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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

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de l'Ontario**

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 8 June 2005

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 8 juin 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 8 June 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 8 juin 2005

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): Today marks the 10th anniversary of our party's election to government on June 8, 1995, an era that continued with our re-election to a second consecutive majority government in 1999.

The Ontario PC Party was elected on a clear mandate of positive change. We were immediately confronted by a huge deficit, a massive debt and some of the highest taxes anywhere in North America. Addressing these were prime targets of the Common Sense Revolution, our party's platform in 1995.

In government, we worked hard to keep our promises. We worked to restore hope and confidence. We cared about jobs and implemented policies that encouraged the creation of hundreds of thousands of new jobs. Ours was a government that saw a challenge as an opportunity. We knew that economic growth would generate new revenues, and those revenues helped to pay for health care, education and infrastructure even as the tax burden on Ontario's families was reduced.

I believe that Ontario's economy continues to benefit from the work we did from 1995 to 2003, but the world is not standing still and, unlike our government, which sought to take on the world and win, we see a Liberal government today that takes economic development and job creation for granted.

Ontario must confront the new challenges emerging in the global marketplace, including the dynamic economies in the Far East. If we don't do everything we can to compete successfully, we will lose jobs in this province. Working with industries and organizations such as the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, I tabled a motion in this House last week calling for the standing committee on finance and economic affairs to investigate Ontario's industrial competitiveness and develop an action plan to maintain and expand our domestic and international markets in the coming years. This motion is aimed at turning the challenges on the horizon into better opportunities for Ontario. I urge the government to act upon it before the House rises for the summer.

CANCER FUNDRAISING

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I would like to take the time today to tell you about a wonderful initiative in my community. On February 25 of this year, the Ottawa Hospital dental clinic and the Bytown study club co-hosted a continuing education day to raise money for the head and neck cancer fund at the Ottawa Hospital. This fund is used to offset the cost of implants and implant prosthetics that are required for patients who have had orofacial surgery due to cancer.

Dentists at the clinic do the needed surgery and prosthetics at minimal cost by donating their time and expertise, but funds are still needed for the laboratory portion of treatment. This is just an absolutely outstanding display of generosity and compassion.

The dental clinic itself at the Ottawa Hospital was made possible by the generous donations of the dental community of eastern Ontario and donors in the oral health care industry. The fundraising by the Ottawa dental community to build this clinic raised approximately \$1 million, and the clinic was built entirely without additional government or hospital funds. It is the only full-service adult dental care clinic in eastern Ontario that provides specialized care for in-hospital and outpatients who are medically compromised.

I know that everyone in the House would join me in congratulating the dental community of eastern Ontario for showing themselves to be benevolent and proactive on behalf of those who have been disadvantaged by their medical disability.

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): At an all-party MPP breakfast this morning, a senior Liberal strategist and McGuinty confidant, Warren Kinsella, reviewed a public opinion poll on the closure of coal-fired generation stations. The survey said that 50% of people under 35 aren't aware of the reckless Liberal promise to close the coal plants by 2007, and 73% said that if the Premier delayed the plant closing by one or two years, it would make no difference in their view of the Premier. What would you expect?

I predict that the polling results may just be paving the way for yet another broken Liberal promise. Is there any surprise? There have been more than 40 broken promises so far, and the McGuinty government seems to get away with it. This includes an increase of almost 25% in hydro customers' bills after the McGuinty government campaign promise to keep the hydro rate protection in place.

Look out in the future. I cannot help but wonder whether voters have heard so many broken promises that they have just given up.

However, I would also like to point out that today's poll showed that just less than 50% of Ontarians remain nervous under the control of the Liberals' electricity system following the blackout a couple of years ago. Just ask the Society of Energy Professionals. The numbers prove that this government has done nothing to restore Ontarians' faith in our once proud electricity system—except to raise the prices, of course.

JOSEPH DUFFY

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Joseph Duffy has passed away. Brother Duffy was the long-time business manager of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario. Before that, he was the business manager of the heat and frost insulators, local 95. A worker, a tradesperson in his own right, he was an insulation mechanic.

Born in Belfast, Ireland, he was a proud Canadian, a great trade unionist and a lifelong, effective and highly regarded advocate for working women and men here in Ontario and across Canada.

He served on a number of important boards and agencies like the Workers' Compensation Board, as it was known then, and the provincial labour management committee for the Construction Safety Association of Ontario, the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, and he was a driving force in the foundation of the Ontario Construction Secretariat. As well, Brother Duffy was the provincial coordinator for Dollars against Diabetes, DADs Day, raising funds to combat juvenile diabetes.

He will be remembered by so many for his tireless work to make all construction workplaces safer. Much advancement in health and safety was the result of his hard work and dedication.

Brother Duffy will be missed by so many. We extend our sincere sympathies and condolences to his wife, Janet, and his children: Lori, Lynn, Michael, Shawn, Steven and Mark.

CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS IN NIPISSING

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise today to congratulate a group of organizations that are contributing to building strong communities in my riding of Nipissing and in northeastern Ontario.

Last week, the North Bay Rotary Club and the Kiwanis Clubs of North Bay and Nipissing joined together to throw an incredible fundraiser for the North Bay Regional Health Centre. Over 500 people celebrated together the moving forward of this important project and raised \$72,000 in the process. Congratulations to Chris Mayne, the chair of the event, to the members of the North Bay Rotary Club, the Kiwanis Club of North Bay and the Kiwanis Club of Nipissing and to all the volunteers for a fabulous evening.

That same day, the Papa Joe ride took place: a motorcycle ride between North Bay and Mattawa. The 300-plus riders enjoyed a beautiful day for a ride, a great barbecue in downtown Mattawa and a big dinner and party in North Bay.

The ride was originally started in honour of Joseph Isadore Lefebvre, or Papa Joe, as he was known, who died of cancer in 1994, but his legacy lives on. The proceeds of this year's ride went to the North Bay Regional Health Centre. The ride raised over \$70,000. I would like to congratulate Don Lefebvre, Papa Joe's son, and all the organizers for another great event.

1340

This past weekend, the Alzheimer Society hosted a beautiful walk on our waterfront. Over 100 people participated.

On Sunday, the Juvenile Diabetes Association held its third walk in our region, with over 350 people walking the waterfront in North Bay. They raised a total of \$102,000 over their three walks in Mattawa, Temiskaming Shores and North Bay. They had representatives from our native community and all across our community.

I'd like to congratulate the organizers of those two walks and everyone in our community who contributed to raising over \$250,000 in the last two weeks in Nipissing. Thank you for building a strong community.

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): As you know, Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago today, Ontarians voted for change in government. In fact, it was a change that was revolutionary. It was a government that was committed to fiscal responsibility, a government committed to lower taxes, a government committed to cutting red tape and getting Ontario back to work again, strong and prosperous.

Not only were we elected on these promises, but we delivered. We cut taxes for working families. We restored balanced budgets. We helped to create over 1.2 million new jobs in the province of Ontario. Most importantly, Mike Harris brought integrity back to politics because he did what he said he was going to do. For the first time in decades, people could actually believe a politician when he or she made a promise.

I tell you, 10 years later, things have changed a whole bunch around this place. We've gone from politicians known as promise keepers to a new batch of promise breakers. This was a government elected to balance the budget, but now they're going to run deficits until at least 2008. It was a government elected not to raise taxes, but what was the first thing Dalton McGuinty did? The biggest tax increase on businesses and working families in the history of the province of Ontario.

We know that in politics, the most fragile commodity is integrity and credibility. Mike Harris and his team, elected under the Common Sense Revolution, understood that. I'm proud to have been part of that team, and I look forward to John Tory in two years' time restoring integrity and responsibility to the province of Ontario.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): The health and well-being of people with intellectual disabilities is at the forefront of this government's agenda. This past May, Minister Papatello announced a \$41.1-million plan to strengthen specialized care for adults with disabilities.

In Hamilton West, there are a number of supports for people with disabilities, and Community Living Hamilton ensures that each of these individuals receives the care they need in an environment that nurtures their ability to live independently and to contribute to society.

On June 16, Community Living Hamilton, alongside Community and Continuing Education, will receive the Corporate/Agency Literacy Award for their work with adults with disabilities. They will be recognized for providing disabled people with a lifestyle that ensures a feeling of acceptance into a community alongside the comfort of residing in a nurturing family environment. Their programs also ensure access to education, appropriate housing and pension plans that allow them to live their desired lifestyles.

I would like to take this time to commend Community Living Hamilton on their efforts to provide disabled persons with the resources and supports to live a full and productive life. I'd also like to congratulate them on receiving this award. They deserve this recognition for the work they put into our community.

We are proud of all of the men and women who volunteer their valuable time and efforts for the betterment of our community—all part of building a healthy, connected community, taking responsibility for each other, and in particular those who are less likely to be able to care for themselves. It's no wonder that Hamilton is the volunteer capital of Ontario.

SUPPORT FOR ONTARIO'S YOUTH

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): Our Premier is becoming known as the education Premier. Therefore, it is part of the Liberal philosophy to support our youth, and hence we believe in their education and training.

Today in the House we have four members of the Port Credit Lions Club in Mississauga South who share our values of supporting youth. As you may know, the Lions Clubs in Ontario have established a public speaking competition for our youth as their way of assisting their training. They are to be applauded not only for their idea, but for holding this competition for over 58 years.

Today with these members of the Lions Club are five members of the Wyman-McCarthy family, also from Mississauga South. All of them believe in strong education for our youth. Father Tom is the principal of Bishop Scalabrini School; Kathryn, the mother, is an ESL teacher; and each of their sons has won the Lions Club public speaking contest. Imagine that: In one family, each of the boys has won the same public speaking competition. Matthew, the oldest son, won in 1997

and 1998, the local and district competitions; Nat won in 2001; and Timothy, the youngest son, won the all-Ontario competition this year, to the amazement of his two brothers. If any of you have a chance to hear their speeches, you'll be amazed at the quality of their delivery, the depth of their knowledge and the high level of humour. Young Timothy will tell you that the longest palindrome is 17,259 words and that two of the more usual oxymorons are "marital bliss" and "government organization."

As Lion Cassan, Lion Bruer, Lion Frazer and Lion Crawford rise with the members of the Wyman-McCarthy family, I hope you'll join me in applauding their support of our youth and their participation in these public speaking contests.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I would like to ask the members of the House to join me as we lament the 10th anniversary of the commencement of the Reform-a-Tory government.

Now, when I say a phrase, I want members to visualize what this means to them: unrest in our classrooms, cuts to social housing, disrespect for public service, hospital closures, Hula Hoops, disregard for the environment, Walkerton, downloading to municipalities, neglect of the energy sector, tax cuts versus social programs, poor-bashing, the minimum wage freeze, the 407 rip-off, the Magna budget, contempt of our Legislature, a \$5.6-billion deficit.

If you could paint a picture of the Reform-a-Tory legacy, what you would see is bleak. They told Ontarians that the drastic cuts were needed in order to balance the books. They told Ontarians it would be worth it.

What Ontarians got was eight and a half lost years and a \$5.6-billion annual deficit. That's why they chose change.

Today we have John Tory's Tories, who voted against a smoke-free Ontario, voted against fiscal transparency, voted against the public health care system reforms, voted against the greenbelt and protecting 1.8 million hectares of green space. They even voted against the best post-secondary education investment in over 40 years. I just don't see the difference. Brand new Tory, same old story.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated June 8, 2005, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to

standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Ms. Churley from the standing committee on regulations and private bills presents the committee's report as follows, and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr9, An Act to revive Acton Disposal Services Limited;

Bill Pr12, An Act respecting Tyndale University College & Seminary;

Bill Pr14, An Act respecting the Institute for Christian Studies;

Bill Pr15, An Act respecting the Toronto Atmospheric Fund and the Clean Air Partnership (formerly known as the Toronto Atmospheric Fund Foundation).

Your committee further recommends that the fees and the actual costs of printing at all stages be remitted on Bill Pr12, An Act respecting Tyndale University College & Seminary.

Your committee further recommends that the fees and the actual costs of printing at all stages be remitted on Bill Pr14, An Act respecting the Institute for Christian Studies.

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

DEFERRED VOTES

TOBACCO CONTROL STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT
À LA RÉGLEMENTATION
DE L'USAGE DU TABAC

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 164, An Act to rename and amend the Tobacco Control Act, 1994, repeal the Smoking in the Workplace Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 164, Loi visant à modifier le titre et la teneur de la Loi de 1994 sur la réglementation de l'usage du tabac, à abroger la Loi limitant l'usage du tabac dans les lieux de travail et à apporter des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

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

Ayes

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Arnett, Ted | Gerretsen, John | Ouellette, Jerry J. |
| Arthurs, Wayne | Hampton, Howard | Parsons, Ernie |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Horwath, Andrea | Patten, Richard |
| Bentley, Christopher | Hoy, Pat | Peters, Steve |
| Berardinetti, Lorenzo | Jackson, Cameron | Peterson, Tim |
| Bisson, Gilles | Jeffrey, Linda | Phillips, Gerry |
| Bountrogianni, Marie | Kennedy, Gerard | Prue, Michael |
| Bradley, James J. | Kormos, Peter | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Broten, Laurel C. | Kular, Kuldip | Qaadri, Shafiq |
| Brownell, Jim | Kwinter, Monte | Runciman, Robert W. |
| Bryant, Michael | Levac, Dave | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Cansfield, Donna H. | Marchese, Rosario | Sandals, Liz |
| Caplan, David | Marsales, Judy | Scott, Laurie |
| Chambers, Mary Anne V. | Martel, Shelley | Sergio, Mario |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Martiniuk, Gerry | Smith, Monique |
| Churley, Marilyn | Matthews, Deborah | Smitherman, George |
| Colle, Mike | Mauro, Bill | Sorbara, Gregory S. |
| Crozier, Bruce | McGuinty, Dalton | Tory, John |
| Delaney, Bob | McMeekin, Ted | Van Bommel, Maria |
| Dombrowsky, Leona | McNeely, Phil | Watson, Jim |
| Duguid, Brad | Meilleur, Madeleine | Wilkinson, John |
| Duncan, Dwight | Mitchell, Carol | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel | Munro, Julia | Wong, Tony C. |
| Fonseca, Peter | O'Toole, John | |

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

Nays

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Barrett, Toby | Hudak, Tim | Murdoch, Bill |
| Hardeman, Ernie | Klees, Frank | Yakubuski, John |

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): They ayes are 71; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF HEALTH SPENDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, can you confirm that the Ministry of Health will be spending \$16.964 million more on administration this year, more so than when you took office, as per page 220 of this year's spending estimates?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I can say, with a great deal of pride on behalf of the people of Ontario, that we are investing billions more in better health care services for the people of Ontario. I can also say that the Leader of the Opposition remains very much married to his plan to take \$2.4 billion out of our health care system. Therein lies the contrast; therein lies the difference. We continue to support medicare for all Ontarians.

1400

Mr. Tory: Aside from the Premier's flights of fantasy about things that I've said, he remains committed to

profligate spending on bureaucracy and administration. That's what you remain committed to. If you were committed to patient care, as you said, Premier, then you'd be saying that we're not going to spend \$17 million more on the administration of the department of health—and that's before we even get to a further discussion of the hundreds of new bureaucrats you are going to appoint.

I would simply like to ask you this question: What is the extra \$17 million in administration doing for patient care that you just professed to be so committed to in Ontario? What is that \$17 million producing for them?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Health, Speaker.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As we had the privilege earlier this week of tabling estimates before the Legislature, I'll rely on those and invite the honourable member, not just for the briefing that we've offered repeatedly, but also to meet up in the estimates committee, where we'll have an opportunity to go over all of the ministries' work.

From the estimates of the Ministry of Health, to be found on page 6, are numbers that I think would prove interesting for the honourable member. They show the beginning of a decrease in 2005-06 for the ministry administration line, and this is part of a 10% overall reduction in ministry administration that my ministry will achieve over the next three years.

Mr. Tory: Of course I had seen the line; it's on the same page that I referred to. But it's coming from the same bunch who overspent their budgets everywhere last year by hundreds of million of dollars. In fact, even on the administration spending for the Ministry of Health itself, you overspent last year. So it's telling that you can't name one patient benefit that comes from the fact that you are spending \$17 million more on administering the Ministry of Health, just administering the department. You can't name one health benefit from that. You're spending that \$17 million since you took office, and last year when you came forward and had estimates, they weren't to be relied upon, so why should we rely on that this year when you have flatlined it?

I just want to know, again, why you think it's OK to blow \$17 million more administering your department since you took office. What benefits are people who are paying twice the health tax going to get from you this year for that?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'd like to reiterate to the honourable member that it's a decision made by my ministry, and presented clearly in our estimates, that we will reduce our administrative costs by 10% over three years. That represents a reduction of some \$39 million, further evidence of our view that we can do better and make more appropriate use of the important resources that Ontarians provide.

The honourable member asks, what can patients point to in the province of Ontario? Just a couple of examples: The bill that we just passed, Bill 164, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, has associated with it a very aggressive plan to help people stay off tobacco in the first place, on

prevention, and also on cessation. Each of these initiatives is one that will incur some modest investment on ministry administration, because it does take important people in the ministry, in the public health unit, to be able to support the important healthier Ontario objectives we are advancing, with obvious patient benefits.

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

Mr. Tory: The fact of the matter is, the money that's being spent on the anti-smoking campaign is contained pages on, and you know that. It has nothing to do with administration. This is just administrative fat.

My new question is to the Premier. There is a troubling pattern emerging here: no answers on how wasting \$17 million on ministry administration is advancing the cause of health care at all in Ontario. Yesterday, incredibly, your Minister of Health disputed his own leaked cabinet document. He said no, he's not hiring 560 new bureaucrats as part of your LHIN program; it's really only 320 new bureaucrats who are being hired at great public expense. I think if you were to ask the people whether they would prefer you hired 320 doctors and nurses with their hard-earned tax dollars they are paying you twice as many of this year for the health tax, they'd pick the doctors and nurses 10 times out of 10.

My question is this, Premier. Since your minister and you and everybody else don't believe your own cabinet documents, what is the total cost of setting up your new regional health bureaucracy, the cost of hiring and firing all these people, and the cost of the hundreds of new bureaucrats you're hiring? What is the total cost?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Apparently, the Leader of the Opposition has a document which he is not prepared to share with us. But let me tell you that the real numbers were advanced yesterday by the Minister of Health, and Ontarians are now aware of those.

I find it passing strange that the leader of the Conservative Party would embrace this. What we have are effectively nine separate silos. We're talking about our hospitals, our long-term-care homes, our community care access centres, our community health centres, our ministry regional offices, our mental health programs and our five academic health science centres. When you add all those up, those nine silos come out to over 1,200 distinct health care organizations. My friend opposite may feel that you can run over 1,200 organizations from downtown Toronto through Queen's Park, but we believe that we should move the management and integration of those programs into the communities, where people in the local communities have more control over their health care.

Mr. Tory: It's a bit ironic, this coming from the greatest centralizer I think we've seen in Ontario history.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Tory: Only this McGuinty Liberal government could talk about this rationalization of functions and so forth, and do it and create this so-called greater efficiency

by adding hundreds of bureaucrats. Only you could do that.

Your own estimates documents, released yesterday by your government, show that you are spending \$17 million more just administering the Ministry of Health since you took office.

I want to quote from the this leaked cabinet document that we talked about yesterday: "There is insufficient detail regarding restructuring plans ... whether a full analysis ... has been done, how the ministry will co-ordinate a network of 14 LHINs into a provincial system, etc."

Instead of wasting any more of our tax dollars on what you just talked about, when it's clear you have no plan—there clearly is no legislation—will you put a freeze on this program until such time as you come before this House with legislation that will set some parameters on how much is spent, how it's spent and whether it really will bring any benefits for patients of Ontario, who are paying twice as many of your health tax dollars this year as they did last year? Will you bring that forward?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I guess it's apt. They call themselves Conservatives, and they are truly defenders of the status quo. But more than just that, the Leader of the Opposition does not trust people in their own communities to take more responsibility for deciding the best way possible to spend money in their communities to ensure they get access to the best possible health care. He says that we should maintain the nine separate silos, maintain the distinct and separate 1,200 health care organizations and that we should run all of that from downtown Toronto. We've got a different view. We think we should move services out, move management out and move integration out into the communities, because we have confidence in the people of Ontario. They know best when it comes to how to spend their dollars on their health care.

Mr. Tory: I'll tell you who you think knows best. You think the people who know best are new, high-priced bureaucrats appointed by you and that they will replace the very people you're talking about involving. The hospitals today are run by local people on hospital boards, and those boards are going to be emasculated by your new bureaucracy that you are putting in place at a cost of millions of taxpayers' dollars.

These new regional health bureaucracies will be responsible for spending somewhere in the order of \$17 billion to \$20 billion in taxpayers' money, as your minister said yesterday.

The cabinet document is rife with examples of wasteful spending, inadequate details and poor planning, and you can't answer any questions today about why your administrative costs are going up by million of dollars.

My question is this: Do you think it is reasonable to move any further along with this whole program when you have no plan, no legislation, there are no parameters, you can't tell us why you are hiring hundreds of people, and there are disputes about how much you are spending? We just know it's millions of hard-earned tax dollars.

The whole thing is a shambles. Will you stop it now and bring legislation to this House?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We're moving forward. We are bound and determined to improve health care for Ontarians, and part and parcel of that moves the decision-making away from Queen's Park, away from the ministry and into the local communities, because we have confidence in the people of Ontario.

We're proud to say that this is a made-in-Ontario solution that will empower local communities. We are going to take full advantage of existing hospital boards. We are getting directors for LHINs from within the community itself, all at a very reasonable price for the people of Ontario.

I might contrast that with just one small but telling example. On their watch, the Tories hired a communications adviser to the minister for over \$300,000 on an annual basis. We have a different approach. We will take full advantage of the expertise and goodwill found in Ontario communities when it comes to improving the quality of their health care.

1410

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, you said, "We just think it's wrong to discriminate against people on the basis of age." But under your work-seniors-until-they-drop bill, an employer in the same workplace could provide employment benefits, like dental benefits, medical benefits and disability insurance benefits, while at the same time denying those benefits to workers aged 65 and over. That sounds like a two-tier workforce to me: workers under age 65 with benefits; workers aged 65 and over, no benefits.

Premier, maybe you could explain how that is not age discrimination.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It's interesting to note that the NDP have come out fully opposed to a recommendation of the Ontario Human Rights Commissioner. This is a matter of human rights. We believe that just because you reach the age of 65, that shouldn't impose some artificial requirement on you that somehow disqualifies you from continuing to work and to make a contribution in the workplace. We think it is right that when you do reach the age of 65, you should have the choice as to whether or not you continue to work. We think it's a matter of fundamental human rights. We have come out on the side that says that seniors should have the right to choose whether or not they wish to continue to work. If the member opposite believes in continuing discrimination, then he should just stand up and say so.

Mr. Hampton: Forgive me, but I don't think I heard an answer. I heard lots of wordage, but no answer.

Here is the reality, and I'm sure you don't want seniors to know this: Under the legislation you introduced yesterday, an employer like Wal-Mart or Home

Depot could be contractually required to provide medical insurance, dental insurance and disability insurance for their workers under age 65; at the same time, they could say to workers aged 65 and over, "None of those benefits for you." It just seems to me, on the face of the record, the McGuinty government here is not only allowing for some pretty serious age discrimination, but you're literally inviting the Home Depots and Wal-Marts of the world to engage in that kind of age discrimination.

I say to you, doesn't that look like a two-tier workforce to you? How does the McGuinty government justify that kind of age discrimination?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The NDP are in favour of age discrimination. The only conclusion that we can draw from the position taken by the leader of the NDP is that they are in favour of discrimination on the basis of age. We will not support that. Ed Broadbent was elected fairly recently at the age of 67. Stanley Knowles was elected for the last time at the age of 71. Lloyd Robertson, a respected Canadian, is the national CTV news anchor at the age now of 71 years. We feel that people should have the right to continue to work beyond the age of 65, should they choose to do so. We think to say anything opposite to that is to support discrimination. We stand against discrimination.

Mr. Hampton: Excuse me, but I don't think I heard an answer this time either. Let's face it, there are all kinds of people out there who are older than age 64 who are working. So when you try to say, "Oh, this is all about ensuring choice," all kinds of people choose to work. This is about other, more important things. This is about things like the economic security to retire with some dignity.

What I see you're doing here is making an invitation to Wal-Mart and Home Depot: "Hire seniors. Don't worry. We'll give you a discount workforce. You won't have to pay dental benefits. You won't have to pay insurance benefits. You won't have to pay medical benefits. You can get them really cheap."

What I hear seniors saying is, "We'd like to retire earlier. We'd like to retire with a pension, in dignity, with economic security." When's that going to happen?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Mr. Alvin Curling): Order. The member from Essex, order.

Have you completed your question?

Mr. Hampton: I was trying to, but I think there are some Liberals who don't want to hear this question.

When I talk to workers, what they say to me is, "We'd like to retire earlier." When I talk to teachers, they'd like to retire earlier. When I talk to civil servants, they'd like to retire earlier. When are we going to see—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We're not doing anything by means of this legislative change that would prevent somebody from retiring at an earlier age. If people can retire at an earlier age, then all the more power to them. We have no objection to that whatsoever. What we're saying is that just as people should have the right to retire

sooner, they should have the right to retire later. What we're doing by way of this legislation is ending mandatory retirement and, at the same time, we are protecting existing pension benefits and earlier retirement rights. Ours is a fair, reasonable and rational approach.

There was extensive consultation that was taken by the minister and Mr. Kevin Flynn. We heard from many groups. The advice we received was factored in. Obviously there will be committee hearings, and we'll have time to hear from many more.

But the principle is sound. We believe, in the province of Ontario, at the beginning of the 21st century, you should have the right to continue to choose, when you reach the age of 65, to continue to work.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: I believe that all those people who want to retire earlier, who choose to retire earlier while they still have good health, while they can enjoy their families, all those people who want to retire with economic security, deserve some attention. But the reality is that 60% of workers in Ontario have no workplace pension. They're not interested in working for Wal-Mart or Home Depot without dental insurance, medical coverage, liability insurance and at dirt cheap wages with no pension.

I'm asking you, Premier, rather than facilitating a two-tier workforce for Wal-Mart and Home Depot, when are we going to see the real priority that people have: pension reform that ensures workers can retire earlier with economic security and dignity rather than having to work longer and harder for less?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): In fact, the honourable member would perpetuate a two-tier system by denying all people who reach 65 the right to protection against age discrimination. That's just wrong in our society.

We have done this, though—and let's be very clear—in a way that will protect the pension, the early retirement and the benefit rights that workers now enjoy and have asked not to be undermined. We have a responsibility to all workers in the province. We're going to protect all workers in the province. This is a fundamental human right, and we're proud to stand and say, "An end to age discrimination for all Ontarians."

Mr. Hampton: I notice that the Premier, after failing to answer the question, now doesn't want to even address the question.

I simply say to the government, I don't think you're protecting anyone here. You're going to end up in situations where, in the same workplace, you have workers under age 65 who enjoy a dental package, medical benefits, disability benefits, and beside them will be another worker who, because they're over age 64, has none of those benefits. How can you describe that as protecting older workers?

I can see where Wal-Mart and Home Depot will love this: the McGuinty government providing them with low-wage seniors, and they don't have to pay for medical

insurance, they don't have to pay for a dental package, they won't have to pay for liability insurance. How is it fair to older workers to say to them, "Work longer and harder for less, with no employment benefits"?

1420

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Right now, workers who turn 65 have no protections whatsoever unless they've negotiated that with the employer, individually or collectively. This is a historic change in the law to make sure that protection against age discrimination continues. We must make this change, or workers out there who are more than 65 will continue to have no protection. But we have been very careful—you cannot undermine pension and benefits rights. Enhancing benefits for all workers in all walks of life is a very important goal of this government. But that's not what this bill does; it's not meant to do that. That's an important conversation for another time. This bill extends protection against age discrimination. It will protect all the workers of Ontario and give workers the right to choose. Why is the honourable member against letting workers decide for themselves whether they continue to work?

Mr. Hampton: Here is the situation: I see teachers across the province who want to bargain early retirement; I see civil servants who want to bargain early retirement; for the pulp and paper industry across this province, the bigger issue was bargaining earlier retirement with a decent pension. What is the McGuinty government's response? The McGuinty government's response is, you can work longer and harder at Wal-Mart and Home Depot, you can work without medical benefits, you can work without dental benefits, you can work without disability insurance. I think that's the answer of the minister of cheap labour. I don't think this is a minister looking out for seniors; this is a minister of cheap labour.

My question again is, when are you going to respond to the real interests of older workers, of all workers? They want to retire earlier. They want to have a decent pension system so they have pension coverage. They want to retire with economic security. They want to be able to retire with dignity. When are we going to see pension reform rather than—

The Speaker: Minister of Labour?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I'm looking forward to the debate when the member has had a chance to read the bill. He will see that there is nothing to prevent teachers, public servants and anybody else from bargaining whatever they wish to bargain.

Sometimes the content of the rhetoric is given greater colour when we look at the record. Let's see what the NDP did for working people when they had the chance. What did they do with the pension benefits guarantee fund that protects the pensions of workers? They gave companies a holiday. What did they do for injured workers, some of the most desperately poor in the province? They put their hand in injured workers' pockets and took money out of those pockets. And what about those collective agreements the member speaks of? Well, it's called the social contract—ripped up the agreement, took

money away and took away benefits. We won't do what the NDP did. We stand for the working people of this province—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Health: Your regional health bureaucracies are in disarray; in fact, they're rapidly becoming a debacle for the McGuinty government as a whole. To make matters worse, your supersized LHIN is taking local decision-making right out of the Niagara Peninsula. Seven municipalities have written to you to protest this. Pelham, Thorold, Welland, Port Colborne, Grimsby, Wainfleet and Fort Erie all agree that the supersized LHIN is bad for Niagara's health.

Minister, if you truly care about local decision-making, why are you ignoring the voice of local municipal leaders?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I haven't ignored the voice of local municipal leaders. I had a terrifically positive meeting with the regional chair of Niagara, Peter Partington, on this very issue. In his supplementary, perhaps the honourable member could stand in his place and tell me what local decision-making has been taken away as a result of our decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Minister, one of the major concerns is your lack of openness through this process, and now we learn that there are going to be political appointments for all of these. That's one of the issues of local autonomy. But your decision will be devastating for the region of Halton, which you have divided into three separate LHINs. They have done years of work to create a regionalized system of health delivery.

No one, in fact, has come out and endorsed this plan. Joyce Savoline, the regional chair, has come out against your plan. Community Development Halton has come out against your plan, Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale, the VON in Halton and the Halton CCAC—and the list keeps growing. Minister, will you be honest with the taxpayers of Halton? Will you involve the Halton taxpayers as you radically restructure health care and rob Halton of its local autonomy?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm very pleased to report to this House that the honourable member is out of date. If he turned around and spoke to his colleague the member from Halton, he would know that as a result of the interventions of Joyce Savoline, someone that I know well and have worked with very closely on this issue, we have been able to make very serious alterations to the local health integration network boundary. With the involvement of the member, we've been able to move the Georgetown hospital to a more appropriate placement within the Halton health services family. We think this is an important advancement.

At the end of the day, what our model will have is people from Halton, people who live in Halton, exercising decisions which right now I have the privilege of making from my office in the Hepburn Block. This is all about community engagement. As the honourable member may have had a chance to consult with his colleagues, he'll know that of the 42 people, two very fine people from Halton region are already stepping forward. They're community-minded people, they're not partisan people, and they're going to make really well-informed decisions on behalf of the patients in the province.

MINISTER'S SPENDING

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Premier. Premier, in 2003, you stood in this House and said to then-Premier Eves, "It is wrong to run some \$25,000 in family expenses through the riding association." Do you still believe it's inappropriate for a member to finance personal vacations and expensive meals through a riding association?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I look forward to hearing the supplementary, Speaker.

Mr. Kormos: Premier, this is the annual return for the Ontario Liberal riding association of York South-Weston, the riding of the Minister for Economic Development and Trade. If a page will come here, I'll send it over to you. It reveals an orgy of spending by your minister: meals in Parisian restaurants, hotel stays in Milan, the latest plays of the London theatre, even \$1,000 suits from local haberdashers, all paid for by the riding association.

Donors who wanted the ear of your government poured money into that riding association and Junket Joe blew it tripping the light fantastic. Premier, do you still believe this is inappropriate? What are you going to do about it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me say that I have had the good fortune of having Joe Cordiano serve as my Minister of Economic Development and Trade. I know that he's been working very hard on behalf of all the people of Ontario. I know that requires extensive travel on his part. I know that he is absolutely scrupulous when it comes to making expenditures. I know that he honours all of the rules. I know that he does his utmost to make sure that he is balanced and fair. I can say that I have complete confidence in any way that Minister Cordiano has brought to dealing with his expenditures.

1430

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. With all the hot weather we have been having lately, we know that summer is approaching. The arrival of summer means that the youth in my riding of York West are finishing their last days of school and many of them will

begin to look for work and training. Summer work provides youth in my riding not only with a source of income but also with invaluable experience for whatever career path they may choose. Summer employment provides students with training and new skills while also offering students a better understanding of a particular line of work to help them determine whether it is the best choice for them as they reach toward their career goals.

There are some college and university students in my riding who are still looking for work this summer, while high school students have just a few weeks left before they are ready to enter the summer job market. Minister, it is vital that students are offered assistance in finding the right opportunity this summer. By helping students in their summer job search, we will be helping them reach their full potential in the years ahead. Minister, can you please—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'm grateful to the member for York West for his question, because I would like to share with him, and with everyone else in the House so they can share it with their constituents, the fact that our government has announced support for well more than 57,000 young people who may wish to have some summer experience. These opportunities are available from April to September. It involves services from my ministry's offices through 100 Job Connect agencies in 80 communities. I would encourage our young people to avail themselves of these opportunities, and I would encourage community organizations to avail themselves of the \$2-per-hour wage subsidy that will give these young people work experience. The youth jobs Web site and the Job Grow help line will provide more details on what is available to them.

Mr. Sergio: Other youth in my riding have an entrepreneurial spirit and have already begun thinking about starting their own businesses, with hopes of great future success. Many, however, have difficulty knowing where to start, and become discouraged and distressed. Teens, either in school or out of school, need a sense of direction and encouragement from those in authority. When youth feel empowered, it spreads to their peers and can cause a great positive change in communities. Minister, what is being done to reassure the youth in York West that their ambitions will not go unnoticed and their desire for starting their own business will come to fruition?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I think my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Trade would love to talk about that subject.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I'm happy to report that last March—

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Nice suit, Joe.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: This one I paid for myself, I'll have you know. Most of these expenses I paid for myself. You know, you sink to a new low when you stoop to that level, but that's fine.

Mr. Kormos: I just said it was a nice suit.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: You choose to do that; that's the lack of your integrity.

We announced the Ontario summer job strategy, and through that program 57,000 young people will get the chance to find jobs or start their own businesses. That's a good thing for the economy of Ontario. The summer company program is a program that's administered by my ministry. It helps students aged 15 to 29 start up and run their summer businesses. We award up to \$1,500 in May and June to help businesses with start-up costs. It's been a very successful program, and I am proud of the fact that we support young people in the province.

ONTARIO JOINT REPLACEMENT REGISTRY

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. The Ontario joint replacement registry was established in 2000 to collect data on full wait times; that is, from the initial visit to the family doctor, to the specialist, through surgery and outcomes, with the goal of providing timely access to hip and knee surgery and improving patient outcomes. The information collected helps reduce the need for redo surgeries, which take longer to recover from and are more invasive and costly.

Minister, why have you decided to centralize control and cancel the Ontario joint replacement registry when your new provincial wait-time data will no longer provide the full wait times to patients from family doctor to specialist to surgery, which is about 205 days, but only wait times from specialist to surgery, about 139 days? Is this part of your plan to control the data so that wait times will respond to your promise to reduce wait times?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The little motive stinger that the honourable member offers at the end of the question doesn't do anything except help emphasize the obvious, which is that we're actually talking about wait times in this province, as evidenced by our government's focus on it. We believe it's imperative that we produce a better result for Ontarians in this important area. I want to tell the honourable member that this afternoon I'm having a meeting with folks from the Ontario joint registry. As we move toward a model of wait times that puts the information available on a Web site for all Ontarians to see, I think we are making progress, but at the same time I recognize the contribution that has been made by the Ontario orthopaedic surgeon community. We will make sure that the value of the data they collect continues to be made available to the Ontario health care system. I think we're going to make some progress on that even this afternoon in our meeting.

Mrs. Witmer: I would say to the minister that the Ontario Arthritis Society wants you to cancel your decision to terminate the Ontario joint replacement registry. They understand and they know that support to patients is going to be lost, valuable outcome data are going to be

lost, data that help reduce surgery and wait times for hip and knee by reducing revision surgeries. Minister, why have you made the decision to go back to the 1970s, to no longer support the patients and collect the data that show how well implants and surgery techniques are working to help provide the best possible care and outcome for patients who have severe arthritis and require hip and knee replacements?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member in one breath herself embraces the status quo. She is just like the rest of that bunch over there. It's Tory, Tory, same old story. You ask a question because someone sent you a press release. Your party is practising fax machine politics. You stand by the fax machine and wait for your message of the day. But the reality, as I said in my first answer, is that we are working with this group. We can do better—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Well, I'm having a meeting this afternoon. That's pretty good evidence of the work we're doing together. At the end of the day, the answer is not to be found in the status quo. The status quo wasn't working for patients in Ontario. They were waiting too long. We are a government that is dedicated to the task of reducing wait times in five key areas, and we will, but we will do so in a way that works with the orthopods and makes sure important quality data are not lost. That is the bottom-line commitment I offer to the honourable member.

GENERAL MOTORS OF CANADA

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Premier, workers at the General Motors plant in St. Catharines are reeling at the announcement by General Motors of the elimination of 25,000 jobs in the United States and significant reduction in production by General Motors across North America. What are you going to do to save those very important jobs, important to their families, important to Niagara, important to Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I would ask the member opposite, where was he when we put forward our half-billion-dollar strategic auto sector investment fund? They opposed that plan and we were successful in landing several billion dollars' worth of new investment in Ontario. Obviously we are paying attention to this news south of the border. We've had our eye on this for some time. They have made an announcement, and obviously they're going to lose 25,000 US jobs, but I think we enjoy some distinct advantages here in Ontario that we should be mindful of. Number one, in Oshawa we've got the most productive auto assembly plant in North America for GM.

Secondly, CAMI, which is a joint venture between GM and, I think, Suzuki, has recently announced they're going to hire 400 more people. In addition to that, one of the advantages we enjoy is simply by virtue of medicare, which gives employers here a real edge over their Ameri-

can counterparts. So I remain very optimistic of where we are going with respect to the auto sector in Ontario. I understand there will undoubtedly be some implications flowing from the job losses down there, but we remain very optimistic.

Mr. Kormos: Tony Van Alphen, in the Toronto Star, reports that Niagara region has lost 10,000 manufacturing jobs over the last decade—10,000 in Niagara region alone. In the period of time between 1995 and 2005, there were 10,000 jobs lost. This has a serious impact on the economy of Niagara. A reduction in GM production, the termination of 25,000 jobs by General Motors in the United States, has General Motors workers in St. Catharines extremely concerned about their futures, their families' futures and their community's future. What are you going to do about those jobs that have been put at risk now by the announcement by General Motors of the reduction in production in the United States?

1440

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it's important to note, by way of contrast, that during the NDP years in government, this economy lost 1,000 jobs every week. I thought it was going to be "month," but it's "week"; we lost 1,000 jobs a week. So far, during our 18 months, we have over 145,000 new jobs that were created by this economy.

It's no secret that we've gone to the wall for the auto sector. Frankly, we've taken a bit of a hit from some other sectors, who are saying, "What about us?" But we understand it's such an important foundational part of our economy that we've set aside half a billion dollars and are engaging in some partnership activities with our auto sector people. We remain very optimistic. We are mindful of activities taking place south of the border and what's happening in the global economy with respect to shifts in the auto sector, but I think we are poised here in Ontario for a significant rebirth of the auto sector. We've made some announcements, and we look forward to making more in the future.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron—Bruce): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. About a year ago, I asked you a question in this Legislature about water quality in Lake Huron. Lake Huron has many beautiful beaches and is a major tourist attraction in my riding, yet public beaches continue to be closed due to high levels of bacteria detected in water along the shoreline. Many concerned citizens in my riding would like to find solutions to the ongoing pollution problem in Lake Huron. What is our government doing to address the problems associated with bacterial contamination along the Lake Huron shoreline?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I very much appreciate the opportunity and also the good work of the honourable member for advocating on this very important issue. I've also heard, and she has been in attendance at the meetings when municipal rep-

resentatives and community representatives have come to my office to raise these important concerns. Last year, as a result of that, we created the Lake Huron science committee, which was to review existing information about the shoreline water quality. The science committee recently completed its review, and they've indicated that bacterial contamination is not worsening; however, additional study is needed. Our government and the Ministry of the Environment have committed \$48,000 to the University of Guelph to further study the problem. As well, we have committed \$50,000 to Huron county to enhance its water quality monitoring.

We are moving forward. We are prepared to support community efforts. We do take water quality in the province of Ontario very seriously.

Mrs. Mitchell: I know that the people in my riding will be very pleased to know that our government has renewed its commitment to better protect water quality in Lake Huron and across all of our Great Lakes.

A report released today by PollutionWatch points out that the Great Lakes are threatened by industrial air pollution as well. The report states that 45% of all toxic air pollution reported in Canada in 2002 was produced in the Great Lakes basin. This report will come as a shock to the citizens in my riding. Minister, what assurances can you provide that our government is addressing the air pollution concerns that PollutionWatch has highlighted?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I do have the report that the honourable member has referenced. I was very interested, and I have to say somewhat heartened, that in 2005, the grade that the province of Ontario has received is a C-plus, and we need to improve that. But I could not help but note that over the last 10 years, it has not been a C-plus since 1995, and in seven of the last 10 years, under the Tory government, it was F. In fact, in one year it was F-minus. I don't know how you get an F-minus.

If you look at the 10 top polluters, three of the worst polluters are coal-fired generators in the province of Ontario. Our government is committed to replacing coal-fired generation. We have already closed one coal-fired plant.

We are also committed to a five-point air plan that is going to improve air quality in Ontario by reducing NO_x and SO_x emissions. We are committed to investing two cents of the gas tax in public transit, getting more vehicles off the road. We are committed to cleaner gasoline. We take our commitment to improve air quality very seriously, and I think the actions of our government demonstrate that.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant): To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, your government's Smoke-Free Ontario Act and tobacco tax hikes created close to 300 smoke shops on New Credit and Six Nations. Six Nations Police and the local newspaper are reporting who benefits: the Hells Angels, the Vagabonds, organized crime. And it

gets worse. I quote the Tekka newspaper: "There is specific evidence to the presence of major motorcycle gang operations, the Italian mafia, Russian mafia, Sri Lankan and Asian mafias, as well as Jamaican drug gang operatives working in the relative safety of native communities."

A Seneca Road smoke shop was shut down because of a partnership with the PLO.

Minister, do you not know what's going on at Six Nations? If you do know, why no action? What are you afraid of?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I find the member's question very interesting. If you knew anything about the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, or the former Solicitor General, I have responsibility for overall policing in Ontario, but I do not have responsibility for administering every single police service. That is an operational matter for the police. If these issues are known, the police will investigate and do what they have to do. It would be inappropriate for me to tell police what they should be doing in their capacity in providing police services, and the member should know that.

Mr. Barrett: Minister, we have the OPP at New Credit. We have Six Nations with their own force. They need help. The smoke shops are out of control. You're leaving Six Nations Police out on a limb. They need help. They could use some of that \$8 billion in tobacco taxes that your government and other governments collect across the Dominion of Canada.

Your government has created this dangerous situation. Minister, why have you turned your back on police at Six Nations and New Credit?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: With all due respect, I haven't turned my back on anybody. The Six Nations Police Service knows exactly what their responsibilities are. They know what their reporting responsibilities are, and they do that. The OPP are in exactly the same position. They have their responsibilities. They are a force that has the ability to go in and deal with crime wherever it's found.

That is, as I said earlier, an operational matter for those particular police agencies. It is not my responsibility to direct police services. That is something that that particular government, given an inquiry that's going on at the present moment, should know very much about and understand that there is a separation between my role as minister and the role of the police services.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, you're very fond of referencing the funding gap between the province of Ontario and the federal government. You've been less attentive to the funding gap of your own making between the province of Ontario and the municipalities. The Conference Board of Canada's report yesterday identified

that Toronto will suffer a \$1-billion gap in the year 2006, most of which is for initiatives and responsibilities of the province. Surely the same rules apply for the city of Toronto and the province as you've laid out for the province and the Canadian government.

My question to you is very simple: Will you commit to ending the \$1-billion gap in the same way you're asking for the federal government to end the gap in Ontario?
1450

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): There is a big difference, at minimum when it comes to the goodwill that we have demonstrated.

I appreciate the question and I appreciate that some folks at the city of Toronto are bringing forward some information, but what I hope everybody appreciates is that we got into this file a long time ago. We have made a commitment to introduce legislation by the end of this calendar year to put Toronto on a stronger footing. We have a consultation process that's going to take place this very summer. So we are into this.

We don't need to be convinced that we need to work together to put the city of Toronto on a stronger footing. That is not an issue for us. The only issue is what is the best way to get there. We're bringing something to the table that has been missing for decades, and it's called goodwill.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Premier, the billion-dollar gap that the city of Toronto is talking about—or, more correctly, the Conference Board of Canada—already includes your new money, such as the gas tax transfer to the city of Toronto.

The Conference Board stated, "Toronto's local government is in dire need of a new fiscal arrangement—either through new revenue sharing or a reduction in financial responsibilities—to become fiscally sustainable."

Mr. Premier, either share your revenues with Toronto or take back the downloaded costs. Which one is it going to be?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member opposite may not appreciate this, but we are in fact involved in some very productive discussions with representatives of the city of Toronto.

Even before those got underway, we have obviously lessened some of the financial burdens on the city of Toronto: We have proceeded with a gas tax, something that is without precedent; we are uploading public health; there is a \$1-billion investment in GO Transit and a \$1-billion investment in the TTC; something the member may think is worth discounting but we think is very important is that we continue to invest billions of dollars in Toronto schools and in Toronto hospitals. We think that those things happen to be very important to Torontonians.

I say, in summary, that we have a good foundation built of goodwill between myself, the mayor and our respective executives, and we look forward to working together to put Toronto on a stronger foundation.

CANADA-ONTARIO RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. This past Saturday you made an announcement on behalf of the province, in partnership with the federal government. The announcement was quite fitting. Just last week, we were reminded of the financial hardships that the cattle sector has been facing due to BSE when they hosted their barbecue on the front lawn of Queen's Park.

Minister, you made an announcement that will benefit the cattle sector, and in particular the Ontario Cattle Feeders Association, the Ontario Veal Association and other groups, as they work toward achieving long-term goals. Could you please tell us more about this announcement.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'm very proud to work in partnership with the federal government to announce a \$35-million investment in the Canada-Ontario research and development program. It demonstrates and fits very clearly into what the Premier is all about, because Premier McGuinty is an individual who has a long-term vision for agriculture, and that's what this is all about: long-term viability.

Over 70 projects were funded through the CORD program. It is very interesting to see some of these projects, including the Ontario veal industry and the Ontario Cattle Feeders Association for the Ontario corn-fed program, because the goal is what we have been talking about: the long term.

What these announcements are going to do is give the opportunity to the cattle feeders and the veal association to conduct research and better market their product to make sure that Ontarians recognize the safe, high-quality, nutritious food they are putting on the table, and make sure that when they go into a store, they are buying local and buying Ontario.

Mrs. Sandals: Thank you, Minister. Your announcement will go a long way to help rural Ontarians who work hard day in and day out to provide us with quality food products. The crisis they face is one that needs special long-term attention. Our government recognizes the importance of long-term thinking, and realizes the value of research and development projects in the agriculture industry. We believe that through advancing science and technology, with a focus on quality and safety, our agricultural sector can truly be a world-class leader.

Minister, my constituents at the University of Guelph want to know how they can apply for funding under the Canada-Ontario research and development fund.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Peters: It's interesting to hear the heckling from the other side as they talk about their pride in the 10th anniversary of the election of their government. When they were elected, they went and cut \$14 million directly out of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. There was no forward thinking on the other side. They just lurched from crisis to crisis.

We are taking a different approach. We are looking ahead. We are being forward-thinking. I'm proud of the work the member has done in promoting the University of Guelph and those great facilities we have there, because the heart of research and development in agriculture and the agri-food industry is in Guelph. What is so great about it is that they are looking ahead; they are forward-thinking. That very same approach is what we are doing and moving forward with as well.

They can apply by getting in touch with the Agricultural Adaptation Council. The council plays a very important role in administering these funds and in reviewing these programs. There is an additional \$28 million available for projects in this pot.

MINISTER'S SPENDING

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My question is to the Premier. When you were over here in the 37th Parliament, your now Attorney General and your now Minister of Health attacked our Minister of Environment on a daily basis for incurring expenses while overseas and charging them through his riding association. Premier, your Minister of Economic Development and Trade is doing exactly the same thing. Why was it not OK then, and why is it OK now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I will say again that I have complete faith in the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, in his handling of these kinds of matters and in the appropriateness of the expenditures he has made.

Mr. Chudleigh: Premier, Chris Stockwell resigned. He was driven out of politics because of the attack methods that you used on him through what you are now calling legitimate expenses. This is the worst case of double standards that I have ever experienced.

Can't you see that this is wrong: buying suits in London for \$1,300; buying luggage; staying in hotels in Toronto, where he has an apartment? This is wrong and it's a double standard. Are you going to ask for his resignation?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know the minister would like to speak to this, Speaker.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): All of these expenses have been thoroughly canvassed; they've been audited. These reports have been audited and none of these expenses is inappropriate. The Integrity Commissioner has gone thoroughly through my expenses on travel-related matters. These have nothing to do with that. In fact, when I stayed in Milan, what the previous member was referring to—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: If I could speak, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. Could I have some order, please. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: It was referred to that I stayed in Milan and that this was a vacation. I paid for the evening

in that hotel out of my own pocket. So the claims that are being made here today are erroneous. None of these expenses is inappropriate. They're all within keeping of management guidelines when I travel. All of these expenses are, I remind you, through the riding association, in support of initiatives that I undertook on behalf of the party with respect to fundraising or other matters. All of these expenses—

The Speaker: Thank you. That brings us to the end of oral questions.

1500

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY 406

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province’s greenbelt legislation and Places to Grow plan have significantly restricted how Niagara can grow and develop; and

“Whereas the 406 highway from Beaverdams Road in Thorold to East Main Street in Welland is one of the busiest two-lane highways in Ontario, with 27,000 cars daily; and

“Whereas extending Highway 406 to Port Colborne will attract much-needed jobs and new investment to Port Colborne, Wainfleet, Pelham and Welland;

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty Liberals immediately expand Highway 406 and extend it to Port Colborne.”

And in support, my signature.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition here from a number of people, among them Bev McLean of Thomas Street in the Middlebury area, who used to swim on the same swim team as me at the Glenmore Curling Club in Dollard-des-Ormeaux in Quebec in the 1960s and 1970s. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas some 20,000 people each year choose to make their home in Mississauga, and a Halton-Peel District Health Council capacity study stated that the Credit Valley Hospital should be operating 435 beds by now and 514 beds by 2016; and

“Whereas the Credit Valley Hospital bed count has remained constant at 365 beds since its opening in November 1985, even though some 4,800 babies are delivered each year at the Credit Valley Hospital in a facility designed to handle 2,700 births annually; and

“Whereas donors in Mississauga and the regional municipalities served by the Credit Valley Hospital have contributed more than \$41 million of a \$50-million fundraising objective, the most ambitious of any community hospital in the country, to support the con-

struction of an expanded facility able to meet the needs of our community;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care undertake specific measures to ensure the allocation of capital funds for the construction of A and H block at Credit Valley Hospital to ensure the ongoing acute care needs of the patients and families served by the hospital are met in a timely and professional manner, to reduce wait times for patients in the hospital emergency department, and to better serve patients and the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite.”

I fully support this petition. I affix my signature to it and ask Benjamin to carry it.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

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

“Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

“Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to ‘phase out’ these double-hatter firefighters; and

“Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

“Whereas Waterloo–Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

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

“That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott’s Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time.”

I want to thank James Peavoy from the town of Erin for his work in compiling this petition. I, of course, support it and I’ve affixed my signature as well.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions against pop cans and beer bottles in public parks. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and especially to the Ministry of the Environment:

“Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks plus children’s playgrounds;

“Whereas it is therefore unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

“Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

“Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminium cans worth \$27 million into landfill sites every year instead of recycling them;

“Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institute a collection program that will include all pop drinks, Tetra Pak juices and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment.”

And since I agree with this petition 100%, I’m delighted to sign it as well.

HALTON RECYCLING PLANT

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas noxious odours from the Halton Recycling plant in Newmarket are adversely affecting the health and quality of life of residents and working people in Newmarket; and

“Whereas local families have lost the enjoyment of their properties for themselves and their children, face threats to their health and well-being, and risk a decline in the value of their homes; and

“Whereas for the 300 members of the nearby main RCMP detachment, as well as other workers in the area, the odours are making their working conditions intolerable;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Minister of the Environment take immediate action to halt all noxious emissions and odours from the Halton Recycling plant, and take all steps necessary to force Halton Recycling to comply with environmental rules, including closing the plant if the odour problems continue.”

As I am in favour, I have affixed my signature and I give it to Luke.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I have a petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

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

“To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and restore funding for these important and necessary services.”

And I have also signed this.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a petition here signed by a number of people, including Elaine West from 1265 Sixth Line in Oakville, and it reads as follows:

“Credit Valley Hospital Capital Improvements:

“Whereas some 20,000 people each year choose to make their home in Mississauga, and a Halton-Peel District Health Council capacity study stated that the Credit Valley Hospital should be operating 435 beds by now and 514 beds by 2016; and

“Whereas the Credit Valley Hospital bed count has remained constant at 365 beds since its opening in November 1985, even though some 4,800 babies are delivered each year at the Credit Valley Hospital in a facility designed to handle 2,700 births annually; and

“Whereas donors in Mississauga and the regional municipalities served by the Credit Valley Hospital have contributed more than \$41 million of a \$50-million fundraising objective, the most ambitious of any community hospital in the country, to support the construction of an expanded facility able to meet the needs of our community;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care undertake specific measures to ensure the allocation of capital funds for the construction of A and H block at Credit Valley Hospital to ensure that the ongoing acute care needs of the patients and families served by the hospital are met in a timely and professional manner, to reduce wait times for patients in the hospital emergency department, and to better serve patients and the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite.”

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas gasoline prices have continued to increase at alarming rates in recent months; and

“Whereas the high and unstable gas prices across Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship to Ontario’s drivers while also impacting the Ontario economy in key sectors such as tourism and transportation;

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

“That the Parliament of Ontario consider an immediate gas price freeze for a temporary period until world oil prices moderate, and

“That the provincial government petition the federal Liberal government to step up to the plate and lower gas

prices by removing the GST on gasoline products and fix the federal Competition Act to ensure consumers are protected and that the market operates in a fair and transparent manner.”

I affix my name in full support.

1510

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition here signed by, among others, Dr. Barbara Clive, head of surgery at the Credit Valley Hospital and a resident of my riding on Nutcracker Drive in Lisgar. It reads as follows:

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

“Whereas some 16,000 Ontarians each year die of tobacco-related causes; and

“Whereas the inhalation of direct and second-hand tobacco smoke both lead to health hazards that can and do cause preventable death; and

“Whereas more than four out of every five Ontarians do not smoke, and this large majority desires that enclosed public places in Ontario be smoke-free at all times; and

“Whereas preventing the sale of tobacco products, especially to young people, and banning the use of tobacco products in public and gathering places of all types will reduce the incidence of smoking among Ontarians and decrease preventable deaths;

“Be it therefore resolved that the Ontario Legislative Assembly enact Bill 164, and that the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care aggressively implement measures to restrict the sale and supply of tobacco to those under 25; that the display of tobacco products in retail settings be banned; that smoking be banned in enclosed public places and in workplaces, and banned on or near the grounds of public and private schools, hospitals and day nurseries; that designated smoking areas or rooms in public places be banned, and that penalties for violations of smoking laws be substantially increased.”

I was pleased to vote in favour of Bill 164 just a short time ago. I affix my signature on this petition and ask page Kai to carry this for me.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): It is my privilege to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Street Public School community in Clarington wishes to alert the Minister of Education to a damaging situation with respect to overcrowding and underfunding at this French immersion school; and

“Whereas Ontario Street Public School is being penalized because it is located in the fast-growing urban centre of Clarington, but is part of a larger board that includes rural communities with declining enrolments and less access to public funding; and

“Whereas despite its exceptional track record, Ontario Street Public School’s French immersion program is being reduced from a K-8 to a K-6 program, with a cap on K-6 enrolment and grade 7 and 8 students being temporarily housed off-site for a third consecutive year; and

“Whereas our single greatest need is in adequate housing of a program that has seen superior academic achievement and a unique community culture building on strong values of success; and

“Whereas the entire Ontario Street school community is committed to working with the Minister of Education and all parties to explore a fair, reasonable, practical and effective solution;

“Therefore we, the undersigned parents, students and friends of Ontario Street Public School, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To grant special consideration for a review of funding options that will protect and develop the existing K-8 French immersion single-track program at Ontario Street Public School in Bowmanville; and

“To undertake the necessary actions immediately, in the context of the current budget, to resolve the urgent accommodation needs of Ontario Street Public School in the shortest time possible.”

I’m pleased to endorse this and sign it on behalf of Alex Reid and others from the community.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions from Doversquare Apartments and the tenants thereof in my riding. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the so-called Tenant Protection Act of the defeated Harris-Eves Tories has allowed landlords to increase rents well above the rate of inflation for new and old tenants alike;

“Whereas the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal (ORHT) created by this act regularly awards major and permanent additional rent increases to landlords to pay for required one-time improvements and temporary increases in utility costs, and this same act has given landlords wide-ranging powers to evict tenants; and

“Whereas our landlord, Sterling Karamar Property Management, has applied to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) to add a fourth high-rise unit to our compound in order to circumvent city of Toronto restrictions on density and the city’s opposition to its project;

“Whereas this project would lead to overcrowding in our densely populated community, reduce our precious green space, further drive up rents and do nothing to solve the crisis in affordable rental housing;

“Whereas this project will drive away longer-term tenants partially shielded from the post-1998 Harris-Eves rent increases, thereby further reducing the number of relatively affordable units in the city core; ...

“We, the undersigned residents of Doversquare Apartments in Toronto, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To institute a rent freeze until the exorbitant ... guideline and above-guideline rent increases are wiped out by inflation;

"To abrogate the ... 'Tenant Protection Act' and draw up new landlord-tenant legislation which shuts down the notoriously pro-landlord ORHT and reinstates real rent control, including an elimination of the ... policy of 'vacancy decontrol';

"To keep the McGuinty government to its promise of real changes at the OMB, eliminating its bias toward wealthy developers and enhancing the power of groups promoting affordable housing, sustainable neighbourhoods and tenant rights."

OPPOSITION DAY

SUPPORT FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Tory.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I'm a clerk in training.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'm a little concerned about some of the attendance at the Clerk's table, but I'll leave that for another time.

We put this motion forward to try to put on the record and again have, I hope, a thoughtful discussion on the part of all parties today about agriculture, and not just about agriculture but about the future and—

The Acting Speaker: The leader of the official opposition needs to move the motion in order that we have something to debate.

Mr. Tory: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the Legislative Assembly calls upon the government:

To recognize and endorse the fiscal and social value of Ontario's agricultural industry and the rural way of life that surrounds it; and

That the Ministry of Agriculture and all members of the assembly recognize and offer assistance with the legitimate challenges that are currently plaguing Ontario's farmers; and

That the government live up to its commitment to make the Ministry of Agriculture a lead ministry; and

That the members of the assembly support and endorse the historical and traditional values of Ontario's rural communities and commit to ensuring that government legislation, regulation and enforcement do not undermine these traditions and values.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Tory has moved opposition day motion number 5. Mr. Tory.

Mr. Tory: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for that. The truth of the matter is, I thought that I had to do it, because I did last week at this time. But I didn't actually have the motion handy, and I thought I might get away with just getting up and starting to speak to it. But you're obviously on top of the rules, as always, sir.

I think that sometimes in this House we act as if this whole issue of agriculture and rural Ontario is something that's happening somewhere else and really doesn't have any relevance for us here, and really doesn't have any relevance for a lot of the people who live in cities, for example. I was fond of saying, and still am, that I come from a city, and I describe myself as a city boy. But I'm a city boy who has gone out of his way, during the time I've been involved in politics, to make sure I spent the time and invested the time to learn about rural issues and learn about farm issues.

I still have lots to learn, but I have come to understand that there is an absolutely crucial connection between the health of the agricultural sector in Ontario, the impact that in turn has on the health of rural Ontario, and then the connection that is often lost, which is that the health and vitality of rural Ontario does in fact have a lot to do with the overall health of Ontario itself and should be of much more concern than it is to people who live in the cities of Ontario.

If you go back and look at the identity of Ontario and where those kinds of cornerstone values come from, they come from the farms, from the soil of Ontario and from the small towns, where people have roots that go back generations, where people hold to the values that have made Ontario great, and that still, I think, in many cases root a lot of where we go and what we do in Ontario. Agriculture is a part of who we are. It connects us to the land. It's a source of pride. The fruits of our land gain accolades and praise around the world.

But I think the part we forget from time to time is the contribution that agriculture makes to fuelling the economy of Ontario. The Minister of Agriculture has been among those saying that it is the second-biggest industry in Ontario—and he's right when he says that—just behind the automotive industry. The fact is that we've heard that a lot of times from the Minister of Agriculture, but what we haven't seen is the kind of commitment that backs up that sort of statement, that says what we're going to do is get behind this industry, especially in its time of trial, and do the things that need to be done to make sure it can remain strong going into the future.

1520

The spinoff economy that agriculture supports, as we all know, is huge. Just think of how many times you've been in a grocery store and how many people are employed there doing all kinds of things, and of how many people make their living getting produce to market.

I was in my own riding in the town of Mount Forest not too long ago. I may have said this in the House before, but it bears repeating because I think it's a good example of the interconnection between all the different things that go on in Ontario that rely on the health of the agricultural sector. I went into the ladies' wear store for a visit to say hello. I said to the woman, as you will, "How's business?" She said, "In 20 years, it has never been worse." I said, "Why is that? What is causing it to be so bad?" She said, "It's very simple. The farmers have no money, and if the farmers have no money, they make

up a substantial percentage of my customer base, and as a result the business is the worst it's been in 20 years."

Two doors down the street in Mount Forest is the Ford dealership. The woman there who is the general sales manager—same day, half an hour later—when asked, "How's business?" said to me, "Well, you know, in the car business it is always up and down, but it's very bad right now." I said, "Is it just the cycle of the car business?" She said, "No, we sell more trucks than cars and we sell the trucks to the farmers. The farmers don't have any money so they're not buying any trucks."

These were two people independent of each other and it was within 15 minutes. I'm sure if I had finished asking the same question in shop after shop, whether it was in Mount Forest, Arthur, Shelburne, Orangeville or anywhere else, I would have had the same story repeated over and over again.

Yet we talk here as if somehow this is kind of unconnected to the rest of reality. When we see retail sales slowing down, not only is it, as the retail council said, a result of the shocking withdrawal of money from taxpayers' pockets by the McGuinty Liberals for the health tax, but it's because they have failed to step up and support the farmers, and the farmers are spending less money at retail and many other places. They're not able to provide properly for their own families, and they're not able really to stay in business. Of course that, in and of itself, has a bad impact on the government. It has a huge impact on the dignity and livelihood of farmers and rural Ontario, but it has a negative impact on the government too, because for every item farmers are not buying, for every dollar they are not earning, the government is being denied tax revenues that would come from the taxation of that spending or from the taxation of that income that is earned by the farmers.

Beyond that, beyond the sort of short-term or current crisis being faced by farmers in rural Ontario, the towns are hurting. We can all see that. As we drive through the towns we can see the number of storefronts that are boarded up. There are a variety of factors that are at play in causing that to occur, but there's no question that the crisis facing the farm economy is a big contributor to that.

You would think that, if this was going on, if we have the minister himself saying it's the second biggest industry in the province, employing all kinds of people, tens and tens of thousands if you include the spinoff jobs, this would be something that would be right at the centre of the government's focus, yet we see that with this McGuinty Liberal government not only are agriculture and small-town Ontario not a priority, but they are basically turning their backs on the farmers of this province and turning their backs even more particularly on rural and smaller-town Ontario.

If you just look at one long-term challenge that should be right in front of us, namely, the challenge of our own food sovereignty, which speaks to the question of the health of our farmers and the health of the agricultural industry, but also speaks to our ability down the road in

five years, ten years, 15 years, to make sure we can be growing and using the food that is grown by our own farmers here in Ontario to look after ourselves to the greatest extent possible, there is no plan, even if you put aside the short-term crisis and say they're failing to respond to that. If you said, "They've got a bang-up long-term plan in place to really make sure that five years from now farmers will be prospering and we'll have increased food sovereignty for Ontario"—but there's no short-term program; there is no long-term program; there is no plan of any kind. It's just find new ways to regulate, find new ways to push down expenditures on to farmers who have no money, as a result of programs they dream up over there, and really just forget about any possible commitment you might make to making agriculture, as the resolution refers to, a lead ministry.

A lead ministry? My goodness, I'm surprised we even still have anybody sitting at the table, based on how far things have fallen. I can remember sitting at the cabinet meetings when William Davis was the Premier of this province, and I can tell you, when people spoke up on behalf of rural Ontario—by the way, there were quite a few more of them at the table at that time—the Premier of this province and the other ministers from urban centres in this province listened, and they acted. That's what they did.

From this government and this minister, a staggering 20% cut last year in the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, and not a peep out of him, and not a peep out of any Liberal members of the Legislature. They are busy out there explaining and apologizing on behalf of the government, "I'm sorry. We're really doing our best here. We're doing more than you think. You don't really understand the numbers," but no one would ever stand up. We haven't heard one of them. With all these canned questions they get up in the Legislature to read, there's not one who ever got up and asked a real, genuine question, with some passion and some emotion, on behalf of the farmers and residents of rural Ontario.

What happens is that you get a series of protests on the front lawn of Queen's Park; they came down here, tens of thousands of farmers. I'll give him his due: The minister was out there to meet those people and listen to them. But unfortunately, I think what we have here is not a minister who doesn't care, but who couldn't go back to the table, after meeting the 10,000 farmers and listening to them, as I'm sure he did, and deliver. When they responded, they responded for a little while with some short-term measures. I was reading a clipping just today about the incredible disappointment people get when they go out to their mailbox, open up the envelope and find a cheque for \$300, which is probably less than the amount they lose on any one third of one cow they try to take to market nowadays if they're a beef producer. That's the kind of thing they produced.

Then you might say, "Well, OK, he had a chance to redeem himself with this past year's budget." What do we find? We find that in fact they're cutting back spending by 23.1%. The minister stood up today and did what

he does so well: He started to speak louder and louder about some of our past budget changes of one kind or another, and he talked about a \$14-million reduction that had taken place one year in the budget. This man should have given credit where credit was due, because he has far surpassed that, by a margin of 10 times this year alone, with a reduction of \$169 million in what this government is going to spend to help the farmers of Ontario this year. He has the temerity to come in here and talk about some past reduction of \$14 million and say that somehow that was behaviour that should be the subject of censure.

I think what's happening here is that it comes from the top. I don't think the Premier is really interested in this. Then you have the finance minister, who said at the time of his budget, "Let's remember that there's a good part of our agricultural industry which is doing quite well and doesn't need the intervention of the government."

I can tell you, I've been making a real effort to get around Ontario, and in particular to focus on spending time in farm communities with groups of farmers, with groups that are in the farm industry, and I'm still looking, aside from some of the people in the supply management areas, for people who want to stand up and say how well they're doing. There are some, but he says "a good part of our agricultural industry." I can tell you, I think that Ron Bonnett and a whole host of other people would take considerable issue with that.

Yet their response was to cut the municipal drainage program, and then, under great duress, to restore it with less money than before—keep pushing through regulations that cost farmers money. They're still waiting for their CAIS funding. Farmer after farmer goes to the mailbox and gets these cheques that are late and small. They cut back the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture by 23.1%, and on and on it goes.

I'm running out of time, but I want to finish on two notes, one of which just has to do with priority-setting. This government obviously had enough muscle at the table that when the time came to divide up the money, they somehow managed to find \$400 million for a swanky casino hotel in Windsor; they found \$400 million of taxpayers' money for that. Yet when it came time this year to look at what was going to be done for farmers, \$169 million of the money that's going to pay for that casino came from money that is not going to be spent to help farmers this year. That's what happened. They have to explain that, not me, because I couldn't possibly, for the life of me, understand how any government, any cabinet, any Minister of Agriculture or any Premier could allow that kind of priority-setting to take place. It's distorted, it's wrong and it can't be allowed to stand. It won't stand, because in 2007, if not before—we're going to work hard in between to fight for farmers and rural communities in Ontario—we're going to change the government and get back to a day when rural Ontario and farmers were respected and listened to in the highest councils of this province. That's what we're going to do.

I want to finish on one final note, which to me says it all again, about priority-setting and so forth. I had a

visit—and I must say that I didn't know about the issue, but I just shook my head again, more in dismay and disappointment than anything. I was at the Perth spring festival—it's a maple syrup festival; I've forgotten the exact name for it—with the member for Lanark—Carleton. We had a very nice time. We were going along all the different booths that were there; there was a farmers' market there. We stopped at one booth, and the woman said to us, "Look, could you help me with something?" She said, "They're now telling me there are inspectors. They're going to come to my farm kitchen and tell me whether it's OK to be making jams and jellies," and all this sort of thing that's been going on for generations in this province.

1530

That is part of what makes Ontario tick, that you have people with a real sense of community. They know who they're buying this stuff from. They know where it's made. It was probably made by the same person's grandmother, in the same kitchen—probably updated but the same physical structure—two generations ago. This government has no time to provide any meaningful help for farmers, no time to develop a meaningful approach, all kinds of time to develop a new so-called municipal partnership program that gouges the property taxpayers of a lot of small towns across this province. But they do have time for their idea of a food sovereignty strategy, to ban fresh sushi and to really crack down on those farm kitchens across Ontario where all these people—like none—are getting into trouble because they're buying jams and jellies from people who have probably been making those things in their kitchens for two or three generations.

I think it's time that we started to see two things. One is some real attention for the plight of farmers, backed up by consistent financial support, consistent support around the cabinet table for the farmers of Ontario. The second is some respect for the people and the values represented in rural Ontario, which are the bedrock values that have guided this province and built this province for many, many years. There was a time when the cities relied on the strength and health and financial vitality of rural Ontario to help them finance all of their expansion and their building of infrastructure. Well, now it's time to have it the other way around.

I think it's time this government woke up, that we had a minister at the table who can actually get something done, who has enough muscle, and I'm not just talking about one minister, but several ministers who will speak up for rural Ontario and get something done. That's why we moved this motion today: to draw some attention to this and to hopefully attract some attention, even just for a minute, from this government.

So I'm very pleased to put those comments on the record and to be joined by so many of my colleagues who care so much not just today, but every single day, about this. The people of rural Ontario know that, and that's why we're going to have a change of government, among many other reasons, in 2007.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I am actually quite, quite happy to enter into the debate, because I want to talk about the person I refer to as the \$200-million Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Steve Peters.

Now, it's very interesting. I find it quite strange that the temporary member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey, the temporary rural member in this House, has come in here and said, "Well, you know what? I don't mind borrowing a rural riding, but I can hardly wait to get back to Toronto and represent Toronto." I give him full credit for saying that that's what he's going to do, but his commitment to rural Ontario is at best transitory, I would say.

What I want to do is talk about our Minister of Agriculture. Now, as I was explaining to my farmers in the Agriculture 101 event and the government relations 101 event that we had in this riding, it's very, very important in an era of fiscal probity that we budget things.

Last year, for example, around this time, the grain and oilseed farmers were experiencing very good prices, so we didn't budget for an extraordinary collapse in the international price of grain and oilseed, but when that happened—something beyond our control, something beyond the control of the Leader of the Opposition, something beyond the control of even the federal government—farmers came to us and said they needed assistance. Now, which government provided that assistance? That would be the Dalton McGuinty government. Whose voice was the one at the cabinet table that convinced other ministers that, yes, money had to come out of the reserve that we'd set aside for these unexpected contingencies? Well, it would have been the Honourable Steve Peters, the Minister of Agriculture.

Last year, he was able to secure from cabinet and his colleagues out of the reserve, with the support of the Minister of Finance, and obviously the support of the Premier, some \$200 million of additional funding that was not budgeted. Now, to me, where I come from in rural Ontario, that's getting the job done for the farmers. The question then becomes, what about the future? What about that future? Well, I think all parties agree—and I know the opposition agrees; both parties agree—that there has been a lack, in my opinion, of that one common vision.

Interestingly enough, I remember when the then Leader of the Opposition—a man who, I might add, has no transitory commitment to rural Ontario—was in my riding and he promised to the farmers that, as Premier, he would institute a Premier's summit on agriculture and food.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition, when the great Bill Davis was the Premier, I don't remember him ever having a summit with the farmers and the food industry in this riding. They weren't there at all. I don't remember Mr. Harris and I don't remember Mr. Eves having a summit for agriculture—

Interjection.

Mr. Wilkinson: Oh, wait a minute. I think the heirless apparent, the ambitious member from Erie–Lincoln, is saying that when he was in the government, all was well with agriculture, was it? Everything was fine when you were in power?

I think I remember a different history than that. I remember the farmers of my riding coming to me and saying how deeply disappointed they were with a party that they thought, with a base of rural Ontario, would be there for them.

I remember when they were unhappy with the Minister of Agriculture. Let's see, I think they had four Ministers of Agriculture. Who did they have? I'm sure the member will help me out. There was Helen Johns, the former member from Huron–Bruce. She was the last minister. She was defeated by her rural riding; defeated by our member Ms. Mitchell. And who was the member before that? Oh, I think it was Mr. Hardeman, the member from Oxford. There's a rural riding. I remember when they used to call for his head. So everything was good back then and now it's terrible? And who was before that? Well, there was Noble Villeneuve. I remember Noble. He really didn't stick too long as well. And who was that first one? There was Ernie and Helen and Noble and—oh, Brian Coburn, that's it; another member who ended up being a Minister of Agriculture and Food for that government. That was back in the old days, but it seems to me that it's a bit rich for the current government to come in here and to start to lecture us about supporting the farmers.

As always is the case with the Leader of the Opposition, he was very good; he explained to us just recently, when he was speaking, that what we needed to do was reduce taxes but spend more money on agriculture. I'm a certified financial planner, and I don't understand—I'm sure, when he gets back up and speaks about this—how on the one hand he can be talking for tax cuts and on the other hand saying that we should spend more money on agriculture.

As the member from Perth–Middlesex, I agree with spending more money on agriculture. But what's going to be cut? Am I not going to get a new hospital in Listowel because of this? Is there not going to be money for the Rotary respite house? What things have to go to make that happen?

It isn't a matter of taxing and spending. What my farmers have told me is that they want a long-term solution. They're happy that the Premier of the province of Ontario had his inaugural Premier's summit at the urging of our Minister of Agriculture. They're proud of the fact that they finally have a Premier of Ontario who doesn't have a revolving door at the Ministry of Agriculture and, instead, has a long-term commitment to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. I think that is what is most important. That is what trumps all: that commitment.

Because we're getting ready for next year's summit, what are we doing? Right now, teams of people are going across this province, speaking with farmers about that

need for revision. That's very, very important to me. I think what we have to do is get out of this dynamic of what the things are that we disagree with and talk about the things that we do agree with.

I appreciate the fact that the Leader of the Opposition has brought forward this opposition motion today, because I say, with all respect, that this is exactly what needs to happen in this House. What we have to do is set partisan politics aside, and I say this with all sincerity. We have to go—because we've all had to deal with the agriculture file—and look not at those things that divide us and not those things that divide farmers, but look at those things that unite us and those things that unite farmers. It strikes me, as someone who knows a bit about business, that the best way to build that coalition is not on the things that are divisive but, instead, on the things that unite us.

Talking to my farmers in Perth–Middlesex, we would all agree, and I think all members would agree, that what's important is that we believe this province should be self-sufficient for food. I think we can all agree on that. I see the member from Oxford is nodding his head. I think he would agree with me on that. Self-sufficiency is important. In this age of post-9/11, when borders can be closed by trade action and by threats of terrorism, we need to be able to feed ourselves. That's important.

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I think we all agree on food safety. We all agree on the absolute necessity that we keep our food safe. I say this with great respect, that all farmers believe they are better stewards of the land and have difficulty with regulation. But I look back and say, why do we have regulation of rural Ontario? Why do we have regulation 170? Why did all of these things happen? It was because of a tragic decision made by Premier Harris: When warned by the chief medical officer of health for this province that he should not allow private firms to check water and not be required to tell the local public medical officer of health, that was a mistake that he made.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): That was the Red Tape Commission.

Mr. Wilkinson: That was the Red Tape Commission. That was a mistake that was made, and we have been living with reverberations of that in this province ever since.

When we took over, we had the Nutrient Management Act from the previous government, we had regulation 170 from the previous government, we had a commitment to source water protection from the previous government, and none of those things, I say with great respect, had ever been worked together as one single policy piece. There is but one source of water that we all draw upon. They say in rural Ontario, "You don't foul your own well, and you don't foul your neighbour's well." We understand that in rural Ontario.

One of the things that I know our ministers—my minister, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture and Food—have been struggling with is how to reconcile those things and to implement fully

the O'Connor report which, I might add, all three parties endorsed and agreed to during the election. How do we make that happen in practical terms? That's why I'm so happy that we have a new drinking water regulation to replace regulation 170, which everyone agreed was completely unworkable. This one is much more workable. I think it's important that we set aside the partisanship and we look at those things.

Now, if we go away from regulation and move to stewardship, which is natural—I know we have farmers in this House. I know the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, the member from Chatham–Kent, the member from Oxford and the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound are all farmers, and they would tell all of our parties how stewardship fits a lot better in the culture of agriculture than does regulation, and I notice that. We have to all take a certain amount of responsibility for what has happened in the past and work together to overcome that.

Self-sufficiency in food and stewardship over regulation is important, but the other thing we have to do is embrace the concept of service. That's a challenge that all of our parties have. I welcome the motion from the Leader of the Opposition. We will always disagree about the history, I'm sure, but I think we can work together on more of a non-partisan basis and challenge our farmers, who at times can be deeply divided, to rise above that themselves. We have to set the example in this House. If we can achieve a certain bipartisanship or tripartisanship in this file, I think the farmers of this province will respond.

I want to finish by commending our \$200-million Minister of Agriculture and the great work he did in the last fiscal year.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of the motion put forward by our leader, John Tory, calling on the government to show some support for rural Ontario and the rural Ontario way of life.

Since the election, the McGuinty Liberals have been concerned about the lack of support this government has given the agriculture community and rural Ontario. In May 2004, in the Liberal government's first budget they saw fit to remove \$128 million from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's budget. It was the biggest cut of any ministry. Again this year, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food once again has had its budgets cut by 23.1%. Tell me, is this a government that supports agriculture and rural Ontario? I don't think so.

Let's take a moment and review this. Instead of making agriculture the lead ministry as promised in the Liberal election platform, they've cut the ministry's budget. During the election, Dalton McGuinty promised to work with the farmers and the federal government to ensure a viable new generation of safety nets. But instead, the McGuinty 2004 budget delivered a \$50-million cut to the safety net programs and slashed half a million dollars out of research and technology funding.

Here we are today, and it's the same old story as last year. The CAIS program does not work without compan-

ion programs, and no one in the McGuinty government seems to be listening to farmers. It's sad to say, but the situation hasn't changed since last year. Farmers are in crisis. The Minister of Agriculture has no plan: no short-term plan, no long-term plan, just a proposal that we'll review the options of creating a long-term plan. Beef farmers are still suffering from the May 2003 BSE crisis. Borders are still closed to live cattle. Cattle farmers are still suffering extreme financial hardships. Spinoff industries, processing industries and whole communities are suffering. But the minister thinks funding can be reduced.

There are reasons why our government did not sign the APF. It was because as it stood, it was not a good deal for Ontario's farmers. Minister, nothing changed. You signed it; it's still not a good deal for Ontario's farmers. The CAIS program without companion programs just doesn't work.

The Minister of Agriculture is quoted in Hansard on November 23, 2004, as stating, "As you know, Ontario's agricultural sector is the most diverse in the country ... and these companion programs play an important role in addressing the unique needs of this province's agricultural industry. Securing the continuation of these programs over the short term is a key element in moving us closer to our vision of a strong and sustainable agricultural sector."

Well, Minister, your finance minister obviously doesn't agree that companion programs are important to our farmers. His recent budget definitely tells a different story. With massive cuts to the budget, you are no longer able to sustain support which was invaluable to the farmers of this province: programs such as the market revenue insurance program and the self-directed risk management program, which even you agreed were important to the sustainability of our agriculture community. In fact, it's in black and white in the 2005-06 expenditure report released yesterday, which shows that you dropped support to farmers to \$170 million, down from \$279 million in the last year that we were government.

Minister, it's obvious that the McGuinty Liberals continue to march with an urban agenda. All you have to do is look at page 29 of the budget, where your finance minister cut agriculture by 23.1%—once again, the largest cut of any ministry in the government. I ask you again this year, when is the Minister of Agriculture going to admit that he is at the mercy of his urban colleagues and that he is still powerless to stop his portfolio from being ravaged? I ask, will Premier McGuinty and the Liberal government make OMAF a lead ministry, as they promised, and support the farmers and the rural way of life for the constituents that he and I both represent in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): The borders are still closed to Canadian cattle. We still have a lack of slaughter capacity in this province. Our safety net programs are not working. The fabric of rural Ontario has never been worse, and this government continues to

blame Ottawa; they continue to blame the US; they continue to blame anyone but themselves.

Ontario has one of the most diversified agricultural economies in Canada, and off-the-shelf safety net programs from Ottawa just don't work in this province. We need a made-in-Ontario safety net program.

We should emphasize Ontario's agriculture and food positives. The positives that we have in this province are monumental. We have some of the best gene pools in the world, be it dairy cattle, hogs, chickens or beef. We can track farm products from farm to fork, whether it be livestock, whether it be grain crops—soybeans, corn—or small grains—wheat, oats, barley, rye—or whether it be fruits and vegetables. These are tremendous advantages. Crop protection, whether it be a crop protection process, fertilizers or other additives to agricultural products, can be traced. This is an extremely great advantage in world markets, and this government is not taking advantage of those opportunities.

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Our industry can trace food safety items from farm to fork, which gives us that huge advantage in the agri-food trade. Agri-food trade should be our number one export item after automobiles in this province, and it's not. This government is failing Ontario farmers in that area. They're not taking advantage of those tremendous opportunities.

One of the problems the government has is that it's underfunded. In Ontario, if you go back over the years, traditionally the agricultural budget has been just under 1% of the provincial budget. That has not come to fruition under this government. That would indicate a budget of somewhere in the order of \$800 million for agriculture. That would allow the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to fund a long-term, made-in-Ontario safety net program designed and used by Ontario farmers. Certainly, we have enough experience in the agricultural community to design and operate, within a set budget, a safety net program that would work. It would also allow stable funding for market development and research. Research, I was sad to see, was drastically cut in last year's budget. After all, in every industry research is the future, and if you don't have stable funding for research, you're going to watch an industry in its closing days. Instead of providing the stable funding, you are short-changing agriculture and food. You're short-changing them financially, you're short-changing them politically, you're short-changing them socially and I believe you're short-changing them morally.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I'm certainly pleased to rise today to support this motion. One of the things I would like to talk about is the relevance in rural communities. That's what the Leader of the Opposition talked about.

In my community of Huron-Bruce, agriculture is the number one industry. So when we talk about the relevance of agriculture in my riding, it is number one. We produce more than four other provinces in my riding alone. We talk about the roots in communities, and my

family has been in a rural community for over seven generations. I'm very pleased to hear that the Leader of the Opposition somehow has found rural communities. I was also in business for over 10 years and certainly have a good understanding that if the agricultural community does not have a good year, neither do our small businesses.

If today's motion is to raise the awareness of what we are going through in the agricultural community today, then I support the motion. But if it's to talk more about the politics in this House—I know this is the House for politics, but I can tell you that that's not what our agricultural community needs. When the Leader of the Opposition talks about how he's found rural communities, well, my family has been there for seven generations.

Rural Ontario is the key to making sure that the province of Ontario is vital. When we talk about what they bring to the table and what they have brought to the table, this is not something that's a passing fancy in my riding. We are the most rural riding in Ontario, and when I hear things about what we have done as a government—we recognize, we respect, we will work and we will continue to work.

I want to make a very clear statement with regard to the agricultural budget of this year. The minister has repeatedly said that there was a \$15-million increase in the budget. There was also reinforcement of the research. I don't know whether or not the members simply don't want to hear it or they simply don't understand the numbers, but let's be clear: The Minister of Agriculture understands the peril of what our agricultural and rural communities are going through. So I do feel that we have to get that on the table right now and have an understanding of it.

I do want to say that tomorrow my private member's bill is about rural communities. I also find it just a little strange in the passing that this opposition day motion looks very much like my private member's bill that I'm doing tomorrow.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): You should be proud.

Mrs. Mitchell: I'm very proud that the Leader of the Opposition supports my private member's bill. I look forward to the leader being in the House tomorrow in support of my private member's bill, because I know that his new-found understanding of our rural communities is something that we look forward to.

Mr. Leal: It's all on the road to Damascus.

Mrs. Mitchell: That's right.

One of the things that I do want to talk about is, I've heard some of the members of the opposition say that they got things done. As you know, Mr. Speaker, not only do I come from a rural municipality, but I also come from municipal politics within my riding. One of the things that I always felt was one of the most difficult things for our rural communities to overcome was what I call the division of politics. It became one community against another community: "If we fight amongst our communities, then we can get whatever," because that was how they conducted themselves. But, they would argue, they got things done. They did, but they did it at

the cost of our rural communities. They used a cookie-cutter style. It was very, very hard on our communities. There doesn't seem to be an appreciation or an understanding of what we went through. I do find it rather strange that we now stand up and laud the same communities that they tore the heart out of.

When I hear about urban and rural, you know what? We're all one. One party goes ahead too much or the other party goes ahead; we are all the province of Ontario. We, together, need urban as much as urban needs rural. We understand that in our rural communities. We look forward to working with our urban counterparts to build a stronger Ontario, and that stronger Ontario will be a stronger agriculture. What we will do, this government will do, with the help and the assistance of not only the cabinet and the Minister of Agriculture, is continue to strongly support our rural communities, and the challenges that our agricultural community is facing right now will be turned into opportunities through renewables, the bio-economy. That is what we should be talking about today. I can tell you that my agricultural community doesn't appreciate when their challenges and their financial straits that they're in are brought into partisan politics. What they want to know is what we're doing, how we're doing it and how we're going to get there. I can tell the members that that is what they want to hear.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to once again voice the concerns of the rural community, and to congratulate and be proud of the members of government for the work that we will continue to do to strengthen our rural communities.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I'm pleased today to speak to the opposition day motion by my leader, "That the Legislative Assembly calls upon the government,

"To recognize and endorse the fiscal and social value of Ontario's agricultural industry and the rural way of life that surrounds it..."

I want to respond a little bit to the member for Huron–Bruce talking about partisan politics and politicking here about the agricultural community. I'd like her to rewind a little bit to the election of 2003 and ask her if she used any partisan politicking when she was campaigning for the seat. I hardly think so. In fact, that's what we do. We do politick, because we believe we have another way and a better way of helping farmers in this province and the people in rural Ontario.

As for my leader, Mr. Tory, I can tell you that in the last three months he has been in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke twice—not once; twice—to meet with rural stakeholders and rural people to try to forge some kind of understanding about where we need to go in this province to help farmers and rural people, because this government has again turned a blind eye to rural Ontario. My leader, Mr. Tory, won't be doing that, and you can count on it.

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I will be meeting with a group of people tomorrow evening at St. Mary's church in Wilno, who have put

together a document that I have sent to all the members of this House, to talk about all the problems that rural Ontario is facing, in particular the problems that are being faced in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, my county of Renfrew.

One of the biggest problems they have is that their incomes are so much lower than people elsewhere in the province. People in metro Toronto have an average income of \$40,000; people in my riding have an average income of about \$20,000. You can imagine the pressure that puts on them when hydro costs are going up—hydro rates have gone up about 35% under this government, when they promised they would freeze rates through 2006. They've been hit with a health tax. The Ontario municipal partnership fund, which they on the other side of the House have talked so glowingly about—under close examination, we find that municipalities in my riding are going to be hurt very significantly by that plan as we go forward to 2007. So it's not a plan that the party across the floor likes to brag about.

Again, I want to refer to the member from Huron–Bruce. She chastises us for politicking, yet she's bringing in a private member's bill tomorrow that celebrates agriculture in the province of Ontario with a special day, June 21. I commend her for that. I think it's laudable that she's doing it. But don't compare that to the steps Mr. Tory has taken to try to help rural or agricultural people in the province, or, in fact, my own private member's bill.

I suppose I can count on the member and many of her colleagues, when I hear that speech today, to support my private member's bill, which actually does something for people in rural Ontario, which is to extend the gas tax rebate to all municipalities in Ontario so that rural people can benefit from that fund, as well as people who live in municipalities that have public or rapid transit systems. That is real help for people in rural Ontario, not some namby-pamby "How are you doing? We love you" bill that is going to be tabled in the House tomorrow. That's real help for people in Ontario.

Also, my colleague Norm Sterling's bill—Bill 187, I believe—which is to establish a special fund for eastern Ontario, similar to the northern Ontario fund that helps people who are in economically disadvantaged areas: Everyone will recognize that eastern Ontario does not enjoy the same kind of economic advantages that other parts of this province do. This government has an opportunity to support those two bills, which will go a long way to helping people in rural Ontario reach and achieve the goals they have for their families and their lives.

One of the other problems facing rural Ontario is depopulation. Everything this government does is directed toward depopulating rural Ontario. How is rural Ontario supposed to become more self-sufficient and able to be more self-determined if it is being continuously depopulated by government policies? If you don't have people, you can't build an economy. Rural Ontario economies are suffering from a lack—the municipalities don't have the assessment, and what does this govern-

ment do? It brings in more impediments to development in rural Ontario.

My time is up. We could go on for a little bit more, but thank you very much.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I'm pleased to participate in this debate, because I think there are a number of questions that need to be asked, a number of issues that need to be raised and, frankly, some solutions need to be offered.

I first of all want to focus on what the McGuinty government promised people before the election, because part of what this Legislature is about is holding the government accountable. Before the election, the Premier was heard to say, "The Harris-Eves government has completely ignored the needs of our province's rural communities. It has downloaded unfair financial burdens on to rural municipalities.... We will give rural communities a voice and provide them with stable funding so that they can chart their own course."

Another promise: "We will make research work for Ontario farmers." Another promise: "We will consult with the industry. The Harris-Eves government has done little meaningful consultation with farmers on issues that directly affect them. We will listen to Ontario farmers and get their best advice." Then another promise: the promise to make the Ministry of Agriculture into a lead ministry which would have a say, an important say, a leading say, on the issues that affect farmers and on the issues that affect people living in rural Ontario generally.

Now we're into the second year of government and I think it's only proper to look at whether or not the government has fulfilled these promises, whether or not Premier McGuinty has lived up to his word.

The first issue that I guess I'd want to focus on is, is the Ministry of Agriculture a lead ministry? The best way to look at that is to look at what's happening in the Ministry of Agriculture. If I turn to the government's budget—and this is a good way to see if a ministry is in fact becoming a lead ministry or if they're not a lead ministry. One of the things the government does in its budget—and I found it interesting that they would actually boast about this. The government actually boasts about a number of ministries that have had their budgets cut. It boasts about ministries that have had their budgets reduced. In the McGuinty government's own budget, this year, in 2005, the McGuinty government boasts that they've cut the operating budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food by \$169 million, that they've cut the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's budget by 23%. So I say to myself, how does a ministry become a lead ministry when you're taking away a quarter of its budget? How does a ministry become a lead ministry when you're literally taking \$169 million out of its operating funding? I think that is a question that Premier McGuinty will have to answer.

But what I find really astounding is that the government in its budget actually boasts about this, boasts that it's doing something positive, something good for farmers by cutting the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's budget by 23%. That's the first test: Is the Ministry of Agriculture and Food becoming a lead ministry?

One of the other tests, as those of us who have been around here for a while all know, if you're a lead ministry, you get put on the important cabinet committees. If you're a lead ministry, you're included in the important cabinet committees where the big decisions are really made. One of the tests is, is the minister on the priorities and planning committee of cabinet? That's where the very big decisions are made. Is the Minister of Agriculture on the priorities and planning board of cabinet in the McGuinty government? No. Not now, not anywhere over the last two years. So for the really important decisions, which are made at the priorities and planning board of cabinet, the decisions about which ministries are going to be funded and which ministries will be cut, which ministries are central to the government's plan, central to the government's strategy, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is nowhere near that decision-making, is not included in that decision-making whatsoever.

I think people across rural Ontario will have to make their own decision on this. Is the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs a lead ministry under the McGuinty government? It's pretty hard to argue that, when it's taken a 23% budget cut in this budget alone, and the McGuinty government is boasting about that. It's pretty hard to argue that it's a lead ministry when the minister isn't on the Priorities and Planning Board of cabinet; in fact, isn't anywhere near the Priorities and Planning Board of cabinet.

1610

Now I want to look at some of the other promises that were made. I agree, the former Conservative government downloaded all kinds of costs on to rural communities. Rural communities were suddenly hit with the costs of land ambulance, and land ambulance is becoming very expensive. Rural communities were suddenly hit with the costs of rural policing. It used to be that policing was covered by general provincial revenues, by the income tax. But, I gather, along with those much-boasted-about tax cuts came the downloading of the cost of policing on to rural municipalities. Then there was the cost of sewer and water, and more of the costs of roads and bridges. All of those things were downloaded under the Conservative government.

Has the McGuinty government done anything to upload those things? Has it done anything to balance those things out? The government wants to boast that in their new municipal partnership program it's somehow going to be better for municipalities. But I've had municipality after municipality write to me and point out that under this so-called new municipal partnership fund, they are covering more of the cost of land ambulance than ever. Instead of reversing the downloading, the McGuinty government is actually increasing it. Rural municipalities are covering more of the cost of policing than ever. Instead of reversing the downloading of policing costs, rural municipalities are picking up more of those than ever.

Social assistance: Is the downloading of social assistance costs being reversed? Not when I talk to rural muni-

cipalities. They say it's going to be greater. In fact, there are rural municipalities that are actually thinking about taking the keys to the municipal office and sending them to the Premier, saying, "If you want to continue to download on us, then you come here and run this, because you're putting us in a financially unsustainable situation. We don't have the tax base to provide land ambulance, we don't have the tax base to cover policing costs, we don't have the tax base for social assistance, and we don't have the tax base for roads and bridges that have all been downloaded."

So I come to that promise. Has the McGuinty government kept that promise? On the objective evidence, no, they haven't. In fact, the downloading is becoming worse—much worse.

Then there is the next promise: "We will make research work for Ontario farmers." I look around the province to find evidence of new research, of new science being brought to bear in terms of Ontario's agricultural sector. One of the things that jumps out at you is that a lot of work has been done over about the last 20 years to make genetic improvements in Ontario's dairy and beef herds, and swine improvement. There were actual strategies put in place, co-operatively between the government and farmers and universities and other research institutes, to establish the Ontario dairy herd improvement program. A lot of this was genetic research. It was, how can we improve the genetic stock of Ontario's herds through genetic research and through doing the follow-up implementation of the knowledge following that research? This was very good work. Anyone who watched the improvement in our beef herds, who watched the improvements in dairy herds, who watched the improvements in our swine herds was very impressed. In fact, international bodies were coming here to Ontario and saying, "This is the right thing to do. This is really smart investment in research."

What has the McGuinty government done? Instead of investing in new research, they have essentially cut the money that was being invested in this kind of research. For example, the Ontario Dairy Herd Improvement Corp has had \$1.5 million cut by the McGuinty government. Beef Improvement Ontario, BIO, had a \$1-million cut from the McGuinty government. The Ontario swine improvement strategy has had to absorb a cut of over \$500,000. On the objective evidence, is there this dedication to research? On the objective evidence, no. In fact, the McGuinty government is cutting some of the good, positive, productive research work that was already being done.

Next, I want to go to this promise to consult with the industry, to consult with farmers on issues that directly affect them. I have asked some questions of a number of commodity groups. I have asked some questions of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and of other leadership groups in the farm sector. Were they consulted about this 23% cut to the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food? Were they consulted about this \$169-million cut to the budget of the ministry? Were they consulted about

these cuts to dairy herd improvement? Were they consulted about the proposed cuts to beef improvement? Were they consulted about the proposed cuts to swine improvement?

Do you know the response I got? The response on every one of the issues was no, no consultations whatsoever. In many cases, farm groups and the leadership in the farm community did not even find out directly from the minister or the minister's office when things were being done. They read about it the next day in the media. Not only was there no consultation, but there wasn't even the diplomacy, the politeness, to get on the phone and say, "We have some bad news, something we want to tell you now because it's the right thing to do, the proper thing to do, the diplomatic thing to do. We want to tell you that this is happening." Even that wasn't done. Leaders in the farm community found out about these things the next day in the media. People from the media would be calling them saying, "What do you think about this cut to beef improvement?" "What do you think about this cut to swine improvement?" "What do you think about this cut to dairy herd improvement?" Farmers were literally taken by surprise.

So it is with the \$169-million cut to the ministry's budget as well. Farmers found out by surprise. There was no consultation, no discussion, not even notice that this may be happening. Has the promise to consult been kept? On the objective evidence, I think it's anything but consultation.

I want to talk a bit about how serious the situation is out there, because we need to recognize how serious the situation is. Currently some would want to believe that really the problem, the crisis, is only with the beef sector. Because of the BSE crisis and the closure of the American border, and now the attempt by powerful interests in the United States to keep the border closed to Canadian beef, there are some who want to believe that it is really only a beef question. It is not just a problem, a crisis, for the beef sector of the farm economy. It is much more widespread than that. It is very serious for the beef sector, but it's much more widespread than that.

I want to speak anecdotally for a minute on behalf of the farmers in my constituency. There are many in the south who happen to believe that not much farming happens in northern Ontario, or in my case, northwestern Ontario. I want to disabuse people of that myth. In fact, there are hundreds of families, there are thousands of individuals, there are several communities where farming is the economic activity.

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In my constituency, for example, there are literally hundreds of beef farmers, some grain farmers, farmers raising elk and bison, and there are farmers engaged in beekeeping, in market vegetables and in grains and oilseeds.

So this is not just a southwestern Ontario or south central Ontario question; this is a question for all of Ontario—the northeast, the north central, the northwest, eastern Ontario, southwestern Ontario, central Ontario.

There are literally thousands of communities that are suffering and that are at great economic risk as a result of the crisis in farming.

When you talk to many of these families, when you talk to many of these farmers, it is amazing what they will do to struggle to hang on. It is incredible the amount of work that they will do off the farm, in terms of finding paying work off the farm, in an attempt to subsidize the farm and continue farming.

I just want to outline exactly how serious the problem is. I want to be fair to the McGuinty government. This is not a problem that suddenly cropped up; this is a long-standing problem. But the McGuinty government will be judged, I submit, on the degree to which they have a plan, a strategy, to respond.

This is a study that was handed out by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, called *The Farmer's Share*. Look at what percentage of food price increases are going to farmers and what percentage of food price increases are going elsewhere in the chain. What is very interesting is if you compare the increase in retail food prices from 1981 to 2003 and then compare the share that farmers get.

Just a few numbers: The retail price of beef in our stores, for example, has increased by \$5.67 per kilogram, while the farm price of beef has increased by only 14 cents per kilogram from 1981 to 2003. Imagine that. If you go to your supermarket and you buy beef products, on average you are paying \$5.67 more per kilogram than you were paying about 20 years ago, but the farmer is only getting 14 cents more per kilogram over that 20-year period.

What that says to me is those farmers who are still in business must be awfully efficient, they must be incredibly efficient, because their price increase for what they are doing, the price that they get for what they are doing, hasn't even kept pace with the rate of inflation, is nowhere near the rate of inflation, yet the price of beef in the store has gone up incredibly. Obviously somebody else in this system or somebody else in the chain is making a fair amount of money, but it's certainly not the farmers.

There was some illustration of how big this problem is, I believe, by some of the events that happened in Alberta about a year ago, where it was discovered that federal money and provincial money in Alberta that had supposedly gone to help beef farmers didn't end up in the pockets of beef farmers at all. Almost all of that money wound up in the pockets of the two or three big packing houses, the two or three big slaughterhouses, all of which are American-owned, as I understand it. They are American companies that simply set up a couple of slaughterhouses in that province. I think it illustrates how serious this problem is: While the price of beef may go up substantially, the price that farmers are getting is not going up.

The study shows that the same thing is true for farmers raising pork, the same thing is true for farmers raising corn and the same thing is true for farmers raising grain.

While the price in the supermarket may have gone up, the price that farmers are actually getting at the farm gate either hasn't gone up at all, or in some cases has actually declined. I think we would all admit that if that situation continues, we're not going to have many farmers left. You can't continue to raise the costs of production, you can't continue to download on them as taxpayers—download the cost of land ambulance, of policing, of roads and bridges—yet they're not getting any more money for their product. That can't continue.

As a result, what I hear farmers saying—I think this is the real issue here today—is, “Look, there need to be some changes.” There need to be some changes in how we regard and how the government responds to the needs of farmers. There needs to be some response from the government in terms of a strategy, a plan. I look for a plan from the McGuinty government in terms of agriculture and food. I look for a plan; I look for a strategy.

What farmers are telling me is that what they see from this government in terms of a strategy is that from time to time there may be a little bit of bailout money that creates a headline in the paper for a day or so, a little bit of bailout money that gives the government or the minister a couple of days of good press and allows farmers to keep the bankers and creditors away from the door for another two or three months, but the farmers are saying, “This is not a plan.” That's not a plan. It may be a media strategy by the government, it may be a public relations strategy by the government, but it's certainly not a plan for farmers.

Farmers have put forward some ideas to this government. What they point to is that, by and large, if you look at farmers in Quebec, there's a plan, a formula whereby farmers in Quebec at least get their cost of production. They're guaranteed a price that at least covers their cost of production so that they know at the beginning of the year, they know throughout the year, more or less what they're going to get for their product, whether their product is wheat or other grains or oil seeds or beef etc. Farmers are saying that's the sort of thing we need here in Ontario. We need a strategy that provides for farmers the long-term costs of production. Whether this is done through an insurance system, whether this is done in some other way, I think farmers are willing to negotiate, consult and discuss, but they're saying that unless that happens, this is going to become increasingly difficult.

It's interesting when you actually look at what Ontario farmers are having to compete against. Corn, for example: I've heard, and I know the minister has heard, from a lot of corn producers across the province who say, “Here is our cost of production, but this is the price we're getting. The price we're getting is below our cost of production. In fact, the price we're getting is \$2 per tonne below previous historical low prices for corn.” They're saying that forward prices for corn, looking at the futures and so on, are trading at about 34% below an Ontario farmer's cost of production for corn.

They point, for example, to corn producers in Michigan, in Ohio, in Indiana, and they say, “These peo-

ple are all getting huge subsidies from the federal government in the United States, so they can afford to sell their corn at very cheap prices.” They can afford to sell their corn at very cheap prices because of the huge subsidy the government there is providing. I don't hear Ontario corn producers calling for a huge subsidy. They simply say, “We at least need help with our costs of production.”

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Something else they'd like help with: They've heard the Premier go to southwestern Ontario, they've heard the Premier go elsewhere in Ontario and talk about biodiesel, talk about his strategy for gasohol, using corn to produce alcohol and putting it in gasoline; they've heard the Premier say that this is going to guarantee better times for all Ontario corn producers, and they were very hopeful when they heard that. But what they're discovering is that the gasohol plants are to a large extent using that American subsidized corn. They point out that in many cases the American subsidized corn comes across the border, then sits in an elevator in Ontario for a while and—I don't think it's a magical process but something akin to it—can then be described as Ontario-sourced corn. Obviously, they object to this. They find that very offensive.

As I've said to the minister before, I was visited by a number of corn producers from southwestern Ontario who produce corn within—gee, they can see the gasohol plant in southwestern Ontario from their farm. They're going broke and are having trouble selling their corn while they see corn that was grown in Michigan and Ohio, subsidized corn, being used in that plant every day. They're asking, “Can't something be done about this?” If Premier McGuinty is going to boast about this, can't something be done to ensure that it's Ontario corn that is the source for this kind of production and the source for this gasohol?

One of the things we need to hear from this government today is, what is going to be done? What's going to be done in the short term? What's going to be to be done in the long term?

I want to raise just a few other issues now, because I think they need to be raised. We need to hear from the minister; we need to hear from government members on this. As I said, there is no income stabilization program for corn and oilseed farmers to replace the expired market revenue insurance program. There doesn't seem to be an income stabilization strategy whatsoever for corn and oilseed farmers. There is no new funding to help farmers comply with the nutrient management program. The estimated implementation cost is \$72 million, but the government has allotted only \$20 million for implementation assistance. I think in most people's arithmetic that would amount to another \$52-million of downloading by the McGuinty government. There is no change in the land transfer tax to help young farmers. There is no provincial funding to match the \$180 million in federal money announced in March for the decimated livestock sector. There is no \$12 million for the extension of the

fruit and vegetable producers' self-directed risk management program. These are all things that have been raised by farm groups and farmers, saying to the government, "This is what you need to do if you really are interested in responding to this farm crisis, if you really are going to live up to the promises you made before the election."

What I'd like to hear from this government is, where is the strategy, where is the plan and where are the itemized sections of this plan: the plan for beef, the plan for grain and cereals and oilseeds, the plan in terms of some guarantee of the cost of production? Where is the plan, going forward? Where is the strategy, going forward, to ensure that Ontario farmers will be able to continue to live on the land, to produce, and that rural communities will be sustainable? That's what I really want to hear here today, and I'm hopeful that we're going to hear some answers from the minister and from some of the government members.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): It's my pleasure today to be able to speak on this motion put forward by our leader. I think it is timely, because the government of the day has forgotten about rural Ontario. Many things have happened, and they just seem to have forgotten about us.

I think I can talk about rural Ontario, because I come from a riding that has the most production of beef, sheep and apples. Mr. Chudleigh in front of me might sometimes dispute the apple thing, but we are one of the largest apple producers in Ontario.

Do you know something? The government has forgotten about rural Ontario. And the thing that really bothers me is that the members who come from rural Ontario who have been elected as Liberals have forgotten about us too. I know it comes out of the Premier's office; there's no doubt. I don't see any change with this government than when we were there and when the NDP was there. I've sat through all three parties being the government, and unfortunately, everything is run out of the Premier's office. So there's no sense worrying about what happened in the past.

Here we are today, with a Liberal government, with a Premier who probably doesn't even know what rural Ontario means, and that's the unfortunate part. If you look at the members he has along the front row, they don't know either, other than maybe the minister from St. Catharines, and he's been around here for a long time. If you look at the ministers, they've forgotten about rural Ontario. We do have a Minister of Agriculture, and I think that man tries. He's been to my riding sometimes, and he's always asked me to come with him, not like some of the other ministers, I must tell you.

In the past few weeks, we've had many announcements in my riding, and they totally forgot about us—never told us. The morning of, they might phone, if they feel like it, and say, "We're going to put some money into your riding," but they forgot to let us know. This is unfortunate, because they were the party that was going to change things. I feel sorry for the Minister of Agriculture over there, because I do think he tries his best.

But when he gets to the cabinet table, they look at him and say, "Who's that guy at the end? Where does he come from? Oh, he represents agriculture. Well, let's cut that. Let's take away money there." You know what they did to him in the budget. They pretty well took away everything he had in the budget.

He tries and does the best he can, but unfortunately, we have a government in power today that has forgotten about rural Ontario. That is really unfortunate because, as one of the Liberal speakers said today, it is the engine that drives the economy. The economy depends on agriculture, but the government says, "We don't need to depend on them." Unfortunately, they've let it slide and slide, and it gets worse.

Even the grants they've put forward—they've changed the system; it was supposed to be better. Let me tell you what some of the people said in Grey county council: "It's totally unfair and unacceptable," said Delton Becker, the mayor of West Grey, "It's a disaster for rural Ontario. They've totally overlooked the forest incentive program, the wetlands and the farm tax rebate. This is not right. It cannot be allowed to continue." That's a mayor up in our area talking about this government and how they treat us in rural Ontario. Unfortunately, as I said before, they seem to have forgotten about rural Ontario. This is a large urban government, no doubt, and that's the way they've set their policies.

Mr. Speaker, I know you're from the city, and that may make you pleased. But I'm sure that you would be concerned about rural Ontario also, because when the farmers don't have any money, there are a lot of other people who don't have any money because they rely on the farmer to spend the money. As I'm say, our area is the biggest producing area in beef and sheep in Ontario, along with apples. Those are farm products. I'm totally flabbergasted at why this government has let us down: broken promises everywhere, a lot of them broken promises to rural Ontario. It's really unfortunate that you've done that to us.

The other thing is, when something does go wrong, they're still blaming past governments. They're still even blaming the Bob Rae government. They have been the government for almost two years now. They've got to figure out that they're the government, and they've got to make some decisions on their own and take the blame when it happens. But no, they don't seem to want to do that.

I'm just glad to be able to have a few minutes here to talk about this and tell you that I'm really concerned as to where the rural members have gone in the Liberal Party. They've left us. They've gone to the large urban centres. They've come here to Toronto and said, "I don't even remember where rural Ontario is." I wonder if some ever go back to their ridings, the way they've let us down and just forgotten about us in rural Ontario.

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This is a timely motion, I'm sure they'll all vote for it. The media said, "What does that mean?" Well, unfortunately, I'm afraid this government hasn't listened until

now, and I don't think they're going to listen. But we have to keep pushing and pushing, and as a rural member over here, I'll keep doing that. I'll even offer, as I have before, my help to the Minister of Agriculture and Food on any items that he has to help us out. I certainly will work with him to try to make it better for Ontario.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): I have the privilege of speaking to this motion from the perspective of, firstly, a rural MPP and the rural parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I'm the rural caucus chair, I'm a farm woman and I'm a lifelong resident of rural Ontario.

From day one, our government has been committed to Ontario's rural communities. And I want to acknowledge my caucus colleagues—Ministers John Gerretsen, Steve Peters and Rick Bartolucci—for all their hard work in making the priorities of rural communities known throughout Ontario as a priority of this government. And yes, northern Ontario is part of rural Ontario. As the rural parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, my work is dedicated to rural communities, businesses, associations and residents. I can say with certainty that over the last two years we have made real, positive change in rural Ontario. I see the proof of that every time I visit this province's wonderful cities, towns, villages and rural communities. I hear it from my colleagues in the rural caucus. And as MPP for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and a lifelong farmer, I understand the current challenges of rural Ontario and what they are facing, particularly in the agriculture industry. These challenges are not isolated, nor can they be solved with quick-fix solutions. I can assure you that the province is working with municipalities, with the federal government, with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and others to deliver sustainable, long-term solutions that will strengthen our rural communities and maintain a quality of life that is second to none.

In November of last year, we launched Ontario's rural plan. Our plan is built on rural Ontario's strengths, which include committed people, diverse economic opportunities, unrivalled natural resources and a solid sense of community, things that we are all proud of. This government is a strong believer in local leadership and local government. We believe in enabling municipal governments to make their own decisions and give them a say in ours. Three priorities are defined in the rural plan—ones that matter most to Ontarians. They include strong people and a strong economy, better health, and success for students. This is what we heard as we went about the province doing our consultations on this plan. This plan supports our government's vision to give rural Ontarians a real voice in strengthening their communities, and Ministers Gerretsen, Peters and Bartolucci are making sure that this voice is heard in Queen's Park and in cabinet.

One of the key initiatives of the rural plan is the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund. Through COMRIF, we have set a new benchmark in collaboration between the province, the federal government and municipalities through AMO. This program is

expected to stimulate up to \$900 million in infrastructure investments over five years to help meet local priorities in rural Ontario. COMRIF is a terrific initiative based on understanding that good, modern infrastructure is key to ensuring strong, healthy and safe communities. It is important to attract investment to rural Ontario and provide residents with excellent services and a high quality of life. COMRIF addresses the infrastructure priorities of our small urban centres and rural communities. Those priorities include safe, clean drinking water for our residents, sewage and waste disposal that doesn't endanger the environment, and improving the condition of roads and bridges. Recently, COMRIF reached another milestone with announcements of funding under the first intake of that initiative. Through the first phase of COMRIF, we'll be improving the public infrastructure of 120 cities, towns, villages and rural areas.

Rural Ontario is the foundation of this province and will continue to play a critical role in Ontario's future. Our government is working with rural municipalities and communities to build more dynamic, diverse and sustainable economies through initiatives such as the rural economic development program, or RED, as we know it. RED has funded many worthwhile projects that will benefit rural communities and add to their prosperity: innovative projects such as Lynn Cattle's energy from manure project or Dryden's downtown improvement project. All of these are intended to reverse the depopulation that others seem to feel is happening in rural Ontario. We are working with Ontario's municipalities on their long-term planning needs by reforming Ontario's planning system through improvements to the provincial policy statement and the Strong Communities Act.

Our greenbelt plan will protect 1.8 million acres of environmentally sensitive land and prime agricultural areas around the Golden Horseshoe. We are particularly proud of this. We are also helping to meet the needs of rural communities through the Ontario municipal partnership fund. This new fund is fairer and more transparent funding than the community reinvestment fund that it replaced.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to return to the concern expressed for agriculture in the motion by the opposition. As a farm woman, I will be supporting this motion, but I am worried about the Leader of the Opposition's lack of knowledge about the nature of the industry. Shortly after our government presented our budget last month, the Leader of the Opposition was quoted in the *London Free Press* as chastising our Minister of Finance for saying that there are farmers who are doing well. He repeated that comment here today. The member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey told the press at that time that he had met with many farmers, but with none who were doing well.

As the government, we recognize that the crisis in agriculture is not over, but as everyone knows and understands in farming, and as all of us who are farmers will tell you, a snapshot taken at any one point in time will show that there are always farmers who are strugg-

gling with their commodities and those who are doing well. This is the nature of agriculture. Were it not for BSE, most beef producers would find that the current low cost of feed makes livestock production a reasonably profitable endeavour. This, unfortunately, comes at the expense of grains and oilseed producers, who watched commodity prices plummet last fall. That has always been the nature of farming. This will reverse itself at some point. Grains and oilseed prices will again move upward, livestock prices will move down, and with it, prosperity or lack thereof.

1650

Before globalization forced agriculture to expand and specialize, farmers would either drive or walk their crops off their farms. By that, I mean we either sold the grain directly into the marketplace or, if prices were bad, we'd feed it to our livestock and then sell the livestock. This practice recognized the reality of the reversing fortunes in agriculture. While the grains and oilseed crisis continues today, many of our livestock producers have had a good year.

Then there are farmers like my husband, René, and I, who have invested in supply management. In my opinion, supply management is the foundation of food sovereignty. As broiler producers, we've had a good year, and we have prospered. It wasn't always that way, but we accept the risk of that as part of our decision-making and choices that we make as farmers, and we work to manage that risk. As farmers, we stand together during a crisis, and we are proud of it. I find it hard to believe that the Leader of the Opposition hasn't met with farmers who are doing well.

The government has made its agenda clear. We want Ontarians to be healthy, to have opportunities for education and training, and to have the opportunity to contribute to a growing, modern rural economy. By working together in strong partnership, we can build strong communities and prove to our citizens that we have a quality of life in rural Ontario that is second to none.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to rise today to speak on the motion made by John Tory, our leader, calling on the government to "support and endorse the historical and traditional values of Ontario's rural communities and commit to ensuring that government legislation, regulation and enforcement do not undermine these traditions and values."

The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who just spoke, said that educating people on the true value of farming and what it does in our province is important. I have a local dairy farmer in my riding, Mr. Lloyd Wicks, who would always say, "Until people have to eat their carpet, they do not know the true value of what farmers give to this province and this country."

As a member who represents a riding with many rural communities, I can tell you that so far in its mandate the government has not been treating rural Ontario with respect at all. In the election materials that the Liberal members were using in their offices, they said they

would make agriculture a lead ministry. In the first budget, they slashed 20% from agriculture. The last budget, just a month ago, \$169 million was slashed.

The headlines in my local papers: "Farmers Angered," "Budget Called Embarrassing," "Budget Once Again Glanced Over Rural Ontario," "Budget Bad News for Farmers in the City of Kawartha Lakes." That is what it has done. That is why 10,000 farmers came to Queen's Park to protest on the lawns. They find themselves in a desperate situation, and they need the government to listen.

The rural communities in our province are suffering because of a myriad of decisions that the Liberals have made. They're putting farmers' livelihoods in jeopardy and other residents in jeopardy. There's no clear process for the CAIS program; it's absolutely dysfunctional.

The litany of decisions made by this Liberal government have hurt the farmers: municipal outlet drainage program removed, funding to genetic research programs removed, they've dragged their feet on providing BSE funding to farmers; increased taxes; hydro rates are going up, increased red tape. They've even sent the jam police out to the farmers' markets. All this while decreasing services to rural Ontario.

Again, we are experiencing an agriculture crisis. They've taken a toll on the communities throughout my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock that I see first-hand every day. Farmers: Put money in their pockets; they spend it in their communities. Every time you go into a small rural community, they are not having good economic times because the farmers are suffering.

I have lots of letters. David Love from Burnt River: "I regret having to do this, but the economic realities are overwhelming. The lack of servicing to rural areas has become an issue of the day. I will have to leave farming."

"If we don't stop this trend, our farmers leaving, critical mass will soon be lost in terms of the number of producers required to maintain the infrastructure so that not only the dairy industry but the whole rural economy functions well. The disturbing thing about this trend is that dairy production is shifting to far more expensive land in areas that are not as conducive to growing alfalfa, the staple of dairy feed."

This is the letter—

Mr. Leal: Is that Lloyd Wicks?

Ms. Scott: Yes. Lloyd Wicks—whom the member from Peterborough knows, because our farmers are out there—from farm implement machinery. "I will have to go out of business. People are not spending money."

From a farm implement dealer in Lindsay: "I've had to lay off half of my staff. We've come to realize that farm business in this area of central Ontario"—this is in Lindsay now—"is declining. We have no new farmers moving in. The farms that come for sale are being sold to people who are moving in from the city."

The Minister of Agriculture has spouted platitudes about Ontario and Ontario products, and he's right: We need to buy more Ontario products. But farmers are going out of business in the city of Kawartha Lakes, the

third-largest agricultural employer in the province, with 9,636 full-time employees and 5,831 part-time employees in farm labour, and farms located all through my riding: Peterborough county, Haliburton county, Kawartha Lakes—

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): What about Durham?

Ms. Scott:—really close to my neighbour in Durham here. We cross over. Lots of farm families have farms in both of our ridings.

Farming matters. The health of Ontario is dependent on the health of rural Ontario. I hope that everyone supports this motion here today. That's all the time I have to speak.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice related to this afternoon's sitting.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: No. Take it off my time. Stop the clock.

The Acting Speaker: I think that's only fair. This is a government opposition day, so if you're seeking unanimous consent, you want it on your time.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: That's fine.

The Acting Speaker: All right. Let's hear it.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Thank you, Speaker, I move that notwithstanding standing order 9(a), the House may continue to meet past 6 p.m. today, following conclusion of proceedings on opposition day number 5, for the purpose of considering Bills 133, 155 and 169.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Carried.

Back to the debate: Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm very pleased to be able—

Mr. Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we had about 12 minutes on the clock.

Mrs. Munro: I don't think so.

The Acting Speaker: If I could seek some guidance from the Clerk: Were there indeed 12 minutes on the clock? I would ask, then, that the clerks add an extra two minutes to what is there to bring it back close to the time. Thank you.

The member from York North.

Mrs. Munro: I'm very pleased to be able to join in this opposition day motion today. I think many of us on this side have recognized the importance of the ideas that are inherent in the motion. I think particularly of the part of the motion that talks about "historical and traditional values of Ontario's rural communities." I think back to a point in time when, as a member of the previous government, I was named to the rural economic task force. This task force was charged with the responsibility of looking at the drivers of a strong economy in rural Ontario. There were a number of recommendations that were made, many of which were acted upon, as a result of a government that listened, that wanted to hear from those people in small-town and rural Ontario. As a result of listening to them, we made a presentation to the then

Premier, and the information that we took to him from this task force allowed the government of the day to act on it.

1700

I think there are some important lessons that we can draw from that. One of the first things was the importance of infrastructure and recognizing that in rural and small-town Ontario things like communications and highways, as well as municipal investments, are key things in terms of infrastructure.

Let me just speak for a moment about the question of highways, as an example. Certainly the announcement around the studies to go to the mid-peninsula highway is one example; the expansion of Highway 26; the question of the commitment to continuing the process for the 404 and the Bradford bypass—these are all initiatives that we undertook because we recognized that any kind of commercial activity from small-town and rural Ontario depended upon a network of highways. So it is with some regret, obviously, that we see that the mid-peninsula corridor is off the current government's table; so are Highway 26 and the Bradford bypass.

In the area of the importance of municipal investments, one of the things we heard in our discussions with community members and municipal leaders was the need for municipal investments. Out of that, we created the OSTAR funding. This was very, very clearly designed to build employment opportunities. When we look at the current government, we don't see that kind of thing happening.

We also recognized the importance of economic development in Ontario as a whole, making Ontario a competitive tax jurisdiction and restructuring the tax system for agricultural land with the elimination of the farm tax rebate. These are just some of the things that we undertook.

When we look at the contrast, then, with the imposition of a so-called health tax and inadequate funding for many municipalities—we've heard throughout the spring on that issue. When we looked at the problems of a legislative framework, we understood the need to phase in nutrient management. We understood the need for the Ministry of Agriculture to be the lead ministry on this, to support our farmers.

Today, unfortunately, we do not see that. We see instead those people who are facing bankruptcy, whether it's through BSE or through finding their land rezoned as part of the greenbelt or through a lack of action on the GTA agricultural action plan. All of these are things that speak to this government's misunderstanding of the needs of rural Ontario.

On a final note, I would just suggest to everyone that if you do want to take the One-Tonne Challenge, may I suggest that you eat Ontario fruits and vegetables, and that will do it.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): The member for York North is absolutely right when she challenges us to ensure that the food products that we purchase in the supermarket and that we consume, as much as possible, should be Ontario produce.

I'm very pleased that our party's leader, the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey, the Leader of the Opposition, has brought forward this resolution today, this important opposition day motion calling upon the government to do more for rural Ontario, small-town Ontario and, in particular, our agriculture sector.

I've been privileged to represent my constituents in Wellington for nine years and my constituents in Waterloo–Wellington for almost six years in this Legislature, and I've always felt that we as rural MPPs need to do what we can to help farm families when they're facing a crisis. If we rural MPPs don't go to bat for those families when they need it, no one will. That has always been my commitment to my constituents, and I'm very pleased that my neighbour and colleague, the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey, feels exactly the same way. He has done an outstanding job as a local MPP, in addition to his many other responsibilities as party leader. He takes a great deal of his personal time to ensure that his riding's needs are looked after, and his riding's needs were on his mind when he brought forward this important resolution this afternoon.

Clearly, our agricultural businesses are in crisis, with a number of specific challenges. When that happens, we, as the Ontario Legislature, need to come together and work together to attempt to resolve them. That's always been my belief. I think the Minister of Agriculture is probably intending to respond, at some point this afternoon, to many of the points that have been made. I have certainly tried to assist him and support him, to the extent I can as an opposition member, to encourage him to do more, to dig deeper and to do what he can within the government.

Unfortunately, it would appear that this Liberal government has been focused on an urban agenda and has not taken the advice and the views of the Minister of Agriculture to heart in terms of determining policy. Another example of that was the massive cuts in the Ministry of Agriculture when the Minister of Finance presented his budget to the Legislature. They show complete indifference to the needs of farmers in terms of the budgetary policy of the government.

I'm being asked to wind up so that some of my colleagues can have an opportunity to speak. I want to thank you for listening to me, Mr. Speaker, and I encourage all members of this House to support this important resolution this afternoon.

Mr. Bisson: I'm going to participate in the debate for a bit. I want to put a couple of things on the record vis-à-vis northern Ontario, and how agricultural and rural northern Ontario feels about what's going on.

I want to make this statement up front: There is, I believe, by means of stealth by both the federal and provincial governments these days and over the past number of years, a move to urbanize Ontario much more than it ever was in the past. If you take a look at a lot of the policies we've seen coming out of Ottawa and out of Toronto, not only in the life of this government but in the lives of previous governments, there is really a lack of the attention that's necessary in order to assist northern and rural communities to flourish.

I'll give you a good example. We know that transportation is a huge issue in rural parts of the province. Highways are in a poor state of repair. In many cases, transportation is a major cost of doing business in our communities. There's not the kind of attention we need from the provincial government to invest in our highways in order to make sure those highways are maintained at a very good standard. How do you do economic development in a community, if you're trying to attract business—some form of manufacturing or economic activity—if the transportation infrastructure is not as strong as it needs to be, let alone air and rail, which is a whole other debate?

If you take a look at the price of gas in the province of Ontario today, it is hugely disproportionate according to where you happen to live. We know that the price of gas on the world market has gone up. But if, for example, you fill up in the city of Timmins and drive to Cochrane, there's an eight-cent-per-litre difference between communities that are just about 100 kilometres apart. Are you going to tell me that it costs eight cents a litre to transport gas from Sudbury or North Bay to Timmins and then 100 kilometres further to Cochrane? It doesn't make any sense—not to say what the price of gas is in a community like Moose Factory or Moosonee. They're part of our provincial system, and they're paying a price for gas that's exorbitantly higher than you'd pay in the city of Timmins. I have constituents constantly calling my office. A good example is M. Yvon Gamache, who just called me last week to complain that he drove from Sudbury to Timmins and there was a 10-cent-a-litre difference in the price of gas between those two communities. It doesn't make any sense.

We know that, by and large, there is a federal responsibility; the federal government should go after the gas companies and stop them from price-fixing, because that's basically what's happening. But the province has some things it could be doing as well to make life a little easier for northerners. For example, they could repeat what the NDP did while in government, which was to eliminate the registration fee for vehicles. That certainly went a long way to help northerners when it came to the price of gas.

1710

When I talk about further urbanization, take a look at the industrial development strategy when it comes to how to support major industries in Ontario. This government—and I give them a little bit of credit—tried to do something for the auto industry. They put together a \$500-million package, which I think will go a long way to assist in securing jobs in the automotive sector. But where is the strategy when it comes to forestry? The second-largest industry in the province of Ontario when it comes to economic activity after auto is the forestry industry. We have mills that are shutting down, literally almost every week. We have thousands of workers being put out of work because of what's happening in the industry. And the response on the part of the government was, "Oh, let's go do a forestry review for another 10

months,” so we can know what we knew at the beginning, which is that we have problems when it comes to a number of issues in forestry that the provincial government needs to respond to, and they’re not. Instead, what they’re doing is accelerating the closure by inaction. They’re accelerating the closure of mills across northern Ontario, let alone saying what is happening with mill closures in places like Opatatika, Kirkland Lake and Chapleau, where the government has gotten into bed with industry and said, “You can do what you want with the forest. It’s yours. If you want to move the trees from Chapleau to Cochrane, go for it. They’re your trees. Do what you want. You can mill them in a few supermills in northern Ontario and displace workers as a result.” That is going to lead to the urbanization of Ontario, because it means to say that people living in communities like Opatatika, Chapleau, Kirkland Lake and others are going to be in a position where they’re going to have to move to other areas to find work, and the work is more than likely going to be in larger urban centres.

I have to say that the workers within the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union are upset. There is a large degree of job loss within their particular sector in the pulp and paper forestry sector. It’s the same thing with the United Steelworkers, the former IWA. The communities and the mayors are all in unison. This is the thing that is truly remarkable. I was at a rally yet again in Kapuskasing last Friday, organized by the STRONG group. There was one a month before by the KERRA group, and they’re all in unison. They’re saying, “We want the provincial and federal governments to work with us. We know there are problems. We know there are solutions. But you’ve got to do something to help us,” and another 10-month study is not going to respond to the issue.

So I say to the government across the way, shame on you for not paying attention to the needs of northern and rural Ontario because, by and large, much of the revenue from the province of Ontario comes from the economic activities in those communities. As forestry goes through the decline that it is now going through, this government is going to rue the day it did not pay closer attention to that industry. As I said before, the second-largest industry in the province of Ontario is forestry when it comes to economic activity. We have major problems as far as a shifting in industry, as far as what’s happening on the international market and what’s happening locally. The government is not responding. Instead, what they’re saying is, “Time for another study. Let’s do another forestry review.” I haven’t seen the report yet, but at the end of the day I’m sure the report is going to come out and it’s going to talk about what we already know.

I predict here that because the roads were transferred over to the forestry companies, they have to pay to maintain and build the roads. That is going to be a recommendation that the government won’t act on. They’re probably going to come in and talk about how much tax they pay on gas for their equipment. They’ve been saying that for a long time. We didn’t need a 10-month study to

tell us that. They’re probably going to come back and ask us for a reduction in stumpage fees. I wouldn’t be surprised to see that, as well as a couple of other things that I don’t have enough time to go through at this point in the debate.

I say to the government, it’s about time you started paying attention to rural Ontario, it’s about time you started paying attention to northern Ontario, and the quicker you do that, the better off we’ll be as far as economic activities in those communities go.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Speaking in support of this resolution, I want to say this about Niagara: Niagarans are as concerned about this government’s abandonment of rural and agricultural Ontario as anybody could be, as concerned about the failure of this government to come forward with even one identifiable policy that bolsters an increasingly faltering agricultural industry, agricultural economy, out there.

Let me give an example. Niagara is the home of Ontario’s finest grapes; make no mistake about it. Some of the hardest-working farming families have been stewards of their scarce and rare agricultural land that constitutes these vineyards, not just for one generation but for two and three and four generations, producers of grape who have won, wineries big and small, international gold medals. Yet these Ontario grape growers are insulted on a daily basis with bottles of wine that this Liberal government allows to be identified as Ontario wine when it contains but a modest fraction of Ontario grape juice. In fact, the majority of that bottle of wine comes from plonk that’s shipped in from South America, where the quality of grape is suspect, where the type of pesticides that are used along with other chemicals are suspect. This stuff is shipped in huge containers in ocean-going ships. The mere shipping alone should cause us concern about the quality of that product. If it wasn’t corrupted at its source, imagine what happens to it en route.

Yet this Liberal government permits wineries to package that juice, that foreign grape, and then mislead consumers—understand what I’m saying, Speaker—into believing they’re drinking Ontario product, when it’s the furthest thing from the truth. A no-cost, zero cost—government doesn’t have to be concerned about the impact on its less than stellar budget—policy announcement that would create an immediate positive impact for grape growers in Niagara and, quite frankly, other parts of Ontario would be for this government tomorrow—oh, heck, even this afternoon. The minister’s here. Stand up and announce—I know the minister advocates for this. I know the minister. I’ve known him throughout his career here at Queen’s Park. I’m convinced he has a genuine interest in agriculture.

The problem is his cabinet colleagues, with their obsession with downtown Toronto. They wouldn’t know a vineyard if they tripped over one or if it bit them on the nose. If the minister only had the support of his colleagues, he would be pleased, I’m sure, to stand up—oh, I know Ms. Mossop supports him. The problem is, he

needs the support of the Premier's office; he needs the support of cabinet; he needs the support of his fellow ministers. Ms. Mossop, for all her best efforts, in this instance is simply not enough. If only the minister could stand up today and announce that Ontario wine labelled "Ontario wine" contains not 20% Ontario grape, not 30%, not 40%, not 50%, but Ontario wine is, by God, Ontario wine 100%. Zero cost to the government: It wouldn't constitute a penny of expenditure out of this lacklustre budget.

I know Tim Hudak has been a supporter of grape growers for a long time. I am confident he agrees with me that bottles of wine labelled Ontario wine should contain 100% Ontario grape, because Mr. Hudak isn't in the back pocket of the big wineries. Mr. Hudak doesn't take money from the big wineries when they make political contributions. Mr. Hudak, like me, is prepared to stand with the farmers and their families, who are the most effective stewards of this scarce agricultural land. You pass the standard now that says Ontario wine will be 100% Ontario grape and you've immediately boosted the welfare of Ontario grape growers. You've also introduced, my goodness, an element of honesty and candour with respect to the consumers. Where's the Minister of Consumer Affairs, who was all gung-ho about bringing your wine to your restaurant but could give a tinker's dam about whether or not this government permitted consumers to be misled about that wine being Ontario wine when in fact it was Chilean plonk shipped in rusty-bucket steamships from South America until it finally reaches its destination here and then gets packaged as Ontario wine?

1720

Napa Valley, California: One of the key elements of the greenbelting of Napa Valley was ensuring that Napa Valley grape was the sole content of Napa Valley wine. This government talks a big game when it comes to grape growers but leaves them cap in hand, hoping against hope that some day the government will introduce honesty to Ontario wine labelling by requiring that a bottle called "Ontario wine" is 100% Ontario grape. It ain't rocket science; it's not complex; it's not particularly sophisticated; it's just—dare I say it?—good common sense. I'm going to tell you something: You give grape growers a financial incentive to grow grapes, and you're going to preserve more agricultural land that way than you ever will with an irrational greenbelt.

Speaking of the greenbelt, the next observation that has to be made down in Niagara, if you really want to support farmers and help them preserve scarce agricultural land—because, I tell you, the farmers are front and centre; they're at the vanguard of the movement to save that agricultural land; they understand how important it is—why then, this government will announce immediately—tomorrow; don't wait any longer. Send the minister down to Niagara tomorrow—Mr. Takhar—let Jim Bradley join him, and announce the expansion and extension of Highway 406 southward on to the clay belt. Move that development away from the tender fruit land.

Move that development away from the rare, valuable and scarce agricultural land. Move that development away from the vineyards. Move it up on to the clay belt.

We've got workers at GM in St. Catharines who are frightened, scared for their jobs, scared for their families' futures, scared for their community's future because of GM's announcement of a significant reduction in production in the United States—across North America, indeed. To achieve that, terminating 25,000 workers' jobs in the United States has left the St. Catharines workers at General Motors fearful about their job futures. The Premier today didn't show much interest in those St. Catharines General Motors workers. I don't want to speak for him. I'm sure Mr. Bradley cares about them—the Minister of Tourism and Recreation, the member for St. Catharines. If only he could persuade his cabinet colleagues to care for them as much as he did.

We've got to do things to encourage development, but smart development, down in Niagara; development up on the clay belt, not on valuable farmland, scarce farmland, unique farmland. Cattle producers down there in Niagara aren't big Alberta-style ranchers. But cattle producers, good farming people, hardworking people and, more often than not, second- and third-generation farmers, are still seeing the price for cattle but a fraction of what it costs for them to produce cattle, yet supermarket prices climb and climb and climb and the cattle producer isn't getting a penny of those increased beef prices. This government's response was to slash the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture. It did. It was number one on the list of budgets that have been slashed in the very budget papers that the government produced—number one; 23% cut to the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture. That speaks volumes to farmers down where I come from and across Ontario. That says to farmers that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals could give a tinker's dam about their welfare, about their future and about the land that they steward so effectively.

New Democrats aren't afraid to stand with farmers. We're proud to stand with farmers, proud to stand with the people who produce our food, who care for the land, who are the true conservationists. As they fight for their future, we'll fight with them.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): When farmers are on their knees, they need inspiration and they need leadership to bring them to their feet. It raises the question of where is the inspiration for our farmers and where is the leadership? Who do they turn to when the minister who's supposed to represent them can't even stand up for them himself? Where do they go to find hope? Who do they go to?

In rural Ontario today, people would be very shocked if they saw a doctor or a nurse driving a school bus to help make ends meet. People anywhere—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Barrett: People anywhere in Ontario would be shocked if they saw teachers driving school buses to help make ends meet. But people aren't shocked to see farm-

ers driving a school bus to help bring home some money. Over 50% of our farmers work off the farm to help pay their bills. I know my partner, when we grew corn and soybeans, worked at Stelco. When I got back into cash crop in 1980, I was told, "Don't give up your day job. You won't be able to afford it."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor. I can hardly hear him. There are a great many conversations going on. Member, please, you have the floor again.

Mr. Barrett: When farmers suffer, everyone around them is affected. Small business goes under. Even when just a few large operators can't pay their bills, schools, hospitals and churches are all affected. Farm incomes, as we've heard this afternoon, have been devastated by not only BSE and poor crop prices but trade action, uncertain weather conditions, rising energy costs and what has become an ever-increasing, crushing regulatory and legislative burden initiated by this Liberal government.

Mix in Ministry of Agriculture spending cuts, unfair property tax assessments and an unaccountable bureaucracy and you see the development of a rural farm and non-farm alliance, an alliance that this winter took to our highways, took to the Legislative Buildings over the past year to get government to wake up and take a look at a developing rural revolution in this province.

Now, rural protests and tractor rallies are not new. I attended a number in 2001 in eastern Ontario during the cash crop crisis. I attended a 12-mile-long tractor rally in Winchester. I will remind members of previous tractor rallies, going back as far as 1969 at Queen's Park. The 1969 tractor parade resulted in the government report of the day, the Challenge of Abundance. Again today, people are asking, "Where is the plan?" They're asking because they're looking at present at empty Liberal promises. However, rural Ontario is fighting back against a government that is very quietly breaking the back of rural Ontario. Very recently, farmers took to the streets in Ottawa. They carried signs: "No farms, no food, no future." That's the reality in rural Ontario, and stay tuned, that will be the reality in urban Ontario.

1730

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'm proud to stand before you today to express the enormous respect our Premier and this government has for Ontario's agriculture and agrifood industry.

In my own riding, we grow apples, strawberries, sweet corn, kiwi. We have tobacco, dairy cows and soybeans in our fields. Corn, cattle and hogs are also important commodities in Elgin. Elgin county represents the diversity of Ontario's agriculture.

In fact, across Ontario, our farmers are producing more than 200 commodities. We are a world leader in food technology and research and development, and more than three quarters of our agrifood exports are value-added. We recognize that these achievements rest on the shoulders of our hard-working farm families. I'm honoured to have had the privilege of meeting these peo-

ple and their hard-working commodity organizations in all corners of this great province, a province that is second to none in the world for its natural and human resources.

As I talk with these people, the quality that strikes me the most, the quality they all share, is a proud spirit of independence. That spirit is what built this great province, and it is what will drive us forward to prosperity in the future. They're willing to take risks and tie their life's work to the land, because they know nothing beats the freedom of raising your family and steering your business on your own terms.

The risks will always be there. A bountiful crop can be wiped out by drought or floods, insects or disease, or unprecedented drops in grain and oilseed prices can have a huge impact. In fact, the pressures are growing. Global competition can be equally devastating. This devastation is being experienced by our cattle industry as the border remains closed with our largest trading partner, despite what sound science tells us.

There are times when the people of Ontario, through this government, understand that we need to step in and help the people who feed us. This government has supplied extraordinary financial assistance to Ontario's agriculture sector. Last year alone we invested and delivered \$377 million in assistance to Ontario's farmers.

Our government wants more for these individuals. We've engaged their leadership in seeking out ways to look at bringing forward long-term business risk management solutions, because we all understand that pouring out financial assistance without a thought to the future is like trying to pour water into a bucket filled with holes. Yes, it is important to have effective fiscal programs for our province's agriculture industry. That's why our government wasted no time in signing the agricultural policy framework. We want to see long-term successes for our agriculture and agri-food industry.

This government is not interested in making ivory tower decisions. That is not our style. We are working closely with agricultural leaders across all sectors to make these programs work. It is an enormous undertaking and it will not fall into place overnight, but we care enough to engage the people who are affected by fiscal programming, because we want to ensure they are getting the maximum benefit from these funds.

The key to building the strong and vibrant industry we all want is to find new ways to address old challenges. This can come down to the difference between choosing what is right and choosing what is easy. We're not interested, though, in choosing that path of least resistance. We accept that doing things differently means facing difficult challenges. Any transition brings with it its own set of trials and tribulations, but I believe we can come out stronger and better.

Financial assistance is important. It helps provide a bridge that helps agriculture cross the challenges that inevitably arise. The problem is, we never know when the next crisis will wash away the bridge that we've built. There comes a time when we need to seek higher ground,

a vantage point that looks out at new opportunities and a different way of doing things for agriculture and our agri-food industry. BSE, rising input costs and competition from the US, Brazil and China are all signposts that we need to heed. Many agricultural industry leaders have recognized that we need to rethink the future. We are moving beyond primary production; our future success depends on it.

We are fortunate enough here in Ontario to have an industry that is studded with brilliant minds. These visionary leaders have already begun moving to that higher ground, and we are supporting their initiatives to carry the agri-food industry forward. For example, BSE has taught us that we must become more self-sufficient. We have worked with industry leaders to build and expand slaughter capacity right here in Ontario. We are supporting the sector as it seeks out new markets and repositions itself with new branding and marketing. Never again will we allow ourselves to flap in the wind at the mercy of protectionist politics. We do have friends south of the border who want to see our markets reintegrated, but still we're moving up to safer ground on our own.

Other sectors in agriculture are recognizing the need for transformation. Our dairy industry and pork industry leaders have catapulted Ontario's reputation for excellence of quality and new value-added products. Our greenhouse sector has embraced technological innovation; it has grown to such an extent that it now represents half of our nation's greenhouse industry. Our grains and oilseeds leaders are exploring opportunities in the new bio-based economy of tomorrow, one which will use their feedstock to fuel and build our cars, build our homes and provide new value-added food products. We applaud their vision. They have heard the train whistle and are climbing aboard to reach that higher plateau. The train that will carry us to a brighter future is about to leave the station, and it's time that we all get on board.

You may ask, where are we going? How will agriculture in Ontario survive and prosper in the decades to come? Well, my friends, this government is already at work. This government has demonstrated its support for our farmers in many ways and places. We have been to world trade talks, where we've defended supply management. We went to Ottawa to work with our federal government and to Washington to stress the traditional benefits our countries have enjoyed in their respective beef and pork industries.

As a government, we know the greatest responsibility is to serve the people of Ontario. They want better health; they want better education. That is why the greatest portion of our public purse is directed at meeting those priorities. We will continue to support our agricultural industry, but we must bear in mind that the reality is that we are working in an environment of limited funds, and we cannot ignore that fact. The greatest failure of any government is to leave future generations to pay for its debt, and the greatest legacy is to leave behind a healthier, stronger, more prosperous place for them to live.

Some will say that agriculture is overregulated. They say that it hinders the independence of the landowner, and as I've said before, independence is a great thing. But when you draw your resources from the land, you have a responsibility to that land. We owe it to future generations to keep our drinking water pristine and abundant. We owe it to future generations to fiercely preserve the rich agricultural land that this province has been blessed with. Only 5% of Canada's total land base is classified as prime agricultural land, and we are fortunate enough to have half of Canada's best soil right here in Ontario. Premier McGuinty and this government refuse to stand aside and allow this treasure to be paved over and lost forever to future farming.

1740

Our farmers shine as our province's greatest stewards of our environment. They understand that the quality of our soil and water must be preserved and respected. How many of us see people watering their lawns on restricted days or spraying pesticides to kill their dandelions? How many urban people know that farmers need to pass a pesticide course before they spray their fields, and that Ontario farmers have reduced pesticide use by 50% in the last two decades? It's our farm leaders who called for nutrient management laws. They asked for province-wide regulations to replace the patchwork of municipal bylaws that existed before. We continue to engage the opinions of our agricultural community as we refine these rules.

Regulations can only work if they are fair and cost-effective. Our farmers should not be expected to shoulder the burden of these costs alone, and we don't expect them to. We're providing millions to assist them in implementing the best management practices that protect our environment.

Let me be clear: This government rejects the notion that regulation hinders progress and prosperity. Regulations may not be easy, they may not be popular, and there are those who will consider regulations to be a thorn in their side, but regulations protect the public, and that includes our farmers.

This government will not shy away from its responsibility to protect the water you drink, the food you eat and the air you breathe, and we will never compromise our integrity to serve the public interest. To that end, we are moving forward on a food safety strategy with the Food Quality and Safety Act and stronger, new meat regulations. We have realigned the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. We've established the new post of the chief veterinarian of Ontario to better prepare us against future animal disease outbreaks and to ensure strong food safety measures are in place.

I'm proud that together with our agricultural industry we are taking a lead role in establishing traceability, provincial hazard analysis critical control point standards and new regulations that will provide a seamless, scientifically based food safety system from field to fork.

These regulations do more than protect the public and give consumers a piece of mind; these regulations work for the industry as well by branding Ontario foods as the

safest products in the world, the highest-quality products in the world, produced in an environmentally sustainable manner. This will strengthen our province's agriculture, our economy and our public trust. As our Premier has said, "We will always work toward the goal of building an Ontario that is a worthy home for our dreams, for our hopes, and for our children and grandchildren."

For agriculture, the key to our success lies in research and innovation, and I'm proud that our government believes in this and is committed to opening the door that we will redefine Ontario's agri-food industry.

We are investing in research and development that will galvanize the industry across all sectors. We are revitalizing the infrastructure that was left crumbling by our predecessors. We are establishing a new research chair at the University of Guelph to explore bio-based agricultural opportunities. And the ministry has an additional \$15 million in its operations budget this year. We are working to find ways for our agri-food industry to better survive and thrive.

Now, more than ever, the industry needs to establish a long-term vision, a process that we began at the first inaugural Premier's summit on the agri-food industry, a process that our government and agricultural leaders are continuing to guide with a series of meetings this summer as we prepare for the next summit.

Later this month, Ontario is hosting the first-ever international Agri-Food Innovation Forum here in Toronto. Researchers, academics and executives will gather to hear distinguished experts from all over the world present their ideas on how innovation in agriculture and food directly impacts human health. They will discuss topics ranging from corporate strategies for commercialization and food marketing to nutrition policies and emerging science in agriculture and food. Our Minister of Health will be there. And I will be there, looking at what opportunities we can help bring to Ontario and to Ontario farmers.

We need to work together. We need to think strategically. We stand at the dawn of a new agricultural age, one that will see industrial uses for our crops and pharmaceutical uses for our food. The opportunities are there. Yes, it does seem a long way off. Yes, it will take an investment in research and development. It calls for a leap of faith and a spirit of entrepreneurship. If we don't seize the opportunities, others will and we will be left behind. The returns will not be immediate, but we can empower our agriculture industry and build a whole new future for our rural communities.

One in every five Ontarians lives in towns that have a population of less than 25,000 people. If we want to ensure that our dreams can find a home in rural Ontario, we need to ensure that those rural economies prosper. These communities have top-calibre people and ideas.

We want to make an Ontario that is a better place to live for everyone, whether it is in our great cities or in our beautiful surrounding countryside. We have the best resources in the world. We have the strongest contingent of people power. We have the tools to build that better place.

I would like to point your attention to a couple of carvings that a wise artist placed here in our chamber. Across the floor, the opposition can look to the right and see the eagle, which reminds them to be vigilant. I have been in your shoes and I respect and understand that need. For us here in government, we look over to the owl, reminding us to be wise in our decisions. As well, carved in the wall behind me, is a sheaf of wheat symbolizing agriculture. These symbols remind us that we are just a few among many who have gone before us. Ours is a time to make a difference, to use our time wisely so that it honours the trust of those who have sent us here to serve, the people of Ontario.

Agriculture is an industry that has undergone many changes in just the past few decades, the past few years and the past few days. It has seen great gains, but it has also been shaken by many losses. We never forget, and we must never forget, that agriculture and food are at the heart of the heritage of this great province. We must all continue to work passionately to ensure that they are a key contributor to Ontario's future.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is willing to step forward and find new paths to success without wavering in its duty to be fiscally responsible. We recognize that agriculture is the foundation that built this province. It is the foundation that we will continue to reinforce.

As summer begins, I encourage everyone to show their support to our agricultural communities. Go out and visit your local farm markets, agricultural fairs and festivals. Talk to those who feed our economy and feed our people. As you travel around this summer, insist on Ontario-grown fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products wherever you go. Don't be afraid to ask the question, when you go into that restaurant, "Is this Ontario beef that I'm eating?" When you go into that restaurant and are served with a glass of wine, ask if that is VQA wine. When they serve you strawberries and cream, ensure that those are Ontario strawberries. These are small ways that each of us can make a difference. We need—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock. Order, please. The minister has been speaking. There must be 25 conversations going on all around this room. Please, show the minister courtesy in the last minute of his speech.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. The minister has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Peters: We all need to recognize the important role that agriculture can and does play in the various societal challenges we face today. Whether it's in functional foods or renewable energy or renewable fuels, agriculture can play a role to keep us healthy. Agriculture can play a preventive role, and we need to recognize that.

Ladies and gentlemen, we will be here supporting this resolution that's in front of us today. Yes, we may have our differences of opinion at times, but we all fundamentally stand behind and support those men and

women. We must salute them and thank them, those individuals who bring us such great bounty. Together, we can build a new day for agriculture and a better tomorrow for Ontario.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Will the members please take their seats.

Mr. Tory has moved opposition day motion number 5. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

There being more than five members, call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Arnott, Ted | Hudak, Tim | Peters, Steve |
| Arthurs, Wayne | Jackson, Cameron | Peterson, Tim |
| Barrett, Toby | Jeffrey, Linda | Phillips, Gerry |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Klees, Frank | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Berardinetti, Lorenzo | Kormos, Peter | Qaadri, Shafiq |
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| Broten, Laurel C. | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Ramal, Khalil |
| Brown, Michael A. | Leal, Jeff | Ramsay, David |
| Caplan, David | Levac, Dave | Rinaldi, Lou |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Marsales, Judy | Runciman, Robert W. |
| Colle, Mike | Martel, Shelley | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Crozier, Bruce | Martiniuk, Gerry | Sandals, Liz |
| Delaney, Bob | Matthews, Deborah | Scott, Laurie |
| Dhillon, Vic | Mauro, Bill | Sergio, Mario |
| Di Cocco, Caroline | McMeekin, Ted | Smith, Monique |
| Dombrowsky, Leona | McNeely, Phil | Smitherman, George |
| Duguid, Brad | Milloy, John | Tory, John |
| Duncan, Dwight | Mitchell, Carol | Van Bommel, Maria |
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel | Mossop, Jennifer F. | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Fonseca, Peter | Munro, Julia | Wong, Tony C. |
| Gerretsen, John | Murdoch, Bill | Wynne, Kathleen O. |
| Hardeman, Ernie | O'Toole, John | Yakubski, John |
| Hoy, Pat | Patten, Richard | Zimmer, David |

The Acting Speaker: Are there any opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 69; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): Even Michael Perik is in favour of this.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Mr. Speaker, I'm being heckled by the member from St. Catharines.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EXÉCUTION

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 7, 2005, on the motion for third reading of Bill 133, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act and the Ontario Water

Resources Act in respect of enforcement and other matters / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement et la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario en ce qui a trait à l'exécution et à d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Caplan has moved third reading of Bill 133. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Please call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

No, there won't. I have here a letter to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Mrs. Dombrowsky for third reading of Bill 133, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act in respect of enforcement and other matters, be deferred until Thursday, June 9, 2005." Signed by Dave Levac, chief government whip, for the time set aside. That will be so ordered.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY AND SUPPORT ARREARS ENFORCEMENT AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES OBLIGATIONS FAMILIALES ET L'EXÉCUTION DES ARRIÉRÉS D'ALIMENTS

Ms. Pupatello moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to amend the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996 and to make consequential amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 155, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les obligations familiales et l'exécution des arriérés d'aliments et apportant des modifications corrélatives à la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Is there any debate? Seeing none, Mrs. Pupatello has moved third reading of Bill 155.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

There being more than five members standing, call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

No, there won't. Another letter to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Ms. Pupatello for third reading of Bill 155, An Act to amend the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act,

1996 and to make consequential amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997, be deferred until Thursday, June 9, 2005.” Signed by Dave Levac, chief government whip, for the time set out for such matters.

TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE TRANSPORT

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 6, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 169, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to amend and repeal various other statutes in respect of transportation-related matters / Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et modifiant et abrogeant diverses autres lois à l'égard de questions relatives au transport.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Is there any further debate?

Mr. Takhar has moved second reading of Bill 169, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to amend and repeal various other statutes in respect of transportation-related matters.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

I have another letter here to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly: “Pursuant to standing order 28(h)—dispense? OK. No? OK. “Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Mr. Takhar for second reading of Bill 169, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to amend and repeal various other statutes in respect of transportation-related matters, be deferred until Thursday, June 9, 2005,” at the time set aside for such matters.

Signed by Dave Levac, chief government whip.

Are there any other matters?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Speaker, I hope you will look favourably on a motion to adjourn the House.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour? Is it the pleasure of the House? Is it carried? No?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: He’s not in his seat.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “no.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

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

The House adjourned at 1811.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Alvin Curling
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

| Constituency Circonscription | Member/Party Député(e) / Parti | Constituency Circonscription | Member/Party Député(e) / Parti |
|---|---|--|--|
| Algoma–Manitoulin | Brown, Michael A. (L) | Hamilton East / | Horwath, Andrea (ND) |
| Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot | McMeekin, Ted (L) | Hamilton–Est | |
| Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford | Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative | Hamilton Mountain | Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration |
| Beaches–East York / Beaches–York–Est | Prue, Michael (ND) | Hamilton West / Hamilton–Ouest | Marsales, Judy (L) |
| Bramalea–Gore–Malton– Springdale | Kular, Kuldeep (L) | Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington | Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement |
| Brampton Centre / Brampton–Centre | Jeffrey, Linda (L) | Huron–Bruce | Mitchell, Carol (L) |
| Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton–Ouest–Mississauga | Dhillon, Vic (L) | Kenora–Rainy River | Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Brant | Levac, Dave (L) | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles | Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées |
| Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound | Murdoch, Bill (PC) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener–Centre | Milloy, John (L) |
| Burlington | Jackson, Cameron (PC) | Kitchener–Waterloo | Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) |
| Cambridge | Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) | Lambton–Kent–Middlesex | Van Bommel, Maria (L) |
| Chatham–Kent Essex | Hoy, Pat (L) | Lanark–Carleton | Sterling, Norman W. (PC) |
| Davenport | Ruprecht, Tony (L) | Leeds–Grenville | Runciman, Robert W. (PC) |
| Don Valley East / Don Valley–Est | Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint | London North Centre / London–Centre–Nord | Matthews, Deborah (L) |
| Don Valley West / Don Valley–Ouest | Wynne, Kathleen O. (L) | London West / London–Ouest | Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail |
| Dufferin–Peel– Wellington–Grey | Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition | London–Fanshawe | Ramal, Khalil (L) |
| Durham | O'Toole, John (PC) | Markham | Wong, Tony C. (L) |
| Eglinton–Lawrence | Colle, Mike (L) | Mississauga Centre / Mississauga–Centre | Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports |
| Elgin–Middlesex–London | Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation | Mississauga East / Mississauga–Est | Fonseca, Peter (L) |
| Erie–Lincoln | Hudak, Tim (PC) | Mississauga South / Mississauga–Sud | Peterson, Tim (L) |
| Essex | Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative | Mississauga West / Mississauga–Ouest | Delaney, Bob (L) |
| Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke–Centre | Cansfield, Donna H. (L) | Nepean–Carleton | Baird, John R. (PC) |
| Etobicoke North / Etobicoke–Nord | Qaadri, Shafiq (L) | Niagara Centre / Niagara–Centre | Kormos, Peter (ND) |
| Etobicoke–Lakeshore | Broten, Laurel C. (L) | Niagara Falls | Craitor, Kim (L) |
| Glengarry–Prescott–Russell | Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L) | Nickel Belt | Martel, Shelley (ND) |
| Guelph–Wellington | Sandals, Liz (L) | Nipissing | Smith, Monique M. (L) |
| Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant | Barrett, Toby (PC) | Northumberland | Rinaldi, Lou (L) |
| Haliburton–Victoria–Brook | Scott, Laurie (PC) | Oak Ridges | Klees, Frank (PC) |
| Halton | Chudleigh, Ted (PC) | | |

| Constituency Circonscription | Member/Party Député(e) / Parti | Constituency Circonscription | Member/Party Député(e) / Parti |
|--|--|---|---|
| Oakville | Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L) | Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh | Brownell, Jim (L) |
| Oshawa | Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) | Sudbury | Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines |
| Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre | Patten, Richard (L) | Thornhill | Racco, Mario G. (L) |
| Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales | Thunder Bay–Atikokan | Mauro, Bill (L) |
| Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean | Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises | Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord | Gravelle, Michael (L) |
| Ottawa–Orléans | McNeely, Phil (L) | Timiskaming–Cochrane | Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles |
| Ottawa–Vanier | Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones | Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James | Bisson, Gilles (ND) |
| Oxford | Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale | Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée |
| Parkdale–High Park | Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation | Toronto–Danforth | Churley, Marilyn (ND) |
| Parry Sound–Muskoka | Miller, Norm (PC) | Trinity–Spadina | Marchese, Rosario (ND) |
| Perth–Middlesex | Wilkinson, John (L) | Vaughan–King–Aurora | Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances |
| Peterborough | Leal, Jeff (L) | Waterloo–Wellington | Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge | Arthurs, Wayne (L) | Whitby–Ajax | Flaherty, Jim (PC) |
| Prince Edward–Hastings | Parsons, Ernie (L) | Willowdale | Zimmer, David (L) |
| Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke | Yakubski, John (PC) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| Sarnia–Lambton | Di Cocco, Caroline (L) | Windsor–St. Clair | Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Sault Ste. Marie | Oraziotti, David (L) | York Centre / York-Centre | Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels |
| Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre | Duguid, Brad (L) | York North / York-Nord | Munro, Julia (PC) |
| Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est | Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités | York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston | Cordiano, Hon. / L'hon. Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce |
| Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest | Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L) | York West / York-Ouest | Sergio, Mario (L) |
| Scarborough–Agincourt | Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement | | |
| Scarborough–Rouge River | Curling, Hon. / L'hon. Alvin (L) Speaker / Président | | |
| Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord | Dunlop, Garfield (PC) | | |
| Simcoe–Grey | Wilson, Jim (PC) | | |
| St. Catharines | Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs | | |
| St. Paul's | Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique | | |
| Stoney Creek | Mossop, Jennifer F. (L) | | |

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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