



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)**

Wednesday 2 March 2005

Mercredi 2 mars 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 mars 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DEER AND ELK FARMERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm joined by Bill Top, Todd Grignon and his son Adam, who are representing the Ontario Deer and Elk Farmers' Association.

Farmers are creative, hard-working, willing to take risks and willing to work with people to satisfy public perception. We have always been encouraged to diversify. Special interest groups have lobbied strongly and continue to work against us with the Ministry of Natural Resources to have our industry exterminated. We have come to the table and openly discussed their concerns. MNR spin doctors wage war and use deceptions to the public against farmers.

This proposed regulation has no science and no substance behind it. This proposed regulation is based only on perceptions. We are an agriculture industry. Our animals are farm-born and -raised. Farmers build their farms, their livelihoods and their businesses based on current rules and regulations, and designed with future trends in mind. Farmers built their business in full compliance with the law, and now this McGuinty government wants to take our businesses away.

A ministry backed by special interest groups wants to change those laws. We had no part in the process. We were not protected. The policies and rules were changed midstream. We need to be protected and governed by the Ministry of Agriculture, not the Ministry of Natural Resources. The ministry designed to protect the farmers is doing absolutely nothing pertaining to our issues.

We have had countless meetings with the Minister of Agriculture, and at the end of each meeting we are promised solutions and assistance; countless promises broken, countless commitments undelivered. We have proposed many options to the government, and they all have been denied.

Minister Peters, why do you not protect us? Minister Peters, how can a non-agriculture ministry dictate to farmers with no consultation with industry? Minister Peters, show us your commitment to deer and elk farmers, as we have not seen this yet.

Premier McGuinty, show us your commitment to agriculture. Premier McGuinty, you promised to make agri-

culture the strongest ministry in your cabinet. Premier McGuinty, please keep your promise.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

ROTARY CLUBS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): On February 23, I had the great pleasure of attending the Rotary Club of Canada's 100th birthday celebration in Peterborough at Trent University's Great Hall. The event was attended by members of the Rotary Club of Peterborough, the Rotary Club of Bridgenorth-Ennismore-Lakefield and the members of the Rotary Club of Peterborough-Kawartha. In honour of Rotary's centennial, the Honourable John Manley, who of course has held numerous federal cabinet positions, spoke to an audience of keen and dedicated Rotarians. The event was also attended by the Honourable Peter Adams, MP for Peterborough; master of ceremonies John McNutt; the mayor of Peterborough, Her Worship Sylvia Sutherland; and Warden Neil Cathcart.

Currently in the Peterborough area, Rotary is primarily involved in the Greenway Trail, which is a beautiful natural trail made out of the foundations of an abandoned railroad line which stretches from Little Lake in downtown Peterborough up through Trent University and on to Lakefield. Rotary members built the trail with determination and elbow grease. The highlight could very well be the wooden trestle bridge that links Peterborough and Omeme.

For years, the Peterborough area Rotary clubs have been involved with the Easter Seals campaign to help handicapped children. Another very popular Peterborough-Kawartha Rotary initiative is Camp Kawartha. Now co-ed, Camp Kawartha was originally founded as a boys' camp and has been providing magical summers for children and teens since 1921.

The Peterborough area Rotary clubs have also been involved with the Polio Plus program, dedicated to the annihilation of polio in the world. Every Victoria Day, Peterborough area Rotary helps to celebrate the occasion by providing a beautiful display of fireworks at Little Lake. This is enjoyed by adults and children alike.

The world watched in horror as a series of tsunamis swept over 11 countries, leaving 150,000 dead and thousands more homeless. The Rotary Club of Peterborough-Kawartha reacted quickly and was proud to offer this humanitarian effort \$5,000.

Rotarians of Peterborough, keep up the good work.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):

Farmers across Ontario are in an absolute crisis, and the Liberal government must take a leadership role to save the industry. Our Minister of Agriculture, Steve Peters, was once an advocate for our farmers, but since being promoted to Dalton McGuinty's cabinet, he has turned his back on the farmers. Steve Peters once said, "Ontario's grain and oilseed farmers have been hard hit by low commodity prices, poor weather conditions and increasing farm subsidies in both the United States and the European Union." Steve Peters was once a strong advocate for a \$300-million cash injection to save the province's cash crop industry, but I heard today that cash crop farmers are still waiting for, and badly need, this money.

Where has Steve Peters, the agriculture minister, gone? Why hasn't Steve Peters spoken up and continued to advocate for this necessary money? Why has Steve Peters turned his back on the cash crop farmers of Ontario? That \$300 million is not an inflated number. We are six weeks away from planting season, and farmers do not have the money to put the seeds into the ground.

Steve Peters used to support our farmers, but where is he here today? How could someone go from being a staunch supporter and advocate for this needed money to doing absolutely nothing when it's so needed? The clock is ticking: Planting season is only six weeks away. We need the government to invest in our farmers now.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Dalton McGuinty's Liberals are hell-bent on taking health care in Niagara region from bad to worse. Not only is the crisis in Niagara region not being addressed by the Liberals at Queen's Park, but it is being aggravated.

Let me give you some illustrations, especially in the area of mental health. A constituent, the mother of a 19-year-old boy suffering serious mental illness, can't get mental health treatment for this 19-year-old boy and is told by the police to have him arrested so that he can get treatment. The kid does three weeks in the detention centre, and still no mental health treatment; he finishes his sentence, and still no mental health treatment—problem unsolved, aggravated by the Liberals at Queen's Park.

Another woman has an eight-year-old grandson who has ADHD and needs to see a psychiatrist. He's been sent to the sexual treatment outpatient program at St. Catharines General—a four-month waiting list. This is an eight-year-old boy who is at incredibly high risk, who isn't even guaranteed to be treated in four months, simply being told that if he joins now, the time period is four months to await treatment and could be longer.

Another woman is looking for a psychiatrist in Welland without success, trying to address mental health problems. My staff went on to the College of Physicians

and Surgeons Web site that lists which doctors are accepting new patients. The nearest ones are in Hamilton.

What does this government do? This government forces Niagara into its mega-LHIN, into a supersized LHIN, which is going to bury the interests and needs of people in Niagara, when it comes to health care, and leave them at the end of the line.

1340

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I want to take this opportunity to welcome the many farmers who have gathered here today at Queen's Park. I want to let the farmers throughout Ontario and those here today know that we are here to listen to what you have to say and that we value your input. I also want to thank you for your hard work, your leadership and your patience in the face of trying times.

I represent a rural riding. As such, I know how important farmers are to our local economy and to the economy of our province and our country. It's no secret that our farmers are facing many new challenges these days. I know, because I get the letters and the phone calls, attend the farm meetings and hear directly from my farm constituents, both back home and here today right on the lawn and right on the front steps of our Legislative Assembly.

I want to reassure the farmers that we will always be here to listen to their concerns. That is why we are meeting with farm leaders from all across the province.

Like our farmers, this government is dedicated to moving forward on critical issues to ensure that farming remains a viable and sustainable way of life here in Ontario.

This government has moved to bring funding to the table for BSE, drainage, abattoirs, enhanced food safety and product promotion, to name just a few. Why? Because we know that our farmers are the very backbone of our province.

We know that there are challenges ahead and there are no magic answers. That said, like our farmers, we're in this for the long run, and we intend to stand with our farmers every single step of the way.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): There'll be no long run for farmers if this government gets its way.

I had the opportunity today to stand with thousands of farmers out on the front lawn covered in snow, who arrived here by bus and by tractor to deliver a message to this government: There has never been a level of frustration among our farmers like we are finding today.

This government, which promised that agriculture would be a lead ministry, has reneged on that promise. In fact, they have cut funding—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I'll give you a chance to make your comments. I'm going to ask the members to be quiet. I'd like to hear the member from

Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke give his statement uninterrupted.

Mr. Yakabuski: In fact, this government has cut funding to agriculture.

Farming is going through the biggest crisis in memory—low prices, unfair competition, and no support from this government—while at the same time, this government is burdening them with over-regulation. They have no money to get their crops in the ground, yet they want them to pay for nutrient management.

For farmers in the province of Ontario, to quote the great author John Steinbeck, this is the winter of their discontent. While this government has money for casinos in Windsor—\$400 million—it has not kept its promises. I heard plenty from farmers today. I heard words from farmers today about what they think of this Liberal government. Well, I can tell you one thing, and they'd better get the message: Farmers do keep their promises.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I know that the member from Huron–Bruce would like to make a member's statement. I'd like to start so she can get her full complement of time. That is the reason for that delay.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): As a member representing one of the most rural ridings in Ontario, I wish to tell the Legislature about a vital part of our province, and that's rural Ontario.

In rural Ontario, we value education. Our government has recognized the special needs of our rural schools. The new funding formula acknowledges that our rural schools have very large catchment areas. The McGuinty government is supporting all schools by providing funding for much-needed repairs and renovations. After 10 years of neglect, this is very welcome news in our rural communities, especially for small schools in need of repair or slated for closure.

Rural Ontario also values our health care facilities. Small hospitals, long-term-care facilities, community health centres and home support services are critical to our small rural Ontario towns. I am pleased that this government is supporting those needs. The Ministry of Health just announced that they have received over 200 applications for family health teams. I can tell you, in our rural ridings this is good news: a service that will be available from one spot.

The government has also helped launch the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund, which will help with the critical infrastructure that is required in our rural communities.

Rural Ontario contributes to the province, and with new funding it will be able to make an even greater contribution. Not only am I proud to represent rural Ontario; I am very proud of a government that understands rural Ontario.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I rise today to speak about the McGuinty government's commitment to agriculture.

Today, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has gone to extra lengths to ensure that their concerns are heard here at Queen's Park. They are here today to get the message out that these are tough times for many of our farmers. I spent my morning today out on the front lawn speaking with those assembled and was fortunate to be able to meet farmers from my riding of Perth–Middlesex for lunch.

Since Perth–Middlesex is the most productive agricultural riding in Ontario, I'm quite familiar with many of these issues, but I always welcome the opportunity to speak to Ontario farmers, as I know do Minister Peters and Premier McGuinty. Speaking with and, more importantly, hearing farmers is the best way we can get a better understanding of both their broad and individual concerns. In fact, after attending the demonstration today, Minister Peters travelled to Ottawa to attend the federal/provincial/territorial agricultural ministers' meeting and conference. Knowing the importance of being here today, Minister Peters postponed—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I'll give you time to finish your statement, if the members would stop heckling.

The member for Perth–Middlesex.

Mr. Wilkinson: As I was saying, Minister Peters is on his way to Ottawa to help close that gap in funding that we have with the federal government. Knowing the importance of being here today, Minister Peters postponed his trip this morning so that he could be right here at Queen's Park to be with our farmers first-hand.

Today's rally, along with the minister's voice, will send a strong message to Ottawa that Ontario's farmers need their fair share. The opposition should join us and support our Minister of Agriculture as he goes to Ottawa and gets the money that we need in this province.

BSE

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia–Lambton): Since May 20, 2003, the US border has been closed to Canadian beef. It is hoped that in just five days it will once again reopen to live cattle.

The consequences of BSE have hit Ontario farmers hard. There were times when farmers didn't know when the border would reopen. They were worried, and they had hundreds of head of cattle but no one to sell to.

We responded to the BSE crisis with a comprehensive federal aid package worth \$410 million. This was part of a long-term strategy developed in consultation with the provinces, territories and industry groups, and was designed to ensure the long-term viability of Canada's beef industry. On top of that, it included continuing efforts to reopen the US border. Those efforts have paid

off, and now we look forward to the resumption of trade in live cattle with the US, scheduled for March 7, 2005.

But more must be done. That's why Minister Peters recently led a delegation of Canadian and Ontario agricultural leaders to the US to meet with the US government and travelled with Minister Mitchell on a second trip to Washington.

I want to reassure the farmers here today and those back home that this government will continue to work toward full resumption of trade.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise on a very serious point, fundamental to the accountability and the checks and balances in our parliamentary system. The opposition is particularly concerned that we have been notified of the absence of almost half of the cabinet. The Minister of Agriculture was seen a few moments ago in the tunnel between this place—

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Scurrying.

Mr. Baird: "Scurrying," one member says. I was hoping you could seek some guidance—

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

The Speaker: Order. I'm sure all members are busy doing the work of the people who elected them.

1350

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the City of Ottawa Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la ville d'Ottawa.

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

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm very proud today to introduce to you Jackie Vandenberg, who is an outreach worker with the Ontario Early Years Centre in Simcoe North. She is in the Speaker's gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): We welcome all visitors to the assembly, but the chief whip knows the process by which people are introduced.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We have question period coming up and I understand the agriculture minister is

not going to be here, so I'm sending this chicken to the desk.

The Speaker: The member from Toronto–Danforth almost went out with that chicken.

I want to take a moment to recognize, in the members' gallery, Paul Klopp, the former member of the provincial Parliament who represented the riding of Huron in the 35th Parliament. Join me in welcoming him.

I also would like to welcome John Parker, in the gallery, the member for York East in the 36th Parliament.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Acting Premier. It's truly regrettable that the Minister of Finance didn't see fit to attend today, because we've been made—

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): There are too many speakers here. The government House Leader on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Too late.

The Speaker: Shall we start now? Can I ask for the clock to start again. Now it is time for oral questions. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Runciman: My question is to the Acting Premier. We have been made aware of some additional disturbing information that may be directly connected to the secret \$10,000-per-person fundraiser held last May at the Sorbara home. We're now advised that the development on the 150,000 acres, the so-called peach fuzz, south of the greenbelt boundary, much of it prime farmland owned by developers, is wide open for development today, despite your government's assurances that this would not happen. On one hand, your greenbelt plan attacks the interests of real, legitimate farmers, and on the other, developers who can afford to fork out \$10,000 to have the Premier's ear are rewarded.

Acting Premier, do you not see how important it is that you now reveal the names of the individuals who attended the secret soirée and may have benefited from doing so?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm going to refer the question to the minister responsible for public infrastructure renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): The information that the leader of the official opposition has presented is not correct. In fact, the land that the member mentions is currently undesignated in municipal official plans, and it would be up to official

plan amendments of the normal planning process of the various municipalities to then designate.

Now, I should tell you, of course, that our Places to Grow plan identifies that, within the current urban envelope, there are some 20 years of land supplied for both residential and commercial-industrial development. We will be having a future conversation with municipal officials about what the future of those lands will be, but it will happen within the normal planning process.

Mr. Runciman: One of my colleagues said, "Places to grow the Liberal bank account." That's a cop-out response. This smells to high heaven.

We see, in the media today, Rob MacIsaac, who's the chair of the Greenbelt Task Force, saying that the boundaries for the greenbelt were set in the Premier's office. We know that the minister, responding to this question in October, said that there would be a requirement for 40% intensification in the municipalities before any growth was allowed to occur in this area. What's happened here is that this government has shafted farmers in the greenbelt area: no compensation for confiscation. They have a secret fundraiser—\$10,000 a head at the Sorbara household—and, surprise, surprise, developers now get the green light for 30 years of urban sprawl in this area that the government said was going to be protected. Will you now do the right thing and release the names of the people who attended this secret soirée at the Sorbara home?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Well, it's certainly a lot of sound and fury by the member opposite. I want you to know that a million additional protected acres by our government is a tremendous legacy that your government would never—you guys want to pave it all. Come on, give us a break.

We're working with municipal officials, we're working with environmentalists and, yes, we are working with the industry to be able to grow in a much different way because of the lack of vision by your government previously. If we had left it up to the previous government, we would pave over this entire province. Well, that's not going to happen under our government. We're going to grow in a better and more effective way.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Back to the minister: One person who will not be on the \$10,000-a-person list for the Sorbara mansion fundraiser is Lidia Kuleshnyk. Lidia has been representing a group of farmers in the Ajax area where the greenbelt cut their farms in half. She came to Queen's Park. She made her point. She did not have a single meeting, as far as we know. She didn't see the science behind that decision. She didn't have her chance for appeal. She wakes up Monday morning and now finds out her entire farm and that entire row of farms in north Ajax are in the greenbelt, the opposite of what they were asking for.

Lidia Kuleshnyk and those farmers cannot afford to pay \$10,000 each to go to a fundraiser at the Sorbara mansion. I say to the minister, if they can't pay the \$10,000, how do they get their appeal? What can you say

to farmers who want to have their fair day in court as well?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I repeat once again that the lands that are included in the greenbelt plan can all be justified on the basis of science that was established either by the Ministry of Natural Resources or the LEAR system under the Ministry of Agriculture.

Besides, in the particular area you're talking about around Ajax, we acted upon the official plan for the town of Ajax, plus we acted upon a resolution from the town of Ajax by the duly elected council to include those lands within the greenbelt, and we did that because it's based on good science and good planning.

1400

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): A question to the Acting Premier: As you are aware, and hopefully your Minister of Agriculture is aware, there are thousands of people on the front lawn of Queen's Park today, protesting this government's inaction with respect to the challenges that the farming community and rural Ontario are facing today. We've heard the sounds of honest working people who don't have \$10,000 each to donate to the Liberal Party. They have to get your attention the old-fashioned way, and I hope they've been loud enough to get your attention. I hope their shouts have penetrated the blankets that your Minister of Agriculture is holding over his head in some bed in the basement.

Acting Premier, your party broke your promise to make agriculture a lead ministry in the Liberal government by slashing spending on agriculture by 20% in your first year. Your Premier says his top priority is a swanky new \$400-million casino hotel in a Liberal riding, while your agriculture minister holds \$300-per-person fundraisers with anti-farming activists. Farmers in Ontario this year will lose \$229 million compared to a \$1-billion net income for farmers in the rest of Canada. Farmers have come here for answers. Acting Premier, why have you clearly turned your back on Ontario farmers?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to have the opportunity to stand in the House and say how very much this government welcomes the visitors who have come to Queen's Park today. They have made their points in a very effective and peaceful way. I myself had the opportunity over the lunch hour to go out there and walk with them. I know that the Minister of Agriculture was out there with them from 10:30 this morning, I believe, until he left the city, on his way to Ottawa to take their message to the government in Ottawa.

We understand that agriculture and farmers in this province are in crisis. Our government is acting, we're listening, and this Minister of Agriculture is very effective.

tive. He has gone to take their message to Ottawa to get them what they deserve so we can continue to have a strong, viable agriculture industry in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary? The member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Acting Premier, you will know, as was mentioned in the first question, that there were thousands of farmers on the lawn. They were hoping to be able to come to Queen's Park and speak to the politicians and then hopefully be given the opportunity to have the minister answer questions in the House. Obviously, the minister did not feel that was important, so he chose not to be here. I also didn't see the Premier there, so I guess the Premier has turned his back on agriculture too.

Acting Premier, why is your government saddling farmers with increased costs of doing business at this point in history? In six weeks, our farmers will be planting, and many cannot afford to put seed in the ground. Ontario farmers lost over \$229 million this year alone. When will we have an agriculture minister who will stand up and fight for Ontario's farmers? When will we have a minister who will take charge of this disaster? When will we have a minister whose voice will not only be heard but listened to? It's clear to our farmers that Mr. Peters would rather hobnob at \$300-a-plate—

The Speaker: Thank you. Acting Premier?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'm delighted to have this opportunity to say to the people of Ontario and the people in this House that we have one of the strongest agriculture ministers that this province has ever seen. And what is the evidence of that? Let me tell you. I can say, because I know, that at the cabinet table, whether we talk about health care, whether we talk about education, whether we talk about energy, this Minister of Agriculture is making the views of that community known and heard. We have implemented—we have active policies in this province in all those areas to support rural Ontario.

Do you want to know where the Minister of Agriculture is today? He's in Ottawa fighting for Ontario farmers, fighting for our fair share. That's the kind of Minister of Agriculture we have here in Ontario, and I'm proud to serve with him.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member from Niagara Centre, come to order, please. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hardeman: Madam Minister, you can't blow that one by the farmers. On the biggest farming awareness day of the year, where's our Premier? Where's our Minister of Agriculture? Why does Steve Peters see the need to be on the lawn shaking hands but then not returning here for question period? Farming is in crisis, and it's a sad time when the Minister of Agriculture doesn't even bother to show up to fight for farmers.

Acting Premier, in the 2004 budget, your government slashed safety net support for crop stabilization by \$50 million, a 33% cut.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member from Guelph–Wellington.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services, if you would come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'll be starting to warn members, because we're going to have a good question period today. I think we were at the final supplementary of the member from Oxford.

Mr. Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll continue. Acting Premier, in the 2004 budget, your government slashed safety net support for crop stabilization by \$50 million, a 33% cut; This at a time when the Ministry of Agriculture saw its administrative budget skyrocket by \$11 million, or a 68% increase. Once again, Minister Peters—oh, I'm sorry, he's not here. Acting Premier, the numbers don't lie. You cut monies previously spent to help farmers in favour of rewarding Queen's Park bureaucrats—

The Speaker: Thank you. The question's been asked.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I think it's important to remind the members of this House that when people came to this place to make their views known, members from this government and this cabinet went out to the front lawn. We spoke with those people. We talked to them, unlike when you were in government. You brought in the police and you brought in the barricades and you built a wall around the members of the government. We went out there; we're talking to them. They're the people that we represent.

You asked what this Minister of Agriculture has done for the farming community in Ontario. One of the first things he did was sign the agricultural policy framework, which your government wouldn't do. That enabled our farmers to access \$1.7 billion that you prevented them from accessing. That's what this Minister of Agriculture has done.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Thousands of Ontario farmers came to Queen's Park today to deliver a clear message to the McGuinty government. There is a serious farm viability crisis in Ontario, and they have a beef with your lack of a plan and your inaction. It's never been tougher to be a farmer in Ontario, never tougher than it is now. Farm incomes are in free fall. For the first time ever in the history of Ontario, farmers have a negative income. I heard a lot of heart-wrenching stories from people who are afraid of losing everything. Acting Premier, what's your plan for Ontario agriculture? What's your plan for the farmers who produce Ontario's food?

1410

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to speak about the good work that the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Agriculture have done to support the agriculture industry in Ontario. I think it's also important to report to the members of this House that because we are

very aware of the crisis there is an agriculture in Ontario, the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture met with eight leaders of the agriculture community just last week. I believe it's a responsible approach to work with the representatives from the agriculture community, to understand from them exactly where and exactly how this government can best respond to the crisis they are now facing.

You were outside; you heard the farmers. I heard the farmers. They recognize that many of the issues that they're made to face right now are not of their making and not of our making. But together we've got to work with them to get them through it.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, I asked for a plan, and as usual from the McGuinty government, we hear a lot of wordage and no plan. Let me tell you, the farmers out there think so much of what you're doing that 7,000 came here today not to congratulate you but to tell you that you're missing the boat and you're risking their very incomes.

They don't need any more Dalton McGuinty "I feel your pain" speeches. They need a plan. They need to see that you have something to work in the short term and something to work in the longer term. They are risking everything, and so far they see nothing from the McGuinty government; nothing at all except more press releases that don't add up to a plan. Deputy Premier, Acting Premier—whatever you want to call yourself today—what's the McGuinty government plan so that people who produce our food can afford to stay on the land and can afford to produce the food for Ontario consumers?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Our government has recognized the importance of the second-largest industry in Ontario, the industry that feeds us. That is why the Minister of Agriculture signed the agriculture policy framework. That is why this Minister of Agriculture has provided \$138 million to support farmers and assist them through the BSE crisis. That is why we have recently announced a \$6-million drainage program. That why we are moving forward with our ethanol strategy, which is going to support agriculture in the province of Ontario as well. That is why, unlike the previous government, we have directed dollars toward supporting the largest farms in Ontario to meet the nutrient management commitments; we've put \$20 million aside.

Maybe for the NDP those millions of dollars don't mean anything. That's not what I heard from the farmers out there. The reality is, we have more to do, our Premier and our Minister of Agriculture are prepared to do it, and they're working with the farm community to find the solutions that will work for them.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, I asked for a plan. You mentioned ethanol. I met with a list of corn farmers from the Chatham area earlier this morning. Let me tell you something. Your Premier goes down to Chatham and talks about ethanol. Those corn farmers who live within five and 10 kilometres of that ethanol plant are going broke. Do you know why? Because your ethanol plant

doesn't use Ontario corn. Your ethanol plant uses corn that comes from Michigan and Ohio and is subsidized. Farmers in the Chatham area aren't going to plant corn this year because the McGuinty government is subsidizing the operation of ethanol plants that use American corn. Is that what you call a plan?

Insurance rates are going through the roof, hydro rates are escalating, the cost of doing almost everything on the farm is going through the roof, and all you've got to offer is importing American corn? Where's the McGuinty government plan for our farmers?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Obviously the honourable member is not paying attention to the good work that has been done so far by the government. He doesn't understand that we continue to work with representatives from the agriculture community. They brought their message here; they're very eager to work with the Premier and with the minister so that, going forward, we can provide resources in areas that will meet their needs.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member from Renfrew–Nipissing, come to order.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Our Minister of Agriculture has also recognized—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Member from Renfrew–Nipissing, I'm going to give you a warning. The next time I'll be naming you.

Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Our minister has also recognized that while we are dealing with a very serious crisis in the agriculture industry, and we do have a role and we can help farmers, the federal government also has a very key role to play in ensuring that our industry is sustained and remains strong in the province of Ontario. He has gone to make his case with the other ministers of agriculture from across Canada. This is a national issue, and I'm very confident that our Minister of Agriculture is going to make the points that need to be made so that he can—

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Acting Premier: some of the farmers I met with today wonder, how can Quebec provide their farmers with floor prices? You say this is a national problem. They're wondering, how can Quebec provide their farmers with floor prices so they can afford to produce? Your Premier went down to Chatham and used the Chatham ethanol plant as a place to deliver one of his "promise" speeches, and do you know what? The farmers who live within 10 or 15 kilometres of that plant and produce corn can't sell corn to that plant. That tells us just how out of touch your government is, how out of touch the McGuinty government is, with the plight of farmers. You say it's a national problem. Tell me, why can Quebec afford to support their farmers when the McGuinty government is importing subsidized corn from the United States?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: First of all, I think it's important to remind the honourable member that the ethanol initiative that we have underway is going to be good for

our environment; it's going to provide 3,000 new jobs in Ontario. The Minister of Agriculture is working on a strategy that will enable the ethanol producers to access more domestic corn.

I want to say, with respect to his issue around the way the Quebec government supports their farmers, that they're using our money to do it, my friend. That's why Minister Peters has gone to Ottawa to get our fair share. Is it fair that other provincial governments in Canada are in a position to provide that support and we are actually funding those subsidy programs?

Mr. Hampton: Maybe then you can tell us, did the Minister of Agriculture go to meet with the federal Minister of Agriculture today? Did he go to whine, or did he go to blame? You're trying to do one and the same thing. One minute you're whining, and the next minute you're blaming.

The question is this, Minister: You say that Ontario farmers should be proud of your government's ethanol strategy. Your government's ethanol strategy is bringing in subsidized corn from Ohio and Michigan while Ontario corn farmers go broke, while they lose everything. Is it the McGuinty government position that those farmers should be happy about that?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: It is the position of this Minister of Agriculture that we will work to ensure that more domestic corn will be able to be used in our ethanol strategy. He has recognized that there are issues, and we're working to ensure that ethanol that is produced in Ontario is made from Ontario corn.

With respect to the issue around the Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa, he is there to represent the issues of Ontario farmers at the federal table with all the other ministers of agriculture, where he should be. That's exactly where we want our provincial voice: speaking out for farmers about the issues that Ontario farmers have to deal with. We want the federal government to provide the kind of support that they should be providing, to help our farmers deal with the crises they are dealing with, some of them because of a national impact.

Mr. Hampton: We're still listening to hear the plan. Last week, I met with farmers in the Orangeville area with our candidate, Lynda McDougall. This is what some of those farmers told us: Ontario's 21,000 beef farmers have lost over \$200 million, Ontario sheep farmers have lost money and Ontario dairy farmers are also losing money.

What they're wondering is this: They see your government has \$500 million for auto investment, they see that you have \$125 million for investment in film and television production in Toronto and they see that you have \$400 million for investment in the casino in Windsor—again, your argument is that this will sustain jobs—but what they want to know is, if you've got a \$1 billion for investments in these sectors to sustain jobs, where's the investment strategy for Ontario farmers who are rapidly going out of business?

1420

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I've shared this information with the member. I'm very happy to do it again,

to talk about all the good work the Minister of Agriculture has done and will continue to do to support farmers in Ontario. We have provided resources to help farmers with the BSE crisis: \$138 million. We have provided resources to assist with the ruminant situation, to assist with dead stock. We have provided additional resources for nutrient management.

I think it's important for all of us to remember that we are in a very unusual time, that there are many reasons why the agriculture industry is in crisis in Ontario today. Our Premier and our Minister of Agriculture are prepared to work with the agricultural representatives to help them identify what more we can do. I'm sharing with you what our efforts have been so far. I believe there is more we can do, and I know that our—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question was for the ag minister, who is undoubtedly feeling some pressure today, so to the Acting Premier: Your ag minister yesterday questioned where my loyalties lie. I've been outside talking to farmers since eight this morning. My loyalties are to farmers, to rural people. I don't discriminate. I don't judge what they farm or what organization they belong to. Acting Premier, farmers outside say your ag minister is a puppet. They say he has abandoned them. Your government has to stop blaming others for your shortcomings. Your government has to stop trying to divide and conquer. While your ag minister was mudslinging yesterday, he neglected to answer questions from myself and the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. Will you stand in your place today—we've had thousands of farmers here—and commit the \$300 million for cash crop farmers—

The Speaker: Thank you. Acting Premier?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I want to remind the honourable member that the Minister of Agriculture was out speaking with the farmers who came here to Queen's Park today. He was out there for hours to listen to them and to hear their concerns. I also want to remind the honourable member that the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture last week met with the elected representatives of farming communities from across Ontario, because we are aware of the crisis they're in. The Premier and the minister want to understand directly from these representative groups what we can do, exactly the very best way we can move forward the kind of support they need. Some of that can be regulatory changes. Some of that is additional funding for programs.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant doesn't seem to want the answer. You're shouting down the minister. Is there a supplementary? The member from Lanark-Carleton.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Farmers from eastern Ontario are not going to have enough money to plant crops this spring.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, I'm going to give you a warning. I would

like to hear the member from Lanark–Carleton's supplementary.

Mr. Sterling: Farmers in eastern Ontario are not going to have enough money to plant crops in the spring. Your minister, shortly after being elected in 2003, went up to Ottawa and signed an agreement, the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program, which has proved to be a disaster in terms of what it provides our farmers. It's also a mess. When can our farmers expect not their 2004 cheques but their 2003 cheques so they can plant their crops in the spring?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: The Minister of Agriculture has recognized that there are serious problems with the CAIS program, that it's not meeting the goals it was intended to meet. However, the minister has indicated he is looking forward to ensuring that those cheques are delivered to the farmers before the spring planting.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I have a question for the Acting Premier. Prime agricultural lands were excluded from the greenbelt; it was pointed out to you time and time again. I made an amendment to have them included, but all the Liberal members on the committee voted against it. We wondered why. Lo and behold, there are now allegations that developers who attended your secret \$10,000-per-plate fundraiser own some of these lands.

Minister, you have been dithering time and time again on your election promise of real-time disclosure for over a year. Now is the time to clear the air. Will you tell us today who was at that fundraiser, or do you have something to hide?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): The minister responsible for democratic renewal will answer that.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Yes, we are going to be bringing in laws that will require real-time disclosure. In the interim, Premier McGuinty said to the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, "Why don't we all play by the same rules, and why don't we all have real-time disclosure?" He did this on October 28, 2004. What's your answer?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Government House leader, please come to order. I would like to hear the member from Toronto–Danforth's supplementary.

Ms. Churley: Minister, that answer is getting very tired. But right now, you have a major scandal brewing here. It's in your interest to keep your promise and disclose who was at that dinner. You're stalling, it looks like you're stalling and the people of Ontario can smell that you're stalling. They know you're trying to hide something here.

Let me repeat: During the election campaign, you said that people had a right to know who funded your party

and that you'd ensure they knew right away. Last October, the Premier stood in this House and said, "If you are prepared to go there, then we're prepared to go there right away." Instead, you've stalled. And now we learn that while you were setting the final boundaries for your greenbelt, developers who wanted their lands excluded were paying \$10,000 to spend quality time with your Premier and the finance minister. Will you disclose the names of those who attended that dinner?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The member knows that the name of every donor is disclosed to the public through Elections Ontario. You know that. The question is the timing. Why won't the New Democratic Party, why won't the Progressive Conservative Party, accept the challenge that Premier McGuinty made in October, November and month after month after month? The silence is deafening.

I think I've got an answer. I think I know why they won't accept the challenge. We just heard last weekend that Mr. Tory has raised \$2.5 million since he's been leader. That's \$15,000 a day. Why won't the Conservatives accept Dalton McGuinty's challenge and agree to real-time disclosure now?

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services.

Interjections.

Mr. Ruprecht: Why don't you listen? You might learn something.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Why don't you direct your question to the Chair.

Mr. Ruprecht: I will, as soon as I get a chance.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, member from Nepean–Carleton.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Show some respect for the Chair, Tony.

1430

The Speaker: Order. I'm now going to warn the member from Simcoe North to come to order. That's your first warning.

Mr. Ruprecht: Identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America according to numerous consumer awareness associations and law enforcement agencies. In order to combat this growing crime, our government has taken action in recent months with the launching of our identity theft statement and partnership with industry at large. I want to congratulate this minister and commend him for producing these brochures in languages of the ethnic community, because it is so important for them to understand that identity theft is a growing problem. So thank you, Minister.

However, most of these initiatives have consumer focus, and the minister should know that our government is doing everything it can to ensure—

The Speaker: Thank you. The question has been asked.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Mr. Speaker, I can listen to this member all afternoon.

It's rare that I get a question. I can't even remember who my critic is on the—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Niagara Centre—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. When I sit and I hear shouting across, I'll give you a warning.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Watson: I think that was the junior member from Nepean, Mr. Speaker. He obviously wasn't given permission for a question today.

I want to thank the member for Davenport for his consistent interest in the issue of identity theft. As he rightly pointed out, identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America.

On Monday this week I was pleased to be in my hometown of Ottawa, where we launched a new information kit aimed at giving businesses useful tips and information on how to avoid the theft of information. I was there with the president of the Retail Council of Canada, Diane Brisebois, the chief of the Ottawa Police Service, Vince Bevan, as well as the federal privacy commissioner and other interested parties.

The information kit provides the kind of information that both employers and employees need to avoid identity theft in their places of business. It is going to provide valuable information for these individuals, not only to save money for themselves and their businesses but also, quite frankly—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Ruprecht: These crimes are growing because more personal information is collected and retained than ever before, and the risk of identity theft multiplies every time it is transmitted or retained in an unsafe manner.

I have heard from my constituents—I know you have too—of the government's need to educate businesses on how to reduce their risk of identity theft and how to take action should they become victims. I understand that we have launched an information campaign geared toward businesses.

Can you explain how the identity theft kit for business can be obtained so that the right people have the right information; and are you prepared to enact legislation to protect consumers if this information campaign is not effective?

Hon. Mr. Watson: That's one of the tougher questions I've had since being a minister, and I thank the member very much.

First of all I want to thank Visa Canada. Visa Canada was at the forefront of a partnership that we developed with the federal and provincial consumer ministers across the country. Secondly, the information is available free of charge to businesses. It's available on our Web site, serviceontario.ca, which is very easily accessible to businesses. Finally, as the member pointed out—and he represents a riding that has many different cultures and languages—the identity theft brochure is available and has been sent to all members and government information centres in seven different languages, because new Canadians are often some of the most vulnerable targets

of these scam artists. We're very pleased to provide the information in their languages.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question to the Acting Premier: As you saw today, corn producers, grape growers, tender fruit producers are becoming increasingly concerned about the McGuinty government's assault on farmers and their way of life. The latest example is your “greenbotch” legislation, which, I remind you, in section 6 gives extraordinary powers to the minister to limit any kind of building on a farmer's lot. The proposals that you have on the table would effectively limit any value-added operations to the extent that any winery that currently exists in the province could never be built in the greenbelt area. Cherry-pitting operations that contribute to agriculture could not be built under that set of rules.

Sadly, the government always characterizes farmers who object as speculators instead of as having legitimate concerns about the regulations that you're bringing forward with your greenbelt legislation. In fact, Paul Mistele from OFA says it's the most draconian piece of legislation ever faced by farmers. Acting Premier, are they speculators, or do they have legitimate concerns?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Let me make it abundantly clear that this government does not regard farmers as speculators. That is your interpretation, sir. We regard farmers as being in an honourable profession. It is a very important profession. What we are doing in the greenbelt is to ensure that farming and the—

Mr. Hudak: Then why are they objecting?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Member from Erie–Lincoln, come to order. I give you a warning. You asked a question, and the minister is trying to respond.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: What we want to make sure of with the greenbelt legislation is that farming will continue. We made extra provisions in our greenbelt plan to make sure that not only the current farming that's being carried out on the good agricultural land within the greenbelt can continue but also that modern and more modern new processes that may come along within the agricultural industry can be accommodated there. We think it's extremely important, not only for this generation but for generations to come, that the good agricultural lands that are within the greenbelt area be preserved for farming, the way it should be.

The Speaker: The member from York North has a supplementary.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): To the Acting Premier: I have yet another example of your and your government's assault on rural Ontario. Your election platform identified a commitment to 5% ethanol content in gasoline by 2007. A few moments ago, you said that

your government was working on an Ontario solution. Yet the Ontario Corn Producers' Association developed a business plan with broad stakeholder support; you didn't listen.

Minister, will you explain to this House why you are so committed to an arbitrary date of 2007 that will, according to the Ontario Corn Producers' Association, shut out Ontario's corn producers and processors? Why are you not listening to them?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Speaker, I'm not sure if it's in order, since the first question was on the greenbelt, but I'm very happy to talk about our ethanol initiative and our ethanol commitment. The reason 2007 is our first target date and 2010 is our second target date is that we are committed to improving air quality in the province. This is cleaner gas. We made that commitment during the campaign. This is going to be good for farmers in Ontario. Certainly, the farmers in Cornwall who produce corn, the farmers in Brantford who produce corn, think this is a good strategy. We know that it's going to be better for the environment, because we're going to have cleaner gas, and it's keeping a commitment that we made during the campaign.

HEALTH RECORDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. Last week, as you recall, private medical tests went missing in my community. They were stolen from a van that was contracted to deliver personal and private health information to clinics and hospitals in the area. We know that one individual was disciplined. We know that couriers won't be leaving people's medical tests out in the open any more. But we still don't know how many test results were lost, how many patients had their privacy violated.

Minister, what do you have to say to those in Niagara region who are now wide open to the very identity theft that your member from Davenport just asked your Minister of Consumer and Business Services about? Can you please respond?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I can. I'll respond along the same lines as I did last week, which is that this is a matter that we take extremely seriously. We work very, very hard to make sure that the personal information of individuals is protected. This is job one.

The member, in her very question, indicated that—in examination of the circumstances that went down, we're always seeking to improve those, and as a result, measures have been taken to make sure that this is the case in the future. We continue to work, through the appropriate bodies, to make sure that any information we have is properly conveyed to the individuals who are affected. This is what we'll continue to do.

1440

Ms. Horwath: Mr. Minister, obviously you haven't even seen the package that was produced and delivered to Queen's Park offices this week by your own minister.

Quite frankly, I've studied the package, and your ministry is in breach of at least three of the standard safeguards in this package against identity theft. Did you prepare a strategy to manage the breach? No. Did you use locks, alarms and video cameras? No. Did you limit access to sensitive data? No, you did not, Minister. Why, then, are you breaching the identity theft protection measures advocated by your own minister and in fact questioned by your own member today in this Legislature?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: This honourable member, in her desire to create hysteria and fear, is creating a circumstance where she has removed any of the reality of the situation, which was that somebody broke into a vehicle in the first place—she talks about alarms and security systems and cameras.

Obviously, there are important protocols in place, and we're always working hard to improve those. We brought in the strongest personal protection law in the country, which is a standard that other people are chasing, and we'll continue to work to improve those.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. You recently released our government's draft growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. In the next 25 years, about 75% of our growth is expected to occur in the GTA and Hamilton. Minister, how will this growth plan be implemented and managed so that sprawl and gridlock is reduced and communities get the infrastructure support they need to grow?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I thank the member very much for the question. We have a situation where we've had a lack of leadership from previous governments that has resulted in gridlock, sprawl, poor air quality and inappropriate land use. In fact, that's exactly why we brought the greenbelt, Places to Grow, source water protection, transportation strategies and a whole host of other measures.

The member asks, what are the necessary infrastructure projects which are going to be put in place to reverse some of the decline we've seen under the previous governments? Quite clearly, our government has taken action where there was none previously: \$1 billion to support the TTC, \$1 billion for GO train enhancement and expansion, \$300 million for the Kitchener LRT, over \$200 million to support the Ottawa train. I want all members to know that there is much more to come. My colleague the Minister of Transportation will be unveiling a strong Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, a GTA-wide transit strategy, and much, much more that I'd be happy—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): And I'm sure that in the supplementary, you'll get there.

Mr. Berardinetti: My supplementary to the minister: You may know that areas in my riding of Scarborough Southwest are earmarked for growth under the city of Toronto's new official plan. In fact, a few weeks ago I had the opportunity to tour the riding with the mayor of

Toronto, David Miller, the city councillor for the area, Gerry Altobello, and my wife, Michelle. We actually spent a good morning together going through the area.

The Warden Woods community is going to see intensified residential development and growth in the coming years. Minister, I'd like to ask you how that intensification will be phased in over a period of years and how my residents will be given greater choices in choosing the type of housing they want in their community.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, that goes right to the heart of the very plan. People across Ontario are telling us that they want greater choices. They want neighbourhoods. They want easy access to community services, schools, work and recreational opportunities. They want to be connected between communities as well.

There's sometimes a misperception that it's either a choice between a 50-foot lot or a 50-storey condominium. We reject that model entirely. There is an entire range of housing choices and affordabilities that we think Ontario consumers ought to have access to. We think there's an entire range of transportation choices, whether it's cars, transit, walking, cycling, skateboarding or whatever. We think that Ontarians deserve those choices, and that is what our plan will deliver for the people of Ontario, through infill and through brownfield redevelopment.

The city of Toronto is already near their target, and they have an outstanding official plan for this.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): My question is for the Acting Premier. Today I heard from John Buchler from my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. In fact, his wife, Antonia, was here today at the rally, along with Klaus Wand and a whole busload of farmers from my region. John is the first one to say that farmers aren't just interested in handouts, and that's a good thing, because by the time they get through the paperwork for CAIS and for BSE funding, it's really not worth their while. What has him really bugged is the way your government is treating rural Ontario. He would be the first one to tell you that the drinking water regulations and the nutrient management rules are going to shut down small farmers all across the province.

Minister, tell me, tell the small farmers in my riding and Ontario, the ones who were here today on the lawn at Queen's Park: When are you finally going to come up with a regulation that is reasonable, affordable and sustainable?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to be able to stand in the House today and say to the honourable member that we did inherit a lot of problems, and we're here to fix them.

I'm really happy that you talk about the water regulation, particularly regulation 170. I have heard from many of your constituents who were absolutely aghast with the burden that regulation 170 was placing on them, a regulation that was signed by the now leader of the

official opposition. Mr. Runciman was the one who signed that regulation.

We have been working very hard to improve that, I'm happy to report. I was happy to report at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association that we've completed a good deal of consultation. We've gone to 12 communities in Ontario, and we're going to be repairing that very flawed regulation very soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary, the member for Waterloo-Wellington.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is to the same minister. Of the many thousands of farmers on the lawn of the Legislature today, hundreds were from Waterloo-Wellington, and I want to thank them for helping us to send a message to the government that rural Ontario will not be ignored and we will stand up for our vital interests.

For three years now, I have been calling upon the provincial government to protect double-hatter firefighters so that our rural communities will be safer as a result of their training, skills and knowledge. Recently, I was pleased to learn that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has added its strong voice in support of the double-hatters' right to volunteer in their home communities. I would ask the Acting Premier, who represents a rural riding in eastern Ontario where this is a huge issue, what is she doing to stand up for the right of double-hatters to volunteer in their home communities and in their own free time?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I guess I'm surprised. Yes, I am a rural member and I am aware of the double-hatter issue in rural Ontario. It was an issue that was raised on the floor of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association convention last week, and I think the minister responsible gave quite an appropriate answer. I'm sure the agriculture community appreciates that the minister responsible, Minister Kwinter, is doing all he can, working in conjunction with the fire marshal's office to ensure that communities across Ontario, including rural communities, continue to be safe.

I just want to remind the honourable member: Maybe he could explain to the OFA and all the folks in rural Ontario why a former minister, himself a rural representative, did not support your private member's bill when he was the minister and you were the government.

1450

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Yesterday the McGuinty government rubber-stamped an outrageous 35% pay increase for the chief executive officer of Hydro One: a \$750,000 base salary, a \$600,000 bonus, \$125,923 in other compensation, a \$2-million severance package should he decide to leave, and you're going to subsidize the mortgage on his home to the tune of \$125,000. Meanwhile, the news wasn't so good for the people of Terrace Bay. Neenah Paper is closing a pulp mill on May 1, and 130 workers will lose their jobs in

Terrace Bay. Why is the mill closing? High production costs—that's code for Dalton McGuinty's 12% increase in the hydro rate for pulp and paper mills. Minister, can you tell the people of Terrace Bay how you justify a 35% pay hike for the chief executive officer at Hydro One at the same time as the McGuinty government kills 130 jobs in that town?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources):

What I'd like to do with the member is address the situation in Terrace Bay, because it's alarming to me. Obviously I'm saddened when I see announcements such as that, where 130 workers are being displaced. It looks to be about 70 of those workers will be eligible for early retirement. We have talked to the company about ensuring that they receive their maximum benefits and early retirement benefits in order that they can stay in the community.

I've also pledged to work with the company to resolve many of the challenges they have. Fibre supply is obviously a big challenge, and we're working with the company. I gave the company some suggestions in a meeting I had on Monday, when they came up from Atlanta, where I think we could streamline our forestry operations. So I've pledged to work with them so that the viability of machine number 2 will sustain the community.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, it's another 130 jobs that are being killed by your government's policy of increasing hydro rates for industries in northern Ontario. That's on top of the 6,000 jobs that were lost across northern Ontario in the last 12 months under your government, and more mills are threatened with closure because you've got a policy of constantly increasing hydro rates for those mills.

Here's what the people in Terrace Bay see. Your hydro policy is closing their mill. They know that investments need to be made in companies like that. They see that the McGuinty government has a \$500-million investment strategy for the auto sector to sustain jobs. They see that you've got a \$125-million-a-year investment strategy to sustain jobs in the movie and television production in Toronto. They see that you've got an investment strategy of \$400 million for the casino in Windsor to sustain jobs. What they're wondering is, where is the McGuinty government investment strategy for the forest industry, a sector that needs to make investments? Where's the strategy—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: As the member well knows, I brought together the leaders of the industry, the unions, the communities, the First Nations and the environmental community in northern Ontario. They are completing a report, which I will have on my desk by the end of next month. That is where I'm going to get an action plan from the experts. We have also asked experts to be part of that council, to start to give us some direction for increasing the value-added capacity of the industry. This will create jobs in the north.

I would say to the member, he may have missed the announcement of the Minister of Energy of the co-generation facilitator that the government is appointing so that we can work with the industry to start to facilitate co-generation opportunities for industry, to get them basically off the grid and maybe even be a net contributor to the grid. We think there's a lot of potential in northern industry to produce power.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. After more than a decade of neglect, our government has introduced initiatives to ensure that residents in northern Ontario will begin to share in the economic prosperity of our province. Minister, you've played a key role in leading on these initiatives, and certainly the residents of Sault Ste. Marie have seen first-hand your commitment to our city, as well as to other northern communities. Our government has reopened the northern office of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, signalling that the north is once again open for business. Can you tell us about the strategies contained in the northern prosperity plan that will help facilitate growth in northern Ontario?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I would like to thank the member and congratulate him for all the hard work that he's doing for his constituents in Sault Ste. Marie.

There's no question but that after years of neglect on the part of the previous government, northern Ontarians really are optimistic about their future. They're optimistic because the McGuinty government is keeping its commitments to northern Ontario. We have kept our commitment to refocus the northern Ontario heritage fund to target job creation in the north. We have kept our commitment to create a northern Ontario grow bonds program. We have kept our commitment to re-establish the northern development councils so that northerners can provide their input—a direct voice to the government—ensuring that the solutions to northern Ontarians' concerns are found and executed by northerners.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education has proposed a new funding model for the transportation of students to school, which will cut the annual transportation grant to the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic school board by 45%;

“Whereas these cuts will force the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board to reduce the existing level of daily bus services for its schools;

“Whereas these cuts will result in increased walking distances for young children and other possible service reductions affecting Catholic schools in Ontario, which could compromise the safety and welfare of these children;

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

“The Ministry of Education should re-evaluate the proposed new transportation funding model to ensure that the current level of funding for the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board is maintained, so that children attending Catholic schools in the provincial riding of Nepean-Carleton will be able to safely travel back and forth from school.”

It will be signed by this member and the member for Timmins-James Bay.

ADVERTISEMENT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Bell Canada Sympatico issued a paper advertisement to households in Toronto and specifically in the riding of Scarborough Southwest; and

“Whereas the advertisement depicts an anatomy drawing of a female body with some sections cut out; and

“Whereas the text by Bell Canada Sympatico beside this drawing reads, ‘You’ll do anything to protect your kids from inappropriate content. So will we.’; and

“Whereas this is offensive to females and to the general public, as it is degrading and misleading;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to forward a copy of this advertisement to the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services and the Ministry of the Attorney General for review and possible legal action against Bell Canada Sympatico and its agents.”

I agree with the petition, and I put my signature to it.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

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

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of HRC to extend specialized services, support

and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

I’m pleased to sign my name to that.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

“Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician’s offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment, at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I’m pleased to present this petition, and I affix my signature thereon because I agree with it.

1500

TTC RIGHT-OF-WAY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment against the dedicated TTC right-of-way on St. Clair Avenue West. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the city filed the ESR (the environmental assessment report) and issued the notice of completion on November 22, 2004 ... ;

“Whereas environmental impacts of the dedicated right-of-way significantly affect the quality of life of nearby residents dramatically and detrimentally;

“Whereas the availability of other alternatives to the project have not received careful consideration;

“Whereas the public consultation program and the opportunities for public participation have not been adequate;

“Whereas specific concerns remain unresolved ... ;

"Whereas the city/TTC have not made their case within the parameters set out by the Environmental Assessment Act. The act defines 'environment' to include 'the social, economic and cultural condition that influences the life of humans or a community.' The city has not established the need for the project, nor has it adequately assessed the potential socio-economic impacts that would result from" constructing such a streetcar laneway;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Minister of the Environment issue a part II order which would subject the St. Clair project ... to an individual environmental assessment."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to put my name to it.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant):

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm issues; and

"Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions, rising costs for energy and a crushing regulatory burden on farmers; and

"Whereas current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario's farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province that protects our rural way of life, and to work in the short term to alleviate the farm income crisis and listen to the concerns of farmers about the greenbelt."

These have been signed today, and I affix my signature.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It says:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the

passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here signed by many, many farmers.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm issues; and

"Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions, rising costs of energy and a crushing regulatory burden on farmers; and

"Whereas current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario's farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province that protects our rural way of life, and to work in the short term to alleviate the farm income crisis and listen to the concerns of farmers about the greenbelt."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I totally agree with it.

CARDIAC CARE

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to speak on behalf of a number of people in the Niagara region today. I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Niagara region has a population of over 430,000 people and has the highest 30-day death rate in Ontario for heart failure, has the second-highest one-year death rate in Ontario for heart failure, has the second-highest heart failure readmission rates in Ontario, has the third-highest post-heart-attack one-year death rate, and is 25% higher than the Ontario average for ischemic heart disease deaths; and

"Whereas in fiscal year 2002-03, Niagara region residents had 1,230 admissions to hospital for heart failure, 1,150 patients admitted to hospital for acute heart attack, 862 admissions to hospital for ischemic heart disease, 93 admissions to hospital for cardiomyopathy, a repatriation population of 458 post-angioplasty patients, 341 admissions to out-of-region hospitals for coronary artery disease, 328 post-coronary artery bypass patients, 92 heart valve replacement patients and three heart transplant patients; and

"Whereas all of the above-mentioned 4,503 heart patients are eligible for cardiac rehab in Niagara, which

translates to 1,500 new patients who would access Niagara cardiac rehab services every year; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funds cardiac rehabilitation in 24 communities but does not fund cardiac rehabilitation services anywhere in Niagara. Heart Niagara, a registered non-profit corporation, provides services in one of the largest cardiac rehab programs in Ontario at no charge to the patient but relies on funding through donations and special events;

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

“That cardiac rehabilitation services in Niagara be funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, as they are in 24 other Ontario communities, and made comprehensive and accessible.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition as a supporter, and ask Clemence to carry it down for me.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen’s Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm issues; and

“Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions, rising costs of energy and a crushing regulatory burden on farmers; and

“Whereas current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario’s farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province that protects our rural way of life, and to work in the short term to alleviate the farm income crisis and listen to the concerns of farmers about the greenbelt.”

I affix my signature to this and present thousands of signatures.

SENIORS’ TRANSIT PASS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This is to the Parliament of Ontario and the minister responsible for seniors:

“Whereas most seniors live on fixed incomes which are eroding every year due to inflation costs and other necessary expenses;

“Whereas most seniors have their freedom severely restricted when unable to go about their daily business, which includes public transit;

“Whereas most seniors should be encouraged to live active, healthy lives—visiting friends, relatives, going shopping etc.;

“Whereas other jurisdictions already provide free local transit passes to seniors, namely, many cities in the USA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and responsible for seniors, to ensure that seniors be granted a free TTC pass and/or introduce legislation that will force the local Toronto Transit Commission to issue free TTC passes.”

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

PIT BULLS

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): These are more petitions in addition to the ones I’ve already received from the National Capital Coalition for People and Dogs, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed;

“Whereas the problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds of dogs;

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty and Attorney General Michael Bryant have failed to allow public consultation on this bill;

“Whereas this legislation is a knee-jerk reaction to a legitimate public concern about all aggressive dogs;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario refrain from enacting provincial breed-specific legislation.”

I agree with it and will be passing it to my good friend to table in this House.

1510

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

“Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

“Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

“Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community;

“Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan.”

I am pleased to sign this petition, being in full support of it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLACES TO GROW ACT, 2005 LOI DE 2005 SUR LES ZONES DE CROISSANCE

Mr Caplan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans / Projet de loi 136, Loi sur l'établissement de zones de croissance planifiée et de plans de croissance.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Mr. Caplan.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I will be sharing my time today with my very able and capable parliamentary assistant, Mr. Rinaldi, the member from Northumberland. I rise today to begin second reading debate of Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act, legislation that will allow us, for the first time in the history of our province, to make decisions about future growth in ways that strengthen our economy, support strong communities and promote a healthy environment.

As members will recall, the Places to Grow Act is enabling legislation. If passed, it will allow the government to designate specific geographic regions of this province as growth planning areas and to develop growth plans that would guide future developments in those areas. This legislation would encourage land use planning that looks beyond the restrictions of simple municipal boundaries. It would integrate planning across natural and local boundaries and help ensure that growth policies are coordinated amongst all levels of government. By showing where growth should occur, it will help us to develop the public infrastructure needed to support that growth, while at the same time protecting for future generations the green spaces so much a part of the kind of quality of life that we want; and support the agricultural lands that we're going to need to support our population and the natural systems that we desperately need to preserve. Those are the places where growth should not occur. Above all, our growth planning will ensure that there are choices about the future that are guided by a long-term vision about the kinds of communities we want to see.

I can't overstate it: This is truly groundbreaking legislation. Nothing like this has ever been attempted in Ontario before. This represents a radical departure from past practice. Because it is such a sharp change from the way we've done business in the past, I want to discuss the challenges that have led us to take this step and describe the vision for the future that guides us now.

Since about 1980, successive governments at all levels—federal, provincial and municipal—have allowed investments in public infrastructure to fall behind our economic growth and the growth of our population. Governments simply did not put enough money into public infrastructure to keep it in good condition. Now, many of our public facilities are in need of major repair: Roads

and bridges are wearing out; water and waste water systems have broken down; many of our hospitals and schools are overcrowded and out of date; major highways are clogged much of the time; and rush hour in the greater Toronto area alone now lasts some 13 hours of the day. In the greater Golden Horseshoe, our public transportation systems are inadequate and are in desperate need of repair.

There are equally pressing needs in rural Ontario. For example, Renfrew county, the largest county in Ontario, has more than 260 bridges and culverts. A study prepared to help the municipality anticipate future costs estimates that more than a quarter need urgent repairs. More than half will require major work that must be done within the next 10 years.

At the same time, we have not managed the rapid growth of our economy and our population in ways that will enhance our quality of life. Too often, we emphasized short-term benefits and piecemeal planning and ignored the consequences that followed that type of uncoordinated decision-making.

In the most heavily populated parts of the province, we have developed widely dispersed car-dependent communities, a pattern of settlement that damages the environment, threatens the economy and impairs our health and well-being. Numerous studies by the Ontario Medical Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, the medical officer of health for Toronto, amongst others, have established important links between the way we design and build our communities and the health of our population. Air pollution generated by daily commutes from these far-flung communities makes many of us sick and injures our health care system. In fact, the Ontario Medical Association estimates some 1,800 premature deaths per year simply because of poor air quality.

In addition, economic damage from congestion caused by this pattern of sprawl amounts to billions of dollars every year—over \$5 billion a year lost to the provincial economy, according to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. And if we do nothing, if we continue with business as usual, it's certain that things will get worse.

In the part of Ontario that is growing most quickly, studies by my ministry, verified by outside experts, show that over the next 30 years, greater traffic congestion will increase commuting times some 45% and increase vehicle emissions by 42%. We will build on or pave over almost 250,000 acres of prime farmland, an area twice the size of the present city of Toronto, simply to accommodate the new residents coming into our communities.

Other parts of the province, of course, face different challenges. For them, the issue is perhaps not runaway growth but the absence of growth. We need to attract new people, new development and new investments in every corner of the province of Ontario: in the southwest, in the east, but most especially in northern Ontario. If the legislation we're bringing forward today is passed, it will enable the government to develop growth plans to assist those regions and help them attract the people and job

opportunities that our province so desperately needs. But in both cases, boom or bust, continuing the patterns of the past offers no hope for the future. Business as usual is simply not an option for the McGuinty government.

I've spoken about the need to repair our existing infrastructure and build new facilities to accommodate the growth that we know is coming, that we want to come to the province of Ontario. By our best estimates, we need to invest, at a minimum, some \$100 billion in the public infrastructure over the course of the next 30 years to meet those needs. But there is a further requirement: We cannot be content to merely replicate the past. We must use that investment in infrastructure to help us build the future and create the kind of communities and the kind of society we want for ourselves, for our children and for our grandchildren.

It is not sufficient to simply throw money at these challenges. Certainly, we have to invest a considerable amount of money, but we also have to be much smarter in the way we go about it. We have to get the best value for our investments by making infrastructure that exists currently work much harder, where we know it can, and by making sure that we build the right things in the right places. We can't afford to re-create some of the boondoggles of the past. But we also need to use our investments in infrastructure to help us achieve the kind of society that Ontarians have said they want. We need to see those investments as instruments of social change that will help us achieve the social goals that Ontarians support and hope for, be it in health, be it in education, be it in social services, be it in the necessary vital services that we all depend upon.

1520

In the next few years, communities across the province will make thousands of decisions about land use planning and development. Those decisions are permanent. Once the land is paved and the houses are built, there is no going back. Our children and many, many future generations will have to live with the consequences. So if this legislation is passed, the growth plans we'll authorize will help and coordinate those decisions in a much more effective manner so that they contribute to a larger vision of the kind of communities that we as a society want, need and can support.

This is a dramatic change. In the past, I would say that there was no coherent vision for the future that we want and simply no plan about how to get there. So in some parts of Ontario, we got sprawl, gridlock, air pollution, inefficient use of infrastructure and lost green space. In others, we got economic stagnation and out-migration of young people to areas that offered greater opportunity. That is not a pattern we are willing to repeat.

This legislation, Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act, and the growth plans it would enable will help us to break that vicious cycle. If Bill 136 is passed, it will help us develop more compact, sustainable communities—communities that are less dependent on the car, more respectful of the natural environment and certainly much more enjoyable to live in. It will help us to ensure that we

have the right public infrastructure in the right places to accommodate the larger population that we want to come to Ontario, because, overall, it's about promoting the economic prosperity and competitiveness of our province that this growth will inevitably bring. It would encourage economic development in those parts of the province where growth is desperately needed. We plan to get the right kind of growth in those areas where urban sprawl puts our quality of life at risk.

I want to tell you that I have a real sense of urgency about this legislation. I am increasingly convinced that we now have what may be our last chance to plan for growth, to secure the future that we desperately want and need. We have an opportunity now to reverse some of the negative effects of unplanned growth and sprawling urban expansion and to encourage more balanced development across all parts of the province. If we fail to act now, as previous governments have failed in the past, we will be overtaken by the course of events. Development will move ahead in patterns that preclude effective planning and that are impossible to change after the fact. If we get it right, however, if we make wise decisions about what we build and where and when we build it, many of the other things that we hope to accomplish—source water protection, green spaces, economic development and transit strategies—will fall into place.

More than four million people are coming to Ontario over the next 30 years, whether through natural birth rates or natural migration patterns, and we will create over two million jobs for that population. That's great news. That means vitality and economic prosperity to support a quality of life that will be second to none. These new residents will enhance the quality of life in our communities and contribute to prosperity and our diversity. But we need to plan how we can best accommodate this growth to make sure that people have places to live, places to work, places to play, instead of this constant catching up to it after the fact. We need to plan carefully to ensure that the infrastructure we need is in place while we protect our environmental assets. We can't do that without the kind of planning that this legislation will make possible in law.

Our government was chosen by the people of Ontario to bring about real, positive change to this province. Our plans are visionary in the sense that they envision a better society and a more effective government, but they are also pragmatic, because we have to live in the real world. We expect to have substantial results in real time at the ground level in the communities where we live. If this legislation is passed, the first growth area we will designate will cover the area we call the greater Golden Horseshoe, the fastest-growing region in Ontario; in fact, the fastest-growing in Canada and one of the fastest-growing regions in North America.

We have developed a draft growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. It is now being circulated to stakeholders and other partners for comment. The draft plan is based upon the discussion document that I had the honour to release this past summer for public comment by Ontarians right across this great region.

I want to acknowledge the contribution of more than 1,600 individuals who attended public information sessions to discuss growth issues and over 500 organizations that made written submissions. I want to say to all of them, to the public, thank you. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and your expertise with us. You have met the first test of citizenship: You are helping to make things better. You are participating in something which is going to create a better future for us all.

We will continue to consult with the people of Ontario, with municipal leaders in the region, with business and industry, with environmental leaders wherever they are, here in Queen's Park and right across this province. If this legislation is passed, we will incorporate the results of this further consultation into our proposals, which will embody our vision for future development here in the greater Golden Horseshoe.

This is a significant departure for Ontario. We have never planned for growth in such comprehensive detail or over so wide an area. In fact, the prevailing theme that we heard in town halls right across this region was that it is long overdue, it is long past the time that the provincial government showed some leadership and worked to get it right. Our planning has never been so firmly based on such sound research and such broad public consultation with the public at large and with expert stakeholders.

For example, we have prepared four technical papers in connection with the draft growth plan. They are all available on the ministry Web site, and we invite public comment. They provide population, economic and household forecasts for growth in the greater Golden Horseshoe, an assessment of the land supply in the area, the ways land use intensification targets could be applied and details about the 25 urban growth centres that we have proposed in the greater Golden Horseshoe.

I urge all members of this House, and the public, to read those studies. They answer many questions about what we propose for the region and why. The growth plan we are developing is based upon the best knowledge we can assemble and the best practices we can observe in other jurisdictions.

I would add that we have received inquiries and interest from urban planners, from the smart growth movement in the United States, from folks literally in jurisdictions worldwide. This is groundbreaking work. It will also be based on expressed wishes and desires, because we believe that there is a lot of wisdom in the communities that make up the region—the local knowledge and expertise of municipal governments and other public agencies.

I'm very proud of this legislation. I'm very proud of the growth plan we will introduce if Bill 136 is passed. But it would never have been possible without the active co-operation and assistance of many people. I would like to particularly acknowledge my colleagues who worked very closely on this piece of legislation. I understand that it was not the normal course of events for governments previously to have ministries work together in an integrated and comprehensive fashion. So I especially want

to thank my colleagues David Ramsay, the Minister of Natural Resources; Steve Peters, the Minister of Agriculture and Food; Leona Dombrowsky, the Minister of the Environment; Harinder Takhar, the Minister of Transportation, as I've already mentioned; and especially John Gerretsen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This plan would not have been possible without their strong support, without the support of their ministries and without a commitment to getting ministry partners to work together, which has not previously existed.

1530

I want to thank municipal leaders who have worked with us and who have contributed to this legislation and the growth plan. The list is exhaustive, but there are quite a few that I would like to mention, especially Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion; the mayor of Burlington, Rob MacIsaac; the chair of Waterloo region, Ken Seiling; the mayor of Hamilton, Larry Di Ianni; and the mayor of Toronto, David Miller. The list could go on and on. These are some of the leaders who have stepped forward to help the provincial government, the McGuinty government, develop these kinds of plans. I have never seen this kind of co-operation, vigour and synergy of having municipal leaders work with the province, business leaders and environmental leaders to develop a shared vision in the way that we have. The suggestions and recommendations that we received from municipalities have helped this proposed legislation become even better, and I thank them for their contributions. They were invaluable.

We are moving forward with a common purpose, because we know we have a unique opportunity before us. If we act now, if we act together, we can literally change the way we live. For the first time in Ontario's history, we have an opportunity to develop a coherent, comprehensive program to shape the kind of future we want, so that the future is something we build in a conscious, rational way, rather than something that simply happens to us.

I think all members of this assembly would want to see strong, sustainable communities. We all want a healthy environment. We all want a prosperous economy. We all want a high quality of life. Those are the goals that I think each and every member of this assembly can agree upon, and this proposed legislation is the vehicle to help us achieve them.

I thank you very much and look forward to the comments of all members of this assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): I have just assumed the chair. Were you splitting the speech?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: With the member for Northumberland.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I rise today to support second reading of Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act. The proposed Places to Grow Act is the first effort by an Ontario government to seize the opportunities presented by future growth and shape them according to objectives on which we can all agree. Those objectives include safe, healthy and vibrant communities; more

compact and sustainable development, with less dependence on the automobile; first-class public services and infrastructure that support and strengthen new development patterns, instead of merely trying to keep pace with them; and the protection and preservation of the vital heritage resources, green spaces and natural environment that contribute so much to our quality of life.

Our government is working on a number of important fronts, and we're working together in a coordinated way to do it. As you know, we have just passed historic greenbelt legislation in this House to protect valuable farmland and other environmental assets in a broad band that stretches from the Niagara Peninsula to Rice Lake.

We are developing a comprehensive transportation strategy for the GTA, to ensure that our transit systems, roads and highways can accommodate future growth and to make the most efficient use of our existing facilities.

We are also making great strides to strengthen an agri-food sector that contributes \$30 billion to the Ontario economy, employs over 650,000 people and ships \$8.4 billion in exports annually.

Besides providing much-needed financial assistance to farmers dealing with the fallout of BSE and market fluctuations, the government moved forward on innovative projects like encouraging renewable fuel production and establishing a new rural plan.

In my ministry, the Ministry of PIR, we're developing a 30-year public infrastructure strategy to ensure that people have access to vital public services when and where they're needed. Bill 136 demonstrates the kind of provincial leadership that municipalities and other stakeholders have been seeking for many years and that the previous provincial government failed to provide. At this point in Ontario's history, as we begin to plan how we want our province to grow in the 21st century, this leadership is vital.

But with that kind of growth, development is appropriate. It's not appropriate to pave over field after field to put up more houses and shopping malls. This is not necessarily everyone's idea of progress, nor do I believe that it's an efficient or sustainable approach to growth. The basic question before us is whether we want to sit back and watch change and new development simply unfold or whether we want to develop specific plans that will allow us to shape a better and brighter future for our community and province.

I don't think there's any doubt that rational, systematic planning is the way to go. As the members know, development in the past has too often taken place in the absence of coordinated planning on a provincial scale. As a result, our most populous region, the greater Golden Horseshoe, contains many communities that are highly dependent on the automobile. Millions of Ontario commuters pay a price for this kind of urban sprawl. They spend hours and hours on the road. They are overcrowded. They are stuck in traffic when they could be working at their jobs or playing with their kids. Indeed, everyone who lives in Ontario pays a daily price for sprawling development. Today, the hundreds of thou-

sands of automobiles stuck in gridlock are all producing harmful emissions that are extremely damaging to our air and to our health.

Gridlock and congestion also come with a huge economic cost, one that's been estimated at more than \$2 billion a year in lost time and productivity. The proposed Places to Grow Act is our last, best chance to put an end to this kind of unsustainable growth.

Many people and major changes are coming. This is made clear when you see projections stating that more than four million people are coming to Ontario by the year 2031. That's good news. That kind of rapid growth, with all those new people and new jobs, certainly has the potential to strengthen our province, to make it even more successful, prosperous and vibrant. Yet, if we fail now, as other governments have failed in the past, to plan a clear and rational path to the future we want, rapid growth will almost certainly prove harmful to our society and to our quality of life.

In our view, this is a critical time for Ontario. That's why we have introduced legislation that would help us plan the province's future growth in a balanced and rational way. The Places to Grow Act is designed to provide provincial leadership in planning for growth, to help us make better choices for a brighter future. The proposed legislation will allow us to plan effectively to accommodate and expand population and economy.

At the same time, it would ensure that we continue to protect our vital heritage, agriculture and environmental assets.

Under this legislation, the province will have the ability to develop growth plans for different geographic regions of the province. Every plan will be tailor-made for the area that it covers. Growth plans will help us to promote economic prosperity by working out where and how different regions should grow, by looking at the infrastructure they need to support that growth and by assuring that growth does not trample on viable green space, natural systems and farmlands. That is so important to our quality of life.

This is an important point in Ontario's history. We're poised for a sustained period of growth that will change the shape of much of our province in the 21st century. To ensure that those changes are beneficial to our people, we need to be clear about our goals and objectives—about what we want growth to provide and the kind of legacy we want to leave our children. The answer, of course, will be different from one community to another, across the many regions of this province. The key is to come up with the answers that work for each region and community and to plan the outcomes that would ensure strong and prosperous communities.

1540

Under the provisions of Bill 136, growth plans can include a broad range of information, such as population projections and allocations, which means how many people a region can accommodate and where they can best be accommodated; identification of urban growth centres, which means where and how we can best accom-

moderate growth now, in the near term and in the longer term; and infrastructure development and location to get the most out of our existing infrastructure investments.

If we get these plans right, Ontario's future growth can provide almost limitless possibilities for our people and communities and businesses, and for our children and for their children.

My hope is that within 30 years, people across Ontario will enjoy the benefits of rational, planned growth. I hope they'll live in strong, vibrant communities that are efficient, well serviced and well thought out. I hope they'll have access to good schools, first-class health care facilities, libraries, parks and recreation facilities. I hope they'll enjoy a high degree of mobility, with roads and transit services that serve the population well by allowing them to travel easily and safely. I hope they'll have employment opportunities close to where they live, so they'll have more time to spend with their families and friends and to participate in the life of their community.

The Places to Grow Act, if passed, can help transform these hopes into reality. By enabling us to plan effectively for the remarkable period of growth that we know is coming, this legislation would help ensure that Ontario builds strong, healthy, livable communities and a new era of economic strength and prosperity in the years to come.

As the minister and I travelled across the province just last year and talked to community stakeholders, that's exactly what they asked for over and over again: They needed leadership from this government to help them shape their communities. So I'm delighted to support this piece of legislation, and I encourage everyone in this House to do likewise.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to be able to take part in this debate on the leadoff by the government.

In his very early comments, the minister referred to the bridges of Renfrew county. I don't know how many times we've stood in this House and talked about the need for infrastructure investment in our rural communities. The fact of the matter is that your government has decided to take some of the people's gas tax money—and that means people from all over this province, including Renfrew county—and they're going to use it to pay toward transit systems in the urban areas. I question why you would even use the example of Renfrew county when they're not getting a penny of their gas tax back for their municipal road system, which of course includes the bridges. I'd like to hear a proper explanation of that, because the fact of the matter is that the people in Renfrew county pay a lot of gas tax over the course of a year.

You're clearly stating that you'd like to be a strong partner with the municipal councils; we heard it over and over again at the latest ROMA convention. Municipal councils in my area are saying, "Where's our share of the gas tax money?" If you're taking tax dollars out of people's pockets here in the province of Ontario, we think it should be evenly distributed, based on a per

capita system, throughout the rest of the province, not just in the urban areas. I think the government should explain, in some of the comments today, why a county like Renfrew or Simcoe wouldn't receive funding or assistance toward their bridge projects if the people in all those different communities across the province are paying their gas tax into the provincial coffers for those projects.

That's just one of the concerns I have with this legislation, and I'll have many more opportunities over the next little while to make further comments.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have to say that notwithstanding the effusive, self-congratulatory comments of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, as well as the hopes and dreams of the member from Northumberland, the broad consultation referred to was in fact an embarrassment in my own community.

I was there while people were outraged to see that not only were the maps totally wrong, but that they inappropriately outlined urban boundaries that didn't exist, and designated land as urban that in reality was not urban at all. I would say that people at first were insulted, but then it turned to outrage after a little while. People I talked to, certainly in the aftermath of the initial presentation, were concerned that this was an opportunity for the government to really look at things like sustainable development, social equity and sustainability in this province, and in the Golden Horseshoe in particular, but that instead they called it a growth plan when it could have been called something that more reflected the desires of the people in my community who came out to the consultations.

Nonetheless, as you are very famous for saying and are very happy to hear these phrases, it is, "Build it and they will come." That is certainly what's going to happen in the Golden Horseshoe area. What's happening is that, with the plans for highways to cut through all of these areas, we know very well that all this really amounts to is a way to encourage leapfrog development and more urban boundary expansion, something that is not what we would like to see in regard to a positive and sustainable way of growing this province. Unfortunately, what we have is a bunch of developers that belly up to fundraisers put on by the finance minister and attended by the Premier, where people can get the ear of the government members that they're going to bend. Then, lo and behold, we have this legislation that's going to go nowhere.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to stand today in support of the proposed legislation. I come from a community that is at the height of its growth. It's facing all the growth pressures we've talked about over the past few years. The people of my community understand the need for that growth, but what they have never understood is why a provincial government in the past had never allowed a plan to be put in place that sensibly allowed for infrastructure, transit, highway infrastructure and for things like libraries and arenas and green space preservation.

Municipal officials I talked to, both staff and elected, are very pleased with the intent of this bill. In Oakville,

this Liberal government preserved and saved from development almost 1,300 acres. The previous government was prepared to sell and pave much of that green space. That's forward thinking and forward planning, in my opinion.

I think the Places to Grow document is one we should be extremely proud of, where a community that wants to grow—we know we're in one of the fastest-growing areas on this continent. We've got a strong and robust economy, and we know that growth is an important part of that economic growth. For my riding of Oakville, this means that after years of simple sprawl, a government finally understands what it takes to control that sprawl, what it means to grow in an orderly way.

I'd like to thank Minister Caplan, Minister Ramsay and Minister Gerretsen for the type of legislation they've been bringing forward, which really understands, appreciates and respects the type of environment that people in an urban setting in Ontario feel they have the right to live in today. I'm extremely proud of this document.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I appreciate the minister's comments and those of his parliamentary assistant, and I look forward to providing more thoughts on behalf of the official opposition momentarily. I'll wear my MPP hat for the good people of Erie-Lincoln first, before I get to the critic's role.

There are a few issues that the minister and I have talked about, and I appreciate that he has lent his ear to these concerns. It's important to get them on the public record. In terms of the urban growth centres, I'm pleased to see that St. Catharines is cited as one. Fort Erie and Niagara Falls on the border area have tremendous capacity. The minister references that in his draft plan that is out to date

They used to have those special little red-coloured dots, and now they've shifted to a border area that is not as clearly defined. I hope that will still be a target for investment for this government, because the minister knows that if he can't get goods across the border and to market efficiently, or tourists coming into our province efficiently and safely, that's a tremendous loss to the economy. So I do hope, when they're making future infrastructure investments, that the Fort Erie to Niagara Falls corridor and the importance of the border links will continue to have the strong emphasis that was part of the original plan, but which I'm worried may have slipped off the radar screen.

1550

On behalf of folks in southern Niagara—my colleague from Niagara Centre will probably speak to this as well—there is tremendous growth potential in the Welland to Port Colborne corridor with the expansion of Highway 406. We would like to see that four-laning extended through Welland and then down to Port Colborne.

I think, for the purposes that the government emphasizes as well the use of brownfields along the canal, the significant compact development that occurred, the use of the canal for transportation that is now in a brownfield status—for future targeted investments in brownfields,

Welland and Port Colborne would make tremendous future growth areas. We have the transportation network there, hopefully with the 406, but also through brown-field redevelopment.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Public Infrastructure has two minutes to reply.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Two minutes is not nearly enough to reply to the comments, but I want to thank all my colleagues and the member from Northumberland as well for his comments.

The member from Erie–Lincoln quite rightly stresses the need for us to maximize the border points, the key economic points for our province. In fact, that's the foundation on which the growth plan in the greater Golden Horseshoe is built, and yes, we see a very bright future for Fort Erie and Niagara. I look forward to having that conversation about some of the thinking that is going on, some of the investments and some of the support that we see, to help support not only the population but the job growth and the employment growth that we see down in the Niagara area. I look forward to working with the member.

I know that we all, as members of this Assembly, have an interest in seeing our communities be successful. To the member from Oakville: Yes, in fact I did omit Mayor Mulvale, who has been a very strong proponent and partner. I want to say that the member himself, in the protection of ecologically sensitive lands in north Oakville—a tremendous job there.

To the member from Hamilton East I must admit some disappointment, because our town hall in Hamilton attracted some 500 Hamiltonians. The report in the Hamilton Spectator the next day in fact did not characterize it as the member from Hamilton East talked about, but was quite glowing about the fact that a minister and a government have never taken such pains to listen to the people in Hamilton, to work to support the future economic well-being of the region. I know we're being guided by the people of Hamilton.

Lastly, to the member from Simcoe North, on the gas tax, I want to reply that yes, we see transit as an important investment. The downloading of roads and bridges by the previous government has caused enormous problems in rural Ontario, and that's why we've established COMRIF, the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund, specifically to meet some of those challenges.

The Acting Speaker: Further discussion?

Mr. Hudak: To give notice ahead, I plan on sharing my time with my good, hard-working colleagues from York North and Simcoe North as well.

It is a great pleasure to rise on Bill 136, to comment not only on the legislation but on the associated plan that goes with it, and on the government's general approach on this sort of growth planning agenda and investment in infrastructure.

First, the tone has come down considerably in this chamber from question period. The atmosphere is a bit cooler than I remember from just an hour ago.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Do you feel the love?

Mr. Hudak: Maybe along that theme, I say to my colleagues, I will offer compliments to the minister on the way he has brought forward this legislation, and to the new Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: The Minister of Natural Resources has asked what's wrong. Well, leopards cannot change their spots, I suppose. But I think the minister has been careful in his thinking about the growth plan in this legislation. He's put forward a number of consultation documents that will probably be discussed here today and throughout the debate. I do believe that in many ways what he's brought forward resembles a lot of things we were doing under the Smart Growth initiative, as many of the principles are the same. It would be a different title. There might be a red cover on the document as opposed to the good old-fashioned blue colour, which, as you can tell by my clothes today, is the one I usually prefer. But I want to compliment the minister on that. If they erred on one side of caution, it's on the consultative side. There has been a sense of consultation on the papers it has brought forward as well.

There are elements of the bill, which we will address, that are not to the same extent worrisome, troublesome, as other pieces of legislation under the Dalton-knows-best mandate. We do have a concern, as we've said in this chamber, about successive pieces of legislation that have taken more and more power into the central government. I wouldn't take as much offence at that as I would with some of your colleagues' bills; Bill 25, Bill 26 and Bill 135, to name a few.

While I'm complimenting the minister, at the same time I have to put it in perspective. This is, I think, a welcome contrast to the way that the greenbelt legislation, Bill 135, was brought forward. The minister has now stopped nodding at my comments, I note. Before I had him, and now I guess there's a point of disagreement.

Bill 135, for those who are watching at home or reading Hansard, is the greenbelt legislation. We will argue, and I think we've argued quite successfully, that the boundaries were done behind closed doors, that the decisions were made on a political basis as opposed to being based on environmental science. It was very suiting that the announcement of the final map on Monday was at the McMichael art gallery, because it showed that this is more about the art of politics than it is about science. Their own group of seven ministers was there in attendance, complete with staff for that announcement. If the greenbelt legislation had followed a similar process in terms of getting the municipalities' information to the table first and foremost, as opposed to drawing the maps and then reacting and trying to change the maps at the last minute, you may have had a different outcome.

Secondly, what this does as a growth plan is much more comprehensive in its nature. It looks at transportation infrastructure and water and sewer infrastructure. It looks at a number of tools, and your consultation papers

are necessary to make it successful, whereas Bill 135 was strictly about boundaries where growth could not take place without an associated plan for agriculture and an associated infrastructure strategy, for example, or assistance for municipalities.

I have said this before in the House, and I'll say it again today: I think it would have been preferable if the entire strategy—the greenbelt, the growth plan and what I'll get to, the GTTA stuff—were under one ministry. The minister can't comment on that. I'm sure these discussions have taken place. It would have been a much more comprehensive and timely approach and easier for people who care about the legislation to respond to one stream of work as opposed to two or three separate streams. I think you could have looked, in a more comprehensive manner, at where growth is to take place and, at the same time, where growth shall not take place.

I would argue that the Smart Growth panels were set up to achieve just that, sitting down at the round tables and the sessions with municipal leaders, many of which the minister mentioned earlier on, that he thanked, and we thanked them for their work on Smart Growth as well. Those panels—municipal leaders, environmentalists, the building community—were to develop those comprehensive regional plans, not just for the greater Golden Horseshoe but for the province as a whole, so you could look at where growth should not go—the environmentally sensitive areas—where growth should go, and how to foster good transportation routes and good infrastructure policies to make that kind of Smart Growth planning successful.

So I am giving accolades where they're due, to this minister for the initiative to date. We will have some concerns expressed here in the House for improvements in the bill, but we're much happier with the process of how we got here than with Bill 135, which we will give a failing grade to. We are not at all happy with and voted against that legislation, and wish a better approach had been used. We're going to keep an eye on it—you've heard in question period today about fundraisers and how those may impact boundary decisions.

We cannot grade the Minister of Transportation quite yet on the transportation decisions: the GTTA, the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority. We read with some interest on this side of the House the Toronto Star article of a couple of days ago where the minister said that plan was imminent. The definition of imminent seems to have changed from the last time, because there was talk that this was going to happen last fall or last winter, that that authority would come forward, but now we're promised a much grander vision, and it's imminent, "So just you wait, and it'll eventually be here."

1600

The problem is, you eventually run out of time. You can't build a highway in a day.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: Twenty years?

Mr. Hudak: With the mid-peninsula corridor, some would say, there's a pool. We'll have a pool in our office

over when the mid-peninsular corridor will be open and we can drive that first car down that new highway. I've got 2031 right now, actually, as my date.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: The minister says, "Hopefully not." But if you want into the pool, we'll see what the minister selects.

The point is that the transportation network that is going to facilitate travel for goods, for services, for individuals to and from work and to and from home is still missing, after almost a year and a half of this government. If there are going to be any major projects, I think that means the door's pretty well closed to driving on any new roads or going down the rails of any new transit systems in the lifetime of this current assembly, by the fall of 2007.

So a complaint we will have from this side of the House is, I think, a very valid one. I hate to do it—it pains me to do so—but to quote Walter Mondale, "Where's the beef?" Where will these projects actually go? You do need to make investment decisions. You need to make partnerships, through P3s or whatever mechanisms they use, to begin to invest in transportation infrastructure. It has been a year and a half already, so if there is a bit of gridlock internally on decision-making, that's going to exacerbate the gridlock that exists today. Those individuals taking the QEW from Niagara to the Toronto area, those coming south down the 400 or east or west on the 401, or those waiting for the subway—I fear those lineups are going to get even longer. They'll have to set their alarm clocks even earlier, because if no decisions have been made after a year and a half of the government's mandate, it's going to be a heck of a long time before those roads or transit systems are built.

I look forward to Minister Takhar's GTTA, but I look forward to it with some degree of pessimism because a great deal of time has passed already, and I've not been impressed by the conduct in that ministry. I can't even think of a single highway project that has come forward in the lifetime of this government.

While we're being complimentary, giving some kind words to the minister and the conduct of this ministry—and I do appreciate his staff giving the opposition briefings on this legislation and the plan—we cannot also forget the work of previous ministers like Chris Hodgson and David Young, who followed on Chris's path.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Chris, yes; David, no.

Mr. Hudak: OK. And certainly David Lindsay, who served as the equivalent of deputy minister at Super-Build, did a lot of work in bringing this forward. I've got a great deal of regard for their work. Probably, if we were being honest, off the record of Hansard, there should be some recognition even from government members that a lot of what they've brought forward to date in their growth planning stems from that earlier process begun by those ministers.

Let me give you an example of some of the Smart Growth principles that began under Premier Mike Harris in January 2001:

"Use existing infrastructure and resources to increase the capacity for economic growth; invest wisely in new infrastructure." That gets a check mark.

"Manage growth by making tough choices about where development should go." Part of this approach is to determine various urban areas for future growth and to set goals of 40% intensification.

"Expand transportation choices within and between communities." I guess more of that will come from transportation—hopefully soon.

"Protect natural areas and farmland for future generations." Obviously, I would have preferred if the greenbelt approach were based on environmental science as opposed to political science, but the goals would be similar to those of Smart Growth.

"Encourage growth in areas where it will have the least impact on the environment"—follows up.

The principles about which the government speaks on these growth planning initiatives follow on the work that Premier Mike Harris started and that Chris Hodgson, David Young and David Lindsay continued under the Smart Growth panels. There are some differences. Our Smart Growth plans were made by local decision-makers and not centrally at Queen's Park. Both aspects play a role, but I would argue that there was a greater deal of a consultative process used in Smart Growth than has been evidenced by the government's initiatives under Premier McGuinty.

Our Smart Growth covered the entire province. I guess they will get to that point under Bill 136, but to date it has been centred on the greater Golden Horseshoe—a very important area, obviously, to address initially, but we do hope we'll understand the time frame and the approach for other areas of the province as well.

Very importantly, and I said this to the minister earlier on, it's one thing to have a plan, but you've got to have some bucks behind it. You could have the buns, but you have to put some beef in the sandwich, to paraphrase our old friend Walter Mondale. Our Smart Growth plans were backed up with financial commitments on infrastructure through a \$1.25-billion GTIP, which is the Golden Horseshoe Transit Investment Partnerships. So there is the money to go with the plan.

I know the ministry is working hard at getting those funds secured, but we have yet to see any evidence of that. A major transit project has not been announced to my knowledge, and certainly no major highway projects to go with it.

The leapfrog effect: I know the Speaker, when he is over here, has spoken about it, and my colleagues here and in the NDP and, I would expect, on the government side. The leapfrogging impact would have been addressed through the Smart Growth because of the associated investments in transit and transportation. Those highways, extensions of GO etc. would be made in conjunction with the plan. But so far we've seen the plan, without the funding to go with it. Maybe when the budget comes forward in April, it will contain some of those investments. As I said, we're approaching the halfway

point of a government that is rapidly running out of time to make the decisions that are necessary to support the Smart Growth initiatives. On leapfrogging, I hope we'll hear more from the government members. It's something that definitely needs to be addressed with actual plans for investment in infrastructure.

I hope to have some more insight into the intensification targets by the end of this debate as well. The government has set an intensification target of some 40%. I know that they hired Urban Strategies, I think to give advice on those intensification targets. They looked at other jurisdictions, including European countries. They looked at British Columbia, which I imagine is Vancouver, and they said that they had achieved 80%. They're different scenarios. European cities are old, many of them constructed before cars were commonly owned by average families in the province of Ontario, so they certainly would have developed within walking distance or a horse ride or a trolley or what have you. Vancouver really, physically, is a bit of an island. It's a bit of an island bounded by the ocean and the mountains and such, so Vancouver would naturally have to get some pretty high intensification targets.

I guess they decided we could meet them halfway. If 80% was the standard in some other countries or in Vancouver, we could get to 40%, but I hope to understand that there is more science behind that 40% target than simply a halfway point to 80%.

If the government truly wanted to support municipalities getting to 40% intensification, I would have guessed they would bring some tools to go along with that, some assistance for those municipalities to invest in core infrastructure, some financial tools to ensure that brownfields can be redeveloped in the urban cores. If we do see those measures come forward in the budget, then I'll have more faith that they're serious about hitting the 40% intensification targets. But if we don't see those investments, I am going to be very pessimistic that we'll be able to achieve that 40%.

There has been confusion, too, when they talk about the intensification targets, and the example was given of the Yonge and Eglinton area in Toronto. Anybody who knows that area of Toronto knows what it looks like. It's a pretty intensely developed area, with commercial and residential properties. Now, how you transpose that on Milton—or my colleague spoke about Oakville—will be interesting to determine. Maybe it's just misunderstood as to what that target will look like, but it's hard right now for us to visualize how you can transpose Yonge and Eglinton on to those communities, or St. Catharines or Niagara Falls, for example.

I said that I would share my time, so I'll try to skip through a few of the other documents I wanted to speak of. As I said, the minister has brought forward a number of discussion papers—the urban growth centres in the greater Golden Horseshoe that had those 25 targets. There is some concern that there are areas that would like to host future growth that may have been left out of the initial list of 25. I think that we need some clarification, as well. If you're not on that list of 25, does that mean

that you'll be limited in your future growth? That may be; maybe not. We don't know. But say, for example, Port Colborne, in my riding, which I think has enormous potential, is not one of the 25.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): It'll grow.

Mr. Hudak: The whip says it will grow, and so he has the same faith as I do in the people of that community and the businesses that are there, which I appreciate. But if there's an infrastructure program that comes down the line to support Places to Grow, as we are calling for today, just like we had the GTIP projects to support growth and intensification, the expansion of highways and transit, will Port Colborne, because it's not one of the stars on the map, be out of luck in accessing that type of pop? So we need to understand better if there will be a pool that will discriminate among the urban growth centres, as opposed to those that aren't starred, and if that is the case, if that's the direction the government is going, what happens to a Port Colborne or a Welland, for example, that is not on the list as it exists today? As I mentioned, I think there's enormous potential down the centre and into southern Niagara because of brownfield redevelopment and existing services. Cities that have actually shrunk over time, if the investments are done properly, will have a chance to rebound.

1610

The minister also undertook The Growth Outlook for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, with forecasts for employment, population and households for 2031. Of course, A Current Assessment of Gross Land Supply in the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area was the third document. I mentioned the one by Urban Strategies about the intensification targets. What's curious, actually—I think I might have caught the government out on this one—is that the government will argue that Bill 135, the greenbelt legislation, was based on science. They say that land decisions about what was frozen were based on population projections and what the land supply is currently. But they either knew what the studies were going to say or we caught them in something that may not actually be accurate. These reports the minister brought out about population and land supply actually came out after the greenbelt map was set, which gets to our point on the other bill, Bill 135: I don't think it was based on science, because when they make their arguments in the House or in committee, they say it's based on plan A, plan B and plan C, or study A, study B and study C, but study A, study B and study C came out after the map was set. So it's a remarkable change in the time stream that would make a Star Trek fan confused. So maybe it was more so—

Interjections.

Mr. Hudak: My colleagues are skeptical, a bit more cynical. I don't know if it's this current bunch, but there seems to be cynicism on this side of the House that maybe they were decided more at fundraisers than as a result of the minister's studies.

Let me give some more specifics. Section 3, as I said, talks basically about how Bill 136 allows the minister to

make growth plans and about the consultation with municipalities in that process, what happens in the event of a dispute, for example. Section 3 really gives the enabling power to the minister to make these growth plans for public infrastructure renewal. As I said, we do have the greater Golden Horseshoe, which I think most people would objectively argue would be the prime area to focus on first. I think what will be important for us colleagues who come from London, Ottawa and other parts of the province is some understanding of the time frame for growth plans for those areas as well. The minister talked about a sense of urgency in moving forward with this, that the decisions should have been made earlier. Well, time continues to pass in London, Ottawa, Sudbury or Thunder Bay and such, so some indication from the government as to when the growth plans for those areas will be coming forward and when municipalities can begin to do their homework would be entirely helpful today.

Section 5 of the act gives the minister the ability to create an advisory council, and the word is currently “may.” We had the same thing in Bill 135, that the minister “may” create a Greenbelt Advisory Council. We heard across the committee hearings, across the greenbelt area, that as a bare minimum it must be a committee created to advise the minister, so change “may” to “shall.” In fact, there were suggestions that there could be unique committees for the tender fruit area in Niagara or the Holland Marsh. Those amendments were shot down in committee, but at least the amendment that was brought forward by ourselves and the third party, and the government members as well, made sure that the committee was mandated, that it did happen. I hope similarly, with respect to Bill 136, they will mandate that advisory council instead of making it optional for the minister.

Section 7 is a notice requirement—I wanted to highlight that in addition to sections 3 and 5—which is a good thing. It requires the minister to give notice to municipalities when they’re considering a growth plan for the area. I know that if this minister had done the greenbelt legislation, there would have been notice provisions in Bill 135. If the minister’s bill gives notice but Bill 135 did not give notice, it was a major oversight that we hope to correct through Bill 135.

I am glad it’s here. I think it’s appropriate. It’s a given that if you’re going to create a growth plan down the road for Ottawa, for eastern Ontario, you would notify the municipalities that you are doing this growth plan, and they could respond accordingly and begin planning and working with the ministry.

I’ll ask my colleagues if they’d care to respond. Was there notice given to the municipalities in the greenbelt?

Mr. Dunlop: No.

Mr. Hudak: The answer is no—no notice to municipalities or landowners in the greenbelt, which impacts those municipalities dramatically. So while I’m happy it’s here, I wish it were in 135. I don’t know if it’s too late, if there’s some procedure. You’re the deputy House leader as well. Maybe we could insert it into Bill 135 additionally, but I think it is too late.

I also wanted to highlight sections 12 and 13 of the act. The minister is nodding; he’s heard about this. A number of groups such as AMO are concerned about this area. This part of the act requires the municipalities’ official plans to conform to the growth plan. I believe the approach the government has taken here is that they conform in the next cycle of their official plans. There will be some who will argue that might take too long, that if you want to make the investments today, that time frame may be too long. On the other hand, others will argue that if you’re putting a new burden on municipalities that’s in addition to other pieces of legislation—burdens like Bills 135, 25 and 26, source water protection, nutrient management, all these other burdens that are coming forward on the municipal sector—perhaps it’s appropriate to give them time or support, because you can’t do the updates of the official plans cost-free. Right?

It does give the minister the power to unilaterally change an official plan as well in the event of non-compliance.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Only if the Minister of Municipal Affairs concurs.

Mr. Hudak: OK. He says, “Only if the Minister of Municipal Affairs concurs.”

Hon. Mr. Caplan: So it’s a check and balance.

Mr. Hudak: I don’t know how much check and balance there is, though. Your colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs didn’t even have consultations as part of his bill, Bill 135, so I’m not clear how he’ll respond to this. But there is the ability of the minister to impose the changes on the OP, and I think there will be some concern about that—and about the qualifications of the hearing officers—associated with sections 12 and 13 of the bill.

I’ll highlight those, and then my colleagues will have more to say about particular aspects of the bill. I look forward to debate on this. I don’t know if this is going to committee. We certainly hope it goes to committee and we’ll hear what other groups have to say.

I know AMO responded in February about these parts of the act, among others. I’ll give you a couple of the highlights there. AMO says some municipalities that are currently designated for growth may not be willing recipients of the growth, and there may be other municipalities that are willing recipients that aren’t scheduled for growth. So rectifying those types of decisions will be an important part of this process.

AMO makes a salient point, too. There are a number of initiatives—this isn’t the only one. There are a number of initiatives, some very egregious in their imposition of power upon municipalities and taking those powers behind the closed doors of the minister’s office. The municipalities make the point that rather than having municipalities and the public negotiate with various ministries, the government should designate a lead ministry on these issues. I think that’s a very important point.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Well, whether it’s this ministry or another, I think it’s certainly valid, but as I suggested, I

would have hoped at the outset, if I go back in time to October 2003, they would have taken a different approach and tried to consolidate all of these initiatives—the greenbelt, the growth plan, the transportation plan, and an investment pool to back it up—which would have been a much more sensible approach, instead of dividing it up among three different ministries. AMO has more to say, and we'll probably get to that a bit later on.

One thing I hope I'll hear from the government members is a recognition of the achievements and the work under Premier Harris and Ministers Hodgson and Young on the Smart Growth initiative. The notes are prepared by staff and sometimes get read by the members. You often hear, "The previous government did nothing. The previous government let this happen." Well, it's not true. In fact, if we do have a problem with rapid growth, it's a problem that other jurisdictions probably envy, that we in fact had that growth. I stand proudly on our record, as a Progressive Conservative under Mike Harris, that saw the biggest expansion of jobs I think in the history of this country, with about 1.25 million more jobs created. Ontario was restored once again as the engine of growth for our country, envied not only in Canada but across North America.

1620

We're home to many new people moving into the province, moving into homes, who go to the greater Golden Horseshoe area, or immigrants from abroad, not by coincidence but because we laid the foundation for strong growth and a strong economy by lowering taxes and investing in infrastructure. Certainly SuperBuild and its associated funds were making significant and, in areas, record investments in infrastructure. I was pleased to be the minister responsible for the sports, culture and tourism partnership that made investments in those areas. The millennium fund invested in the larger urban centres for initiatives and to support Smart Growth.

When I hear the members opposite say the previous government did nothing, I find it highly regrettable because it doesn't meet with the facts, but it's also very superficial.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): No government ever did anything—

Mr. Hudak: I guess no government ever—

Mr. Dunlop: This is the first government to ever do anything and they've really made the farmers mad.

Mr. Hudak: You can see there is some frustration on this side of the floor about not recognizing the work of the previous government. I hope I hear part of that because I am pleased with the boom that was created under the economic policies of the Mike Harris government. That was supported by infrastructure investments and the Smart Growth initiative, which was a leader in Canada. I hope I hear an honest reflection of that from across the floor.

Can you always plan better? Any government could always plan better. I salute the minister for trying to develop a 30-year plan. We need investments in the meantime. I don't want to wait 30 years for that mid-

peninsula corridor, for example, but I do think we need to recognize the outstanding work and leadership under Premier Harris and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in this realm.

I spoke a bit about the GTTA and the importance of moving that forward. We have not seen a single noteworthy project to support this initiative out of transportation. The minister brings forward bills about helmets and safety seats and things like that, but I would like to see greater concentration and emphasis on breaking the gridlock. That long snake of traffic that working families deal with on a daily basis is getting longer every day. None of this planning—this 30-year plan or five-year plan, the growth plan, no plan to make plans—is going to work without a significant investment in breaking gridlock, investments in transit, as we did with the Sheppard subway extension, for example. Moving GO to Barrie, Kitchener, Waterloo, Guelph, I think are some of the areas we were highlighting as a government, and moving it into Niagara as well will go a long way. Major highway projects to ensure Ontario stays as the economic engine, so goods can get to market efficiently and safely, and so people can move and visit families, or tourists can come to this province and enjoy their stay and not get stuck in gridlock, are absolutely vital.

Some of the projects I spoke about: the mid-peninsula corridor, which has been sadly thrown into reverse; part of our transportation strategy, extending Highway 404 past Lake Simcoe, including the Bradford bypass; completing Highway 407 through Durham to Highways 35 and 115; widening Highway 401; making safety investments in southwestern and eastern Ontario; sending 427 up to Barrie and Highway 410 to at least Highway 89.

I know that tremendous work has been done on Highways 11 and 69 into northern Ontario. There were record investments under the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves governments into those two areas. I know the Minister of Northern Development and Mines will continue to press that at the cabinet table, as he is on Highway 69 from Parry Sound to Sudbury. In fact, the minister cares so much, I think he's probably out there every weekend with his shovel and asphalt building that 69 from Parry Sound to Sudbury.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Come with me on a Saturday.

Mr. Hudak: Come and help out. I want to do a mid-peninsula corridor first. Not to always talk about my own backyard, but I'll do a mid-pen and then we can help you out on a Saturday north of Parry Sound.

Anyway, among others, including investments in northwestern Ontario, 11 and 17, a comprehensive plan.

No matter how well you plan this, how pretty a document it is, how many nice colours you have for various dots, none of it is successful without a major investment in breaking gridlock. It is well past the time to make those types of investments. Every day of delay causes people's alarm clocks to be put earlier and earlier in the morning and people then coming home later and later at night to visit with their children or their husband or wife.

The last point I'd make is with respect to the environmental assessment process. Quite frankly, you could probably spend every dollar from the gas tax on the EA process. They're long, expensive processes. I know the Minister of the Environment is investigating this area. We hope that as an associated program the EA process will be streamlined to make sure you cover the bases, make sure you do good environmental work, but at the same time reduce red tape and streamline the process so that you can actually begin to move ahead on major transportation and transit initiatives and investments in water and sewer projects. If something as relatively straightforward as a new streetcar line down St. Clair here in the city of Toronto is going to take several years, imagine how long expansions of Highway 410, Highway 427 or the mid-peninsula corridor could take. So we hope to see that come forward.

Lastly, you're going to have to put—I know my colleague from Brant cares about this—brownfields and repatriate brownfields back into production.

Mr. Levac: It's coming.

Mr. Hudak: He says it's coming. That's a major part of this initiative as well, but you really need the tools to make it successful. You need the legislative and regulatory tools to do so, as well as tax incentives and investments on behalf of the taxpayer. A number of tools are out there. We can talk about that later on, but you need that toolbox, so to speak, full of tools to make sure you can actually do some brownfield redevelopments.

My last point—I've gone on a bit longer than I had planned to, Mr. Speaker. I see the Speaker respond with great excitement to the opening phrase of my last point.

The government has a strong predisposition against the automobile. I understand they have important initiatives to make sure we reduce emissions and smog, which we support. We brought forward our own initiatives, like Drive Clean, in that regard. But I think there is a reality that a lot of people like to drive the car and a good number of people, with all the intents and purposes of the government to put us all into condos and apartment buildings in urban cores, will still want to have their own backyard and play catch with their son or daughter, have their own garden and their own living space. I think it's part of Canadian culture to own your own home. Many will like the privacy of driving their own car to or from work or carpooling with a friend or what have you, but will prefer to drive or take transit and live outside of urban cores for a number of reasons.

There's this notion that urban sprawl is causing us all to become much fatter. I think that caloric intake, for example, might be another cause of that. Who knows? But I think it is part of our culture that people like to own their own homes, especially young families, and will find the automobile actually empowering. There's an anti-automobile message that comes through quite a bit from the government's pronouncements.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: It's true; you don't like cars. You might because you're in Brant. But listen, this is what they

talked about: the automobile and highways. I fear that you are actually restricting roadways and transportation development seriously because you're an anti-car. You have to expand the highways. Transit investments: absolutely, we need to do more of that, but to relieve gridlock for those who choose to drive, you need those investments in the highways as well, which has been absent from your agenda.

Mr. Levac: The 424.

Mr. Hudak: I hope we will see some of those investments. I just have not seen those to date.

The point I'm trying to make is that gridlock will continue. No matter what the intentions are, no matter what the intensification standards of 40% are set by the government, you'll still have people who will prefer to commute, have some of their own space, live in their own homes. To address that, you need to make the investments in transit and transportation to get them to and from work quickly and to and from their families quickly. I worry that this will be left out of the plan altogether, with some goal of putting everybody in apartment buildings or condos. Maybe I'm wrong, but I've not seen the evidence to date of any coherent plan to break gridlock.

Certainly I expect that the greenbelt plan will see a big leapfrogging impact into the Simcoes, for example, maybe as far as the Oxford counties. Who knows, I say to my colleague sitting beside me. But I know the leapfrog impact over the greenbelt is going to cause increasing problems without proper investments in transit and transportation.

That's an overview of the concerns I have as the critic for public infrastructure renewal. I know that my hard-working colleagues from York North and Simcoe North have their own strong thoughts on this and how it impacts on their ridings, and I look forward to their debate as well as the others in the chamber.

1630

The Acting Speaker: Further speakers?

Mr. Dunlop: I'm very pleased to be able to rise and make a few comments on Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans.

It's funny that we'd be talking about a growth plan and growth on a day when thousands of farmers and a lot of our rural stakeholders visited Queen's Park. I don't think anybody has to question how we feel the government treats the citizens of rural Ontario.

I made my earlier comments about the roads and bridges that we mentioned in Renfrew county and the gas tax and why I thought it was so very, very unfairly distributed, when in fact all people pay into that particular program.

There are a couple of clarifications that I would like to get my head around. The \$100 billion over 30 years—and I hope the minister or someone in the government caucus can clarify this for me—is that 100 billion provincial dollars, or is that \$33 billion spent by the provincial government, \$33 billion by the federal government, and \$33 billion by the municipalities? Are we talking

about \$100 billion or \$300 billion? I think that's very important, because I think it's going to be a lot closer to \$300 billion than \$100 billion. In 30 years' time, I can tell you that a lot of the capital projects we have today will not be built for the same type of dollars. I know the hospital that is under construction right now in Orillia started out 20 years ago with a proposed plan of \$10 million, and the contract signed in 2003 was for \$82.5 million. You can see that the cost escalates. So we need to know the government's plan. The minister keeps bragging about this \$100 billion, but I'd really like to know if he's really talking about \$300 billion.

Another concern that I have is the way the government treats some of the municipalities. We keep talking about partnerships and this new commitment to municipalities and all these sorts of phrases that the government continually uses in this Legislature.

I can tell you that we have a growth area in the county of Simcoe. The city of Barrie, of course, is one of the major growth areas in the province and has been for some time. I think the county of Simcoe and the city of Barrie have done a fairly remarkable job in how we've controlled growth and allowed growth to take place in that part of the province. There's also a great deal of concern about our environment in that area.

But we got a real surprise just last fall, only a few days before this bill was brought out. A company called UCCI Consolidated had applied to the township of Oro-Medonte, which is just north of the city of Barrie, in the little community called Shanty Bay, and they applied to the county of Simcoe, to amend their official plan for an adult lifestyle community. The township was in full approval. This is a township that I can tell you is not flamboyant in any way whatsoever. They plan very carefully, particularly around their water source protection and around the huge Oro moraine that is in that area. In fact, that's a priority of the township of Oro-Medonte and Mayor Neil Craig.

The county approved the amendment and the township approved the amendment. We thought it would just be natural that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs would go along with this official plan amendment, because these are communities that are very well organized and that plan very carefully. But, no, it was turned down. It has become a great disappointment to the township and to the county that this great partner they had, the province of Ontario, would turn down an adult lifestyle project that was going to take place in Shanty Bay. We think there was some political pressure put on at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs; I'm quite sure there was. They caved in. So this partnership that the township of Oro-Medonte and the county of Simcoe had with the government doesn't exist any more, as far as I'm concerned, because this was something that was very well—it needed, and it had, a great deal of support from the whole community. Literally, I've got petitions with thousands of names, asking the government to reconsider that.

I guess if that's the question—we keep talking about the ministry's plan for a healthy environment. We know

that they're going to ban all coal-fired generation by 2007. I can tell you, that's not going to happen. We know that's not going to happen. Why anybody would make an idiotic promise like that, who would ever know? But it will not happen, and that's why we've got all these crazy announcements happening right now—except for the fact that we know the government will make a big splash this spring when, apparently, the Lakeshore generating station closes, a plan that Elizabeth Witmer put in place, and when Dwight Duncan tries to take credit for the final closing of that plant.

But I'm concerned about this so-called healthy environment legislation that the minister kept referring to and how it impacts the water source protection legislation that is about to be brought out. I have to put it on the record again: We have a proposed landfill in the county of Simcoe called Site 41. It's had absolutely unbelievable opposition. Over and over again, there's more opposition to it; there's more scientific proof—real science—that's brought forward, and yet the county apparently wants to move ahead with this, and we don't know where the minister stands on it. We're trying to get a commitment from her.

We know that the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario is not supporting the proposal, because in his latest report last fall he condemned the fact that the Ministry of the Environment did not allow a review of the actual application. That's a sad thing for this government to have to say, that the Environmental Commissioner is opposed to the fact that they would not allow a review.

That brings me to other areas of concern. I was really glad today when my colleague Tim Hudak brought forward his concerns about highway construction and about the kind of money the previous government had put into the SuperBuild program. I have to thank the young Minister of Tourism at the time for the sports, culture and recreation program that you put in place. I know that a number of municipalities in my riding thank you, Mr. Hudak, for the approvals. It was a 20% provincial share, a 20% federal share and a 60% municipal share. We had some great projects.

I hope the minister will continue down that path, because I believe sports, culture and recreation are part of a healthy lifestyle. They're part of a healthy community, and we certainly need that. We have some plans in place right now, and I'll be very disappointed if this government doesn't put in 20% of the amount of money for those programs—at least 20%, because they brag that they're going to do better, and we'd like to see whether they can actually come up with one cent, let alone 20%, of the funding.

That brought me to another huge concern about growing strong communities and about expansion of highways etc., and that's Highway 400 and Highway 69, and Highway 11 into the north. As you know, the previous government expanded that program fairly rapidly. I know that it was never fast enough. The programs weren't moving ahead fast enough for the past critic on northern

affairs and northern development, who is now the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I haven't heard him say a word about Highway 11, or about Highway 400 and Highway 69. We can't believe what's not happening there. The way he talked in this House for the four years that I was here in government, I thought the highway would have been complete by now. You haven't hired a bulldozer to do anything yet.

The only project that is underway is the project that Ernie Eves approved. That's the only project that is underway, and the citizens of the province of Ontario are very concerned that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is not fighting to have Highways 400, 69 and 11 complete, because there should be much more construction taking place on those projects than what we actually have. That's a huge disappointment for someone who criticized the previous government so much.

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: Garfield, you guys are a failure in the north. We know that.

Mr. Dunlop: I hear the Minister of Northern Development and Mines heckling me. You're good at closing down—

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the minister—everybody's been very polite this afternoon. I would ask you to be polite as well.

1640

Mr. Dunlop: Obviously I've hit a huge nerve here, because what I'm saying is exactly the truth. People in the north are wondering what is happening to the Highway 69, Highway 400 and Highway 11 expansions. We need to know. It's important that the citizens of the north are treated with respect and dignity when it comes to growth in those areas. It not only affects their population but it affects economic growth as well. The previous government did a lot, and we've seen nothing so far from this government in that area.

I was disappointed to hear both the parliamentary assistant and the minister actually come out and say that nothing had been done by past governments, that this was the first government that was actually planning. It's a very sad state when people stand up and say that. There have been some tremendous projects that have taken place. A lot of the projects now being completed were announced, and funded most of the time, by the previous government, and now this new government is out there cutting the ribbons and trying to take credit for them. We all know what they are. They are buildings that have sprung up all over the province: a lot of the university buildings; the 70,000 new people places. Those types of things all took place under the previous government, and the new government of course has tried to take credit for them, even for the Northern Ontario Medical School, believe it or not. I heard the Premier actually saying that the other day. This government started that, and now Dalton McGuinty is trying to take credit for it.

We're getting down to the last 11 minutes, and I know the member for York North wants to make a few comments. I think that I will likely, in the end, support this legislation, with some amendments. I know there are

a lot of people in this House who want to have a lot of debate on this, and more hearings on it, of course. I think the hearings are very important, because we've already been told how important the planning process is. I'm sure all of the municipalities in the province, whether they're in the growth areas or not, will want to have some input. I don't think they want to feel like the farmers did today. The farmers of Ontario feel left out of the process. We've seen that today.

I've got to wind up by saying how disappointed I was today. I know we're not supposed to talk about attendance in the Legislature, but when 13 members of the cabinet are not present on a day when the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has a demonstration and wants to see the members—

Mr. Levac: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This place is respectful, and I think we do not mention people's attendance.

The Acting Speaker: I know he's getting very close. He did not mention individual members, but you're getting a little bit close. Be careful how you phrase this.

Mr. Dunlop: I won't mention them. I can only say that it was a huge disappointment today that we had people not present in this building. That doesn't send a very good message to the people who grow our food, the people who keep our rural economy alive and strong. We've seen the largest demonstration today in the history of Queen's Park, people opposed to this government; the largest agricultural demonstration ever happened today at Queen's Park. It is a sad day when we do not see the Premier present to answer questions.

With that, I'd like to turn it over to the member from York North. I have appreciated this opportunity to speak to Bill 136.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak on Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans. I think that, upon reflection, one might think that the bill should be renamed, perhaps more accurately, the Dalton to Decide Act or the More Bureaucratic Forms to Fill Out Act.

In the preamble of the bill, the Liberals say that the purpose is "to accommodate future population growth, support economic prosperity and achieve a high quality of life for all Ontarians." I think all of us would recognize that these are noble goals and certainly would like to believe that, in fact, this can all be accomplished in the process. But I think it's really more important to look at the details of the bill. And when you look at that, you come up with the conclusion that it is one more piece of evidence that this government has an obsession with planning instead of action.

I think it's fair to say that Bill 136 is just the latest chapter in the new McGuinty planning system. The new McGuinty planning system is highly centralized, carries with it a huge bureaucratic load, leaves very few decisions to local councils and allows for fewer housing and lifestyle choices for local residents. Bill 136 will mean a massive increase of bureaucratic, centralized control over

local governments and residents. The bill makes no indication of how local governments will deal with the massive growth that will take place in the already built-up areas. Issues around transportation, infrastructure or social needs of communities are left out. There's no plan for cash to pay for any of this growth. The government is taking away the power of local municipalities but leaving them with the bill.

There are some extremely important issues for people to understand and to hear on further from the government in terms of the decision-making process. This bill comes in what now appears to be the McGuinty tradition of centralizing power. If we look back a short time ago to both Bill 25 and Bill 26, we saw the ability of the minister, in Bill 26, to inject himself into the planning process and not have to follow the same rules that anyone else should. This was a portent of things to come. We look at Bills 135 and 136 and we see that this trend has continued.

This bill provides what might be seen as winners; the greenbelt bill, losers. How many people are in these communities? They're going to receive a certain amount of attention—provided, of course, that municipalities will have to jump through so many more bureaucratic hoops. Historically, municipal planning has been just that: municipal planning. But growth plans will not be municipal plans; they will be top-down, Queen's Park-ordered plans that local governments will have no choice but to obey.

Section 6 of Bill 136 outlines a whole range of issues that may be included in a growth plan. These include population projections, identifying growth areas, growth strategies and a whole range of development and planning criteria. These may not sound so dangerous, but when you read further down into the act, clause 6(e) of the act allows growth plans to include "such other policies, goals or matters that the minister considers advisable." What this means is that growth plans which give the provincial government absolute control over local planning can include anything the minister and cabinet want to put in.

People should also know that there is no right or possibility of appeal. It says right in the bill, in subsection 7(8), that a decision is "final and not subject to appeal." So the danger that people need to understand is that what has historically been a municipal power is in fact being centralized in Queen's Park. As I mentioned, we've already seen this process through the Planning Act, through the Greenbelt Act and now through Places to Grow. The danger of this is not only that the municipalities lose powers under this bill, but also that they still have to deal with the results of growth. So what we're talking about here are transportation and infrastructure issues.

1650

I want to take a couple of minutes to talk about an area in my riding, the town of Newmarket, which has been identified as a potential growth area. What I think people need to understand is that while this might look very appealing—certainly, for an economic driver, oppor-

tunities for further development have some appeal—let's look at some of the surrounding issues.

First of all, Newmarket is a community that is almost completely developed, yet the government has identified it as a major growth area. York region has a history of being one of the highest-growing areas in all of Canada; 40,000 people come to York region to make it their home. In Newmarket, that problem is obviously exacerbated by the fact that surrounding it is Aurora, already mostly built up. To the east is greenbelt, to the west is greenbelt and to the north is the part of the town of East Gwillimbury which is open for development, but it too is mostly greenbelt.

This creates, certainly, a local issue. How will Newmarket handle this kind of growth? Are we going to have high-density, big apartment buildings? Are we going to have the density of communities like Queensville, Holland Landing or Sharon, sharing in that density?

What about the need for increased social services and social infrastructure? Often government talks about sewers and water, but obviously there's the question of schools, community centres, daycare, home care, women's shelters; there's an entire range of recreational needs, all of these things that, historically, have been planned by municipalities.

All of a sudden, then, we're going to see enormous pressure on communities like Newmarket. Does the government really want Newmarket to look like Yonge and Eglinton? Do they not understand that the town was planned with infrastructure and services needed for the population that it would have for today?

As we look at this bill, this is a very important initiative that requires a great deal of response before, I think, people are going to see this as a positive step for individual communities across the province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments: the member from Danforth—Toronto—Danforth.

Ms. Churley: Toronto—Danforth, Mr. Speaker. It used to be called Broadview—Greenwood, and Riverdale, but it has been changed. We hope to change it again and get the name East York in there. Jack Layton and I made that promise to the people, and we're still working on that, figuring out what to call it.

The bill before us today: I'll have an opportunity to speak a little later in response specifically to the comments made by various official opposition members. I guess you could say there are some points of agreement, and then there are points where there is no agreement whatsoever. For instance, we can agree that there is a problem with the highways, but, and this is what the Liberals always like, they can come down the middle. The Tories are saying, "We want those highways, we want the money and we want them built quickly." And we say, just like around the greenbelt, "We want to save more; they want to pave more." They want to build these highways; we're saying that these highways are contradictory in terms of what the government says it's trying to achieve within the greenbelt legislation that we just passed. Now, the part of that overall plan for growth in

the Golden Horseshoe and across the province is contradictory. To be building these new highways at the same time as they're saying it's absolutely urgent that we have sustainable growth doesn't compute.

Our colleague from Hamilton mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker—and you're one, when you're a member here and not in the chair, who likes to say, "If you build it, they will come." We know that was about baseball, but we also know that it's just proven fact that if you build infrastructure, if you build major highways, oh yeah, they will come.

Therein, among other problems, are some of the problems that I'll be outlining later with this legislation.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm pleased to take a couple of minutes to respond to the leadoff hour by the official opposition. I appreciate the comments by the member from Erie–Lincoln in respect to his rather complimentary approach at the beginning and recognizing the work of the minister and the consultative process. I think it's only fair, as one member, to say that successive governments have had and will continue to have responsibility to support municipalities and provide direction on growth in the province of Ontario. It's not a one-party initiative; it's not a one-government initiative; these are things that have continuing lives.

I recall, back in my municipal time, as early as about 1989, that Gardiner Church, who was at that time a civil servant in the province of Ontario, visited with our local council of the day. It was the first time somebody sat down and began using the terminology "greater Toronto area." At that point, there was a rather negative reaction from the outlying municipalities that the word "Toronto" somehow would be used in a context that would involve them. It's more than 15 years ago now—16, 17 years ago—when that first thinking around the greater Toronto area began to happen and people began to think in that context. Now we're talking about the greater Golden Horseshoe. So times are changing and our context is changing, and each government has a part to play over an extended period of time.

The member from Simcoe North was commenting on—in fact, he didn't know about—some important activity that was going on today that the Premier and some other ministers were in support of and engaged in, and that's the Beacon project. The announcement that there's some \$2.5 billion to be invested by General Motors, supported by the province and the federal government, is being made in Oshawa today and in some other locales in the province of Ontario. This is probably the single most important investment that we may see during this particular mandate.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): Let me pick up where the previous member left off. Why do you have the announcement today when you know the farmers are coming to Queen's Park? You create this diversion of an announcement out of GM when that could have been done tomorrow or could have been done yesterday. You were getting away from listening to the 7,000 farmers who were out on our front lawn and

saying, "You ain't helping us enough." That's what they were saying, in spades, out there.

Let's get back to the bill. The proof is in the pudding in terms of where they come with their funding in the next budget.

The previous government had a plan for transportation, both for highways and for transit. I can remember, as the Minister of Transportation, opening the Sheppard subway line, where the previous government put some \$570 million into public transit in that one project alone. We put hundreds of millions of dollars into GO Transit, and into renewing buses not only here in Toronto but in Ottawa, London and a whole bunch of other places. We also had planning with regard to a master transportation system, and, through our Smart Growth panels, we were developing places for intensification of population.

So in a lot of ways, the government, a year and a half later, is picking up what we had. It has woken up and is putting it in the form of a bill here today. But let's face it, the previous government was far along the way with regard to planning, but we planned with a difference: We put our money where our mouths were with regard to putting some of those planning notions into action.

1700

Ms. Horwath: I'm very pleased to be able to comment on the speeches of the members from Erie–Lincoln, Simcoe North and York North. In fact, I want to take this opportunity while I have the chance, before the member from my caucus who is going to be speaking to this legislation very shortly, has her chance to speak.

I would just like to say that initially the people in my community were concerned about environmental issues, urban expansion and sustainability, but once they got over that initial debacle of what happened in Hamilton in the public hearings around the maps and how inaccurate they were, they began to actually think there might be hope in this whole program the government is bringing forward. But then they were sorely disappointed to find out that very early on in the process already, there has been an initial caving in to the desires of the developers.

Quite frankly, when you look at the reduced target in terms of the intensification piece, the fact that the proposed target has been a moving target, unfortunately, is very frustrating. If I could say one thing initially, it's this idea that the intensification, which is so key to real, sound urban planning, is a key that has been lost on this government. It is extremely unfortunate.

When you look at what the other building blocks to sustainable development are, things like affordable housing, for example, density and ensuring that the density occurs in urban centres well before we even consider expansion of urban boundaries, then you'll see that this piece of enabling legislation called Bill 136, Places to Grow, is simply window dressing on a pretend plan to deal with the ongoing pressures around urban expansion, leapfrog development and urban boundary expansion. It's unfortunate that we're in this situation, when the government had an opportunity to do some really positive things in this area.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Erie–Lincoln has two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate the comments of my colleagues as part of our time, as well as those in the questions and comments. Just to quickly summarize, as I said, there are many principles that are similar to the Smart Growth initiative, but they've moved off in some areas, and I think we need to bring them back along that Smart Growth path. It's important now to move beyond what is an academic debate—a lot of pretty maps, pretty plans and nice coloured dots—to actually making investments and having not only a 30-year plan but a plan for the next couple of years as well. To paraphrase my friend Walter Mondale—I use “friend” very lightly there—Put some meat in the sandwich; show where the beef really is.

As my friend from Lanark–Carleton said, in September 2001, we brought forward a comprehensive plan to invest in transit and highways, a balanced plan that had a \$3.25-billion provincial investment into our transit system, both within the Golden Horseshoe and without, and, as well, investments in our highways: the Highway 404 extension, for example; Highway 407 east into the Durham area; the mid-peninsula corridor through Niagara, in the Hamilton area; the GTA east-west corridor, to ensure we could address the leap-frogging issues, among others. So it was a comprehensive transit plan, hand in hand with a comprehensive investment in highways.

This government has brought down a number of initiatives in addition to 136: source water protection; the regime under Bill 135, behind the minister's closed doors; Bill 26, the ability to declare a ministerial interest in a local zoning and planning initiative; the change of language to “consistent with” from “have regard to.” Some municipalities are going to say eventually, “Why do we bother getting into the planning business at all? Under this government, it's all going to be run by the province behind closed doors.”

If you want to move forward, bring forward some meat in the sandwich: real investments in roads and transit; clear out the red tape in the EA process so we can actually get projects off the ground; invest in tools such as tax increment financing for brownfields; and I know it's a dirty word on that side of the floor, but realistically, P3s, partnering with the private sector, to invest in this type of infrastructure.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Before I recognize the next speaker, I would ask the members and the honourable ministers to pay some attention, hopefully.

Ms. Churley: Especially now.

The Acting Speaker: Further speakers? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Applause.

Ms. Churley: Good timing, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, all of you. The House is packed, as you can see, and my full caucus is with me to hear the great speech I'm going to give on growth. I'm sure everybody here is waiting with bated breath to listen to me talk for an hour about

the government's growth plan. I know you just can't wait.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you, not in your capacity as the Speaker but in your capacity as the member for Beaches–East York and our critic for many areas. That's one of the opportunities and problems with being such a small, but may I say mighty, caucus, that we each have quite a workload, and you have a particularly big one. That's because he was new—he and our new member from Hamilton. Of course, we piled it on because they didn't know what they were getting into. The member for Beaches–East York has finance, Comsoc, municipal affairs, GTA and some others that I can't even remember.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): She's sucking up to the Speaker.

Ms. Churley: Not at all—I sucked up to the Speaker earlier. I want to explain, because sometimes people may wonder why I'm on my feet as the critic for environment among other areas, as well as on these issues. I want to say that the member for Beaches–East York very graciously allowed me, when I gave up my critic areas when he joined us, when he ran in the by-election in this area—I was a former councillor but only for a short time, and the member for Beaches–East York had been a mayor of East York when East York still existed, and then was on city council, and was obviously the right person to carry on with this portfolio. I have admit that it was hard for me to give it up, because it is something that is dear to my heart. One of the things we agreed upon was that I could and would continue doing a lot of the land use pieces of the portfolio, because in our caucus we really don't make that much of a division and distinction between land use policies and environmental policies. They are part and parcel of the same thing, especially now, in 2005, when we're dealing with all those very complex issues around land use vis-à-vis air pollution, water pollution and all the other problems that go along with urban sprawl. We recognize in our caucus that there is a very direct link and connection.

In fact, I am proud to say that in our caucus, in every critic area, we tend to try to look through the lens of environmental protection to see if there is an aspect to any bill that comes before us that needs to be looked at through that lens. I know the member for Beaches–East York and other members in their critic areas tend to do that, and I think that's important. I've heard the government talk about that as well, that you cannot divorce land use policy from environmental protection.

I think that, as we've seen the grim and tragic results over the past few years, the direct link between contaminating our environment and our human health, there is no doubt in anybody's mind any more that this is an urgent matter we have to address. When we talk about things like growth, the greenbelt plan and all of those things, we think about air pollution and more and more kids with asthma. We think about what happened in Walkerton, about water pollution and the need to protect our water, and all the pieces of legislation that have come

before us under the previous government and now under the present government, some pieces of legislation that came as a result of the Walkerton inquiry, which made many recommendations. This land use policy before us is just a small piece of that.

That is one of my passions, to work on environmental issues, and of course municipal affairs and those issues are one of my passions as well, so I'm really pleased that I have this continuing opportunity to marry the two and to talk about them in one piece.

1710

Let me talk a bit about the legislation before us today. First and foremost, people need to understand that there's not a lot of meat on this bone. This is enabling legislation, and that is why it's really important that we go to committee and have further discussions about this, because the meat of the matter remains in the growth plans that are yet to come.

To this end, the legislation needs to include key aspects of growth plans for emerging and priority urban centres, such as the intensification targets, affordable housing targets and protection of environmentally and culturally significant lands. As I said, the meat of this legislation lies in the development of the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe and eventually other areas of the province. The focus needs to shift from growth—a bad word. Let me tell you why.

Mr. Hudak: "Growth" is a bad word?

Ms. Churley: It can be bad in this context, because even when we think of Smart Growth, we're talking only about growth and not sustainability. Instead of growth, I like to talk about it in terms of community sustainability or urban sustainability. We know that within the Golden Horseshoe, and I'm trying to remember now, over three million people are predicted to arrive in the Golden Horseshoe over the next number of years, and there is just no question that we have to find ways. That's what this legislation and the greenbelt legislation are proposing to deal with. But if we continue to think about it in terms of growth, then I think we're not moving forward and accepting the fact that we have to do things differently. If we change the language of how we refer to these things—I come back to the way I started to refer to garbage years ago.

When I got involved in my community—and this is a land use issue as well, in many ways, because of the difficulty in siting landfills—we got rid of an incinerator in South Riverdale that was polluting and stopped new ones from being built. The pressures are even more upon us to find different ways of dealing with our garbage. One of the things we started doing then—there was a group actually called "It's not Garbage." We have to stop talking about garbage as garbage, because so many products that end up in the garbage are not garbage. They can be reused, recycled or whatever. When you start doing that kind of mind shift, changing the language sometimes will help lead you to think differently about some of our problems. That's why I think it's important, and I'm sure the member from Erie-Lincoln would agree

with that. I'm certainly not saying here that it's ridiculous to suggest that we shouldn't be planning for more sustainability or urban sustainability and that there will not be growth, but we need to think about it differently.

What we have before us today, though, is vague and general enabling legislation mandating the government to designate growth areas and establish growth plans for those areas. As to the nature of the growth plans, seemingly at this point, and unfortunately anything goes, they "may"—that's what it says now—include various aspects of urban sustainability and social equity, is not strong enough and requires strengthening in this act. That's one area I've identified right there that very clearly needs to be strengthened.

Mr. Speaker, this cold that I had when I was speaking the other day to the greenbelt legislation is lingering. I can't seem to get rid of it.

Mr. Hudak: It's the greenbotch effect.

Ms. Churley: The greenbotch effect.

There are no criteria for consistency in plans across political or watershed boundaries. Consequently, there is real potential for the growth plans to reflect political interests as much as environment and human health issues, and that is of real concern. You know, just today in this Legislature, the official opposition, the acting Conservative leader and myself raised an issue around the greenbelt that was quite shocking; that is, finding out that the government had recently, while they were setting the boundaries for the greenbelt, held what sounds like a small but very powerful special-interest political fundraiser with the Premier, the finance minister and the finance minister's brother, who is a developer. There are allegations that some of these developers who were at this \$10,000-a-plate dinner, \$15,000-a-couple—and several of these people were there with their partners, I understand—were in a room with the Premier and the finance minister at a time when the boundaries of the greenbelt were being set.

You've heard me on many occasions, Mr. Speaker, express real concern about a section, a part of the greenbelt that's been left out, and even those from the environmental community and the conservation community and those who support the greenbelt agree and have said that those lands should be included. In fact, some farmers, the Christian Farmers, for example, when I was at public hearings—and the member from Lincoln will remember this—told us very clearly. Some farmers are opposed to the greenbelt, some are for it, and those who are for it made it very clear that they were quite concerned about this farmland being, as they described it, better quality farmland than the farmland that is in the greenbelt, except, of course, for the Niagara Escarpment and the Holland Marsh area, which are already protected. There is no rhyme or reason for this farmland that has been left out. In fact, one of my amendments was to include that very good farmland. All the Liberal members turned it down. We couldn't figure out why. I just thought that it made perfect sense to include it when so many experts came forward, including some farmers, saying, "Why not

put farmland that's better than some of ours in the greenbelt?" They didn't do it.

I raise that because, even if it is just perception—today I called on the government, as I have several times over the past few months, to keep its promise in the election to allow real-time disclosure of political donations. Every time I ask the question, the government members, whoever answers, say, "Well, we're going to do it in time. It's complicated or whatever. We're waiting for the opposition parties to say they'll do it too." Well, that wasn't the promise in the election. But, you know, we New Democrats have said that we're happy to do it—no problem. But, the promise was to do it.

Now we have this situation where of course the Liberals are denying that there was any influence-buying at this dinner. This was a fundraiser, and all parties have fundraisers. But, you know, the smell is there, because you have this connection, because the government allowed the way that the greenbelt was set up. At the end of the day, the boundaries were set, as we understand it, in the Premier's office. So whether or not they say there was science, the Tories say there wasn't. I believe that for most of the lands, with some key exceptions, there are good reasons why they are in the greenbelt. But I believe that there is no good reason for the farmland that was left out. So even the perception that a fundraiser of this magnitude and the promise not being kept to disclose who was there—it leaves a very bad impression.

I also think that—coming back to the growth plan before us today—when you have the potential for these growth plans, yet to be set, to reflect political interests as much as the environment and human health interests, you've got a problem. Allowing it to go ahead like this, the government is actually opening itself up to those kinds of accusations once again. That is something that really needs to be—not only for the benefit of the people of Ontario, but for the benefit of government members, I would say, so that everything is clean, above-board, transparent and there is not even any perception of political interference.

Proposed growth plans need to mandate core elements of community sustainability. For example, stating that a growth plan may contain some components, such as intensification and density of new development, the protection of sensitive and significant lands, including agricultural lands and water resources, and provisions for affordable housing, is meaningless. We know that core elements of sound urban planning and equity need to be mandated, so that the government doesn't just pick and choose in accordance with political ends. Given the act's list of policies, goals and criteria that may be—that word "may" again—included in growth plans, regard for renewable resources and energy efficiency—energy efficiency is another huge component, along with transportation—is noticeably lacking in the plan we have before us, the enabling legislation.

1720

Under clause 7(4)(a), dealing with the amendment of proposed growth plans by the hearings officers, the

minister may—there's that word again—notify the public regarding amended plans. Why not just put it in there very clearly that the public has the right and will be notified? Why is that "may" stuck in there? That sets off alarm bells with me. It means there can be political interference once again, even if it's just perception, even if there might be a good reason for it. The fact that word is in there allowing the government to pick and choose what they will allow the public to be aware of, and if they are, for instance, going to amend any of those plans—it needs to be changed to "shall." There's no question about it. I put the government members on notice that that will be an amendment of mine.

I hope I'll have much more success in my amendments in committee than I did on the greenbelt. I was not so successful there, although I genuinely felt that some of the Liberal members sitting on the committee were quite sympathetic to my amendments.

Mr. Hudak: Like the floating greenbelt.

Ms. Churley: Like the floating greenbelt. I think those on the committee really understood this legislation. I commend all the members on the committee, from all three parties. Well, I was the only member from my party, so I guess I'm commending myself too. I think we all did a good job in terms of understanding the issues and going out and listening to the public, and hearing and understanding where some of the problems were in that legislation. The public gave us all kinds of suggestions as to how to improve it, and virtually none of those amendments were accepted—the floating greenbelt, for instance. I'm glad the member from Erie—Lincoln raised it.

The government promised and promised that there would be a permanent greenbelt, and then we find out—I made an amendment to fix it. As I said before, I really thought it was an oversight, because the government had promised a permanent greenbelt. There was a lot of scurrying about in committee, because they recognized—remember that?—that I had discovered a real weakness in the plan here. There was a lot of scrambling around. They came forward with their own amendment, because I guess mine went too far, basically saying, "Look, once the parameters have been set"—that wasn't being done right then and there when we passed the legislation, because they had until March 9 to do that. That was the date set for setting the parameters of the greenbelt boundaries. What I was saying was that once that's done, to add more lands—I am even more alarmed about this now, when I think about this fundraiser and those farmlands being left out. I'm thinking on my feet here. Because it's a floating greenbelt, what that means is that as long as the same amount of land is there, the same amount of hectares, the government can step in and take a piece of prime farmland from the south somewhere and stick in a piece of land from some outer edge on the north that isn't such prime farmland, and say, "Presto," because there are some pressures from development.

That could happen under any government if this is not eventually amended. The same problem lies within this legislation. The act is non-enforceable through the courts. Any action or failure to act under Bill 136 is beyond

judicial review. So clause 15(1)(c) needs to have “or not done” removed to make actions not consistent with the act subject to judicial review.

Again, another problem, as in the case of Bill 135, the Greenbelt Act, is that it contains no provisions requiring provincial works or undertakings—i.e. provincial infrastructure development—to conform to growth plans. This is a really serious problem. Only decisions made under specified statute must conform to the growth plans. Let me give you an example. The proposed transportation corridors—what they’re really saying is highways; they call them transportation corridors—such as the proposed one between Kitchener–Waterloo and the GTA, would not have to comply with growth plans. Now, on top of that one, more plans for highways were announced when the minister announced the growth plan for the Golden Horseshoe area.

There is a lack of public accountability around implementation and monitoring. The act needs to establish a comprehensive monitoring program for tracking the content and the implementation of the growth plans across the landscape and within various jurisdictions. That would provide, of course, the data through which criteria can be evaluated and growth plans amended so that they could better achieve the government’s stated objectives.

The government did recently announce—I was there for the announcement—the draft growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. I’ll tell you a little bit about that. It’s interesting. I was looking at some of the media that came out as a result of the minister of infrastructure’s announcement on this. I like the way Murray Campbell put it, in the *Globe and Mail*. He talked about the greenbelt in the first part of his article, and then he went on to say, “The second shoe dropped yesterday with the unveiling by public infrastructure minister David Caplan of a plan to show where those millions of newcomers”—ah, here’s the number too. Murray Campbell says it right here: “3.7 million people in the next 25 years ... a bit of urgency to the matter....”

“The government intends to use its powers to shape municipal plans and to make infrastructure investments to direct development away from lands that provide food, water or recreation. It wants to do that by getting people to snuggle a little closer.”

I thought that was kind of a nice way to put it, in terms of talking about intensification. That’s really well put. That’s exactly what is being done here.

Again, looking at some of the news reports that came out of the announcement: For instance, I think the minister, when he was speaking today, made a point of talking about all those who support their growth plan. I think he mentioned some of the environmental groups and conservationists, some of whom were very involved with the greenbelt. Once again, I don’t think anybody’s arguing that this needs to be done. It’s a given; absolutely. The question is how it’s done, and will it really achieve its purpose?

I just want to quote to you from an article by April Lindgren, who writes about the announcement as well.

She quotes, in her article, Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence Canada, which is my old organization years ago. I was the first full-time executive director of what was then called the Environmental Defence Fund. It’s now Environmental Defence Canada, I believe. What he says is that it’s not “nearly ambitious enough and is being phased in too slowly.”

“There are communities all across southern Ontario threatened today by bad development, by urban sprawl. They can’t wait 10 years for this plan to come into effect.”

Again, Mr. Smith is quoted in a story by Antonella Artuso from the *Sun*, and says that the “sprawl will actually continue unchecked for the next few years because municipalities have up to 10 years to get in line with this plan.”

1730

There has already been real concern expressed about how long this is going to take and the kind of urban sprawl that will happen as a result of not being aggressive enough in terms of timing. So the 40% intensification by 2014 target in this draft plan is completely uninspired and really disappointing, because we’re not reinventing the wheel here; it’s been done in other places. Research, in fact, completed by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal itself suggested that an even higher target might be feasible, as per greater Vancouver regional district’s target of 70% by 2021 and England’s target of 60% by 2007.

We’ve got a bad situation here, and an urgent situation, as you well know, Mr. Speaker. I know that in your capacity as our critic in this area you’re very well aware that the present redevelopment rate in the greater Golden Horseshoe is 15% to 20%. So it’s extremely counter-productive, in the middle of all of this, the situation we’re in as I outlined it, for the government to include three new highway corridors beyond those in the initial discussion document.

I was there at the announcement and I was completely shocked that these were added. I was complaining about the highways that were initially mentioned, but now we have had some new ones added when the minister announced them. I know the Conservatives support the highways, but if they really understood some of the implications of these highways they would agree with me.

Mr. Hudak: People like their cars.

Ms. Churley: But we’ve got to cut down the cars.

Mr. Hudak: We can’t all ride bikes like Jack Layton.

Ms. Churley: I know we can’t. I ride a bike too. You should go to my office. It’s sitting right there. It’s got a flat tire right now, but there’s too much snow to ride it anyway. I know that not everybody can ride a bike, but I know that everybody can get on a bus and get on a train if they’re available, accessible and practical for people.

These highways—I’ve mentioned some of them: the mid-peninsula, the 407 east and GTA east-west, the Brampton to Guelph—remain part of the plan. These highway corridors undermine the plan’s goals regarding the containment of sprawl and the promotion of more sustainable development patterns.

As I said, if this wasn't enough, the government has now added two new highway corridors to the mix: an extension of Highway 404 north to Ravenshoe Road, i.e., Keswick, along with the short northward extension of Highway 427. I find there are problems with each of those, vis-à-vis the government's stated objectives in this and also in the greenbelt, but the 404 extension is especially problematic, as it is the absolute key to the Queensville development. It will mean sprawl all the way to Lake Simcoe.

You have heard me go on and on and on about my puzzlement and my disappointment that the government is not including south Simcoe in the greenbelt plan. I have described on many occasions, and I'm going to tell you again, briefly, why this is so important. The government said it was creating a greenbelt to curb urban sprawl and protect prime farmland. The greenbelt legislation that passed is not going to do that. I supported the greenbelt, and our caucus supported the greenbelt, because we believe it's important to protect environmentally sensitive land and some prime farmland. I think it's nuts to not support protecting some land and it's important that it be done, and that's fine; let me set the table with that. That's why I supported it. But it doesn't do what they said it was going to do. It is not protecting some of the best farmland we have; it left that out. And it's not going to curb urban sprawl. This bill, the way it's drafted now, is not going to do it either. This highway just puts the final nail in the coffin in terms of what we refer to as leapfrog development.

Let me say that this issue is not just around the leapfrog development and the urban sprawl that is going to create, and all the traffic congestion, air pollution, gridlock and other problems we have—the reason why the government is coming forward with these bills—but Lake Simcoe itself is under tremendous stress. I have heard the development that is going on in the south Simcoe area referred to as development on steroids and the Wild West of development. It's just crazy up there. It's out of control. The people in the area really want it, the farmers in the area want it to be included, because they see this happening. They're very worried and they asked the government to include them, and that wasn't done. This is very alarming.

When we see that, at the same time, this growth plan is allowing an extension of the 404, there's just no question about what's going to happen there. I fear for the quality of the lake, because it's already under stress. I fear for the prime farmland in the area and for the farmers who are very worried that they're going to be gobbled up. I fear for the urban sprawl that's going to continue as a result, because people will end up just driving further and further, a little further out.

Already we see it: There are going to be more extensions to highways, and people are going to continue that urban sprawl we're so worried about. The 404 extension will put pressure on the northern greenbelt boundary, and the 427 extension will put pressure on the southern boundary. Coming back to what I said earlier, if they build it, they will come.

So much for the greenbelt as the cornerstone of the government's strategy for sprawl. I notice that when the government is talking about the greenbelt now, I don't think we're hearing them say any more that it's the cornerstone of the strategy for sprawl. I think that more and more, there's a recognition that they've had to admit that the greenbelt legislation that's being passed is not going to stop sprawl. This growth plan before us today is not going to stop sprawl as it is.

The plan takes a very weak approach, as well, to the issue of settlement area boundary extensions. There are no clear tests set for extensions except, in the short term, until sub-area plans are developed, only "factors to be considered," as opposed to hard tests, and I'm sure that made perfect sense to you, Mr. Speaker.

Without going into a lot of detail around it now, I want to put on the record some of the concerns that the New Democrats and I have with this bill. The plan takes a fairly blunt approach to intensification areas; for example, targeting urban growth centres and intensification corridors for high density—not less than 200 residents and jobs per hectare. But it makes no reference to issues of the scale and character of development—pedestrian friendliness etc.—that would make such redevelopments acceptable and attractive to existing communities.

The plan also takes a very unimaginative approach to employment land issues, prohibiting redevelopment for non-employment uses and barring incompatible land uses from the vicinity of employment areas in intermodal facilities. The implications of this for brownfield and grayfield redevelopment are unclear. This is, again, key. In order to be able to preserve our prime farmland and environmentally sensitive areas, we need to be able to develop our grayfields and brownfields. It would seem to bar creative mixed-use redevelopment of conventional business parks, and that's a concept that has gained considerable interest in the US, in the context of the overall shift to a service and knowledge industry as opposed to an industrial-based economy. As we can see in my area of south Riverdale right now, there is a fair amount of some brownfield, old industrial land, and the film industry has really taken off in the area over the last several years. Of course, people here would be very well aware of my keen interest in the film industry.

1740

As an aside here, I was glad to see that Mr. Sorbara very graciously came down to my riding to announce that they were going to keep their promise after all and increase the film tax credits. Mr. Speaker, you played a role in that, as well as our colleague the member for Trinity-Spadina, in urging and pushing the government to keep its promise because we were seeing thousands of jobs disappear.

I bring it up because not only was there a lot of compassion and concern about the people who were losing their jobs from the service industry, the hairdressers, the costume makers, the catering companies, you name it, on up to the producers, directors and actors—we were very concerned about the job loss—but

it's also a very good example of what's happened to some of those old industrial areas as they've been cleaned up.

The film industry is a perfect example. Beyond the service and knowledge industries, it's a perfect example of an industry that needs a lot of land, a lot of value added and moves into these areas and creates a lot of jobs. I know that a lot of the people in south Riverdale and the portlands where the three major film studios in Toronto reside—it's a good example, actually, because a lot of the people who work in these film studios also live in the area. Many of them walk or bicycle or take the local buses or whatever to work. To lose that perfect situation where people can live and work in the same area as we're trying to shift ground and do things that way would have been a real shame.

There is, let me say, much more to be done on all levels of government in terms of making sure that that important industry stays viable, but I'll leave that for another time.

There is a reference again in this bill to a long-term strategy for mineral resource management in the Golden Horseshoe to include coordinated and orderly development of aggregates to minimize conflict with other land uses, comprehensive approaches to rehabilitation, including progressive rehabilitation, and opportunities for alternatives and innovative ways to conserve and extract aggregates, but nothing really specific.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this is another area of great concern to me. The new planning statement that the government just came forward with allows pretty much just unchecked aggregate resource extraction within the greenbelt area itself and more golf courses, which use huge amounts—talk about water-taking, both the aggregate industry and golf courses. The concern is—the Environmental Commissioner has twice raised this issue in reports as a critical one—that there's very little research. We don't know very much at all about what kind of damage is being done or how work around—sorry.

It might be me, the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, and I'm tired, but I'm finding the chit-chat to my side very distracting at the moment.

The Acting Speaker: I think it's not just from your side. There is a great deal of chit-chat going on in the room, especially here at the front. I'm having a hard time hearing you as well. I'd ask all the members—it's getting a little late. We only have 15 minutes till we break. If you would just try to keep it down just a little. Thank you.

You may proceed.

Ms. Churley: Thank you very much for your courtesy.

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: Absolutely. I'm sure Mr. Duguid is listening intently to hear what else I have to say.

The aggregate situation is a bad one. The fact that it's been allowed on the greenbelt is a real problem. Again, an amendment I made was not passed by the Liberals. But I'm glad to see that there's at least a reference to a

long-term strategy, because I think the Neptis Foundation as well as the Environmental Commissioner both expressed real alarm over the past couple of years about this industry and the fact that we're not doing what other jurisdictions are doing, and that is looking at replacements and ways to recycle. It's just not happening. At least there's a mention of it.

Another concern: Too much specific detail about planning decisions is left to sub-area plans to be developed for the GTA and Hamilton, north of greenbelt, west of greenbelt, Niagara Peninsula and east of Durham.

I would like to say, in the few minutes I have left today, that the focus needs to be shifted from growth to community sustainability or urban sustainability. There are no criteria for consistency in plans across political or watershed boundaries. Consequently, you have the potential for growth plans to reflect political interests. I think that is one of my major concerns.

I would recommend to everybody here that they take a look at the Neptis Foundation's September 2004 report, *A Response to the Ontario Government's Discussion Paper, Places to Grow*. For people who may not be aware of what the Neptis Foundation is—I refer to them a lot—they do a lot of good work. They are a very credible and renowned organization that does research in these areas. Let me tell you a bit about them, because I refer to them a lot. I did when I was discussing the greenbelt as well. They're an independent, privately funded organization, and they conduct non-partisan research, education and publication on urban regions. That's what they do; that's their expertise.

"In 2002 and 2003, it conducted arm's-length research that provided a platform of information for the provincial government's Smart Growth panel"—that was under the previous government—and Neptis reports are cited in the previous government's *Places to Grow*. I must say that I commend the previous government—I don't commend them very much, but I do commend them—for using Neptis and including their studies and work in their publications. Their comments, as they say in this document, "are based on solid research findings into regional growth and change."

If you look at their recommendations—they've done a very thorough study of this, and have looked at what other jurisdictions across the world are doing—they give the government some very clear and concise recommendations of what they would like to see in place.

They're chit-chatting again. I don't need you to listen to me; I'd just like you to keep your voices down a little bit. But I would recommend that you do listen, because I'm going to give you—we've got Tories and Liberals chit-chatting here—some recommendations that come from the Neptis Foundation. You know as well as I do that they do very good work. They did very good work on the greenbelt plan as well. They gave recommendations. I'll read a few of them, because I think they're some of the most important recommendations we need to look at when we go into committee with this bill, to improve it.

One of the things they point out is that, “Economic prosperity in today’s world is closely connected to the physical and social quality of place. To remain competitive, the region needs to ensure not only that its infrastructure is well maintained, but also that it offers an urban lifestyle that attracts talented workers. This means ensuring, among other things, a wealth of cultural opportunities, a clean environment, a convenient and accessible public transit system, and lively mixed-use neighbourhoods.” That, I think, paints a pretty broad and clear picture of what we’re looking at here.

When it comes to transportation, there’s a huge piece missing from this plan. The only way to make it work—the Conservatives talk about needing these highways because people are still going to want to get in their cars and drive. If they don’t have any other options, they are not going to be able to get out of their cars and travel any other way. As you know, the family physicians recently came forward and talked about how important it is to get people out of their cars and into public transportation, not just for environmental reasons but for mental health and physical health reasons as well.

1750

So we needed to see, and we didn’t see when the government made this announcement—and we’re still not hearing it—what is the transportation plan here? There is no transportation plan. There is no transportation plan, no money talked about. There are fine words being bantered around when we ask about it, but there is no plan whatsoever. There is no plan when it comes to public transportation, and without that, the whole house of cards will collapse. It is an absolutely key piece to this new way of planning our communities, our sustainable communities.

Another point that the Neptis Foundation made is that we have to remember, “We are not planning for the same population that we were 20 years ago: The baby boom”—that means us, I think, Mr. Speaker, and others here—“is aging; households are smaller; the population is more diverse. Planning has to change in order to keep pace with these changes.” That comes from a report by Larry Bourne, *Social Change in the Central Ontario Region*.

Energy prices: This says, “Energy prices are likely to increase over the next 30 years.” But of course, we see them increasing already—this from a government that, when in opposition, berated the previous government all the time about rising hydro prices. Now the government is bringing in policies—yes, hydro prices are going up—but what we don’t see in place is a real conservation and efficiency plan. There is some planning around the edges but not like in Germany and other jurisdictions in Europe, where they are far, far ahead of us in terms of real energy efficiency and conservation plans. That has to be a key component, because prices are going up, we have global warming and climate change—all of those things that are interconnected. So it’s not just about the high cost of providing that energy and paying for that energy, but it is also about a clean environment. Yet there are no plans whatsoever in terms of how we redesign and

design new urban communities, sustainable communities. It is completely devoid of any discussion about energy conservation and efficiency and green power—all of those things that are key.

I’ve talked about, and the Neptis Foundation talks about, urban sprawl being a major contributor to both air and water pollution. They say, “Areas in which residents and workers must depend on automobiles for travel contribute to air pollution, while replacing natural areas with roads, parking lots and buildings affects water quality.” That’s from Ken Ogilvie: *Air, Water and Soil Quality*. He’s from Pollution Probe.

“Ontario lacks a region-wide vision for green lands protection.” The Neptis Foundation says, “Only 8.5% of the land in south-central Ontario is fully protected from development”—that’s not a whole lot—“and protection is fragmented among upper- and lower-tier municipalities, conservation authorities, and the provincial government.”

“Ontario’s agri-food industry is threatened by the loss of land to development.” Again, that’s what this and the greenbelt plan were supposed to have dealt with and have not done it, which is why amending this draft legislation before us today is so critical, because the plan in place is not going to do what needs to be done here.

It’s interesting that today, of all days, when the farmers were down here, the Minister of Agriculture was not here to answer questions from the—

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): He’s at the federal-provincial ag meeting.

Ms. Churley: Yes, he happened to have to go to Ottawa today.

Interjection: He was here.

Ms. Churley: He was here earlier, but the fact is, it would have been a good day—let me put it this way: It would have been a very good day for the minister to be here so he could answer our questions and respond accordingly, because we had all these farmers here in the Legislature who would have been very interested in answers to our questions.

One of the things that we heard about constantly when we were in public hearings on the greenbelt was the absolute crises that farmers are in, in this province. The greenbelt, as I said, is just the tip of the iceberg for them. There have been so many problems that have been accosting them for a number of years, including all the new pieces of legislation that have been brought forward which impact them and affect them, without the resources to go along with them. The commodity prices, BSE, free trade and some of the unfairness within that—there are a number of problems which my leader, Howard Hampton, today asked questions on and has over the past several months. There are remedies, there are things that can be done, and the greenbelt alone and this draft legislation before us today about growth is not going to solve that problem. You need to put real policies in place to make a difference. That’s why I was happy that there was all-party support.

I know that everybody is looking at the clock now in anticipation of my sitting down, but I'm going to end on this note, because today, of all days, was our opportunity to really hear from the agricultural community what they need. They have some really good ideas, and yes, it's going to take some resources, but they are going to be resources that are going to pay off in the long run. We need to see the government—for instance, one tiny little program that the NDP put in place when we were in power was the Niagara tender fruit program. It was really a fund to help farmers stay on their land and continue farming. Then the Tories came into power, just as it was about to be paid out—

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: That's right. The Tories cancelled it just as they were about to pay it out. The Liberals should just immediately bring that back—just bring it back. These farmers need—

Interjection: They need to be talking to the feds.

Ms. Churley: Oh, it's, "They need to be talking to the feds." It was an NDP provincial government that brought in this program. Bring it back. You need to bring in programs that help farmers. They want to stay on their farms. They're not the villains here. The farmers want to be able to continue to produce our food for us, but they need to make a living, and they need to be able to pass that farm down to their children.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue; I have a few minutes left when we pick up this debate again. But now, it being almost 6 of the clock, I will sit down and allow you to say, "It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until ..."

Mr. Levac: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the House to sit beyond 6 p.m. for the purpose of considering certain legislation, and when the House then adjourns, it stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow. I seek unanimous consent for that.

The Acting Speaker: The government House leader has moved unanimous consent to keep the House going until 6:30. Is it agreed? Agreed.

CITY OF OTTAWA
AMENDMENT ACT, 2005
LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA VILLE D'OTTAWA

Mr. Gerretsen moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the City of Ottawa Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la ville d'Ottawa.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Let me just say that I listened with some amusement this afternoon to some of the commentary about what has happened to the Greenbelt Act. I know that this is not strictly dealing with this bill. I have been given five

minutes to speak about this very important bill, but I want to just correct the member opposite.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: What bill are we debating right now? Could you remind us?

1800

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Your point of order is well taken. Right now we are debating the bilingualism bill of Ottawa.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Speaker, I apologize for that. Let me once again thank the member from Toronto–Danforth for voting in favour of the Greenbelt Act. I think it's one of the bravest moves she has made. She's going to be thankful for that for the rest of her life, because she did a really courageous thing: She voted in favour of a good bill.

In any event, let me very briefly talk about this bill. This bill is all about empowering a municipality to give it the right to pass a resolution or a bylaw that will deal with the languages in which that municipality will carry out the various services that are available. We all know that the city of Ottawa is a city in which not only English but French is spoken to a large extent.

This government is all about empowering municipalities, to give them more power and more authority in a number of different ways, as we've already seen with respect to the Planning Act amendments in which municipalities, after all, are ultimately given the authority as to how far their urban boundaries should be extended. I can give you a number of other examples with respect to the Municipal Act that we're going through right now as well. We're reviewing the Municipal Act in order to empower municipalities to a much greater extent than they currently are. That's what this bill is all about. This bill basically makes it incumbent upon the city of Ottawa council to have a policy that deals with the languages in which their services are going to be provided.

I'm very pleased that this bill carries my name and that this bill will live up not only to the commitment that the Premier made prior to the 2003 election but also to the request from the city of Ottawa in the way it is on the record with the previous government and indeed with this government as well.

With that, I hope this bill will have the unanimous support of the House so that the city of Ottawa can go ahead and do its thing, which basically means to adopt a policy related to the use of the two languages that are spoken in Ottawa, namely English and French.

The Acting Speaker: I understand that we're just going in rotation. Further speakers to the bill?

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): This is a sad time for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's a sad time for democracy, because this bill is one of the reasons why young people don't go out and vote. This bill is one of the reasons why people are cynical about politics and politicians—politicians who say one thing to get elected and do another thing after the election. I put forward a motion in committee asking that this bill not be called for third reading unless the government could table

with the Clerk of the Legislature, Claude DesRosiers—un bon francophone, un bon Franco-Ontarien—the name of one single francophone anywhere in the world who thinks this honours Dalton McGuinty's and Madeleine Meilleur's campaign promise—not one.

I'm going to get that name, I'm going to give it to Le Droit and we're going to talk to them about it. They couldn't find a single name, up until two seconds ago, and it's a joke.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): It's probably a relative.

Mr. Baird: It's probably his relative. Give me a copy of the name right now and I'll put it in Hansard.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): The Clerk has it.

Mr. Baird: Can you authorize him to give it to me now? No, they don't want to see it. They've got the name, but it's secret. The person is in protective custody. The person wants to remain anonymous because this bill is a joke. There's not a single city councillor in Ottawa who doesn't think this thing is a joke.

J'ai reçu une lettre aujourd'hui du président de l'ACFO de la grande ville d'Ottawa. Ils disent qu'ils ne supportent pas ce projet de loi, qu'ils veulent un amendement, présenté par mon cher collègue le député de Timmins–Baie James, pour la mise en place de la promesse de Dalton McGuinty. Mais tous les députés libéraux ont voté contre leurs promesses pendant la campagne électorale.

They put forward a resolution that was word for word from Dalton McGuinty's campaign promise, but Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party and Madeleine Meilleur and Jean-Marc Lalonde and all the other Liberals were more interested in giving an issue to the Bloc Québécois and to the Parti Québécois to play partisan politics with: an effort to linguistically divide the people of Canada, the people of Ontario, the people of Ottawa, with their cheap partisan politics. So I'm going to call it like I see it: a sham bill that's a disgrace, not just to the great traditions of the Ontario Liberal Party—Bernard Grandmaître, if he were here, would be sick. He would be absolutely sick if he had to vote on this bill. Bernard Grandmaître would have resigned rather than stand up and vote for this bill, absolutely would have stood up and resigned before supporting this sham of a bill.

Mr. Lalonde: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: We have a point of order here from—

Mr. Lalonde: I just want to refer to one of the comments and questions asked by—

The Acting Speaker: We have a point of order from the member from—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me; I haven't recognized you yet. A point of order from the member from—and I'm trying to remember—Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Go ahead; a point of order.

Mr. Lalonde: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to point out that we did receive letters from groups supporting it. The president of AFMO, Jacques Hétu, is supporting it—

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. This is not a point of order.

Please continue.

Mr. Baird: What a joke. Le président de l'ACFO est Jean Poirier, and Jean Poirier knows this bill. I asked in committee—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: There you go. Now say you're sorry.

Mr. Baird: Baloney. This does not say that you're honouring your election promise. That was my question.

Mr. Bisson: John, let me see.

Mr. Baird: I want to tell you about our committee hearings this morning. I asked the chief counsel for the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the top lawyer to my friend Gerretsen—and this is on the record in Hansard—“If the city of Ottawa wanted to bring in a bylaw where they only offered French services between 3 and 4 a.m. at the Carp library in the basement”—he said that would be allowed. And that is a disgrace; an absolute disgrace.

Mr. Bisson: This is from Alberta.

Mr. Baird: This is from Alberta, because they couldn't find anyone from Ontario to say anything good about their bill.

What does the other one say?

Mr. Bisson: It's the association of municipalities.

Mr. Baird: It's the association of municipalities. He said it was ACFO, but of course it's not ACFO, and it doesn't say that this honours Dalton McGuinty's and Madeleine Meilleur's election commitment.

So again, I beg the Liberal members, would you give me the name of one single person, a francophone anywhere in the world—it can be from Africa; it can be from southeast Asia; it can be from Quebec, from Ontario—

Interjection.

Mr. Baird: Leave my father out of it. It can be from anywhere in Canada that says that this honours Dalton McGuinty's and Madeleine Meilleur's word. It doesn't.

I'm glad that Bernard Grandmaître is not here—the founder of la Loi 8 en Ontario. C'est une bonne chose que Bernard Grandmaître n'est pas encore un député et qu'il n'est pas obligé de voter pour ou contre ce projet de loi. Je suis absolument certain que, si Bernard Grandmaître était encore député de cette Chambre, il parlerait fortement contre cette promesse brisée par nos collègues du côté du gouvernement libéral.

1810

I want to say, as I conclude my remarks, that I like Madeleine Meilleur, the minister for francophone affairs.

Mr. Bisson: She's a nice person.

Mr. Baird: She's a nice person, she's a good person and I respect her, but I just can't believe that she would support this bill. She was such a passionate advocate for francophones when she was on the Ottawa city council. When she wanted that bylaw enshrined in legislation—

my friend from Timmins—James Bay gave the Liberal members the occasion to honour their election campaign commitment. You might not like John Baird's view on it, but it's the same thing after an election as it is before an election. I was shocked, I was appalled and I was morally outraged when I first saw this bill. I should also say that I was glad they broke their promise, because it was terrible.

I want to put something else on the record—you're getting me going a bit here. No Conservative candidate in the last election ran advertisements against official bilingualism. There were Liberal Party ads against official bilingualism in the last election campaign; ads paid for by Liberal Party of Ontario campaign supporters against official bilingualism. What did Dalton McGuinty do to punish this mean-spirited attack on francophones? He made him Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Every single ad that Jim Watson ran in the last campaign said he was against official bilingualism. That's OK, because he was fighting Garry Guzzo. I think Mr. Watson is probably the only one who doesn't have to bow his head in shame as we vote on this ridiculous piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? Further debate?

M. Bisson: Mes amis, c'est une journée intéressante aujourd'hui. Si on regarde où on en est rendu, hier soir ici à l'Assemblée on a eu la chance de faire le débat sur la deuxième lecture de ce projet de loi. À ce temps-là j'ai dit, « Écoute, je ne vais pas parler longtemps. Demain, je vais proposer un amendement qui donne directement au gouvernement l'habilité de faire dans leur projet de loi ce qu'ils ont proposé dans la dernière élection. » Le gouvernement nous a donné une opportunité d'aller au comité aujourd'hui. J'ai proposé ces amendements. Tout ce que ces amendements faisaient, c'était de dire que dans le projet de loi, tel qu'il est écrit présentement, si une municipalité, la ville d'Ottawa, après ce projet de loi est passé, décide—est-ce que je peux avoir les documents, s'il vous-plaît, monsieur Lalonde? On est dans le débat. Donnez-les-moi. Je vais m'en servir. Merci.

Mr. Baird: He's the new page.

M. Bisson: Il y aura toujours une profession comme page quand on prendra sa retraite, pour vous laisser savoir. Justement, j'aimerais revenir faire ma retraite comme page ici. C'est le fun.

Le point que je veux faire est ceci : j'ai mis en place un amendement aujourd'hui qui était très simple. C'était pour dire que dans ce projet de loi présentement, tel que proposé, si la ville d'Ottawa—comme mon ami M. John Baird et moi l'avons dit aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée—décide qu'elle veut offrir les services aux francophones seulement chaque deuxième samedi à quatre heures du matin dans le sous-sol d'une salle municipale ou d'une bibliothèque à la ville de Carp, elle a le droit de le faire. Présentement le projet de loi, tel qu'il est écrit, accepte que la ville d'Ottawa puisse faire quoiqu'elle veut avec leur politique.

On a demandé à l'avocat qui représente la couronne de venir nous répondre à cette question en comité

aujourd'hui. On lui a demandé directement : si la ville d'Ottawa décide qu'elle veut donner des services en français seulement à quatre heures du matin chaque deuxième samedi dans le sous-sol d'une bibliothèque à Carp, est-ce que c'est légal selon la loi, telle qu'elle est proposée, sans amendement? Qu'est-ce que l'avocat a dit?

M. Baird: « Oui. »

M. Bisson: « Oui. »

Mais écoute. C'est très très clair qu'un projet de loi comme celui-ci ne donne rien à la municipalité que la municipalité n'a pas présentement. Sans le projet de loi, si la ville d'Ottawa veut changer sa politique sur le bilinguisme, elle a la capacité de le faire, parce que nous autres, l'Assemblée, dans les années passées avons conféré aux municipalités l'habilité de faire des politiques municipales. La ville d'Ottawa, selon ses droits et selon son habilité, a fait une politique qui dit : « La ville d'Ottawa a une politique sur le bilinguisme officiel. » Présentement, si la ville d'Ottawa veut changer cette politique, elle a le droit.

Ce projet de loi, tel qu'intitulé et proposé par le ministre, M. Gerretsen, dit que, apparemment, on va conférer à la ville, à la municipalité d'Ottawa, un statut de bilinguisme officiel. Moi, je me suis levé dans cette Assemblée quand le projet de loi a été amené ici l'automne passé, et sur le titre de la loi j'ai dit que c'était une très bonne affaire. J'ai dit, « Je vais supporter le gouvernement si vous faites ça, et je vous applaudis. » Je suis sorti, j'ai lu le projet de loi, puis je me suis rendu compte dans deux minutes que le projet de loi ne faisait pas ce qui avait été proposé.

Aujourd'hui j'ai proposé un amendement. Mon amendement dit qu'on va changer la section de la loi qui dit simplement que, si une politique sur le bilinguisme officiel existe présentement, cette politique devient enchâssée dans la loi. Le gouvernement a voté contre. C'est clair que le gouvernement est en train, comme j'ai dit en bon français, de passer un sapin à la communauté francophone, d'essayer de les faire croire qu'on dit, « Oui, on va avoir une politique qui dit que la ville d'Ottawa va être officiellement bilingue », mais, franchement, ça ne le fait pas.

Le deuxième amendement que j'ai proposé fait affaire avec l'amendement qui a été suggéré par l'ancien sénateur—John?

M. Baird: Jean-Robert Gauthier.

M. Bisson: C'est ça. Jean-Robert Gauthier, l'ancien député fédéral de Vanier et aussi sénateur pendant deux années, et qui était impliqué dans la communauté francophone pour des années, nous a donné des suggestions. Une suggestion était pour amender la loi d'une manière différente pour dire que, dans le moindre des moins, si on passe un projet de loi avec ces amendements, il serait difficile pour un juge d'accepter que la ville d'Ottawa puisse faire un changement aux politiques de bilinguisme qu'ils ont présentement d'une manière négative.

Le gouvernement a même voté contre ces amendements que l'ancien sénateur, M. Gauthier, avait proposés.

Donc, c'est clair que le gouvernement n'est pas intéressé à faire tel qu'ils ont proposé. Je me trouve dans une situation un peu drôle. On a un projet de loi ici à l'Assemblée—ce n'est pas drôle. C'est triste. On a un projet de loi ici aujourd'hui qui nous dit qu'on va donner et conférer à la ville, à la municipalité d'Ottawa, un statut officiellement bilingue, et ça, je veux voter pour. Je serais en faveur. Je veux me planter ici puis voter pour.

Mais on regarde le projet de loi puis il ne fait pas ça. Je me dis, « Mais, quoi faire? Vas-tu voter pour ou contre? » Vous me mettez dans une situation qui n'est pas confortable, parce que ça me met dans une position d'être libéral. Moi, je ne suis pas libéral. Comme les conservateurs, les néo-démocrates croient qu'on doit être clair sur la question. Les conservateurs, eux autres, disent non. Ils ne veulent pas conférer à la municipalité ce droit. Nous, les néo-démocrates, disons que oui, on veut le conférer. On est très clair. Le gouvernement de M. McGuinty dit, « On ne veut pas être clair, et on ne va pas le faire. »

L'autre point que je veux faire, c'est que M. Baird—ça fait deux ou trois jours qu'il le dit. On demande aux libéraux de nous donner une indication faisant affaire avec quelqu'un de la population canadienne ou du monde qui est préparé à dire qu'il est en faveur de ce projet de loi. Des deux documents qu'on nous a donnés, l'un vient de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta. Ils ont écrit une lettre datée le 18 février, pas trop longtemps passé; c'est assez récent. Si on lit la lettre—et je n'ai pas mes lunettes—ça dit qu'eux autres sont en faveur du concept. C'est un peu ça qu'ils disent. Moi, je suis sûr que si je communique avec M. Jean Johnson et que je lui donne le projet tel qu'il est écrit—et j'espère que tes lunettes—

Interjection: No?

M. Bisson: Non. Holy shit. Non, je ne suis pas capable. Excuse-moi. I withdraw that: unparliamentary. Excuse-moi. Je ne peux pas lire avec tes lunettes. Je ne peux plus voir. I apologize. I shouldn't have said that.

M. Jean Johnson, président: je suis convaincu que si moi et M. Baird l'appelons par conférence téléphonique pour lui demander, « Lisez le projet de loi tel qu'il est écrit. Est-ce que vous pensez que la ville d'Ottawa est protégée? » M. Jean Johnson de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta va dire, « Non, mais je suis en faveur du concept. »

1820

L'autre lettre qu'on a, c'est de l'Association française des municipalités d'Ontario. C'est signé par Jacques Héту. Je connais l'association des municipalités. Elle représente les municipalités. Eux autres, ils veulent avoir ce que vous autres voulez avoir, c'est-à-dire, donner l'habileté complète aux municipalités. Eux autres, ce qu'ils veulent avoir, c'est quoi? Certaines municipalités veulent nous donner la flexibilité de faire ce qu'on veut.

Interjection.

M. Bisson: C'est exactement le point, monsieur Lalonde. C'est ça que vous faites. C'est ça mon problème. Mon problème est que la ville d'Ottawa a demandé

d'enchâsser dans la loi le droit du bilinguisme pour la ville. Vous avez dit que vous alliez le faire dans un projet de loi. Vous avez introduit un projet de loi qui ne fait pas ça. Là, monsieur Lalonde dit, comme l'adjoint parlementaire l'avait dit au comité ce matin, « On veut donner la flexibilité aux municipalités. » Mais vous dites vous-mêmes que ça ne confère pas un statut officiellement bilingue à la ville d'Ottawa. Je pense que c'est très clair qu'à la fin de la journée vous n'êtes pas en train de garder votre promesse que vous avez faite aux électeurs.

Je veux finir en disant ceci. Nous, le parti néo-démocrate, avons une position qui est claire, comme le Parti conservateur. On a une position opposée. Le Parti conservateur a été très honnête là-dedans. Je ne suis pas d'accord avec eux autres, mais ils ont été honnêtes et ont dit non. Le Parti conservateur a dit qu'il n'était pas préparé, comme gouvernement dans le passé ou aujourd'hui ou dans le futur, à donner à aucune municipalité le droit d'enchâsser le droit d'être officiellement bilingue dans leur communauté. Je ne suis pas d'accord, mais ils sont clairs.

Nous, les néo-démocrates, prenons la position telle que je vais l'expliquer. La position de notre parti est très simple: si une municipalité, comme la ville d'Ottawa, demande à la province d'enchâsser sa politique sur le bilinguisme officiel, on l'accepte et on la passe dans cette Assemblée. Pourquoi? Parce qu'on veut respecter les municipalités si elles font cette demande.

On comprend très bien qu'il y a possiblement une communauté quelque part en Ontario où un conseil municipal existe qui veut s'assurer qu'on enchâsse les droits linguistiques de leur communauté. Eux autres comprennent que si on passe une politique municipale—comme on dit en anglais, un « bylaw »—aujourd'hui, un conseil futur pourrait le changer. Il y a certaines municipalités qui vont avoir un débat à un certain point dans leur histoire pour dire, « On veut enchâsser ce droit dans un statut provincial. » Nous, le parti néo-démocrate, disons que si la municipalité, par un vote majoritaire du conseil, demande à la province de l'Ontario d'enchâsser dans la loi un statut d'être officiellement bilingue, on le fait. C'est ça que nous autres avons pensé que les libéraux voulaient faire dans la dernière élection. C'est clairement pas ce qu'ils font présentement dans leur projet de loi, tel que proposé aujourd'hui.

C'est encore une autre promesse brisée, et je pense que c'est une histoire très triste. Le gouvernement aurait mieux fait de ne rien faire que d'introduire ce projet de loi.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

L'hon. M. Gerretsen: En français.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I wouldn't want to speak your French.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Neither would I.

Mr. Sterling: When this bill went to committee, there was an opportunity to amend it. Amendments were put forward by my colleague the member from Nepean-Carleton; they were turned aside. The member from the New Democratic Party wanted to put forward some

amendments; the government rebuffed them and put them aside.

I see a number of members here, but a lot of people from eastern Ontario are missing tonight. I understand their reluctance to be here, because this really is an embarrassment for the francophone community in Ottawa–Carleton, given the promises of our Premier of the day.

I'm not sad that they turned their story around, because I believe this is an issue that can be worked out at the municipal level. That was the position of the former government of Ontario, the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario, and this government has finally seen the light to adopt our policy in the past. It's only the idea that Mr. McGuinty said to the francophone community, "We're going to pull on a string; we're going to tell you you're going to get an officially bilingual city," and he didn't deliver.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Are there any other honourable members who wish to speak?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): He gets a response.

The Deputy Speaker: I get that as being correct. Now that I've had the assistance of the minister, response?

M. Bisson: Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Merci. Are there any other honourable members who wish to speak to the bill?

Minister of Municipal Affairs, you have the opportunity to respond.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: This is a great bill, and I hope everyone in the House will support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Gerretsen has moved third reading of Bill 163.

Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to introduce in the gallery Ronald Caza, the lawyer who represented the Montfort Hospital when they were threatening to close it and who will make sure that the bill being passed today will be respected.

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the member that's not a point of order, but we welcome our guest.

Mr. Baird: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to also recognize Ronald Caza. The Montfort issue was of course a very divisive one, and when the government announced it would not appeal the Court of Appeal decision, the people at the Montfort were tremendously classy and warm-spirited. I'm pleased he could join us in the House today. It certainly will not take a long time for him to interpret legally the qualifications and the obligations—

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nepean—Carleton, I remind you that's not a point of order either.

Mr. Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask unanimous consent for M^c Caza to give us his legal opinion on this bill. I would guess that he would be on-side with the opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: That too is not a point of order.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The minister has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

It now being well past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1828.

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CONTENTS

Wednesday 2 March 2005

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Deer and elk farmers	
Mr. Dunlop	5509
Rotary clubs	
Mr. Leal	5509
Ontario farmers	
Ms. Scott	5510
Mr. McMeekin	5510
Mr. Yakabuski	5510
Mr. Wilkinson	5511
Mental health services	
Mr. Kormos	5510
Rural Ontario	
Mrs. Mitchell	5511
BSE	
Ms. Di Cocco	5511

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on general government	
Mrs. Jeffrey	5512
Report adopted	5512

ORAL QUESTIONS

Political contributions	
Mr. Runciman	5512
Mr. Caplan	5512
Mr. Hudak	5513
Mr. Gerretsen	5513
Ms. Churley	5517
Mr. Bryant	5517
Ontario farmers	
Mr. Runciman	5513
Mrs. Dombrowsky	5513, 5514, 5515, 5516, 5517
Mr. Hardeman	5514
Mr. Hampton	5514, 5515
Mr. Barrett	5516
Mr. Sterling	5516
Mr. Hudak	5518
Mr. Gerretsen	5518
Mrs. Munro	5518
Identity theft	
Mr. Ruprecht	5517
Mr. Watson	5517
Health records	
Ms. Horwath	5519
Mr. Smitherman	5519
Growth planning	
Mr. Berardinetti	5519
Mr. Caplan	5519

Rural Ontario

Mr. Miller	5520
Mrs. Dombrowsky	5520
Mr. Arnott	5520

Hydro rates

Mr. Hampton	5520
Mr. Ramsay	5521

Northern Ontario development

Mr. Oraziotti	5521
Mr. Bartolucci	5521

PETITIONS

School transportation funding

Mr. Baird	5521
-----------------	------

Advertisement

Mr. Berardinetti	5522
------------------------	------

Regional centres for the developmentally disabled

Mr. Dunlop	5522
------------------	------

Chiropractic services

Ms. Horwath	5522
-------------------	------

TTC right-of-way

Mr. Ruprecht	5522
--------------------	------

Ontario farmers

Mr. Barrett	5523
Mr. Hardeman	5523
Ms. Scott	5524

Anaphylactic shock

Mr. Craitor	5523
Mr. Parsons	5524

Cardiac care

Mr. Delaney	5523
-------------------	------

Seniors' transit pass

Mr. Ruprecht	5524
--------------------	------

Pit bulls

Mr. Baird	5524
-----------------	------

SECOND READINGS

Places to Grow Act, 2005, Bill 136,

<i>Mr. Caplan</i>	
Mr. Caplan	5525, 5530
Mr. Rinaldi	5527
Mr. Dunlop	5529, 5536
Ms. Horwath	5529, 5540
Mr. Flynn	5529
Mr. Hudak	5530, 5541
Mrs. Munro	5538
Ms. Churley	5539, 5541
Mr. Arthurs	5540
Mr. Sterling	5540
Debate deemed adjourned	5548

THIRD READINGS

City of Ottawa Amendment Act, 2005, Bill 163, *Mr. Gerretsen*

Mr. Gerretsen	5548, 5552
Mr. Baird	5548
Mr. Sterling	5551
Agreed to	5552

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

Mr. Dunlop	5512
The Speaker	5512

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mercredi 2 mars 2005

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2005 sur les zones de croissance, projet de loi 136, *M. Caplan*

Débat présumé ajourné	5548
-----------------------------	------

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2005 modifiant la Loi sur la ville d'Ottawa, projet de loi 163, *M. Gerretsen*

Mr. Baird	5549
M. Bisson	5550, 5552
Adoptée	5552