that garbage on the curb and have someone else pick it up. But this government is going to take ambitious steps. I'm proud to be part of that, and I look forward to seeing us successful and completing a 60% waste diversion strategy in the near future.

The Acting Speaker: It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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