

No. 116A



N° 116A

ISSN 1180-2987

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)**

Monday 7 March 2005

Lundi 7 mars 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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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

Monday 7 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 mars 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SHANNON AND ERICA DEERING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House to pay tribute to a successful event in my community on Saturday, March 5, at the Scugog arena on behalf of Erica and Shannon Deering. Over 1,000 friends and neighbours attended. Everyone present shared the view that it takes a community to raise a child, and Scugog and Port Perry, their home, is just such a community.

When two of our community's children needed help, the response was overwhelming, generous and full of warmth. Shannon Deering is 19 years old and her sister Erica is 16. They were left as quadriplegics after a horrific car accident last summer. However, the event this past weekend shows that they are not alone in meeting the challenges that they face. In fact, I can see Shannon and Erica being a strong voice for the physically disabled community any time soon. I am pleased to report that Shannon and Erica will soon be home in Port Perry in their new barrier-free home.

The benefit hockey game on Saturday is one of many examples of the entire community coming together to support the Deering sisters and their parents Tony and stepmother Debra and grandparent Jean Deering, who is a real treasure and who looks after the children on a daily basis. She is to be formally thanked.

Saturday's special guests included 2002 Olympic hockey gold medalist Cheryl Pounder and her teammates from the Toronto Aeros. Some of the team included Sommer West, Heather Logan, Bradi Cochrane and Jen McCullough. They played a Scugog team comprised of mostly women from the Scugog area.

I would like to commend Brian Callery, Bill Van Camp, Rob Scott, Martha Larsen, Ron Compton, Brenda Robinson and Marg Snider-McGrath for their support of the Deering sisters.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I'd like to bring to the attention of the House two important items related to identity theft that consumers must watch out for.

The first, as incredible as it sounds, concerns a constituent of mine who had his identity stolen in order for thieves to steal his house. In fact, his house was sold twice within 19 months before he noticed another person's name on his property tax bill.

The second also concerns identity theft, which is the fastest-growing crime in our country. Tens of thousands of our citizens are victimized by identity thieves every year. While I applaud our minister's valiant effort to combat identity theft through public education campaigns and making specific recommendations to businesses, this may not be enough. Many of our new immigrants and members of our ethnocultural communities may not be able to defend themselves properly, since this kind of theft is really foreign to them. We must listen to consumer advocates who are calling for more stringent measures such as requiring businesses and government to report leaks of personal information to consumers and criminalizing identity theft offences. We should listen to them and act quickly before identity theft becomes a real epidemic.

WOMEN'S CURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I rise today to tell all members of this House about the outstanding performance of Kanata residents Jenn and Stephanie Hanna at this year's Scott Tournament of Hearts Canadian women's curling championships, held in St. John's, Newfoundland. Jenn is the skip of the Ontario rink that made it to the championship final, where they were defeated when Manitoba's skip snatched victory with her last rock.

Jenn's Ottawa curling team arrived at St. John's as relative unknowns. However, that changed quickly when they began the competition by defeating Canadian curling legend Colleen Jones and her Team Canada rink. Jones, who has six Canadian championships and two world championships to her credit, is one of 25-year-old Jenn's heroes.

After that initial victory, the Ottawa rink faltered under new-found media attention and added pressure, but Jenn and her teammates regrouped to win four of their last five round-robin matches and then two tiebreakers and a semifinal match.

I'm sure all members of this House will want to join me in congratulating Jenn and Stephanie, as well as their teammates Dawn Askin, Pascale Letendre and Joelle Sabourin, all from Kanata and the city of Ottawa. We're proud of them all.

NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK WEEK

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Today marks the beginning of National Social Work Week. The theme this year is Social Workers: Celebrating Community—Honouring Diversity. This gives everyone a chance to honour and recognize the work they do to enhance the quality of life for individuals, families and communities across Ontario and Canada. It is also an opportunity to publicly recognize the contribution of individuals who remain true to the Ontario Association of Social Workers' goals of creating a caring and just society.

In 2001, Dr. Dan Andrae and Dr. Frank Turner established a division of the profession called the Social Work Doctors' Colloquium. They are a group of senior leaders in the profession from academia and practice, and today they are pleased to be presenting the honourable David Zimmer, MPP from Willowdale and parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, with the inaugural Award of Merit. The Social Work Doctors' Colloquium Award of Merit will be awarded annually to an elected official who represents the values of the social work profession.

Throughout his career, Mr. Zimmer has been actively involved in humanitarian causes, including as vice-president of the Alzheimer Society of Canada, as deputy chair of the Refugee and Immigration Board of Canada and as chair of the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Corp., one of the largest in North America. His ongoing interest in improving the lives of Ontarians and in enhancing the quality of communities makes him a most worthy recipient of this special honour. I would like to personally congratulate my colleague the honourable David Zimmer on his award, as well as to thank the social workers of Ontario for the valuable work they do.

1340

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean—Carleton): People who care about health care were excited to learn that the Minister of Health was coming to their riding, that he was visiting the great riding of Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey. They were excited; they wondered if he was going to be coming to help explain what he was going to do for rural patients who are in desperate need of a physician—these orphan patients. They thought he would be there to announce new funding for the Headwaters hospital in Orangeville, which is trying to get more funding to increase the hours that they can operate their MRI. They thought they might be getting new funds to deal with additional cataract operations, because these are the so-called priority areas of the government's agenda.

Alas, when the Minister of Health showed up in Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, all the people of that constituency got was politics—no promises, no deliverables, nothing. This followed through on last Friday's successful agreement with the Ontario Medical Asso-

ciation, where there was no new money put on the table to attract more physicians to the province of Ontario, or new residents' spots for Ontario students.

People in Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey were excited about the opportunity that more funding would be coming for rural Ontario, but alas, they realized that this government has not responded to those needs, to those challenges. People in this riding have a great opportunity to send in an advocate for them and to send Dalton McGuinty a message by voting for John Tory on March 17.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Every year in Ontario, more than 22,000—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I'd like to hear the member from Nickel Belt's statement.

You can start again.

Ms. Martel: Every year in Ontario, more than 22,000 health care workers are accidentally stuck with needles. The vast majority of these accidents could be prevented through the use of safety-engineered devices such as retractable needles. The sharps alliance—including ONA, SEIU and OPSEU—has lobbied the Minister of Health to make the use of safety-engineered devices mandatory in Ontario. To date, no commitment has been made by the McGuinty Liberal government to protect workers in this important way.

This is a very serious health and safety issue. Today, I will present a private member's bill aimed at preventing accidental injuries and infections caused by accidental sticks with hypodermic needles and other sharps.

In Saskatchewan, the government is conducting public consultations on a regulation on mandatory safety-engineered medical devices to go into effect this November. In Manitoba, the government has announced it will bring in legislation or a regulation to make safety-engineered devices mandatory. Four years ago, the federal Needle-stick Safety and Prevention Act came into effect in the United States. Last year, researchers at the University of Virginia's International Health Care Worker Safety Center showed that with only one quarter of workplaces in compliance so far, there was a 51% reduction in needle-stick injuries.

It's time to protect Ontario workers from needle-stick injuries and reduce the health care costs associated with testing and treating workers who are injured on the job. My private member's bill will be debated on March 31, and I ask all members to support this important bill.

HOME CARE

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): Last week, the McGuinty government announced that it will be investing in the diagnostic and medical equipment re-

quired to care for Ontarians in their homes and in their communities. This is all part of this government's commitment to providing home care to 95,700 more Ontarians by 2007-08. The diagnostic and medical equipment we're investing in will strengthen our home care system, allowing us to do exactly that. This investment in medical equipment will assist people in their own homes, in supportive housing and in adult day programs in the community. The equipment includes mechanical lifts, bathing equipment, intravenous and feeding pumps, as well as devices designed to increase mobility, such as door openers and wheelchairs.

Province-wide, this announcement is getting a warm welcome. Joe McReynolds, the chief executive officer of the Ontario Community Support Association, said: "This extremely wise investment by the government will help people with disabling conditions to access services in their community. Both client and worker safety will also be increased, with far fewer opportunities for injuries."

Health care reform won't be easy, but we can no longer continue with the status quo. Step by step, we will make sure that Ontarians are the healthiest people in the country, and Friday's announcement is one of those steps. We are transforming health care in Ontario and bringing positive change to Ontarians.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): Last week, we welcomed farmers from across the province who came to send us a message. They were here to tell us that times are bad and they need our help.

I'm proud to say that many members of the Liberal caucus, including myself, were out there that day to listen to farmers and hear what they had to say. I'm even prouder of being a rural Ontarian. The people you saw in the crowd were people I am proud to represent. They are the people who ensure that Ontarians, along with all Canadians, have quality food on their tables each and every day.

It's no secret that they are faced with extraordinary challenges like BSE and low commodity prices. I want the farmers in Northumberland to know that we heard you at the rally and we are committed to you. We see the pain and frustration in your eyes, and we are working to make farming more sustainable in the province. That is why we have already taken some necessary steps such as exempting the land transfer tax from family farms, investing in increased abattoir capacity for older animals, establishing a new renewable fuel standard that will require that gasoline sold in Ontario contain an average of 5% ethanol by 2007 to help our corn farmers and providing up to \$30 million to help the cattle industry recover from the fallout of BSE. But we know that farmers need more help, and we'll continue to meet with them and work with them to ensure they have the tools they need to continue in the footsteps of the many proud farmers who have come before them.

CHILD OBESITY

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today to speak about the leadership role that the McGuinty government is playing across North America. Indeed, the right's newest hero, the Republican Governor of California, is following the government's lead when it comes to fighting child obesity.

Yesterday, the Governor himself, Arnold Schwarzenegger, came out in favour of terminating junk food from schools as a great step in the right direction against child obesity. On this side of the House, we already know that giving kids healthy choices in schools will help them make better choices about what they eat now and in the future.

Unfortunately, the official opposition doesn't seem to think that child obesity is a problem. Instead of supporting a good piece of legislation and pumping up the kids with healthy food choices, the member for Oak Ridges accuses us of micromanaging. Shame on him.

While I would never say such a thing, it occurs to me that if the Terminator saw their lack of concern for child obesity, he just might call the PC member for Oak Ridges and the new guy who wants to come in girlie men. That's what he'd call them.

Hopefully, having their newest hero come onside with our way of thinking would convince the Tories that this is indeed good legislation. If not, parents all across the province will be saying *hasta la vista* to them in the next election.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to say two things. We would be willing to ask for unanimous consent for him to speak for another minute or two; and second, I say to Bill Carroll, don't give him the Play of the Week for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I know there is unanimous consent that he do another statement tomorrow.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I beg leave to present the report on pre-budget consultations, 2005, from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Mr Hoy presents the committee report and moves adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a statement?

Mr. Hoy: The standing committee on finance and economic affairs conducted extensive pre-budget consultations in December 2004 and January 2005 in Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Ottawa, Kingston, London and Whitby. Witnesses included the Minister of Finance; experts invited by the committee to present economic and financial forecasts; representatives from various associations, organizations and other stakeholder

groups; and individuals. The committee heard from 158 witnesses appearing in person and received 82 written submissions from others who did not appear before the committee.

I want to thank committee members from all three parties and the staff who assisted with the committee work.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Hoy has moved adjournment of the debate on the motion for adoption of the recommendations of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

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

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

All those against, please say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Boutrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Sterling, Norman W.
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Wilson, Jim
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	
Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50; the nays are 19.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Mr. Bryant moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, to repeal the Representation Act, 1996 and to enact the Representation Act, 2005 / Projet de loi 176, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, abrogeant la Loi de 1996 sur la représentation électorale et édictant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale.

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

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr. Bryant?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'll speak to it in ministers' statements.

1400

ELECTION FINANCES AMENDMENT ACT (ONGOING DISCLOSURE OF CONTRIBUTIONS), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS (DIVULGATION CONTINUE DES CONTRIBUTIONS)

Ms. Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act respecting the ongoing disclosure of contributions by registered political parties and constituency associations / Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections en ce qui a trait à la divulgation continue des contributions par les partis politiques inscrits et les associations de circonscription inscrites.

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

Ms. Churley?

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): This is, unlike the government bill just introduced, a real-time bill in real time, right now, that will deal with real-time disclosure of financial contributions. It amends the Election Finances Act to provide that the chief financial officer of every political party and constituency association—which is not part of the Liberal bill introduced today—must, within seven days of depositing a contribution in excess of \$500, file with the Chief Election Officer the name of the contributor and the amount of the contribution.

I would move unanimous consent for second and third readings of this bill today without debate.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? I heard a no.

GREENBELT AMENDMENT ACT
(PERMANENT GREENBELT), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE
(CEINTURE DE VERDURE PERMANENTE)

Ms. Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005 to create a permanent greenbelt / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la ceinture de verdure afin de créer une ceinture de verdure permanente.

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

Ms. Churley?

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): What this bill does is actually create a permanent greenbelt instead of the floating greenbelt that was just passed in this House. The bill amends the Greenbelt Act, 2005, to designate additional areas of land to be included in the greenbelt area: the lands that I made amendments to and that the government left out.

The bill also amends the act to prohibit regulations removing lands from the greenbelt area and to prohibit amendments to the greenbelt plan removing lands from areas to which the plan applies, which under the government's bill you can do.

The bill prohibits the issuance of licences or permits, or expansion of site plans under the Aggregate Resources Act, if they relate to a site including or adjacent to a key natural heritage feature located in the protected countryside.

The bill also amends the act to provide that objectives of the greenbelt plan include that no development proceed on lands that are part of the natural heritage system designated in the greenbelt plan.

The bill expands the prohibition on passing bylaws or undertaking projects that conflict with the greenbelt plan to also apply to Ontario ministries, boards, commissions and agencies. In the case of a conflict between a provision in the greenbelt plan and a provision in a plan, bylaw, policy, act or regulation specified in the bill, the provision providing more protection to the natural environment or human health prevails.

The bill amends the act to replace the hearing officer appointed by the minister to hear proposed amendments to the greenbelt plan with a greenbelt area tribunal, which is established in the bill.

The bill also amends the act to replace the Greenbelt Council with the greenbelt advisory council and sets out provisions regarding the council's membership, terms of reference and mandate.

Finally, the bill amends the act to address the applicability of section 3 of the Planning Act and section 7 of the act to a plan made or amended by the minister under the Ontario Planning and Development Act, 1994, as well as the applicability of section 7 of the act to decisions made relating to areas designated as protected countryside. Should we pass this bill, it means we will have a permanent greenbelt, not a floating greenbelt.

SAFE NEEDLES SAVE LIVES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR
L'UTILISATION D'AIGUILLES SÛRES
POUR SAUVER DES VIES

Ms. Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to reduce the incidence of needlestick injuries / Loi visant à réduire les incidences de blessures causées par des piqûres d'aiguille.

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

Ms. Martel?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Every year more than 22,000 health care workers are accidentally stuck with needles on the job in Ontario, and a vast majority of these accidents can and should be prevented with the use of safety-engineered medical sharps.

In Saskatchewan, the government is working on a regulation now to go into effect on this issue this November. In Manitoba, the government has announced it will introduce a regulation or legislation that will also make safety-engineered medical sharps mandatory there. Four years ago, federal legislation in the US was passed to make safety-engineered devices mandatory, and last year research showed that, with only one quarter of workplaces in compliance, there has been a 51% reduction in needle-stick injuries.

It's time that Ontario workers were protected too. My bill will require that employers in prescribed workplaces must provide for and ensure the use of safety-engineered medical sharps, if commercially available and appropriate, in any circumstance where a worker is required to use a medical sharp.

MOTIONS

CONSIDERATION OF BILL Pr11

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion regarding committees.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Was that for the Pr bill?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Yes, for the private bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent, as requested by the minister? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that standing order 87 respecting notice of committee hearings be suspended for consideration of Bill Pr11, An Act respecting the Kitchener-Waterloo Young Men's Christian Association, by the standing committee on regulations and private bills on Wednesday, March 9, 2005.

The Speaker: Carried? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, March 7, 2005, and Tuesday, March 8, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The minister has moved government notice of motion number 316. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1410 to 1415.

The Speaker: Will all members take their seats, please. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Baird, John R.	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldeep	Runciman, Robert W.
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Sterling, Norman W.
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wilson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Munro, Julia	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim	
Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie	Martel, Shelley	
Kormos, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

RENOUVEAU DÉMOCRATIQUE

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for

democratic renewal): I am pleased to introduce the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. This bill, if passed, will strengthen Ontario's democracy in four ways.

First, it will give Ontarians a more direct say on important government decisions than they've ever had before by allowing us to move forward on establishing a citizens' assembly on electoral reform and a citizens' jury on political finance reform. This bill will enable Elections Ontario to access the permanent register of electors so people can be selected to take part. Under the current law, Elections Ontario cannot do this. Under this bill, if passed, that would happen.

Second, this bill, if passed, will give northern Ontarians stronger representation in the Legislature by preserving the existing 11 northern ridings in Ontario.

Third, this bill, if passed, also reintroduces fixed election dates, putting citizens at the centre of our democracy. Each election would be four years from the last election. For example, the next election will be on Thursday, October 4, 2007.

Finally, with this bill we are making political donations to parties more transparent to the people of Ontario. This bill provides for real-time disclosure of donations to political parties and leadership candidates and requires that those contributions be made public through the Internet. The system we are introducing will make Ontario the world leader in transparency when it comes to donations to political parties and leadership candidates. If passed, the legislation would apply to both election and non-election periods, as well as to leadership campaigns. To my knowledge, there is no other jurisdiction with such a comprehensive level of transparency for real-time donations. Donations must be reported to the Chief Election Officer at Elections Ontario, not a year after they have taken place, not six months after they have been donated, but within five business days. That is real-time disclosure. The Chief Election Officer, in turn, will post the reports on the Internet within five business days of receiving them.

1420

Ce système fera de nous un chef de file mondial de la transparence. Ce projet de loi reflète ce qui est au cœur de notre programme de renouveau démocratique : l'établissement d'une relation plus positive et productive entre les citoyens et leurs représentants élus.

Finally, this reporting provision will be retroactive to January 1, 2004. That means you will not have to wait to see a recent donation, and all future donations will be made public on a regular basis.

I wish to recognize the fantastic work by my great parliamentary assistant Dr. Kuldeep Kular, the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. This bill also reflects the excellent work by the professional and diligent civil servants of the Democratic Renewal Secretariat.

Moving ahead on electoral reform, preserving our 11 northern ridings, real-time disclosure of donations: This government promised democratic renewal; this bill means democratic renewal. I urge all members of this House to support this bill.

HYDRO GENERATION

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): It's a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to inform the members of the government's ongoing efforts to promote renewable energy opportunities.

As a government, we recognize that Ontario's continued growth and prosperity depend on an adequate, long-term supply of electricity. Our approach to meeting that need is two-pronged: We are looking to increase generating capacity—particularly clean, renewable energy sources—while also promoting a culture of conservation.

We have set ambitious goals for cleaner energy generation. The members will know that our government has set a goal that Ontario will get at least 5% more of its electricity from new clean, renewable sources by 2007. This requirement increases to 10% by 2010. My ministry is working to ensure that we can meet those goals.

I'm pleased to advise the members that earlier today I announced that we were making 18 sites available for water power development. I also announced that we were inviting a second round of applications to develop wind power on crown land.

The members may recall that last November we issued calls for expressions of interest to identify potential water power sites. The ministry was generally pleased with the results. A total of 57 applications were received, and 18 sites have been approved for development. The successful proponents now have 121 days to send in development proposals. We believe there is potential for between 200 and 300 megawatts of clean hydroelectric capacity.

At the same time, we are giving a six-month window of opportunity, starting on April 1, for companies or individuals to submit proposals for sites for wind power development on crown land. This follows closely on our approval given in January for 16 private companies to assess wind power potential on 21 crown land sites. We feel that there could be as much as 3,000 megawatts of wind power capacity on private and crown land in Ontario.

As we develop cleaner and greener energy projects, we are tapping into a very fertile source of innovation, job creation and competitive growth. I would venture to say that this is an exciting time for the renewable energy industry in Ontario.

We believe that continued investment in water power and other sources of renewable energy will both clean up our air and create new jobs and opportunities right across this province. We are doing all of that so that we can help ensure that Ontarians have cleaner air to breathe, a healthier environment and a more prosperous future.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): It's amazing what a \$10,000-a-ticket fundraiser will bring to this Legislature.

Last week my leader, John Tory, received a letter from Mr. Bryant. Mr. Bryant said in his letter, "Deb Matthews, MPP, president of the Ontario Liberal Party, will represent our party as we move forward together to work out the necessary framework for disclosure. I invite you"—John Tory; Howard Hampton is also on this letter—"or your designate to be in touch with Ms. Matthews to arrange a meeting to finalize the details so we can all commence this disclosure as quickly as possible." I don't know how this is moving forward together. This letter was written on March 3. This is March 7.

The Liberals talk about moving together and bringing forward fair democratic reform, but this bill that was introduced today has no role for MPPs to be involved in what goes forward with regard to democratic renewal in this province. Much of the bill is left up to regulations—regulations that are going to be made by a Liberal cabinet as to how we go forward. The terms of reference for the democratic renewal citizens' committee will be set by the Liberal candidate. They will not be set by the Legislative Assembly.

I'd also like to comment with regard to the provision that we're going to have 11 ridings in the north. If we have 11 ridings in the north, that's fine and dandy by us, but we have to be fair to the south as well. Our Constitution says that every citizen has the same equal vote. When you look at the numbers that come out, with regard to 107 ridings, we have ridings that are going to be 34% below the provincial average, which is 106,600 people. There are three ridings in the north that are smaller than ridings in the south. Yet those ridings in the south are not going to have average representations of a population of 76,000 or 77,000; they're going to have populations of over 110,000.

Not only is this act in contravention of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, which is our legislation where we set our boundaries, but it's also in contravention of section 3 of the Charter of Rights. This bill allows that of the 11 constituencies in the north, 10 are above the 25% limit contained in the readjustment act. If the government wants 11 ridings in the north, then let's go ahead, but we will have to have more ridings in the south.

Therefore, I would say to the minister that as we go through this process, the only fair thing to do, if you want to retain 11 in the north, is to set up a provincial election boundaries commission to establish how many ridings we should have in the south, and that those people should have equal representation to those in the north. Some of the people I represent in my riding will be part of a population of 113,000, over 9,600 square kilometres, whereas the riding of Sault Ste. Marie in the north will have a population of 74,000 and will cover 250 square kilometres. This doesn't add up. The Charter of Rights is for all Ontarians, whether they're in the north, in the east or in the south.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I'd like to respond on behalf—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I got a lot of interruptions in the responses, and I commend the member from Lanark–Carleton for not even having an outburst about that. But I need to have more co-operation from the members so I can hear the responses.

Ms. Churley: I'd like to respond to the minister responsible for democratic renewal. Let me see what we have here today: We have retroactive real-time disclosure. So if you gave a year ago or so, retroactively it's going to show up on the books. What this bill gives us is a real-time loophole, because you exclude riding associations, and we all know what happens with that. Just in case you don't get it, let me explain. This means that you can keep on having your high-priced dinners with the Premier and finance minister and have individual cheques for over \$5,000 each made out to different riding associations. What a scam.

1430

You have an opportunity to come forward today with real-time disclosure. Was it a mistake? Do you want to make an amendment and put it in? This bill before us today is a further delaying tactic. Instead of getting on with passing a bill like mine today, which does not have a big loophole you could drive a truck through—why don't we pass that instead, or make an amendment to yours?

You're doing exactly what the Tories used to do. We want real-time disclosure. You promised real-time disclosure. You bring forward a bill today on real-time disclosure, an omnibus bill with other parts in the democratic renewal process that you know the opposition is going to have different problems with. Yet you include it all in one. Why don't you sever your real-time disclosure bill off—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Municipal Affairs, please. Minister for Natural Resources, come to order, please.

Ms. Churley: Mr. Speaker, it's getting under his skin, no doubt.

Sever the real-time disclosure bill off and amend it to get rid of the loophole, so riding associations are included, or pass my bill—one or the other. You did that, by the way; you had no problem severing out fixed dates for elections, so why not sever off real-time? I will tell you why you're not severing it off: You are stalling. You continue to stall.

This bill that's before us today is an omnibus bill. There are many difficulties with this bill, and I encourage and demand that the government sever off real-time disclosure so we can deal with it in real time, right now, and quit this stalling.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to respond to the Minister of Natural Resources who, like the Minister of Energy last week, has come and made another nothing announcement. Is anything happening? No. Just like last week, when the Minister of

Energy came into the Legislature and announced he was going to write a letter to the federal Minister of Finance. Well, write your letter. This is not going to bring on any more wind power now. This is not going to bring on any more hydroelectricity power now.

This is a government that is desperate for hydroelectricity announcements to cover up the fact that two years into your mandate, you do nothing while coal burns. Remember that promise? You were going to shut down all the coal plants. Here we are, two years into the announcement, and this government does nothing while coal burns.

There's something even more interesting about this announcement, because when the minister went to Thunder Bay to make his original announcement about water power in northern Ontario, the First Nations ran him out of town. They sent him packing, back to Toronto, because his announcement was so unfavourable to them. They looked at it and they saw that the McGuinty government's policy for developing more hydroelectricity in northern Ontario would force First Nations into the hands of companies like Brascan. What did Brascan do just a few years ago? After they got their hands on the Mississagi River plants, they literally ran the lake dry. The environment be damned, fish habitats be damned, tourist industry be damned. Run the lake dry because you can make money. The McGuinty government is now telling First Nations, "Climb in bed with Brascan. Your future lies with an environmentally irresponsible corporation like Brascan."

There's something else that's interesting here. None of these announcements will do anything for the 130 workers at the pulp mill in Terrace Bay who are losing their jobs thanks to the McGuinty government. None of these announcements will do anything about the more than 200 workers at the Kenora paper mill who right now are dealing with the possibility their mill may close, or the Abitibi workers in Thunder Bay who are dealing with the possibility their mill may close. Why? Because the McGuinty government policy is to drive up electricity rates, no matter how many mills close and no matter how many thousands of workers lose their jobs in northern Ontario.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I have a real-time point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm asking for unanimous consent for the order for second and third readings of Bill 176, an Act to amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, that it be called immediately and that the question be immediately put without any further debate or amendment, so we can get this done in real time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. It seems to me you've all heard it, because I was having difficulty. Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. There's a lot of disruption in the early part here.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm glad the member for St. Catharines agrees with me.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GREENBELT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. A week and a half ago, you appeared on TVO's Fourth Reading and you talked about the greenbelt and how you arrived at your boundaries.

Those of us who were hoping for a clearer explanation were disappointed. The so-called scientific reasons for the boundaries remain sealed in a Mason jar underneath the Premier's Rosedale porch. Here's what you said to Susanna Kelley: "I have not met with any developers. I have purposely stayed away from meeting with individual landowners that had an interest in the greenbelt."

Minister, do you still stand by your statement from a week and a half ago?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): First of all, we're very proud of the greenbelt that was created and that basically added a million acres of land to that.

I can confirm that during the process of drawing up the greenbelt, between about August of last year until the plans came out, I have not met with any developer on the greenbelt. The gentleman who was referred to, I met with on the night of the seventh game of the Stanley Cup playoffs between Toronto and Philadelphia when he wanted to know from me whether or not this government was willing to break its commitment with respect to the agricultural preserve in Pickering. I told him no; it was a commitment of this government that that would be preserved for farmland. That was the total conversation that I had with that gentleman. But never at any time did I meet with developers or property owners with respect to the greenbelt while the process of drawing up the greenbelt took place, between the summer and the time it was enacted here.

Mr. Runciman: Now we're starting to qualify time-lines. We have a copy of a letter sent to the minister today by a developer with an interest in the greenbelt. The minister said just a week and a half ago, and I'll quote him again, "I have purposely stayed away from meeting with individual landowners that had an interest in the greenbelt." You didn't state, "Within a four-week or a five-week period, I stayed way from greenbelt developers who had an interest in developing the greenbelt area."

In the letter, the developer thanks the minister for meeting with him. Worse, he also thanks the minister for exempting a parcel of land that he owns from the greenbelt. I'll send a copy of this letter over to the minister.

Minister, I believe the people of Ontario deserve an explanation. What is it?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Speaker, I would be more than pleased to take a look at this letter that he's talking about. I don't know what he's talking about. As far as I know, no property was exempted. I once again repeat that during the drawing of the greenbelt mapping and plan that took place during the summer of last year and the time when it was actually enacted here, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I did not meet with any particular developer.

The developer that he is talking about, again, I met with in early May, at his request, to deal specifically with respect to our party's commitment related to the agricultural preserve. As I indicated to him that particular evening and as I have indicated to him many times before, the agricultural preserve, to the best of my knowledge and belief, is part of our commitment to preserve that for future generations as agricultural lands in this province.

Mr. Runciman: Now we're even getting additional qualifications, not being as firm and forceful as he was in his answer on TVO. You claim to have avoided meeting with developers who have interests in the greenbelt. Now we have the letter from one of those developers that says that you did meet with him, and as a result of the meeting you removed a parcel of land from the greenbelt. The letter states, "We were told all of block 41 was to be removed from the greenbelt, not only the lands belonging to us." Today's Hamilton Spectator also has confirmation from the head of the Greenbelt Task Force that they had nothing to do with setting the greenbelt boundaries.

Minister, how can you possibly claim that your greenbelt was based on science, given this damning evidence?
1440

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I can confirm that the greenbelt was indeed based on science. The original area that we put out during our platform that we wanted protected was made available during the election campaign. Following our election campaign, we used the best science available from the Ministry of Natural Resources, from conservation authorities, from the Ministry of Agriculture and from the official plans that had been developed by the different municipalities to come up with the best science and planning available to determine what areas should actually be included in the greenbelt. That was done, to the best of my knowledge and belief, for the entire million acres that are now protected.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I'm going to ask the member from St. Catharines to come to order, and I'm also going to ask the member from Durham. I'm having difficulty having you come to order, even in your seat, so I'm going to ask you to come to order.

New question.

Mr. Runciman: I have a question to the Premier. We hear the minister saying, "to the best of my knowledge," and "I believe"—talk about waffling.

Premier, your Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been, I think, caught saying one thing and

doing another. Evidently he takes his cues from you. Your Minister of Municipal Affairs, confirmed as the man ultimately responsible for drawing the greenbelt boundaries, has now been thanked by a developer with interest in the greenbelt for exempting his lands. Premier, do you still stand by your assertion that the greenbelt boundaries were based on science?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Absolutely. I draw the Leader of the Opposition's attention to some of the science that we relied upon. In particular there were a number, in fact six separate documents, all of which are on-line, and I'll make reference to those. There is the Natural Heritage Reference Manual that was developed in June 1999 by you. It is a very solid document, and that's on-line. The LEAR report is a methodology that's used to assess the significance of agricultural resources within the proposed greenbelt area. That was developed in 1995, revised in 2002, and then we had it revised in 2004. As well, there is A Current Assessment of Gross Land Supply in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. That was developed in the winter of 2005. That's also available on the Web site. There are three others as well that I'd be pleased to draw the member's attention to after his supplementary.

Mr. Runciman: My colleague from Erie-Lincoln tossed cold water on that response last week. That just doesn't stand up to scrutiny.

The story gets worse. Mr. DeGasperis, the developer who thanked the Minister of Municipal Affairs today for exempting his lands from the greenbelt, is the same Mr. DeGasperis who paid \$10,000 to meet with you and the finance minister at the Sorbara household last year.

Premier, your defence last week was that you actually broke your promise to Mr. DeGasperis, so no big deal. Now, however, we see the exact opposite. Your minister met with Mr. DeGasperis while his ministry was drawing the greenbelt boundaries, and suddenly his land is excluded from the greenbelt. What science was the exemption of Mr. DeGasperis's land based on? What was the science used there?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It comes as a surprise to me that this particular individual is pleased with our government's actions when it comes to what land was excluded in the greenbelt.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. One minute, Premier. Member from Erie-Lincoln, I'm going to give you a warning. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's no surprise that there are many people who are unhappy with the fact that their lands were included in the greenbelt. In fact, on the weekend, a representative of the Urban Development Institute said, "It doesn't look like"—the government—"acted on any of our recommendations." Again, it's no secret that some people and some interests are unhappy with the 1.8 million acres that we have preserved in perpetuity. But there are millions and millions of Ontarians who are pleased and proud of the fact that they have a government that stood up for their children and their

grandchildren and protected 1.8 million acres. Perhaps the gentleman opposite does not understand that, but we are proud to decide in favour of the greater public interest and to stand up for our children and our grandchildren.

Mr. Runciman: The science seems to be in culinary science at your secret \$10,000 soiree.

Over 100 acres of Mr. DeGasperis's land was excluded from the greenbelt after his meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Recently, a similar plot of land was sold just south of Mr. DeGasperis's land for \$150,000 an acre. So conservatively, Mr. DeGasperis's land is valued at least at \$15 million.

Premier, you have to appreciate the understandable impressions surrounding this: Pay \$10,000 to get your ear about greenbelt boundaries and, at the end of the process, receive an exemption with at least \$15 million attached to it. That sounds like a decent return on investment. Premier, will you finally release the science behind this exemption?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Earlier, I made reference to three reports to be found on-line, and there are three others as well, which I'll gladly draw to the attention of my friend opposite.

The Growth Outlook for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was tabled in January 2005 and put on the Web site. That's a paper that provides population, household and employment forecasts to 2031 in the greater Golden Horseshoe. Another document, The Application of a Land-Use Intensification Target for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, consists of research on the application of intensification targets in other jurisdictions as a tool for limiting urban sprawl. That has been available since January 2005 on the Web site. And then, of course, there is the Greenbelt Task Force report itself, made available in 2004 and also to be found on the Web site.

There is lots of science; I have now quoted six separate reports. I have said nothing of the 75 scientists, led by Dr. David Suzuki, who said that they support this greenbelt. Again, the member opposite may not be prepared to accept the science, but it is there for all to see.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. My question relates to some new information about your secret \$10,000-a-person fundraiser with developers.

Between 1999 and 2000, the province sold land in Durham region's Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve to local farmers. The lands were sold with easements attached to them guaranteeing that the land would remain agricultural forever. These lands, according to you, are now included in the greenbelt.

But we've just learned that last week, at the same time you were announcing the greenbelt boundaries, a developer paid Pickering council \$2.7 million to remove the easements that guaranteed that the land would remain agricultural.

Premier, can you tell us why a developer who paid \$10,000 to have your ear at your secret fundraiser would now pay \$2.7 million to get rid of anti-development easements on land that you say is protected by the greenbelt?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Let me repeat once again: The lands that are in the agricultural preserve in Pickering are part of the greenbelt. Whatever the city or town of Pickering does by way of resolution removing some designation on those lands is up to the town of Pickering. But quite frankly, the lands are still part of the greenbelt. They are part of our commitment to make sure that the agricultural preserve remains protected for agricultural and for sensitive environmental purposes. That has not changed. This government cannot be blamed for whatever the town of Pickering may or may not do by way of resolution.

1450

Mr. Hampton: I heard a lot of wordage, but I didn't hear an answer. Some \$2.7 million is a lot of money to bet. I'm trying to figure out why someone, after paying \$10,000 to have the Premier's ear, would go out and bet \$2.7 million to have easements removed when the land is apparently in the greenbelt.

Let me tell you why I think this happened. We know that the Premier made a lot of promises at this \$10,000-a-plate dinner about what land would be included and what land would come out. We know that your greenbelt is a floating greenbelt, that the land that is in the greenbelt now can suddenly come out of the greenbelt and be developed. So we have the developer who pays \$10,000 to have the Premier's ear and then goes out and spends the \$2.7 million to buy the easements. Doesn't this coincidence make you wonder, Minister? Doesn't this coincidence of spending \$2.7 million on land that can't be developed make you wonder just a little bit what happened at this dinner?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: First of all, let me thank the majority of that caucus for supporting our greenbelt legislation. They did the right thing. They are making sure that an additional million acres of land is protected for generations to come so that we can once and for all deal with the sprawl situation and the gridlock that has developed in the GTA.

As to any other comment that this member is making, it's just pure and idle speculation. This government cannot tell the town of Pickering what resolution to either pass or reject at their council meetings. He should be asking those questions of the council of Pickering, I suppose, or of the people involved.

This government has done all it can to make sure that there's a greenbelt there for generations to come, so that the children of our children will be able to enjoy the farmland and the environmental land that has been protected for many, many years.

Mr. Hampton: New Democrats support a permanent greenbelt, not this floating operation here, where somebody can pay \$10,000 and have land removed.

I want to point this out: The province sold the Duffins-Rouge lands for \$4,000 an acre, and we're told that if this land were now to be developed—and it looks suspiciously like it might be headed that way—the developer would get over \$100,000 an acre. Boy, that's a neat profit. Ninety-six thousand dollars an acre just like that, after you attend the \$10,000-a-plate dinner. And of course, who's the developer who's wheeling and dealing? Mr. DeGasperis. I guess he realized that if he can get something with the left hand, down the road he can get something with the right hand.

Here's the problem: We need a permanent greenbelt. My colleague the member for Toronto-Danforth, Ms. Churley, has introduced a private member's bill that would give us a permanent greenbelt. Instead of blaming the municipality, will you support Ms. Churley's private member's bill creating a permanent greenbelt so that this travesty can't continue?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to tell this member and his caucus and everyone in this room and outside that we do have a permanent greenbelt; that the legislation that was passed is stronger than any other legislation we've ever had in this province. The greenbelt plan simply calls for a review every 10 years. That's what it calls for. And it has the extra provision that if, for any reason, an acre of land is taken out of the greenbelt, it has to be replaced by another acre of land. No other legislation of a similar nature has these kinds of provisions. It is a strong greenbelt that this government and the people of Ontario can be proud of for many, many years to come.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is to the Minister of Health. Community Nursing Home Ltd. is Port Perry's only long-term-care home. It serves 105 residents. In October, the home received \$133,599 in provincial funding to hire more staff. The money was supposed to guarantee two baths a week per resident, more nurses, more registered practical nurses and more personal support workers.

Staff at the Community Nursing Home confirmed that residents are not receiving two baths per week, as they were supposed to beginning January 1, and workers at the home are being fired, not hired. In the gallery today are a personal support worker and a registered nurse who will be laid off as of April 17. Minister, why is the Community Nursing Home not providing residents with two baths per week, and why are you letting management fire, not hire, these staff?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): First and foremost, I say to the honourable member that I was in Shelburne this morning, where I visited a long-term-care home facility and found just the opposite. The circumstances the honourable member mentions are troubling circumstances. I'll take this question under advisement and get back to her.

I would say to any member of this House, if they find that there's a long-term-care home in this province that is

not acting in accordance with what we all expect to be appropriate in each of these facilities, there is a 1-800 number, an action line, which has compliance and enforcement associated with it.

We take these matters seriously. We're working hard to make sure, through these associations and the 600 long-term-care homes in this province, that every dollar allocated for the provision of enhanced service to those most vulnerable in these homes will be spent that way.

I'll take up the information provided by the honourable member and endeavour to get back to her promptly.

Ms. Martel: Let me give the minister some additional information and remind him that it was his government that promised that, with the new investment, there would be 1,400 new front-line staff and 600 new nurses.

This home got \$133,590 from your government. Management is cutting two and a half registered nursing positions and 105 hours of personal support per week. That's one less hour of direct, hands-on nursing care per resident per week. Some 12 staff are losing their jobs. The home can't even provide residents with two baths per week now, even though they are mandated by regulation to do so. So it's very clear that, with that loss of staff, it will be impossible for the remaining staff to provide even basic care to residents.

I want to ask you again, Minister: Can you explain to the staff who are here today how their layoffs are going to help the people they want to care for?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I have no interest or obligation to explain that. I take the honourable member's question seriously. I support the tone of it. I'm not satisfied by these circumstances. What I can tell the honourable member is that this morning I was in Shelburne, and the county warden from Dufferin county told me about how the money had been put into effect and talked about the new hiring that had happened in that home and about the enhanced care that resulted. That was the intent of these resources that we brought to long-term-care homes.

I will not be satisfied until I'm assured that every cent directed to these long-term-care homes for expenditures to enhance the quality of care is spent that way. That's why I appreciate the honourable member bringing this forward. If other honourable members have information like this, they can be assured that it will be acted upon and that we will seek to make sure that all these dollars are spent in exactly the fashion they were intended.

Ms. Martel: I don't know anything about the situation in Shelburne, but let me tell you something else about Port Perry that's very troubling.

A bargaining unit representative from Community Nursing Home is also here today. She was suspended from her job for two days, and one of the reasons given in the suspension letter was that she went public with the new layoffs and how that was going to hurt seniors in her home.

I have no doubt that other homes are receiving new provincial money and are firing, not hiring, staff. But with the lack of whistle-blower protection, many other

workers may decide not to come forward to release this information for fear of being suspended or terminated.

Minister, your long-term-care discussion paper talks about whistle-blower protection, but it's not in place. What are you going to do to protect this worker at this home and other workers who want to come forward to speak out but are afraid to do so?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Unlike the honourable member, I'm not going to speculate about a circumstance occurring more broadly. However, I've been on the record saying that our legislation with respect to long-term care, which will be coming forward before this House this year, will include whistle-blower protection, for exactly the reasons that the honourable member mentions.

Here again I say to the honourable member: Send that specific information across the way and we will follow up on it. She can be assured, and all members of this House can be assured, that the dollars we have allocated, almost \$200 million in additional resources for long-term-care homes, will be spent on the provisions that were intended, which is in enhancing the quality of care for those most vulnerable residents.

1500

GREENBELT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: There are serious and widespread questions about connections between secret meetings with developers and changes to the greenbelt boundaries.

Today's revelation is even more alarming. The minister said, "I have not met with any developers," but today that statement doesn't seem to meet with the facts we've learned. Specifically, for some reason, properties belonging to Mr. DeGasperis in the city of Vaughan, in the finance minister's riding, have been exempted from the greenbelt. His neighbours—those to the north, the south, the east and the west—did not get any kind of exemption. One difference: Mr. DeGasperis had a secret meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and he attended the secret fundraiser at \$10,000 a plate.

Minister, surely, if you made this one particular exception for one individual and not his neighbours, you will release the science today on this property to try to defend any integrity left with this plan.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Your plan is to pave the greenbelt. We all know about that. You voted against the greenbelt legislation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. Member from Oxford and member from Simcoe North, I want you to come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: When I met with Mr. DeGasperis, it was two or three months before—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member from Nepean–Carleton, if I sit down, I don't want you to start shouting. I want to give you a warning.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: It was two or three months before the greenbelt mapping and the plan were even put into preparation. He came specifically to meet with me with respect to our commitment to maintain the agricultural preserve as agricultural land. I told him that was our plan, that was our commitment during the election campaign, and that's exactly what happened.

These are the six plans right here, the science on which the greenbelt is based. I would suggest to the member that you read it and come to exactly the same conclusion we did; that is, that the million acres of land we are protecting in the greenbelt, in addition to what is already in the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment, is something that everybody in Ontario—

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary.

Mr. Hudak: Quite frankly, the minister's answers aren't cutting it, not by a long shot. Minister, you know full well that you released the draft greenbelt study area in December 2003. Those who were caught up in that area knew that every parcel of land was under consideration. After that point in time, you had at least one meeting with DeGasperis. Who knows how many other developers had secret meetings with the minister and his staff? Sir, you changed the boundaries. You didn't change the boundaries to the south. You didn't change the boundaries to the east, the north or the west. You made an exception for this piece of land that would have pocketed the individual at least \$15 million, and that would have gone by your desk, Minister.

By the end of the day, sir, will you release the detailed science around this property in the city of Vaughan, in the finance minister's riding, or will you leave your integrity at the door? Do the right thing, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I will ask one of the pages to walk these documents over to you. This is the science that the greenbelt was based on, the best science available that we used from the Ministry of Natural Resources, from agriculture, from—let's see, where else?—the Greenbelt Task Force. You used exactly the same science to determine the limits of the Oak Ridges moraine plan, and we used exactly the same science in determining the limits of the greenbelt.

We are proud of the greenbelt. The people of Ontario are proud of the greenbelt. David Suzuki and 75 scientists are proud of the greenbelt. I would suggest to you that, in years to come, even you may be proud of the greenbelt as well.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I have a question for the minister responsible for democratic renewal. For over a year and a half, you've used every delay tactic in the book to avoid bringing in real-time disclosure of donations. Now, with your back to the wall, you've thrown Bill 172 at us in a desperate attempt to

buy just a little bit more fundraising time for your party. You've crammed everything but the kitchen sink into your bill, including giving yourself the power to set up a citizens' assembly, without any consultation at all. The loophole in your real-time disclosure provisions is big enough to drive a truck through.

Interjection: A Mack truck.

Ms. Churley: You know we can't support this bill, this omnibus bill. If you want real-time in our time, drop your bill and pass the bill I introduced on real-time disclosure today. Will you do that?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I say to the member, I'm afraid your bill just isn't good enough. For us, real-time disclosure is five business days. For this member, it's seven days—close, but not enough. For us, this applies to donations of \$100 or more. For the MPP for Toronto–Danforth's bill, it has to be donations of \$500 or more. If there are any loopholes, if there's any Mack truck, it's going to be driven through the bill of that member over there.

Ms. Churley: Minister, that's ridiculous. People aren't concerned about the \$100 donations or the \$500 donations. They're concerned—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I'd like to hear the member from Toronto–Danforth put her supplementary, and the government side has been heckling. I'd like to hear the supplementary.

Ms. Churley: People are concerned about the \$5,000-plus that, under your bill, people can still give individually to riding associations and not disclose. That's the loophole. You're stalling, and everyone knows you're stalling. These are the sorts of tricks the Tories used to use and you guys used to denounce.

Before the election, for instance, Gerard Kennedy said, "Why do they insist on sticking to a bill that contains a piece of their election platform smack in the middle of it?... Well, it is clearly—and I say this with as much generosity as I can muster—a government that has lost its way...."

The democratic renewal provision in your bill gives you dictatorial power. The real-time disclosure provisions allow huge donations to go undisclosed. I brought forward a bill that would make real time a reality and leave out the loopholes. Why don't you support it? What are you afraid of?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Only the New Democratic Party would have a problem with the world-leader-in-transparency legislation that has been introduced today. I understand we're now going to be leading the world in terms of transparency of real-time disclosure. Maybe the New Democrats want us to lead the galaxy. But in any event, I'm telling you that Ms. Churley's bill has a big \$500 loophole in it, and it's just not good enough for this government.

I say to the member opposite, let's agree to a process right now. Even better, let's agree to this bill passing

right now. You wanted real-time disclosure; I give you real-time disclosure. Now I need your real-time support for real-time disclosure in the province of Ontario. Let's hear it: real-time support now.

CATTLE FARMERS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Our cattle farmers have been under tremendous stress since May 2003, when the borders were closed to Canadian cattle. Since then, our government has continued to work toward and has anticipated the reopening of the border that was to have happened today. Unfortunately, due to a recent US federal district court decision, this will not be happening. Minister, can you please tell my constituents what this government has been doing to try to ensure that the border is opened in a timely fashion?

1510

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): We're extremely disappointed in the decision that was reached by the Montana judge last week. But at the same time, we do remain optimistic, and we're going to continue to be working with the agricultural community to lobby and to move forward. Certainly the Premier demonstrated that last week, not only in his speech that he delivered in Detroit to US business leaders, but as well the Premier talked to representatives from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, the Ontario Livestock Dealers' Association and the auction dealers' association, to make sure they knew the steps that we were going to continue to take. As well, he took the opportunity to call the outgoing ambassador, Paul Cellucci. So I want to thank the Premier for his continuing efforts in that regard.

Certainly we have tried to do our part, as the government, meeting with both senate and congressional representatives in the United States, to make it very clear that the science has taken place. And I'm confident that when the judge has an opportunity to look at the minimal-risk rule that the United States Department of Agriculture has in place, he is going to see that it's built on sound science, and that border will quickly be reopened.

Mr. Leal: I want to thank the minister for his detailed response. Despite the fact that most farmers were cautiously optimistic with the March 7 opening date, this comes as a huge disappointment. This is a case of politics delaying sound science. Can you let my constituents know how our government plans to deal with this continuing issue of the border remaining closed?

Hon. Mr. Peters: The set-aside programs that have been in place since last September will continue. It's a commitment that we made when the Premier announced \$30 million in support for the ruminant industry. So that support will continue.

As well, we spoke over the weekend with representatives from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. The OCA is meeting today. We're planning a meeting for early next week to bring all the industry players together

to give them the most up-to-date information that we have.

Certainly, the time has come that we need to realize that, as we move forward, we do need a targeted strategy. We have done that in the past; we've demonstrated in working with the various ruminant organizations that, by working together, we can develop long-term plans. That's our intent when we meet. We have been there to support farmers in this province, and we will continue with that financial support.

GREENBELT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I want to go back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. There are two critical issues here that we're dealing with: One is the legitimacy of the boundaries of the greenbelt, and the other is the unequivocal statement that you made to TVO that you did not meet with developers to talk about greenbelt boundaries. I think these are very serious issues, Minister, which you have not dealt with here today in question period. Clearly, now you're saying, "OK, maybe I made a mistake. I did meet with a developer, but it was outside the critical period of time."

In reality, this was part of the consideration process; the game was on. He's now admitting he met with this developer. We now know the developer was part of this \$10,000 secret soiree; we know that as well. We're talking about this individual having a parcel exempted from the greenbelt—he's congratulating you for that—a parcel that we know was worth at least \$15 million—\$15 million.

I ask the minister, once again, to tell the public of Ontario why he told TVO that he did not meet with the developers and to release the science behind this exemption.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I believe that what I told TVO, quite frankly—and perhaps the tape will bear this out—is that I determined myself, personally, that I was not going to meet with any individual property owners while the mapping and the planning of the greenbelt was going to be in place, which took place after the Greenbelt Task Force reported, sometime at the end of June or early July. I felt that the people I should meet with were the legally elected people from all the different areas—whether they were at the regional council or at the local council—and the planning officials. It's not that I was prevented from meeting with anybody, but I didn't meet with any developers once the planning and mapping took place.

The meeting with Mr. DeGasperis was at least two or three months before that, to deal specifically with the agricultural preserve. He wanted us to break our promise to keep that as part of the agricultural lands, and I told him, as far as I was concerned, it was part of our commitment to the people of Ontario to keep it as agricultural lands.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): It appears that with every new question the minister's story changes. I do wonder how many meetings he had with developers before August, and then what happened in August. He got collective amnesia, I guess, about all these meetings he had beforehand. Maybe those fundraisers are some sort of down-payment system on future decisions.

Minister, I read through this stuff that you sent over. We've got this from the Web site. Quite frankly, there is nothing in here about the city of Vaughan. There is nothing in here about the individual parcel in question. There is nothing in here about the individual developer in question. There are no answers in there about property 41 in the city of Vaughan in the finance minister's riding.

Sir, we told you that you shouldn't reserve the right to yourself to make these changes. You assumed that power and, sir, you have now used that power to a \$15-million benefit for one particular developer.

I ask you, sir, by the end of the day today, to release the science on this particular property in the city of Vaughan. Tell us why it got an exemption when all the neighbours did not.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As a result of the consultation process with all the various municipal leaders involved, there were some changes made. I believe the Toronto Star—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Well, isn't consultation all part of making sure that you've got it right? And we do have it right. There were certain changes made. The net result of those changes was the fact that 8,500 acres of additional land were placed in the greenbelt.

With respect to the city of Vaughan, to the best of my recollection, and I have to review the documentation, basically the natural science system of protecting the watercourses in Vaughan—they were protected. There were some tablelands that weren't, strictly speaking, part of the natural resource system that were made available for development. But as far as I'm concerned, in the city of Vaughan, the amount of land that was put into the greenbelt equates to about the amount of land that was taken out.

The bottom line is this: A million acres of land are going to be protected for future generations, something that that government didn't care about because they didn't care about the sprawl or the gridlock that existed in this part of Ontario.

COURT BACKLOG

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Attorney General. In December 2003, the Provincial Auditor warned this province that the backlog in our criminal courts was at an all-time, 10-year high, that the integrated justice project was floundering and that the ministry was failing to collect millions of dollars of unpaid and overdue fines.

You and your government's response? "We'll flat-line the ministry's budget." Cases continue to be thrown out,

finances continue to go uncollected, the backlog grows, and it's the front-line staff who bear the brunt of the anger from the public.

Minister, you promised to rebuild our public services. Why are you breaking that promise? How many cases have to get tossed out of court and how many human rights cases ignored before you take action to rebuild the justice system?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'm going to get to a number of initiatives that we've undertaken to deal with court case backlogs. But now, actually for the first time, we're going to be publishing statistics on caseload—criminal, civil, family and otherwise—that previously had never been known to the public so that it will be able to track exactly the progress we're making.

Since we formed the government, we have appointed 29 judges to the Ontario Court of Justice. That is one way to deal with the backlog. We've hired 50 crown attorneys and deployed them across the province. We have set up the blitz courts at the sites—and the member will know this: You need to set up the blitz courts at the sites where you've got the biggest problems. You've got some sites where there's very little or no delay; you've got some sites that just generally incur delay. That's the purpose of the blitz courts. We've established case management teams in high-volume areas to monitor caseload and identify charges that might be in jeopardy, and instituted a bail best-practices protocol to reduce the number of in-custody appearances.

I have more to say in response during supplementary.

Mr. Kormos: Attorney General, you see the president of OPSEU, Leah Casselman, here. I want you to know that with her are three OPSEU workers from our court systems: Shelley McCormick, Julie Weber and Ramona Solevilla. These front-line workers ensure that documents are processed, court proceedings are transcribed, fines are collected and victims of crime get the information they need.

You've treated these workers, mostly women, with ongoing contempt, casualizing and contracting out their jobs, denying them full-time work, cancelling their training. Rather than reinvesting, you've brought more cut-backs into the system in the courts, at the Human Rights Commission and now at the Native Affairs Secretariat.

1520

Shortly after you were elected, Leah Casselman asked you to meet with contract workers from the courts. You refused. Why have you not met with the front-line workers? They're the ones who're going to tell you how to address some of these problems. Why haven't you met with these front-line workers in our courts to discuss new ways to rebuild the court system in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I certainly join in the member's commitment to ensuring that we not delay our case flow anywhere in the province of Ontario. I thank all the front-line workers who are working on this. I thank them in person as I go from court to court across the province of

Ontario, and I take their advice on how we can reduce delays.

I'll tell you what they say to me time and again. What they don't want to have happen is what happened in the early 1990s under the NDP government, when the Askov decision came down and more than 80,000 cases got thrown out in the province of Ontario. So we won't be taking any lessons from Mr. Hampton and the NDP when it comes to justice delayed, because that's justice denied.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My question today is for the Minister of Health. So many of our communities in Ontario have received the dubious distinction of "underserviced." What does this new deal with the OMA do for the people of Ontario who are in communities that have received the designation of underserviced?

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's interesting to hear the heckles from the parties opposite, who first created the shortage of doctors in this province and then said that the agreements we sought to reach with the Ontario Medical Association were too generous. Now they heckle and suggest something to the contrary.

I'm pleased to be able to say that, as a result of the hard work of two teams negotiating over a lengthy period of time, our government has come to a tentative agreement with the Ontario Medical Association that has been unanimously endorsed by the OMA board. In doing so, I'm pleased to read something that is helpful. A release from the Ontario Medical Association said that they have "unanimously endorsed a new tentative agreement with government that will take steps to improve wait lists, doctor shortages, Ontario's competitiveness with other provinces and access to health care services for Ontario patients."

Our government believes that, in reaching this tentative agreement, investing these resources of the people of Ontario is a very significant step toward reducing the underserviced areas, which were the legacy of that party while in government.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Minister.

Interjections.

Mrs. Mitchell: I also want to say, especially for all the communities that have received their underserviced designation, that this is good news for the people of Ontario, and I'm pleased that the opposition recognizes this as good news. But what will this new deal do to improve access to a full range of health services?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The enhancements to this agreement build on the foundation of the previous work that had been done, which, by its very design, was going to support new models of primary care. The honourable member will know well, because all honourable members who are in touch with their ridings know well, that 213 communities have already submitted applications for

family health teams. This agreement underscores our commitment to primary care, because it associates that agreement with this new model of the provision of care.

I think one significant benefit that patients all across the province of Ontario will soon experience is that this government has suggested that it's appropriate to put the resources of the people of the province behind it and therefore allow us to lift caps which have long been in place for some of the specialists. This has been one of the key constraints of the Ontario health care system, and I'm pleased to be able to say that if this agreement is ratified by the membership of the Ontario Medical Association, caps on key specialties will be a thing of the past in the province of Ontario.

GREENBELT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): Back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and some of the issues he was talking about earlier: In the letter that I sent over to him from Mr. DeGasperis earlier today, he talks about Mr. John MacKenzie, special assistant, greenbelt and planning, of your office. DeGasperis was told that "all of block 41 was to be removed from the greenbelt, not only the lands belonging to us.... I ask you to amend the plan to exclude all of block 41 from the greenbelt plan. Not just our lands."

You talked about the tablelands earlier to protect streams and lakes. DeGasperis says, "The balance of the tablelands in block 41 is no different from our lands and should be treated the same."

We also have a letter from Michael Di Biase; you talked last week about the official plan in Vaughan. He takes strong issue with that, asking you to amend the greenbelt plan to reflect Vaughan's official plan: "We have no tolerance for double standards in the province."

I think the people of Ontario deserve a clear explanation from you with respect to the rationale for exempting these properties: a \$15-million realization for this one developer. Please stand up and explain your actions.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): The first thing I can explain is that the date on Mr. DeGasperis's letter is March 7, 2005, which is today, in which he's trying to confirm some conversation that took place, I guess about 10 months ago. So the actual contents and the parcels that he's referring to that—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: It would be interesting to know how the opposition got this letter before I as minister got the letter. But that's another issue, I suppose.

All I can tell you is that I am not familiar with the blocks of land that he refers to. However, now that we have this letter of March 7, 2005, which happens to be today, you can be assured that we will take a look at it and deal with it accordingly.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): The minister is certainly backpedalling here. His answer almost seemed to say that he doesn't remember if they'd had a meeting in the first place, whereas 10 minutes ago he said that he'd had the meeting. He said it was in May, so it didn't matter because it was in May. But we think it matters.

According to Mr. DeGasperis's letter, he said that he had a meeting with the minister and his special assistant, and that he was told that all of block 41 was to be removed from the greenbelt, so all of the land in question. A commitment apparently was made.

Minister, was it you who were making the commitment? Was it your political assistant? Who exactly made this commitment that the land would be exempted?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: First of all, it would be difficult for me to know about particular issues in the million-acre greenbelt. I never saw the letter until the member gave it to me. But Mr. DeGasperis never says in his letter that he raised the issue of block 41 with me. What he says is, "We have had a number of discussions and meetings with Mr. John MacKenzie, special assistant ... of your office, to which he has been very helpful, but we were told that all of block 41 was to be removed from the greenbelt...."

In other words, I didn't even have that conversation about a specific piece of property. The only thing I can recall—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Oxford, I'm going to give you a warning. I hope the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke comes to order too.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As I mentioned before—and at least he agrees on the date, because I did say it was the seventh game of the Toronto–Philadelphia series; he was in a bit of a hurry and didn't really have all that much time to speak to me—all I can remember is that he came in to see me specifically about the agricultural preserve in Pickering, and we said at that time, as far as I was concerned, that we were going to live up to our commitment to retain that land as agricultural land.

1530

SECOND-STAGE HOUSING

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I have a question for the minister responsible for women's issues. Tomorrow is International Women's Day. In honour of that day, I'm asking you to fix a broken promise to women. Safe housing for women fleeing domestic violence, like second-stage housing, is in scarce supply. Your government hasn't built any of the affordable housing units you had promised. As a result, women in shelters are forced to choose between returning to an abusive home or homelessness.

The Liberals' election platform and throne speech promised to restore core funding for second-stage housing, but this November you did not deliver. You took the money promised to second-stage housing and stretched it thin over a wide variety of services. International

Women's Day provides you with an opportunity to right this wrong. Will you do it?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm very happy to address this. This member will probably recognize that today we had a tremendous announcement. My parliamentary assistant, Deb Matthews, and I made it from London. We spoke to 98 agencies that are benefiting today from a new refurbishment fund, which is designated not just to our women's shelters but also to our second-stage housing providers: 98 agencies that made that priority list for funding for things that, frankly, may not be very sexy. It is one-time funding for things like repairing the roof, getting a new furnace, upgrading the wiring, adding, in some cases, bullet-proof windows and doors, basic security items that places like our second-stage housing and shelters desperately need.

Yes, we did it this week. It is the beginning of International Women's Week, something that I think everyone in this House should be celebrating, and I look forward to having an opportunity to continue the long list of some of our achievements so far this year.

Ms. Churley: Like all your announcements, Minister, you still haven't kept your promise—and the Premier's promise in opposition—that you would reinstate funding to second-stage housing. I've been hearing from second-stage housing providers across the province, providers like Family Services Hamilton. They have a message for you: You have put second-stage housing in even greater crises by breaking your promise. As a result, there will be even fewer safe places where women and their children can go to rebuild their lives.

Minister, any statement you make tomorrow on women's issues will ring hollow if you do not keep your promise on second-stage housing. I ask you again, specifically on second-stage housing, will you keep your promise and restore the funding to second-stage housing?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: What I do know is that this year for the first time, we brought second-stage housing agencies back into the government fold. They participated in a significant announcement around transitional support programs that not only went out to counselling agencies, shelters and second stage, but as well we have incorporated them into all kinds of other funding models.

This member opposite should stand up or, frankly, do cartwheels over our domestic violence action plan that we released in December, a \$66-million plan that encompasses four significant areas. One of those that has been lauded by every expert is our public education campaign; supports to the community for those who have to respond to domestic violence; training of front-line workers, which, frankly, we don't do enough of across Ontario; and finally, the justice sector, where we know there are improvements that have to be made. But I must finish by saying we have addressed French-language services in this sector as well, and I hope this member opposite will appreciate—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. New question, the member for Mississauga East.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): My question is for the Minister responsible for democratic renewal and his world-leading legislation. During the last election, as I was meeting with the voters in my riding, one of the things that kept coming up was the state of democracy in our great province and the ways we can improve our democratic system, including the way political donations are made to parties. People are worried that our democratic system is not sufficiently accountable and transparent. At the same time, we're witnessing increasing cynicism and decreasing voter turnout, especially among our young voters. My question is this, what will the legislation introduced today do to combat this?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for his question. Firstly, we will begin the process that will allow us to start the citizens' assembly and the citizens' jury on financial reform, so that finally, for once, the people will get a say as to how their electoral system works and how political finance works.

This bill is also going to, for the first time, provide for real-time disclosure of donations to political parties and to the PC and NDP leadership conventions in 2008. We're going to see, for the first time in Ontario—and there isn't anything like it in North America, the Commonwealth or the world—legislation whereby you've got to disclose, within five business days, a donation to a political party, and then it will be disclosed on the Internet by the chief electoral officer. It is transparency that will give people confidence, and we look forward to getting all members' support.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): The Progressive Conservative government cut the number of legislative seats in northern Ontario by one third. Today we learned again that the Progressive Conservative Party endorses the further elimination of one northern seat from the next general election.

Twice, when I was in opposition, I introduced legislation that would have maintained the number of seats at 11. I had the support of my leader and my caucus. The Liberal Party of Ontario committed to these 11 seats in our election document and reiterated that commitment in the speech from the throne. Minister, how does today's legislation address the needs of the people of northern Ontario for a strong and equitable voice at Queen's Park?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I thank the member for his question. I thank the member for his leadership and for the leadership of the northern caucus, and the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, to make sure that we have 11 ridings in the north in Ontario entrenched in legislation if this bill passes. This is not only an expression from a government of a commitment to northern Ontario, but it's a guarantee to those communities, which face enormous challenges in terms of ensuring that their voice is heard in vast geographic areas, that notwithstanding the fact that under the Elections Canada boundary commission

they would end up with 10 ridings, we want to make sure they get strong representation, and that means 11 ridings in the north. Eleven ridings in the north is good news for northern Ontario and good news for all Ontario.

VISITORS

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would hope that you would help me recognize the Queen's University media students who are in the press gallery today. These budding communication professionals run the Queen's Journal, the Diatribe, CFRC radio 101.9 and Studio Q. They'll be meeting members of the Legislature and the press gallery today.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The minister knows that's not a point of order, but of course they're welcome.

PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over 1.2 million people use physiotherapy services every year in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas those who use physiotherapy services consider this an important part of their health care and rely on these services, along with the OHIP funding, in order to function; and

"Whereas the elimination or reduction of physiotherapy services would be viewed as breaking the promise not to reduce universal access to health care; and

"Whereas eliminating or reducing OHIP coverage of physiotherapy services, where the patient pays part of the cost, will end up costing the government far more in additional physician, emergency department and hospital visits;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the Parliament of Ontario does not delist physiotherapy services from the Ontario health insurance plan, and that assurance is given that funding for physiotherapy services not be reduced or eliminated."

I affix my name, as I support not only the petition but also the Thorntonview long-term-care facility.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"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 economies of the local communities;

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre 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 in agreement and affix my signature thereto.

1540

TUITION

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): I present this petition on behalf of the member for Kingston and the Islands. This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the students’ association at Queen’s University:

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

“Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

“Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

“Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students’ call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (1) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (2) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (3) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students.”

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have here a petition 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.”

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

TUITION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I’m here today to present this on behalf of the member from Peterborough. It’s to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, from Trent Central Student Association:

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

“Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

“Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

“Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students’ call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (1) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (2) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (3) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students.”

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 economies of the local communities;

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre 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 this.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas seniors and other qualified patients require the continued provision of physiotherapy services through schedule 5 clinics to promote recovery from medical conditions and continued mobility and good health;

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

“The patients of schedule 5 physiotherapy clinics request the continued support of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for provision of OHIP-covered physiotherapy treatment to qualified seniors and others in need of these vital health care procedures.”

I am pleased to add my signature to this petition.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, the Minister of Public Infrastructure, and the Minister of Transportation that reads as follows:

“Whereas GO Transit is presently planning a tunnel in an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing; and

“Whereas the TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue and Old Weston Road bridge; and

“Whereas this bridge”—which really is also an underpass—“will be (1) too narrow for the planned TTC

right-of-way since it will have only one lane of traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians. It’s about 50 metres long. It’s dark and sloping on both the east and west sides, creating a high bank for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man’s land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under the St. Clair Avenue West bridge, thus eliminating this eyesore with its high banks and blank walls. Instead, it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful, continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow.”

I support this petition 100%, and I’m delighted to sign 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 economies of the local communities;

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre 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.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): Again, I’m presenting a petition on behalf of the member for Kingston and the Islands.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies, as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor, be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing the disease. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood, and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences.

"Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes. We think it is in all Ontario's and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

1550

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, relating to support for chiropractic services in Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"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 add my signature to this petition.

TTC RIGHT-OF-WAY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I do have one more petition I would like to present to you. It's to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment.

"Whereas an environmental assessment is underway on St. Clair Avenue West to study potential transit improvements, including the possibility of installing a dedicated TTC right-of-way;

"Whereas the consultation process so far has been in bad faith, top-down and rushed, which has disappointed and angered the local community almost entirely, and not been up to any acceptable public standards;

"Whereas comments by the chair and the members of the Toronto Transit Commission have made it clear that there is a predetermined outcome to the EA process, regardless of the objections of the local community;

"Whereas a dedicated right-of-way would restrict left-turn access to neighbourhood streets north and south of St. Clair Avenue, and a barrier down the centre of St. Clair would force the vast majority of residents to make U-turns and go further out of their way just to get home or go to work;

"Whereas a dedicated right-of-way would force significantly more traffic on to our local streets;

"Whereas safety must be a high priority for any alternative selected and, according to the ambulance and fire department staff, they don't like to work with right-of-ways;

"Whereas a right-of-way would lead to the reduction or elimination of on-street parking on St. Clair Avenue West;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge the Minister of the Environment to order a full environmental assessment on St. Clair Avenue West, one that genuinely consults and takes into consideration the views and opinions of the local community."

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLACES TO GROW ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR

LES ZONES DE CROISSANCE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 2, 2005, on the motion for second reading of 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I believe the member for Toronto–Danforth was in her speech. So you have the floor.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I'm pleased to be able to not necessarily pick up where I left off, because I can't quite remember where I left off, but I do want to talk about—it was last week—one of the major problems I have with this piece of legislation, and that is the focus on highways.

I have brought it up in this House in regard to the greenbelt legislation, and brought forward amendments which were not passed by the Liberal members sitting on the committee, although I think they were very aware of the problems when I presented them around building the highways “and they will come.” I’m sure my colleague from Beaches–East York will want to talk about that as well, because that’s one of his favourite expressions. We’re both into baseball.

In this case, we all know. We’ve seen it. The evidence is there. When you build highways, when you build infrastructure like the big pipe, obviously the development is going to come. I referred to four or five highways, and there were two new ones added after the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal a few weeks ago announced their growth plans. In particular, the highway going up to south Simcoe is of grave concern because of what we refer to as leapfrog development. That is one of the major problems with the greenbelt, which of course relates to this bill.

There are a number of problems, but there are two major ones. One is the leapfrog development which will happen because of south Simcoe being left out. And now, to make things worse, we have a highway being extended up there. So there’s no question about it: The greenbelt, along with this growth plan, will not achieve its stated purpose, which is to stop or curb urban sprawl.

The second major problem with this plan before us is that even though there’s a lot of talk about the importance of moving forward with more transit-based transportation, the government is not putting its money where its mouth is. So there’s a lot of good talk around it, but no action. We know that this week the cost of riding the TTC here in Toronto has just increased by 25 cents per ride because the province refuses to fund it at the required level. We know that the greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan states that growth needs to occur at transit-supported densities. But at the same time, even though that’s very nicely stated—I’d agree with that—they are building new highways through the greenbelt. Unfortunately, and people are really starting to see that now, it’s a typical Liberal approach, where they talk a good line but continue to deliver the status quo. That’s one of the things that’s happening around the greenbelt now.

It is true when the Minister of Municipal Affairs stands up and says that, yes, New Democrats supported it, and there are maybe 80% to 90% of urban dwellers especially, and a lot of rural dwellers, who supported the greenbelt for obvious reasons. We can’t go on with the status quo. But now we’re finding out about these secret \$10,000-a-plate dinners that have been going on with developers, and a lot of land being moved around—the question my leader posed today. Unfortunately, that takes away the credibility of the government’s announced good thing, and that is preserving prime farmland and environmentally sensitive land. Who could not agree with that, except maybe some Tories and developers? You’ve got to agree with that; we cannot go on with the status quo.

Unfortunately, with the greenbelt passed as it is, not permanent but a floating greenbelt where you can take out very sensitive pieces of land like Duffins-Rouge and exchange them for not so environmentally sensitive pieces of land somewhere in the northern part of the greenbelt—that’s not a permanent greenbelt. That is what we call a floating greenbelt. So people are going to lose faith in what the Liberals put forward and what people believed was a very positive thing. Now we’re finding out more and more down the line that there are these problems with the greenbelt.

The growth plans that we’re speaking about today give clear precedence to new highways and to freight moved on highways. That, again, is staying with the status quo. Policies within the growth plan needed to give clear preference to the movement of goods by rail and the development of new rail facilities over new highways. The evidence is there; it is there in spades. We cannot keep on doing what we’ve been doing: building new highways and depending on more and more huge trucks and vehicles to be moving our goods around. Not only does this reduce truck traffic on our highways, but it also helps us meet our Kyoto commitments, because the government may have forgotten that moving a tonne of freight by rail is much less CO₂-intensive than moving it by road.

1600

You can’t isolate all these factors out. As I said in my speech when I first spoke to this last week, we even have to stop referring to this as “growth.” We’ve got to start a mind change here to sustainable communities; we have to start thinking in terms of sustainability. Unfortunately, what we have before us in this growth plan, and indeed even the greenbelt, is that we’re going to see more urban sprawl and more greenhouse gases. Not only does the government have to come up with more money for transit, but the infrastructure costs associated with implementing the growth plan and stopping sprawl are going to require immediate government action now. By the government’s own admission, the cost of developing new, and replacing old, infrastructure is estimated to cost in the neighbourhood of \$100 billion over the next 30 years.

We need to see the federal government come in big time. We need to see a partnership of all levels of government to come in to deal with this, but we also need to see a down payment in the upcoming budget, not pushed off to future years.

There are some huge problems with this bill that need to be fixed. We need to take it out to committee so I can attempt to make those amendments. Thank you for this opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): It’s a pleasure to speak in support, of Bill 136, Places to Grow. I’m a family doctor turned politician. Recently my own city of Brampton has decided to cut or control urban sprawl.

I was going through a report released recently by the College of Family Physicians of Canada in January of

this year. In that report, they mentioned that there is great evidence of health problems related to unplanned and uncontrolled urban sprawl. There are related diseases—for example, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular complications, high blood pressure—if you have urban sprawl.

The McGuinty government has a plan for urban growth, and this plan is mentioned in Bill 136, Places to Grow. The McGuinty government has also set aside one million new acres of greenbelt in the greater Golden Horseshoe area to promote and care for stronger, healthier and safer communities. That's why I support Bill 136, Places to Grow.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to respond very briefly to Bill 136, the Places to Grow plan. What troubles me most about this is that it's another living example of where the government is interfering, if you will, with respect to the understood authorities of the municipal level of government, which is closest to the decision-making process. That being said, I understand and completely endorse the fact that they must respect the purpose and intention of the province's overarching policy position, of the planning policy directions that are required. If you read the preamble, you see clearly what I call the micromanaging of this government. It's rather concerning to me. It exempts the ministry, for that matter, and gives them ultimate authority, and it overrides the authority of municipal plans and the work that's been done by duly elected local persons.

To the extent that official plans are approved at the upper-tier level and by the ministry itself, the official plans themselves have gone through rigorous tests and public hearings with respect to allowing the amount of serviced land to be put to productive use for future growth in the province. In fact, the growth of the province is quite another issue, but it's important that Ontario grows and that communities grow, and it's important that they respect the environmental standards that are in place and have been respected by the local and upper-tier levels of government for some time.

But this bill ties the hands of local municipalities to control their own land use and planning. During the election, the Liberals said that they would scrap the Ontario Municipal Board. In fact, it overrides the Ontario Municipal Board and its duly sanctioned, legitimate authority.

I am concerned at the government's interference and their do-good attitude that only they know what's good for the people of Ontario. In fact, I support the intention, but it's the method by which this government is moving forward that concerns me most.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I'm not sure that it's a do-good attitude. I think it's more a McGuinty attitude.

Having said that, it's a pleasure for me to comment on my colleague's excellent speech, which I heard the other day sitting in the chair and now heard the balance of today. She is absolutely right when she points out what this bill attempts to do. The bill authorizes the minister to OK, to validate—however you want to put it—the

growth plans of municipalities that are experiencing growth. These would be primarily municipalities in the Golden Horseshoe, in the area around Toronto, Hamilton and Niagara Falls.

What it does and does not do I think is open to question at this point. We have seen the efforts of this government to protect the greenbelt, something which we New Democrats believe should be done. But we have also seen how that whole protectionist plan, that whole good idea which we had envisaged when the bill was first introduced, seems now to be falling apart in the wake of scandals that are being suggested here today in question period.

The reality is that this plan and what is being put forward here today is not really going to work unless the government is committed to putting resources where the planning ideas are. Ms. Churley touched upon those in terms of transit. It makes very little sense to be building highways out into the greenbelt, as the greenbelt legislation allows. The reality is that if you want to keep people in an urbanized, city-like state, then you're going to have to build transit. You're going to have to build public transit, as opposed to highways into the greenbelt. That is going to say whether or not this bill works. Ms. Churley is to be commended for bringing out the salient facts behind it.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It is indeed a real pleasure to have an opportunity to reflect on Bill 136, Places to Grow. As a former municipal politician in the city of Peterborough, one thing I always appreciated was good, sound planning, because when you have good, sound planning, you have communities that develop in an orderly fashion, where growth and the provision of infrastructure and the provision of transit can go hand in hand.

That, essentially, is the vision that's been clearly articulated by this government on a number of fronts: first of all, our campaign commitment for gas tax to expand transit; secondly, the fine work of our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the greenbelt; and now the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal with the Places to Grow Act. We can see very clearly that we're bringing these elements together for an overall plan to have Ontario at the forefront of how we deal with urban sprawl.

There are many examples of communities in Ontario where growth has gotten out of control. They can't provide the infrastructure to service it, they don't have the transit to service it, and it leads to an environment that's not conducive for living. You can see through this bill that we're moving forward in a very positive way.

I know that for my own community of Peterborough, the city council is endorsing this act, because what it does for Peterborough is that it provides an opportunity for us to grow in the future. We have the infrastructure present and we have the business and manufacturing base to accommodate many more people in our area.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): You've got lots of water over there.

Mr. Leal: We're very pleased that we are moving forward with this bill. We've got the water problem solved, and I want to thank my friend from Simcoe North, I believe.

Mr. Dunlop: We'll see next spring if it's solved or not.

Mr. Leal: It is. Because of this government's immediate action, we're building new infrastructure in Peterborough, not the 12 months that we had to wait with this gang over here when we had the flood of 2002. They were missing in action. But let me get back to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Now, if we'll all calm down, the member from Toronto–Danforth has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Churley: I listened with pleasure to the responses from the members for Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale, Durham, Beaches–East York and Peterborough. Everybody had some good comments to make.

As always, the Liberals are going with the notes that they've been provided about what's in this bill. But if you really read the bill and pay attention to what some others are saying instead of just your government members and your own ministers, you would see that there are some serious problems with this bill. I know the members from the Liberal Party want to do the right thing, and when the ministers say that this bill and the greenbelt are actually going to achieve their stated purpose, they're going to want to believe that. I'd like to believe it too and so would the huge, vast majority of people who supported the government on this greenbelt, who are becoming more disappointed every day as they discover that it isn't a permanent greenbelt, that it is a floating greenbelt, which I said all along. I introduced a private member's bill today to correct all of the problems, including that piece and all of the highways that are being built through the greenbelt, that the Liberals wouldn't accept in committee.

1610

People are becoming increasingly cynical about what has happened because of the alleged secret deals being made at these dinners etc. The reality is that highways are being built through the greenbelt. The reality is that there are serious shortcomings with the greenbelt, as passed, and the recent release of this government's draft growth strategy makes them more pronounced, because now it's written in stone in this bill that they've even added some more highways. So we're going to see more and more of the status quo. Again, I would call on the members to support sending this bill out to committee so we can see if we can talk some sense into the Liberals to fix this bill to make it actually work.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act. I just want to pick up on a comment made by my colleague from Toronto–Danforth. The comment was that we have to stop thinking about growth and start

thinking about sustainable communities. It's interesting to me. I don't think we have a choice about growth. It's estimated that in the next three decades, there are going to be four million more people moving into the GTA. So I think the issue is that we don't have a choice about whether we plan for growth or not. We must do this. We must find a way to plan for growth, and that's certainly what this bill is about.

I'm going to be sharing my time, Mr. Speaker, with my colleague from Scarborough Centre.

I just want to talk a little bit about where I was this weekend. I had occasion to drive to Orangeville through my hometown of Richmond Hill. So I was in Orangeville. I was driving through Nashville, through Kleinburg, through Maple, and it is clear to me, as someone who grew up in the 905, that there have been very few plans in place as those developments have gone in. I remember, when I was just moving away from home, when the Baif subdivision was built just south of Richmond Hill. Even at that time, those of us who'd lived in the town all our lives wondered where the plan was and who was thinking about how people were going to access services living in those communities. Well, the growth has been exponential when you look at the communities and the density.

There was an interesting article in the Star this weekend by Laurie Monsebraaten. It was about a man named John Stillich. He is a retired provincial finance expert, and his passion is public transit and urban planning. He talked about the relative densities in some of the cities around the world. There are spots in Amsterdam where the density is 23,000 people per square kilometre; in old Toronto, by contrast, 7,000 people per square kilometre. In some of the new subdivisions we're talking about, the density is 4,300 people per square kilometre. That's not sustainable.

When the member for Toronto–Danforth talks about needing to have sustainable communities, that's exactly what this piece of legislation is being put in place to provide for, and if you look at the purpose of the legislation, it says exactly that: "Making efficient use of existing infrastructure and preserving natural and agricultural resources will contribute to maximizing the benefits, and minimizing the costs, of growth." That's exactly what we need to do.

This bill provides for consultation. Section 7 ensures that there will be notice and consultation with surrounding communities and that people will have an adequate time to write submissions, to give their input.

This bill also recognizes that planning has to cross municipal boundaries, that in many cases historical municipal boundaries are not the logical boundaries for growth planning. So this bill allows for planning across those boundaries.

The other thing it does is require that the official plans of municipalities conform to the growth plan that's been put in place by the province. I think it is our responsibility as a provincial government to have an overall vision of what the growth patterns in the province should

be. In fact, it takes the responsibility away from individual councils and allows them to conform with a broader plan which is in the best interest of the people in the province. It's much like the smoking legislation. It's hard for individual municipalities, small municipalities, to make those decisions about banning smoking, whereas the provincial government has taken the right stand, and that allows municipalities to conform. This growth planning is much the same idea.

As I read this article that was in the *Star* on the weekend, and I think about my own time when I lived in the Netherlands, it is absolutely critical that we start to look to some of the models around the world, where people live high-quality lives in beautiful built form, but they are not in sprawling, low-density, unserviced environments. That's the vision this legislation puts forward. It's a plan that allows people high-quality lifestyles in well-serviced communities and allows families to have those opportunities across the province.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Mississauga Centre.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Not even close. The other side of town: Scarborough Centre.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, the other side of town: Scarborough Centre. There we go.

Mr. Duguid: The good part of the greater Toronto area.

I'm delighted to rise today to speak on Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans. This bill and the Places to Grow draft plan will, if passed, be an important part of the changes that the McGuinty government is bringing to this province. It's been almost 17 months now that the McGuinty government has been in office, and we are well on the way to bringing in many of the reforms and changes necessary to ensure Ontario's prosperity into the future, but also to preserve and enhance our quality of life. This bill, this initiative, is a very important part of this program. The Places to Grow initiative will ensure that we can accommodate, in an effective and efficient way, the growth we expect to see over the decades ahead.

Let me talk a little bit about the Scarborough experience, because we have experienced a lot of growth in the Scarborough area over the last number of years. I had the opportunity to serve in that particular community as the councillor for the city centre part of Scarborough for nine years, and I'm very proud of the growth we've seen in that area—likely the fastest-growing part of the Toronto area in particular, and one of the fastest-growing areas in the whole greater Toronto area and the entire province. We have seen my community, and the inner part of the urban part of that community, the city centre area, grow like crazy in the last number of years, and we've done it in the right way. We've done it thinking ahead; knowing that we had to have transit, so we've got the RT there to support it; knowing that this is an area where high growth should go; bridging that gap that the community originally would have had probably 10 or 15 years ago, where every body was against higher densities.

The community in my area recognized that you may not want higher densities right in the heart of your residential neighbourhood, but in areas where it's supported by transit, roads and infrastructure, you need to strive for higher densities, because that makes for better and more sensible development right across the entire community. It also creates a place to be, and that creates economic development. That's what we have seen in the Scarborough city centre area. We have seen jobs created. We have seen CLEAR Net, which is now TELUS, come in and locate their head office there. We have seen a number of condominiums go up. It's a burgeoning, beautiful community to live in, with recreation—everything you could ask for in an urban community. A lot of that came through the vision of great people like Frank Faubert, who was the former and last mayor of the city of Scarborough. So this area has developed very well, and I think this speaks well to the vision that's before us here today.

1620

This government is moving very quickly on a number of fronts.

We're moving quickly to transform our health care system, because we believe in the health of our people. We discourage people from smoking. We encourage people to eat more nutritious foods to discourage obesity. That's part of what the greenbelt is doing as well, because the greenbelt certainly improves the health of our community by reducing smog and congestion and providing green space.

We're also improving the skills and education of our people—a very important part of making sure that we have a thriving economy—by improving our classrooms, and by improving and investing in our post-secondary education system.

We're also working to enhance the prosperity of our people, and that's where this document comes in. With four million people coming to this province over the next two or three decades, we're going to need to encourage that growth. We need that growth. It's important. It's not a bad thing, but it has to go in the right place and it has to be well thought out, and if it is, we will create millions of jobs. In fact, two million jobs are estimated to be created just by that growth alone over the next three decades.

My time is running out. I just want to point to an article in the *Toronto Star* today that talks to the need for a growth plan. It's actually written by Jan Kasperski, executive director and CEO of the Ontario College of Family Physicians. She says:

“...the current body of evidence indicates serious public health problems will continue to escalate unless decisive action is taken to control urban sprawl, preserve green space, improve air quality and protect water sources.

“While we leave the policy debate to others, we are cautiously optimistic, given the Ontario government's recent actions to:

“Set aside one million new acres for a proposed greenbelt in the greater Golden Horseshoe....

“Develop a growth plan and other planning initiatives like the proposed Places to Grow Act that will play key roles in controlling sprawling growth by promoting more compact development.”

The experts have got it right on this one.

I encourage the minister to keep going. He’s showing great vision, as is our Premier. I’m very proud to support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. O’Toole: It’s a pleasure to respond to the apparent impression from the government speakers just now that only they have the answer.

If you look at the content of this bill, it’s almost—and I mean this in this chamber quite respectfully—anti-democratic. If you read it, it empowers the minister, and the minister alone, to make almost all the interpretations and ultimate decisions, when today, under the Municipal Act, despite their promise during the election, the Ontario Municipal Board is the court of resolution for disputes in planning. The very conflict is that it says—and I’ll read the section—the minister is entitled to appoint. It says in section 5, “Advice to minister: The minister may appoint one or more persons and establish one or more advisory committees, consisting of such persons as the minister appoints.”

In other words, has this got anything to do with the questions raised in the House today about the secret \$10,000 dinner at the Sorbara mansion? When they pay \$10,000 to get the ear of the minister and the Premier, it leaves me somewhat concerned about the intent of this legislation. In the growth plan itself, it says in almost every section that “the minister shall determine” the policies and goals, such as intensification. It says in section 7, with respect to notice, “as is specified by the minister.” In section (c), it says “approved by the minister.” There’s also “the minister may confer” and “the minister may appoint one or more hearing officers.”

They have taken complete control of planning, irrespective of the duly elected persons municipally and regionally. I am very concerned that even in the intent of trying to find appropriate use of land, there’s far too much government interference.

Mr. Prue: It’s a pleasure to comment on the statements made by the member from Don Valley West and the member from Scarborough Centre. I must comment, member from Scarborough Centre, that it was good to hear Frank Faubert’s name mentioned again in this Legislature. You neglected to say he was also a member of this Legislature for many years. He was my friend, and we all miss him enormously.

Going back to the bill itself, I heard the two government members speak. They are very long on saying what the bill is going to do but very short on saying what the bill is not going to do. Quite frankly, when you are going to designate growth areas, as this bill purports to do, when you are going to tell municipalities how they are going to develop, how they are going to grow, you are micromanaging them. There is very little in this bill that tells us where the government’s plans or the min-

ister’s plans are around automobiles, around highways that conduct those automobiles and produce the smog, and whether the leapfrog development that’s going to take place because of the Greenbelt Act is going to intensify automobile use. There is very little here about community designs or how we’re going to see communities, hopefully, go up rather than out. There is absolutely nothing at all being said about housing and the fact that we are going to need tens of thousands or perhaps hundreds of thousands of additional housing units for the population as it comes about.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): As mentioned by the member for Don Valley West, we must find ways that the growth development is done for the future of all Ontarians and the agricultural sector.

Lorsque je regarde le deuxième paragraphe de la note explicative de la Loi 136, c’est très clair : « Le conseil d’une municipalité, un office d’aménagement municipal ou un conseil d’aménagement qui a compétence dans une zone visée pour un plan de croissance doit modifier son plan officiel pour qu’il soit conforme au plan de croissance. »

It is clear. Also, in other words, municipalities and communities would be involved in the development of regulations under the Places to Grow Act and in the development and implementation of the growth plans themselves.

It is very important that we give the proper tools to the planning boards of all the municipalities because they are the ones, really, that know what should be done for the future of their communities. Also, they have to listen to what the people want. But one very important part of it is the preservation of the agricultural land.

At the present time, we know there is a lot of pressure from developers and farmers who would like to sell their piece of farmland at this time of year especially, with the difficulties they are going through. But we want to make sure that we do protect our agricultural land by giving the proper tools to the municipalities to plan for the future of all Ontarians.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It is my pleasure to speak to Bill 136 today in the Legislature.

The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell spoke about the preservation of farmland. This is something that the Liberal government has been talking about in their Places to Grow Act and the Greenbelt Act, how they’re going to preserve all this farmland. That is exactly what they are going to do: They are going to preserve some land. But they are not doing anything to preserve the farmer.

As a farmer from my area, Mike Donahue, said to me last week, “Ostensibly, what they’ve done here, John, is they have preserved the habitat by guaranteeing the extinction of the species.” That is what they’re doing with their greenbelt legislation and their Places to Grow. It’s very popular in Toronto, where all the people who live in the city see this story about preserving farmland

and they think, “Oh, boy, that’s wonderful.” But in fact they’re preserving acreage, much of which won’t be farmed, because the farmers simply will not be able to sustain an agricultural operation on that acreage. So what they’re going to be preserving down the road is a field not of dreams but of weeds. There will be no agriculture in much of this land because they are not doing anything to help the farmer.

While the farmers were here last week, visiting Queen’s Park and looking for support, the minister shuffled off to Ottawa. Did he come back with anything? Did he get anything from Paul Martin? Not that I’m aware of. So they’re not doing anything to help the farmer, but they want to tell the world that they’re preserving farmland. Of course, this is just another example of this government and its overriding mantra, which is, “Other than the Liberal government”—the 71 members of the Liberal Party over on that side of the House—“nobody in the province of Ontario really knows much. So leave it to us. We’ll take care of everything. Father knows best.”

1630

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Don Valley West has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Wynne: I want to thank the members for Durham, Beaches–East York, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their comments.

To the member for Durham: I just want to make the comment that he suggested that we think only we have the answer, and then he cited section 7 of the bill.

Section 7 of the bill actually allows the minister to set up advisory groups to consult on the growth plan. I don’t expect the member for Durham to understand why a government would actually put in place processes to consult, because it’s not something that that government ever did. So he doesn’t understand it at all. What this bill does is set up a process to talk to people, I say to the member for Durham, about what their best ideas are. That’s how this government functions, whatever sector we’re talking about.

To the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: We recognize the plight of the farmers. What this bill is about is sustainable communities. The fact is that we’re going to have growth in this province. Yes, we need to preserve farmland; we need to preserve green space. We’ve got to have places for people to live, and they’d better be built sensibly and with infrastructure. That’s what this plan puts in place.

I completely agree with my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell that there’s a delicate balance in terms of the provincial role in setting a vision, putting a plan in place and working with municipalities. Those official plans need to conform to that bigger vision. We’re not talking about micromanaging; we’re talking about having a vision in this province that is rational and that municipalities can then buy into with consultation. That’s what this bill is about.

To my friend from Beaches–East York: Yes, we talked about what this bill is going to do, and unfor-

tunately a piece of legislation can’t do everything. So what we know this bill is going to do is put a plan in place. That’s the cornerstone of it, that’s what we need in the GTA, and that’s why I’m pleased that our government has brought it forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to debate Bill 136. In spite of what I just heard, I would like to pat this government on the head for continuing some of the good work that was done by our government.

Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act, would probably not be under consideration right now had it not been for the leadership of the previous government, the Ontario PC government. We saw a decade of inaction by both the previous Liberal and NDP governments. We took significant steps, for example, to protect the Oak Ridges moraine, and that set the bar a little higher for these kinds of planning discussions and issues to be negotiated with the municipalities across this particular part of southern Ontario.

It’s an area referred to as the greater Golden Horseshoe. That’s an area to the southwest. It incorporates both Haldimand county and Brant county. These two counties make up half of my riding of Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, bearing in mind that half of that area is under water, under Lake Erie.

I do have a caveat, however. The way this particular government has written the bill, I would not consider it healthy. It essentially holds municipalities back. It holds them back from controlling their own land use planning initiatives and holds back their own particular agenda. The counties that I represent and neighbouring counties do have different agendas based on the soil type, for that matter, and based on the nature of the farming that goes on in those counties. For example, Oxford county, just to the north of me, has a far different approach to land use planning, as do the smaller fruit and vegetable farms and tobacco farms in Norfolk county.

I do understand this bill was brought in to coincide with or to complement, if you will, the Greenbelt Act by setting out the rules surrounding growth plans, rules to curb urban sprawl. Places to Grow is very similar, in my mind, to the Smart Growth legislation introduced a number of years ago. However, as I’ve indicated, I feel it’s far more restrictive in what it allows our municipalities—our partners—to do when it comes to land use planning.

This act does seem to break one or two promises, a Liberal promise. I remember the Liberals before the election telling us they were going to give municipalities more say. I put forward that this legislation has the potential to give municipalities less say when it comes to land-use planning. I think I recall the Liberals saying they would also scrap the Ontario Municipal Board. I’m not sure where that came from, and maybe that will come down the road.

I mentioned the county next to me, Brant county. I share the southern half of Brant county in my riding. Brant county’s staff are concerned about the intentions of

this bill and where this would lead us. The warning was out in Brantford city hall with respect to Places to Grow, that it will “give the province considerable authority to designate growth plan areas and to prepare goals, strategies, policies and criteria regarding a wide range of planning and infrastructure matters that municipal official plans will have to conform to.” They are concerned about this direction. Again, they are concerned about what has happened to municipal autonomy. They are concerned about the balance of provincial and municipal governance.

Mr. O’Toole: Micromanagement.

Mr. Barrett: I hear the expression “micromanagement”; we’re not in the policy of managing, let alone micromanaging, as policymakers. Our job is to steer the boat but not to get right in there and roll up our sleeves and row the boat.

The city of Brantford staff feel that while the province may think that local government is important, they consider themselves as now being secondary. Further, Bill 136, in my mind, can be seen as another mechanism for this government to flex its majority position as it attempts to accomplish its goals.

We have a plan before us to create 720,000 acres under greenbelt. I have attended some of those meetings and it goes without saying that’s obviously a controversial and perhaps misdirected initiative.

Mr. O’Toole: Ram it through.

Mr. Barrett: Again, I hear in the audience the term “ramming it through.” Greenbelt doesn’t address concerns of farmers I’ve talked to. It doesn’t address their concerns about agricultural diversification; it doesn’t seem to present an economic plan; it certainly does not present a transportation plan or a transportation strategy for those communities that are affected.

I sincerely hope that this proposed legislation, as it draws in the counties of Brant and Haldimand, would seriously take a look at transportation economics and the need for transportation—obviously the mid-peninsula corridor, as it plans to continue west from the Buffalo area, skirting the northern boundary of Haldimand county, approaching Brant county. The potential of that mid-pen. corridor is very significant as far as any economic benefits for both Haldimand county and Brant county.

Last Saturday night, I attended the annual meeting of the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture. The Niagara North Federation of Agriculture was represented there. The Niagara North Federation of Agriculture is worried that development restrictions would create barriers for many Niagara growers, farmers who rely on that agricultural diversification to essentially ensure the future viability of their farms, something that any farmer thinks about as they see the next generation make plans to continue in farming in an economically feasible way.

1640

Ironically enough, OFA, here last week in great numbers as we know, has concerns with Bill 136. They use the phrase that it is the equivalent of expropriation

without compensation. That’s something we have been hearing a great deal of with respect to the greenbelt. Again, because we do not have property rights in Ontario, the potential is there as well if this type of legislation opens the door for that kind of activity. Of course, these farmers, members of OFA, agree with the principle of preserving farmland but they are concerned when they lose the value of their land. What impact will that have on my Brant county farmers? What impact will that have on my Haldimand county farmers now that they have been designated as coming under the umbrella of the GGH, the greater Golden Horseshoe?

OFA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, is also concerned that this government’s attempts at preserving and protecting agricultural lands through the imposition of the greenbelt surrounding the GTA will negatively impact truly sincere attempts at stewardship, attempts to preserve farmland, to protect agricultural land in those areas next to the GTA, municipalities now included under Bill 136 in the greater Golden Horseshoe. There is a concern, and I think this goes without saying.

There’s another criticism from OFA in response to the Golden Horseshoe greenbelt: Farmers should not bear the responsibility for creating open land, parkland, land to provide outdoor recreational activities, open spaces for urban people, without any kind of consideration or trade-off or any discussion of compensation.

My colleague from Erie–Lincoln has made a number of points. There is an oft-repeated phrase: In order to save farmland, you have to save the farmer. We heard that loud and clear last Wednesday and we will hear that yet again this coming Wednesday, March 9, as the tractors and not only farmers but other rural landowners and rural residents arrive here at Queen’s Park. I sincerely hope the Minister of Municipal Affairs will be present to speak with his constituents about Bill 136 and some of the ramifications it may have for these people who are on the land.

There are farmers here today in the precinct who have come to the conclusion that they really have no place in the hearts and minds of this particular government.

“Leapfrogging” is an expression we hear constantly and we hear yet again in discussions of this particular piece of legislation. I guess you would refer to leapfrogging as what we see in the Caledonia area, just south of Hamilton in Haldimand county. There has been a great deal of interest this winter in open farmland south of Caledonia for developers.

Developers and homebuilders are concerned as well about this particular piece of legislation and the greenbelt legislation and their effect on the price of homes: the price of existing homes, the price of new homes. Mark Parsons of the Greater Toronto Home Builders’ Association says that it will be harder for first-time homebuyers to afford a residence. My concern is, to what extent would this extend to Brantford, Brant county; to what extent would this extend to Caledonia and Hagersville in Haldimand county as they come under the influence of Bill 136 and the map that’s drawn and labelled as the greater Golden Horseshoe area?

Economics does come into play when policy is developed. Obviously, when you restrict the supply of anything, whether it be homes, vehicles or food, the price rises. That occurs whether demand remains the same or grows: If you restrict the supply, the price goes up.

We all know there are projections of four million people emigrating to the greater Toronto area, the Golden Horseshoe area—by extension, now the newly-named greater Golden Horseshoe area. I do urge this government to come up with a plan. We need a plan that ensures adequate long-term supply of land for housing. That can be done as part of this bill. I heard that consultation will be part of this process, and I sincerely hope that, with this one, the government does take its time. We cannot have legislation that destroys the dreams of young couples, for example. They work hard. They have a vision of building a home or having a home built; they have a vision of children playing in a backyard.

There is an issue that's very important with any discussion of this particular piece of legislation, the greenbelt legislation or any government involvement in land-use planning, and that is the issue of property rights. We live in a province where land grabs have happened in the past. We know that there have been a number of court proceedings and planning hearings that have reiterated the rights of landowners to go about using and enjoying their property. However, we also know that this particular Ontario Legislature has the power to override basic property rights.

I certainly consider property rights as part of our heritage. It has been enshrined in British common law. People come to this province, they come to the GTA and they come to Canada seeking the right to own and to enjoy property. In many cases, it's something they did not have the opportunity to do in their home countries. Private ownership of property and the development of that property has been a key incentive for the very significant economic growth we have been blessed with, not only in the province of Ontario, but across the Dominion of Canada.

Now we have a situation with four million economic immigrants, if you will, coming to Toronto, coming to the GTA, coming to the Golden Horseshoe and, to use the terminology of this particular legislation, arriving in the greater Golden Horseshoe. What do we offer them as an incentive to strive to acquire and enjoy property?

We know the other side of the argument: There is a requirement to build hydro corridors for power towers, to widen streets, to establish landfill sites and to build our roads and railways, and certainly there's a requirement to protect environmentally sensitive land—in many cases, to protect it from misdirected development. However, governments have neglected to provide property owners with a fair hearing, in my opinion, to justify infringing on their inherent right to enjoy property and their right to have appropriate compensation for any devaluation of their land or loss as a result of economic growth, development activity and government initiatives. You cannot remove the value of someone's property, in my view, and at the same time not offer just compensation for that loss.

I made mention of the tradition, the heritage that we have enjoyed over the centuries, with respect to the use of property. Property rights go back to the year 1215, to the Magna Carta, the foundation of our common law in both Canada and Ontario. The recognition of property rights in the Magna Carta is fairly straightforward, and I wish to quote—this goes back to 1215: “No constable or other royal official shall take corn or other movable goods from any man without immediate payment, unless the seller voluntarily offers postponement of this.” So if the king takes a man's corn—and that's the old English expression for wheat or grain—the king pays. Regrettably, we have lost that right.

1650

I would like to mention that I attempted to address this issue about nine and a half years ago, in 1995. My first private member's bill was titled Property Rights Statute Law Amendment Act. I'm heartened that in the meetings that I attend in the Toronto area, primarily meetings that have been initiated around the debate on the greenbelt, I hear a great deal of discussion about the right to own land and the right to own property and not have a government taking it without compensation.

On Wednesday this week, we'll be hearing considerably more about this from those who have organized what's referred to as the rural revolution, sponsored in part by the Lanark Landowners Association. They are forwarding a number of resolutions to this Legislature. I don't have time to read two of the resolutions—I could quote in part—and a third resolution specifically relates to the greenbelt and, by extension, to Bill 136.

In the 37 seconds remaining, I will quote in part the first resolution that will be presented next Wednesday. The rural revolution essentially demands a request of the Ontario Legislative Assembly that “the right to own, use, enjoy and the opportunity to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy. However, this right does not supersede or allow an individual to cause harm or injury to another. Ownership rights shall not be abridged or usurped without due process of law and shall include full, fair and timely compensation.”

I'm out of time, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Let me say in response to the concerns and comments that have been made by the member that the fact of the matter is, what we have before us in Bill 136 is really enabling legislation, so it's really hard to tell what will happen and we are all operating in a vacuum as a result. So much of the bill, in fact, will be dealt with later and so very little of it appears here in the actual legislation. What needs to be done, really, is going to have to be a matter of both public hearings—that's clear—and also a significant amount of work between affected municipalities and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

What is disconcerting is that the enabling legislation itself really doesn't set out some of the criteria that you'd think would be set out if we're talking about growth—how to have consistent growth, how to have growth that

is sustainable and how to have growth that actually enhances communities. If you look through the bill, you will see that there really aren't any criteria that are consistent for planning across watershed boundaries, across political boundaries, those being municipal boundaries. What you have here is the potential for the plans, as they start to develop, to really be developed at the whim and vagary of different municipal councils, which may or may not result in the government achieving some of the objectives that I hear government members say they want to achieve.

Those are the general principles with respect to criteria that you'd want to have in the bill itself and not wait to have developed in regulation, where in fact those could be changed at any cabinet meeting any Wednesday of the month. So those issues around criteria, to ensure consistency, to have sustainable growth, are things that are really lacking. I think it should be put into the bill so that people have a clear idea of what we're dealing with and what their expectations are before some of those more detailed negotiations get underway with the municipalities that are going to be impacted.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): We call it "questions and comments," so in my two minutes I just wanted to reflect on a few questions. In my mind, I would ask: How do you accommodate four million additional people settling in Ontario over the next three decades? How do you promote a balanced, rational approach to Ontario's future growth? How do you plan for growth in simple terms around the Golden Horseshoe and throughout Ontario? How do you provide for proper housing, for proper commercial development and for proper farming communities within the boundaries of Ontario?

I know that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant spoke about this a bit and mentioned the Magna Carta and the rights that are provided for in there. I say to those questions that the answers are all contained in the act in front of us today, the Places to Grow Act, 2005. Clearly, there is a process in place for proper growth. There are "notice" sections provided for, where the minister will provide notice where our growth plan will take place. It also allows for the minister to confer with municipal or local officials on where and how and when a growth plan will occur. Instead of removing rights, I think this empowers communities, empowers those who make planning decisions as to how best to build our province of Ontario.

We recently passed the greenbelt legislation, and we created a greenbelt around the Golden Horseshoe. Once you do that, the obvious next step is to decide what to do within the Golden Horseshoe and outside of the Golden Horseshoe. This act clearly does that. It's an intelligent way to deal with planning in Ontario, and I'm pleased to support it. I think it has all the right checks and balances in it. If you read it carefully, you'll see that the sections here cover all of the different checks and balances required to make Ontario work properly.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and make a few comments on the comments of the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant on Bill 136. First of all, I think what I'd like to point out to the people here in the House today, particularly the people from Mr. Barrett's riding, is his ability to support the rural economy and the citizens of rural Ontario. Over and over again, at our caucus meetings, as chair of our rural caucus session, as our lead on the OFA delegation that attended Queen's Park here last week as well as our lead on the Lanark Landowners Association, which will be visiting us again this week, Mr. Barrett has been our contact person and has worked unbelievable hours in trying to force the government to listen to what he is concerned about around property rights.

We heard that in the anti-smoking legislation. There's nothing wrong with an MPP who actually does represent his constituents. Mr. Barrett represents many of the people in the tobacco industry, and they have some very serious concerns around property rights, around compensation for their product. They're not asking everybody in Ontario to start smoking; they're asking the government to compensate them properly. Now we're seeing the same sorts of things coming out in—I guess we're going to call Bill 136 the new Magna Carta? I don't know. That's what I heard in the last speech.

Let's face it: There are still real problems with the greenbelt legislation, and I just want to compliment my colleague for a speech well prepared. I want to really compliment him on how proud I am, as a member of the PC caucus, to work with Toby Barrett, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. He sticks up for the rights of the citizens of rural Ontario. That is something that the government across the way is simply not doing. Mr. Barrett, I congratulate you for doing that.

Mr. Prue: It's a pleasure to comment on the statements made by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. He speaks about property rights. What he had to say was well-thought-out, but I would caution members who might be influenced by that. He quoted the Magna Carta, a wonderful piece of work that was done—

Mr. Yakabuski: Back when Norm Sterling was just a rookie.

Mr. Prue: When Norm Sterling was still a rookie, as you said.

It's when the nobles got together and put the sword to a very weak king and made him do things he otherwise wouldn't have done. But that law is no longer extant; if it were, we'd all be getting at least one jug of free ale a month, which is in the Magna Carta, something I think some of us could support. It was done for the noble people, not for the common people.

1700

In fact, in Canada, we are bound not by the provisions of the Magna Carta, as important a historical document as that was, but by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms came from considerable consultation in this country. It was signed by nine of the 10 provinces, with Quebec being the only

province not to do so. The government of Canada did not allow in the Constitution for the provision of property rights. It is singularly absent. So for any discussion to take place in this Legislature, I think people need to know that property rights are not part of the Constitution. In fact, people are not allowed to do with their property precisely and exactly what they wish when it does not conform with the broader public good. You are allowed to sell it, but you are not allowed to develop it or use it in ways which are deleterious or harmful to society at large. The only thing that is allowed for under the Constitution and under the laws is that you be adequately compensated should the government decide to take your property. I think the argument around property rights is not one for this legislation but for another day.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Barrett: I do thank the members opposite for commenting in the context of some of my little bit of work on property rights. Yes, the Magna Carta does go back I guess it would be more than 800 years, to 1215. It may well be a situation where, 800 years from now, our descendants may be discussing the Places to Grow legislation with the same admiration that we have for the Magna Carta. That would be the year 2800. Whether parliamentarians refer back to today's debate, we can only speculate.

As I mentioned, I did run out of time. I attended a meeting with the member for Durham in Port Perry. There was a resolution presented that evening. This resolution will be coming into this Legislature this coming Wednesday. I do hope the Minister of Municipal Affairs will be here for that one.

I quote it in part: "Private property shall not be rezoned, re-designated or reclassified in any manner that limits the natural and private use of property without the owner's prior written consent and approval. When, in the course of society's advancement, it becomes necessary in the public interest to abridge this fundamental right to private use, then full, fair and timely compensation shall be awarded."

I really don't see anything wrong with that principle. It's a principle that has been contained within English common law. I look forward to that resolution coming into this House. It's a resolution that I feel has a great deal of bearing on the legislation we're debating today.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Yakabuski: He was having his free jug of ale.

Mr. Prue: Yes. We were discussing the provisions of Magna Carta. Sorry for the time in standing to my feet.

I'd like to talk about this bill. Bill 136, entitled the Places to Grow Act, is an enabling piece of legislation. I'd just like to go through some of the provisions so that people who are watching, or perhaps some of the members who haven't had an opportunity to read it yet, might understand what is the purport of the bill. It designates growth. It says where growth shall occur. It sets up priority urban centres where growth needs to be

managed. Those centres, without naming them all, are probably in and around the Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa areas, where there is already significant development taking place; places like Durham, Mississauga and York region to the north of Toronto. These are called priority centres. There are also emerging centres that have been designated as slightly different under this bill. That would probably, in my view, be cities like Kitchener-Waterloo or Guelph that are starting to expand in their own right and starting to build subdivisions of houses outwards from those cities that have been there, quite literally, a long, long period of time.

It allows for the growth plans and it says what the growth plans are going to be in these urban centres, whether they be priority or emerging centres. It talks about things like intensification, how fast we should allow the number of people per square kilometre to increase, how high the buildings might have to be to accommodate that, how dense the property might have to be, whether or not there is sufficient and suitable parkland. It talks about the land supply and the finite amount of land that is available in the urban centres, particularly in southern Ontario and in the places that have experienced the most rapid growth over the last 20 to 25 years. One need only go in any direction from this very building, to the east, west or north—you would have to go 20 or 30 kilometres to run into land that has not been developed or is not soon to be developed. It is exponential growth that has taken place in the Toronto area, certainly in the last few years.

The old city of Toronto—that is, the city before the megacity—had about 800,000 people at the turn of the century. If you look at the number of people who live in that old city of Toronto today, it's certainly not much greater than that. It is still under a million people, with all of the development that takes place in increasing waves, first of all into the East York and York areas and later into Scarborough, Etobicoke, North York and, after that, in an expansion wave, into Mississauga, York region and Durham. Now it appears to be going much further out than that, the way east to Clarington, and it just goes out and out and out.

Do we need something that talks about reeling that in, trying to define whether or not this is the kind of plan we want? I think we do. This growth plan will talk about planning, talk about community design, but one thing that is missing in this whole plan and something that I hope the members opposite will deal with when this goes to committee—should it go to committee—is the whole question of affordable housing. Where are we going to have the people live in what is a sprawling metropolis that now encompasses some five million people in Toronto and the GTA, and will probably grow by leaps and bounds some more? It has all been largely within my lifetime that we've seen this happen, and I suppose, by the time I die, I'm going to see a lot more of it take place. Where are these people going to live and what are we going to choose and what's this growth plan going to do unless it allows for the provision of affordable housing?

It's one thing what is happening today: Drive up Dufferin Street and see what was farmland five or 10 years ago is row after row after row of what in Toronto would be referred to as monster homes. I don't think one of them is under 4,000 square feet. I doubt very much you will find one under 4,000 square feet, and they are all occupying land that only five to 10 years ago was beautiful agricultural land that grew the food that Ontarians ate, and it's not there any more.

Who can afford those 4,000-square-foot homes? I don't know. Certainly not people I know. I don't know how young families afford it. I don't know how new immigrants afford it. I don't know—

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: I do know that there are many professionals, I suppose, who have been able to mortgage themselves, now that mortgages are low, and have been able to afford it. But is that the kind of city we want? I would think that is not the kind of city we want here in Toronto, and I think it's probably not the kind of city we would want in Kitchener-Waterloo or Hamilton or sOttawa or any other place.

I want the government to take a very hard look at this particular act, Places to Grow. There is no provision in the act for affordable housing. It seems to me that if we are going to actually see affordable housing, we cannot allow the sprawl that is taking place, because within that sprawl there is no provision at all for affordable housing. There are no people there of modest or poor income. They can't afford to live there. There are no jobs for them to live there; they do not have the money for a car to commute to where there are jobs. In fact, the communities are very different than the communities you will find in urbanized areas like Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa or Thunder Bay, just to give some examples.

1710

There is also nothing in the bill that talks about environmental assessments, and I think this is a key thing. Within the body of this bill, if we are going to allow the government to designate growth, we have to talk about environmental assessments so that we know, when housing is built, when factories are built, when whatever is built in increasing waves outside of the urban areas, that we have done everything possible to mitigate environmental problems.

In fact, we have done everything possible to clean up some of the old environmental mistakes. You can go to towns like Brantford and see the brownfields around them. You can go to places in Hamilton and see the brownfields and, even here in Toronto, the brownfields that exist along the lake in what was once great industrial land. There needs to be something in this bill, and I hope when it goes to committee there is, that talks about and deals with environmental assessments.

In the United Kingdom they have embarked on a similar type of plan, and I am heartened to see what their plan did. It's much better than the plan that's being proposed here. It says they have a goal that by the year 2008, which is only three years from now, they will have

a 60% marker, where you cannot build in the land until it is 60% developed. Within a city, 60% of the developable land must be built within the official plans before the developers can go out and try to develop something new. This bill sets the standard much lower. It sets it at 40%, and the year is 2015.

So the United Kingdom will be at 60% in three years, and if everything goes according to what this bill says, we will be at 40% by the year 2015. What that means, in a nutshell, is that when the 40% trigger is met in a place like Richmond Hill—let's go a little bit further outside of Toronto—when the 40% of urbanization has taken place, it allows the developers under this bill to free up another section of land. Is that intensification enough? I don't think it is enough. I would ask the framers of this bill and the government opposite that when you're looking at that, come to the conclusion that it simply is not enough.

You have to take a firm belief in what you want to see in this country. The farmers were here last week, God bless them, and they'll be here again in a few more days. They have a message to tell us. They want to see the farmlands preserved. But to be quite blunt and honest, the number of people required to farm in Canada is not any higher today than it was 10, 15 or 20 years ago. The number of farms is down; the number of farmers farming them is down. Increasingly, people are choosing to live in the urban areas. It is our cities that are having the exponential growth; it is not the farming country. It is the cities where people are choosing to come to live.

That is not unique to Canada. It is absolutely solid throughout the entire world. If you go to China, you will see the people are leaving the farms to go to the cities. If you go to India, you'll see they are leaving farms to go to the cities. You'll see that in Africa, in Europe, in Australasia, literally everywhere throughout the world. Canada is not unique; the United States is the same. People are leaving farm country and migrating to the cities. The number of children who stay behind to look after the farm—it's usually one son or one daughter who stays behind and the others migrate out. The farms have to be large in order to sustain the families. They can't be the small places they were just a generation ago.

People also come to the cities, I think, because cities help to make them feel free. There's an old expression from the Middle Ages, "City air makes you free." You might wonder about that because city air tends to be a little more polluted, oftentimes, than country air. But think about it for a moment. When you moved to the city, you suddenly found that you felt free. You felt free to do what you wanted. You felt free to experience what the city had to offer. There was a synergy that grew with the population. There were jobs available. There was a livelihood to be made. The arts were expanded. Go to this city, go to Hamilton, to Ottawa, to any of them and see the lively art scenes, the restaurant scenes, all of the new cultural and ethnic traditions that you may not see in small-town Ontario but that are so commonplace today in our cities.

You have the opportunity for transit. You have the opportunity to move around without the necessity and

cost of owning a car. You have the opportunity to experience what a city will offer, because it's large, because it's concentrated.

We have seen a great change take place in the cities of this province in just the last little while. I can remember when these cities had a much more vibrant local citizenry who used to be involved in the life of the cities. All this predated amalgamation, which has done one thing, and that is, destroyed the democracies that many cities enjoyed. Many of the larger cities and even some of the smaller ones will have a contingent coming down, I understand, on Wednesday from the now city of Kawartha Lakes, again hoping to see the minister, to have him live up to the promise that the Liberals made to de-amalgamate them prior to the last election.

People come to cities for access to services. I look at what is contained within this bill, and there are a number of things that have not been done.

I had an opportunity to read a wonderful little paper by the Neptis Foundation. It's a response to the Ontario government's discussion paper, *Places to Grow*. The Neptis Foundation set out fairly well, on just a page, what they think this bill should include, and I would like to echo some of their comments. I give them full credit for coming to these conclusions, not myself, although I think, given time, I might have come to some of the same conclusions. What they talk about is what is going to be needed to strengthen this bill—not to throw it out, not to abolish it, not to say it's horrible—to strengthen the bill so that it works for all Ontarians. They talk about doing a number of things, and I'd just like to go through some of them here.

The first one is, they believe this bill should have regulatory and fiscal measures contained within it so that any city, any urban municipality, anybody who is subject to the bill itself would have to have a policy on urbanization that coincides with the ability of transit to service that urbanization. If a city chose to develop a new block of land that is contained within its borders, they would have to ensure that there were bus routes into it before the houses were actually built. They would have to ensure that there was infrastructure there so that people wouldn't be going there without schools, libraries and other things, which happens so often in times of rapid urbanization. I see that very often when I go north on Dufferin Street. I see row after row of houses, and I know the kids are having to be bussed a considerable distance, rather than walking to a neighbourhood school that they would enjoy if they lived in a more urban environment.

We need to identify the areas for re-urbanization. Those areas have not been set out clearly. We have set the areas where we don't want to see urbanization—in the moraine and the greenbelt—but we have not set out those areas which need to be re-urbanized. That needs to be done, particularly in brownfield sites and older industrial areas in older cities. There are a great many brownfield sites that, if they could be remediated, would be ideal to house people and jobs and commerce. Some of those exist right in our very backyards.

If you are from Toronto, I invite you to go down to the port lands and look at acre after acre that is sitting there vacant, and has been for many years. The city of Toronto did want to develop them—it was called Ataratiri—but they lost their shirt. I think the province needs to be involved in some of those areas. The technology has changed. The ability to remediate has changed. Maybe the time has come for lands like Ataratiri, or lands in other cities that have what one would call urban blight, to be revitalized.

We need to halt the expansion of urban boundaries. This bill is going to do nothing if we allow municipalities to expand their urban boundaries, to eat up more farmland outside of those boundaries, because as soon as that happens, you can rest assured the developers will be there, building house after house. That needs to be stopped. We need to make sure that future growth is contingent upon infrastructure; that is, the infrastructure must be built before the growth is allowed.

1720

In all ways, we need to reduce automobile use, either by transit, which I think everybody would agree with, but we also need to look at other options. We can transport by rail at a fraction of the cost and with much less danger, many times, to the environment. Nobody has been talking about rail transportation. Rail is a biggie. We need to get back onto the Great Lakes seaway. We can transmit things across the seaway and across the Great Lakes to various places in Ontario much cheaper and with much less harm to the environment than building more highways.

We need to look at changing where people park. Drive outside the city and you will see parking lots, where people can commute: catch a bus or sometimes a GO train to downtown Toronto or to where they work. We need to put in many more of those and discourage people from driving into the inner cities.

We've seen what London, England, has recently done. I know it's controversial and I don't know whether we're ready to do that yet, but they have put a tax on driving downtown. Unless you live downtown, if you drive downtown and you don't have a special licence, you've got to pay a couple of dollars a day for the privilege of doing it. It has really helped to ease the congestion in the downtown area. More and more people are hopping on the tube, as the British call it, and fewer and fewer are choosing to pollute by driving down singly in an automobile.

We need a region-wide system of protection of the green lands, whether or not they are in the greenbelt area. All green lands are valuable to all Ontarians. We need to protect farmland no matter where it exists. Even if it is 20 or 30 or 50 miles away from an urban environment, we need to protect the green space and the farmlands in that location as well for future generations.

Last, but not least, we need to monitor the programs. We need to monitor what is happening through this legislation to land consumption: the average densities that are being obtained in each one of the urban areas, the

activity rate; that is, the rate between the number of jobs created and the number of people who are living in a particular area. We need to look at the transportation supply and monitor it, the modal split between communities, the commuting costs and how much it costs when you build homes and people have to commute long distances to work; and last, but not least, the infrastructure and investment levels within each of the municipalities, to make sure they have the wherewithal to build the sewers, streets, libraries, parks and hospitals before we allow additional people to live there.

If the bill can accomplish all of this—and I hope it can after committee hearings—if there can be safeguards built into it, then the bill will be a good bill. If the bill does nothing but talk about lofty platitudes, then the bill is not going to accomplish what we, as Ontarians, expect. We have an opportunity at this time to really define what we want in our cities. It is an opportunity that I hope will not go wanting.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I enjoyed listening to the remarks of my friend from Beaches–East York. Although he had some positive things to say about the bill, I don't think he has recognized how far-reaching Bill 136 is. I think all of us in the political game know that far too often governments of all stripes are too worried about tomorrow's headlines. This bill looks decades down the road to say, "How can Ontario deal with an increasing population and the strains it's going to put on us and our infrastructure?"

As a very proud representative of Waterloo region, I know my region, which will be directly affected by 136, has adapted this type of thinking. My understanding is that in the mid-1970s, about 30 years ago, the region started to look at planning and how they could deal with shifts in population, growth and infrastructure. We in Waterloo region have been at the forefront of this, one of the pioneers. In June 2003, the region came forward with a growth management strategy. We're projecting that over the next few years 250,000 people will move to our region.

So when you sit down with a group like the region of Waterloo and you talk about Bill 136, what you find is unqualified support for it. As a municipality, they're faced with all sorts of problems and all sorts of challenges, and they need tools from the provincial government such as those that are contained in the Places to Grow Act.

In fact, Ken Seiling, our regional chair, came forward when this bill came out. In the time remaining, I'd like to share a quote that he put out in a press release: "I fully support the direction the government is taking to ensure we better manage growth in this province. Without this leadership we will only see further environmental degradation and an erosion in our quality of life. This reinforces the work being done in Waterloo region."

So I'd just like to say, in representing a community that will be affected by this, that it stands 100% behind this bill.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm glad to rise to debate the comments of my colleagues on Bill 136.

The concern that has been brought up in debate and that I have as well, as an opposition member, is the degree to which the government is taking extraordinary powers behind the closed door of the minister's office. Certainly, Dalton McGuinty, in opposition, campaigned upon respecting municipalities and giving greater authority to municipal leaders. But in office, the opposite has taken place, including in Bill 136. One of the chief concerns that we have, as an opposition, is the ability of the minister to force changes in the official plans of the municipalities. This is reminiscent of Bill—

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Bill 26.

Mr. Hudak: Bill 26. I thank my colleague from York North.

Bill 26, as you recall, gave the minister the ability to declare a provincial interest in a matter before the OMB. So a simple zoning order change or some change in a plan gave the minister the ability to declare a provincial interest and then take that back behind closed doors to the minister's office and cabinet. What made matters worse is, there were no qualifications on that. There didn't have to be any particular reasons given. Time frames were absent from the legislation as well. So there was an extraordinary assumption of power by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

It's similar in the greenbelt legislation as well: an extraordinary regime of planning that the minister can put on to municipalities and property owners within a municipality. So while the Dalton McGuinty Liberals campaigned on expanding powers to their municipal partners, in reality, in Bill 136, in 135, in 26 and in source water, it has been directly the opposite.

As an aside, Roger Anderson, the chair of AMO, said to me one time that he wonders why municipalities are going to be in planning at all when the province is taking all that authority into Queen's Park.

Ms. Martel: In response to the comments made by my colleague from Beaches–East York, I'm glad he identified that what is missing, obviously, from this legislation is affordable housing.

It's not only affordable housing that's missing with respect to being a core element of sustainability of communities; there are other things that are missing as well. For example, the legislation, as it's currently drafted, states that a growth plan may—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. If those things aren't contained or if the plans are not taking those into consideration as a matter of course—that they shall be considered; that they shall be part of any growth plan—then I can tell you that you're going to see affordable housing either not being developed at all or being developed in a fashion that I would describe as a ghetto one, which will not in the best interests of any community, including the people who live there and the

people who are close to the neighbourhoods and the people who really need to be assured by this government, which made very significant promises on affordable housing, that their needs will be met and they would be able to live in affordable housing that's close to local schools, that's close to shopping, that's close to public transit and that's close to all the amenities all of us want to be close to and be able to access when we live in a community. Those things, right now, are at the discretion of those who are developing the plan. Frankly, if we're going to make any headway at all, for example, with respect to affordable housing, those are things that cannot be at their discretion. They have to be included in any plan that is being developed.

Secondly, my colleague talked a lot about investment in rail, and I would also include investment in public transit. If you want to be able to deal with sprawl and with all those people on the road, you have to make a significant investment in these things, and I haven't seen that kind of financial investment yet by this government.

1730

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I am very pleased to speak to this debate. I always like to respond to the member from Beaches–East York. It's a pleasure to listen to him. He is always thorough and thoughtful.

I have to talk a little bit about the sprawl issue. I have witnessed over the last 10 years a paving over of Ontario that has been indiscriminate and quite frankly unhealthy. Even the family physicians of Ontario will tell you that what we have been living through is unhealthy. If you were driving back from cottage country, it used to take a lot longer to get back to the city. Now you get back to the city very quickly, but then it takes forever to get through the city, the endless city that goes on and on. There is nothing beautiful about this city, there is nothing healthy about sitting there in traffic, and there is nothing productive about it. There is nothing to recommend that kind of growth. So we need to start thinking about these things and planning them.

That is exactly what we're doing with Places to Grow, with the greenbelt, with the heritage act. They all come together in a plan: a plan for the future and one that will make this province a place where people do want to grow up, and that has some sense to it.

We talk about infrastructure and the need for planning for transportation, which is quite true, and I agree with you on the rail thing. However, I would like to see more people being able to walk from their homes to their work. If you are building up communities, there is more likelihood that you can live and work within the same community. That is something that used to be and that has long, long gone by, and we need to get back to that. I have spent many, many years on the highways and byways between Toronto and Hamilton and beyond, and I can tell you that it sucks the life out of you if you have to drive along and just look at that endless sprawl, endless lights, endless concrete. It is not healthy; it's not humane; it's not sane. This is a start to getting things back on a sane track.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Beaches–East York has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Prue: I would like to thank the members from Kitchener Centre, Erie–Lincoln, Nickel Belt and Stoney Creek for their thoughtful comments. You have all talked about different things, and in two minutes one can't really do much justice to it.

But I agree with the member from Kitchener Centre that we need to look at planning. The reality is, I am not convinced that this bill yet gets to where we are going to look strongly enough at the whole planning exercise. I do acknowledge that Kitchener is at the forefront and that in fact many urban centers are looking very strongly at how to contain sprawl. Kitchener is doing a good job, but so are many others in Ontario.

To the member from Erie–Lincoln, who talked about the cities' authorities, I agree that you cannot, on one hand, say to the cities, "We're going to give you authority," and then, on the other, micromanage them. I don't believe that this bill, quite frankly, goes that far. The cities need the authority, but what they need before authority is the money to accomplish what they have already built and to preserve what they have already built.

To the member from Nickel Belt, affordable housing is absolutely key. We cannot hope to expand our municipalities and the number of people who live in them, the four million who are expected to join us in the next 30 years, without a provision for affordable housing.

To the member from Stoney Creek, you are right about the traffic congestion. It is only when you almost get to where you're going that you can't get there. I hope that people will start to take up walking and cycling, as they are in some cities.

One last comment on the heritage act: I sit here perplexed day after day after day in not seeing the heritage act come back for third and final reading. Where is it? I am getting increasingly nervous that if this House is prorogued at some point between now and May, the heritage act may die on the order paper.

Ms. Mossop: I won't let it happen.

Mr. Prue: All right.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure today to join the debate on proposed Bill 136. I will be sharing my time, the remainder of our time, with the member from Ottawa–Orléans.

Growth and urban sprawl have been huge issues in my community of Oakville. Simply put, there do not appear to have been any plans at the local level or the senior levels of government to adequately deal with that growth in a sensible manner.

When you look at some of the issues we were all talking about during the last election—such things as schools, the environment, green space, health care, hospitals, air quality—this bill that we have before us, the Places to Grow Act, brings all those issues together. It wraps them all up pretty neatly and starts us down the road on a path that I think will lead to a much better com-

munity, not only for Oakville but for all the communities in Ontario.

Oakville is a community that's at the peak of its growth. It has been dealing with the pressures of growth for quite some time and continues to deal with them. The council is constantly trying to wrestle with growth issues. As a result of that, the residents of my community understand growth. They understand the benefits of growth: the jobs it brings, the housing for young families, new investment, the migration to Ontario from the rest of Canada, the immigration to Ontario from countries outside of Canada. But from their personal experience, they have seen that a lot of this growth that has taken place has been poorly planned and poorly managed. There has been endless sprawl, gridlock. Somebody told me—I think it's in the document—that our rush hour is now officially 13 hours long. What used to be a rush hour is approaching a rush day. That is just something I don't think any community can live with.

When you look at the inadequate schools that our children and our families have had to deal with in recent years, at the lack of hospital facilities and the lack of transit, you can see why there is a real need for a serious plan that all municipalities can co-operate with and can adhere to that will allow southern Ontario to begin to develop in a way in which all of us would like to see it develop.

One of the cheapest tricks or stunts that I have ever seen politicians, at all levels, pull in recent years goes something like this: It's where a ratepayer stands up and expresses concern over the green space preservation in their community or the lack of community services. The next thing you know, the politicians are responding and telling that person who is doing the complaining that they don't understand the system, they are anti-growth, they don't care about jobs, they don't care about homes for young people, when exactly the opposite is true. They do care about all those things. They care about their community. What is really happening is that the politicians, the bureaucrats and the planners haven't been doing their job properly.

I believe this is a way that allows us to apply the sort of logic our constituents expect us to apply to planning and growth issues. It allows us to apply that logic in a sensible manner.

I am proud to say that this government, after the plan was released for the first time, listened to my community. If you look at the maps that have been issued, when the map first came out, it referred to downtown Oakville as being a growth area. Anyone who knows Oakville knows that downtown Oakville is, sadly, one of very few communities in Ontario that still has a fully functioning, economically viable downtown heritage area, which has been intensified already. As a result of information that I was able to bring to the ministry's attention and that our council was able to bring to the ministry's attention, this has been changed on the map. The map now refers to the growth in Oakville that will be taking place in the mid-town core. That is a sensible place for that growth to take

place. It is around the transit nodes; it's around the transit hubs.

People who care about strong economies, who care about clean air and green space preservation, who want to raise families in a clean environment, love the Places to Grow plan. It's good, sensible planning. It's the start of a process that is going to allow us in the future to build the sort of communities that we will be proud to leave for our children.

1740

They say that about 90% of Ontario's growth is currently occurring in the greater Golden Horseshoe area, and when you look at things that are saying that emissions from vehicles may increase by up to 42% if we don't do anything, and commute times may increase by up to 45%, you realize that somebody has to get a rein on this. I'm proud to say that our government is putting forward some proposed legislation that I believe is going to allow us to control this problem and build the communities we really want to see in Ontario.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I'm pleased to speak to An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans, Bill 136. Having sat on the city council of Ottawa for three years when we were going through our official plan from 2001 to 2003, it became evident that there should be a better practices system across the province. I think this bill is going to fit that need very well. Our cities must be more sustainable than they are now.

I have something here from the Centre for Sustainable Transportation. It shows that in our core areas, the vehicle kilometres travelled per person per day is six kilometres. As we move out to the core ring, it's 10. As we move to the inner suburbs it's 13, and in the outer suburbs it's 23. The sprawl that we've built in has created a situation where we have to drive four times as much if we're in the outer suburbs than we do in the core. Even six kilometres per day in the core is probably a lot.

Ottawa's experience from 2001 to 2003: What we did there was the amalgamation of 12 or 13 communities. The first thing we went at was freezing the urban boundaries. We had to freeze the sprawl, and then work from there and look for densification within the core urban areas that existed: Kanata, Nepean, Orléans and Ottawa. Densification was to take up the next five years' growth. Hopefully, we won't have to move those roads or sewers or water lines out beyond that densification—all the infrastructure that costs a fortune.

For sustainable cities, we have to get away from single-family homes. They're too expensive. The production of greenhouse gases and use of energy is almost doubled in a single-family home compared to other forms of row housing.

This process that we're going to go through—looking at all the municipalities in the greater Toronto area and beyond—is going to be the only way you're going to get that overview; the only way you're going to get the costs down over the long run; the only way you're going to be able to say where these three million people are going to

be and where we're going to put our infrastructure to serve them. Doing one municipality or one community at a time is just not going to work.

I'd just like to say that I don't agree with the member from Erie-Lincoln. If we follow the old process and don't have that overview, we're going to have the same-old same-old, and we can't do that for the future. Energy costs are going to drive away that kind of development. What this bill is doing is that we're getting ahead of the game and we're going to do the right things for it.

One of the things they're offering now—I wasn't aware of it till I was doing some research last week for a Better Buildings program—was eco-mortgages; that's good. If you live near public transit, you'll get a better mortgage rate.

There are a lot of things we have to do in that way to get energy costs down, to get more sustainable cities, to decrease greenhouse gases. Transportation demand management is one of the methodologies used now. We should have more people working at home. You can fit up an office in the home. Some companies in the US are decreasing their office space requirements by 65%; you now have people working at home just as effectively. They've got all kinds of tracking systems to make sure that the efficiency of the person working at home is just as high—probably higher, because often if a parent's there when the child leaves for school in the morning and there when the child comes home at night, you still get your work done and you probably do more work under those circumstances.

I just received something from CH2M HILL, a large engineering firm in North America. They're into this heavily. They tell me there's a chair now at the University of Calgary, I believe, that looks at transportation demand management. These are very important ways to reduce these terrible transportation costs. If you build the roads, I'm sure the cars will come. That's what's been happening, so we have to take a new approach. If we're able to look at large groups of municipalities at one time, then we're going to plan that infrastructure—the transportation, especially—to make sure that we can get rid of a lot of the needs for transportation. Two cars in each laneway just doesn't do it any more.

I was reading Robert Kennedy's book last week for that Better Buildings program. He said that one-mile-per-gallon more efficient cars would reduce the necessity of going up into Alaska to drill in that great, vast land that is such a natural heritage for the States. All these things come together. This is a great bill. It's going to do the work. It's going to let us learn a lot about making more efficient cities. I urge all members to support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Munro: I listened to the member opposite making comments about Bill 136, and I was hoping we might have further information in terms of some of the issues that this bill raises. Clearly, what this bill does is concentrate power in Queen's Park. We know that local planning will be superseded by the direction of the

government, and one of the things he talked about was the question of intensification. This is really open somewhat to speculation in terms of exactly where it will take place and the method that will be used.

I look at one of the areas identified for growth that is in my riding, and that is the town of Newmarket, which, by the way, is completely bordered by areas that are designated as protected countryside. So it does raise some questions with regard to what exactly it means to have intensification. Are we going to have Yonge and Davis Drive look like Yonge and Eglinton? Are people then going to have to take a look at their community lifestyles and see those challenged by that kind of intensification? The government has given us a number of 200 people and jobs per hectare, but we really don't know whether that means 200 people, or 100 jobs and 100 people; there is no definition of this kind of intensification. So I think there are a number of people in our communities who view this initiative with healthy skepticism, because we have a lot more questions than we have answers in this bill.

Ms. Martel: With respect to the comments made by the two government members, let me say that part of the concern I have with this bill is its vagueness with respect to what really will be included in the proposed growth plan, and what the government sees as essential core elements when it talks about growth and ensuring that growth is sustainable for our communities.

There's no doubt that over the next number of years, we are going to see tremendous growth, particularly in the GTA. The issue I have is, what shape and form does that take if the government is not interested in saying very clearly and setting out very clearly in legislation what some of those components are that absolutely have to be taken into account when plans are developed? I mentioned those before and I will mention them again: Where is the requirement, for example, that growth plans take into account intensification and the density of new development; protection of sensitive and significant lands, including agriculture lands or water resources; and the potential or the provision for affordable housing? These things right now, as they appear in the bill, are items that may be included in a growth plan. I think the government should be outlining what are the core requirements that have to be included in the growth plan so that we can have some consistency across these areas where we're going to see tremendous growth, in terms of what is provided, what the investment will be and how that development will be managed in a way that the community can continue to be sustainable.

My other major concern really has to do with a lack of any concrete information about investment. If we're going to do something about urban sprawl, it absolutely, fundamentally means we have to be investing very significantly in public transit and in rail. That will require an enormous public investment. I haven't heard the government talk very much about who's going to be providing the funds for that enormous investment that's going to be required if we're going to have proper growth.

1750

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm pleased to rise in support of the bill, Places to Grow. When you look around and you see the type of growth that has occurred in the last number of years, where at one time an amusement park was actually in the middle of nowhere and now is in the middle of many housing developments, and you wonder where the trees are, because there aren't any, or very few, which people have planted because the others have been destroyed, you have to think about how you can develop a comprehensive strategy around development and planning growth. I think what's really important is that you want to be able to include the communities in that planned growth strategy. You can't do it in isolation of where the people themselves will be living. You have to remember—I think grandma said it well—that they're not making any more land, so you can't continue to pave it. You must be able to protect that environment, and do so in such a way that looks at the need for growth and investment in the types of jobs and the types of industry you might want to have. You're right: There has to be an investment in infrastructure, but all of that is part of that planning process.

What it requires, first and foremost, is leadership that says, "We're going to do this because it is the right thing to do for the future." You cannot continue to grow ad hoc without putting in place some thoughtfulness. You can't continue to grow ad hoc by simply getting a ruling that goes in your favour. You must, in fact, invest in the communities a part of their priority of where they choose to go. That's what this is all about. Yes, it will be intensification, but at the same time it is protecting the environment. Yes, there is need for infrastructure around transportation, and that will be part of the discussion that will occur. But none of it will happen in isolation of the people it's meant to serve. That's the best part of this bill, and that's why it needs your support.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm also pleased to rise to speak to members opposite who made comments on behalf of the Liberal Party on Bill 136, the Places to Grow legislation. I think the term that's been used by my colleague from York North is "skeptical." We have some concerns on this side of the House about the bill. From a selfish point of view, looking at local planning from a two-tier system like we have in Simcoe North and in the county of Simcoe, where we have both official plans and zoning bylaws at the lower level and an official plan at the county level, I'm concerned about all the work that's been put into those plans.

I know that most municipalities and planning boards have worked extremely hard with many governments of different political parties to come to terms with those official plans and zoning bylaws. I'm wondering, when we look at Places To Grow, which specifically identifies areas of growth, where we'll draw the line as far as inter-

ference from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and how it will affect the zoning bylaws and OPs of those communities that have done so much work.

We in Simcoe county have very strong concerns about the bill, particularly because we already have one high-growth area, and that's the city of Barrie, which everyone knows is one of the fastest-growing cities in our country.

Again, I appreciate this opportunity to make a few comments. It's been an interesting bill, and we look forward to further debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Reply?

Mr. Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise again. I appreciate the comments from my colleagues.

I'd agree that anything the government does these days in regard to planning and urban sprawl is greeted with a certain degree of skepticism. That could be because people who live in these communities today, who expected their communities to turn out entirely differently, should be skeptical. Previous governments have simply been unable to deal with this type of problem.

You've got to really look at the environment you find yourself in. Ontario's population today is approaching 12 million people. By the year 2031, that same number of people will live in the greater Golden Horseshoe area alone. Simply put, if you take all the people who live in Ontario today, by 2031 that same number of people will be living around Lake Ontario. We need to do something about that. We can't do what we've done in the past. We can't throw up our hands.

I listened to the opposition's remarks and comments. To paraphrase them, one thinks we're doing too much and one thinks we aren't doing enough. That's generally a sign that you're doing exactly the right thing. I think that with this Places to Grow document we are doing the right thing. If we don't plan for this growth, another quarter of a million acres of greenfield and farmland will be paved over. Like a previous speaker said, they're not making any more land.

If you look at the experience that a lot of the speakers on this side of the House bring to the House—and the previous three speakers have all been involved in politics at the local level—all have had to deal with provincial governments that have been unable to come to grips with this issue. I believe we're a party and a government that are able to come to grips with this issue. This is a great place to start, with the Places to Grow document.

The Deputy Speaker: Those observing these proceedings may not realize, but the Speaker has an electronic clock, the Speaker has a beautiful pendulum clock, the Speaker has a watch and the Speaker has a pocket watch. I'm going to refer to the one you can't see and say that, it being near 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1756.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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