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Monday 6 June 2005

Lundi 6 juin 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 6 June 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 6 juin 2005

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FABRY'S DISEASE

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I rise in the House this afternoon to express my absolute disappointment with the Minister of Health because of his unwillingness to exercise his authority as minister to assist the victims of Fabry's disease by approving coverage for enzyme replacement therapy.

This issue was first brought to my attention in April 2002 by my constituents John and Donna Strauss of Mannheim in Wilmot township. My staff and I began to make inquiries with the Ministry of Health, and I wrote numerous letters to the Minister of Health calling upon him to do the right thing and approve Fabrazyme as a treatment for these patients, who would otherwise have to pay up to \$300,000 a year for this medicine, an absolutely prohibitive amount of money which would soon bankrupt each and every one of these families.

The case for the coverage of Fabrazyme has been made in this House repeatedly and persistently by the MPP with the most credibility on health care issues. Of course, I'm speaking of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. I am aware that the member for Oak Ridges and the member for Nickel Belt have also expressed their public support for Fabry's disease patients in this House. Still, the minister, in response, has demonstrated callous indifference to the pleas of the Fabry's patients as recently as last Thursday during question period—this in spite of the verbal and written assurances that he gave to Donna Strauss that he would take action to solve this problem.

How can the minister sleep at night knowing he made this commitment to these desperate people and now comes into this House making bureaucratic excuses for his inaction? How can he ignore the fact that as many as 40 countries cover this life-saving medication, that it has been approved by Health Canada, and that the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta have done the right thing for Fabry's patients? When will he earn his keep as Minister of Health, keep his promise to Fabry's patients, and take action on this issue before more lives are lost?

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): On Monday, May 30, I had the pleasure of joining my colleagues the Honourable Minister Takhar and Tony Wong, along with several York region politicians, to unveil the new Viva rapid transit vehicle.

Viva will link the region's urban centres of Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Aurora and Newmarket along four major corridors, including Highway 7 and Yonge Street. In addition, Viva will link York region with the city of Toronto and its subway system, to GO Transit and to the transit system in the region of Peel and eventually into Durham region. Viva rapid transit service will officially begin in September and will be opened in four stages between September and December.

These rapid transit buses are quiet, roomy and comfortable. The vehicles are fully accessible, with wide doors, low floors and ramps to accommodate wheelchairs and strollers. They also operate on clean-burning diesel and meet the latest emission standards. This new, modern vehicle is the first of its kind in the GTA, and I can assure everyone that when Viva begins operating this September it will provide a fantastic ride and a unique transit experience.

Viva will ensure that the current ridership remains, while attracting new public transit users. It is estimated that these initial improvements will lead to a 30% increase in transit ridership, or an additional 4.5 million riders, moving 7,000 cars a day off the major arterial roads. The Viva rapid transit system is designed with passengers in mind, offering a service that is frequent, flexible and comfortable. Rapid transit vehicles will arrive every five to 10 minutes during peak periods. This is only the beginning.

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It has become blatantly obvious that this government is not interested in protecting the rich historical collections housed within the building that stores Ontario's archives. For months we have heard stories of the ongoing mould infestation that is threatening the integrity of Ontario's most valuable collection of our heritage. Now the safety of staff and countless others who use the archive facilities are also at risk because the building is structurally unsafe. Last week we heard the alarming news that entire floors in the building may collapse. What can we expect to hear next week, or the week after, when tragedy strikes because this government has failed to respond? We know

that the government plans to move 80% of the collection to a new off-site storage facility north of Toronto, but we have not been told when this will happen or what will become of the most frequently used collections that the government intends to keep at the main public service facility. How can this even be an option when the safety of those who use the building is compromised?

I have received countless letters and e-mails about this problem, calling on the government to step in and do something to protect our collection. Despite the warnings we have received, nothing has been done. This lack of action not only speaks to the government's inability to keep their promises, but highlights the fact that they simply don't care about the health and the safety of the public, or the priceless material housed at the archives that is disintegrating daily due to the deplorable conditions.

It is high time that dithering on this issue be put aside and decisive action be taken. I call upon the minister today to stand in his place and protect our heritage and public safety now.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I want to acknowledge all the seniors of Hamilton this June, which is Seniors' Month. We have a great community of seniors in my city. Beyond the nice words and activities planned for this month there are some very real issues that are facing Hamilton seniors that this government has not addressed. The seniors' advisory committee for the city of Hamilton lists a host of concerns needing action. Chair Shirley Glauser and her committee know that many of our seniors face a tough time after they retire. Everything is more expensive and yet they live on fixed incomes, like pensions that have eroded in value over time. A recent survey shows that inflation hits Canadian seniors harder than other age groups. In Ontario, the seniors' inflation rate is higher than the national average and takes an even bigger bite out of meagre incomes. A pension cheque doesn't go very far when everything costs more: hydro, gas, transit fares, property taxes, rent, prescriptions, the McGuinty health tax and other new user fees.

That is why we need the government to index pensions so that they keep pace with the rising cost of living. There should be a focused strategy for improving seniors' services. Whether it's funding for seniors' centres, public transit, affordable housing or pension reform, the McGuinty government can and should do more.

I commend the groups in Hamilton East that dedicate themselves every day to serving our seniors. To the advisory committee; First Place; the YWCA and its two active living centres; Hamilton Dementia Care Network, and all the other agencies and people who dedicate themselves to the health, well-being and security of our senior citizens, thank you very much from the bottom of my heart. Happy Seniors' Month.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): June is indeed the month that has been set aside in the calendar

year to celebrate and recognize the contributions of seniors in our communities, seniors such as the Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain, who recently received the very prestigious YWCA Woman of Distinction award for her work in the voluntary sector for abused women, and also for the provision of better child care.

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I'm fortunate to have within my own constituency of Etobicoke Centre a senior advisory committee that meets on a regular basis. It consists of members from the community itself and from community care access, long-term-care facilities, service organizations and legal, just to name a few. The committee identifies relevant issues, such as Alzheimer's, respite, health, well-being, continuing access to lifelong learning, and community connections such as Jumbly's Theatre, which is a remarkable theatre group that's looking to bridge the gap in diversity in our community, which will result in a play in about three years. These are the types of issues we talk about, and these are the types of things we do in our community. We also discuss relevant issues relating to proposed legislation, which enables me to come back to the community.

Allow me also to say thank you to some very special people as the session ends: to Janet Marcheuz, Anne Wood and Margaret Williams in my constituency office, and to Rebecca, Chris, Sarah and Audrey. You're all wonderful.

Charlotte Whitton, the former mayor of Ottawa, once said that being a woman in political life, you have to work twice as hard as others to prove yourself. Fortunately, when I have such wonderful people around me, it's twice as easy.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to remind the Minister of Energy, as well as all members, that Ontario is entering the peak months of power consumption. Today's high consumption of electricity proves my point. At 11 a.m., Ontario electricity demand had already hit 21,596 megawatts. The price of power had reached 10.6 cents per kilowatt hour. Today's projected peak in electricity consumption is estimated at 23,466 megawatts.

Ontario is able to meet this demand because of coal-powered plants such as Lambton, which has a capacity of 1,975 megawatts, and Nanticoke, which has a capacity of 3,920 megawatts, that are available to contribute over 20% of the total capacity to the generation system. Yet, if you believe this government, we must close all coal-powered plants within two years. If you believe this government, we can completely replace about a quarter of Ontario's generating capacity by 2007—unrealistic.

I would invite the members to take a look at the hydro meters today and ask whether this government's electricity policy will meet demands this summer.

In the remaining time, I'd like to recognize the well-behaved young students who are visiting in the chamber today.

SCLERODERMA

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Several times during this month of June, many committed residents from rural, urban and small-town Ontario will volunteer to heighten the profile of scleroderma and to raise funds for continued support of research into the causes and cures of this demonic disease.

June is Scleroderma Month across Ontario. It is a progressive disease of the vascular and immune systems and a severe connective tissue disorder. Still-unknown factors trigger the overproduction of collagen, with resulting thickening, hardening and scarring of the skin and some internal organs, most commonly the digestive, circulatory, pulmonary and muscular systems. Blood vessels tend to narrow, causing diminished blood flow. Patients become unduly sensitive to the cold and suffer discoloration, thickening and tightening of the skin. Internally, it's very common that there is a narrowing of the esophagus, creating swallowing problems, and digestive difficulties most assuredly arise. The lungs, heart and kidneys are also affected by this ailment.

More prevalent than muscular dystrophy or multiple sclerosis, scleroderma affects an estimated two to three people in 10,000. Four out of five affected are women between the ages of 30 and 50. Its causes are unknown. It is not contagious, and it is not hereditary. It does strike every age, every ethnic background and both sexes. It is estimated that there are as many as 40,000 cases in Canada. A good friend of ours, Audrey Gouskos, is now recovering from a near-fatal outcome associated with this terrible disease.

The Scleroderma Society of Ontario consists of volunteers and volunteers only. It is moving forward quickly, with the encouragement of the medical fraternity, to find a cure for this dreaded disease—we hope sooner than later.

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): As a professional engineer, I would like to take this opportunity to join all members in celebration of Engineering for Ontarians Day. This is separate from Hug an Engineer Day, which is every other day of the year.

There are close to 70,000 professional engineers in the province, and I would ask that the House recognize the important role engineers play in making our province strong, safe and a great place to live.

If I could direct members' attention to the gallery, we have with us today representatives from Professional Engineers Ontario, the organization that has been regulating the practice of professional engineering in the public interest for more than 80 years. Our guests include president Robert A. Goodings, registrar and CEO Kim Allen, past president George Comrie, president-elect Pat Quinn, deputy registrar Johnny Zuccon, and Ken McMartin, P.Eng., president-elect of the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers. Thank you for being with us.

Let us also extend a warm welcome to the good contingent of professional engineers and PEO spokespersons who have joined us today. We're pleased to have you here, and we greatly appreciate the important work you do.

Along with fellow members Phil McNeely and Norm Sterling, I am pleased to be co-sponsoring a reception for PEO in the legislative dining room later this afternoon. All members are duly invited to attend the event, where the Honourable Michael Bryant will be delivering brief remarks. Attendance will be taken.

Please join us in recognizing this day and the invaluable work professional engineers do for our province.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): We all know that a strong Canada needs a strong Ontario, and in order to keep Ontario strong, we need to invest in our people.

Ontario currently faces a gap when it comes to the money it receives from the federal government and what it sends to the federal government. While Ontario is honoured to support the rest of this country, we are stretched beyond what we can afford.

I want to commend Premier Dalton McGuinty for tackling an issue that few, if any, Premiers have had any success in quantifying, communicating or altering. As the great Canadian author Margaret Laurence once said, what matters is "trying to express something that in fact everybody knows, but doesn't say or can't express." Well, Premier McGuinty is saying to the federal government that we have a fairness issue, and he has found a way to express it.

Here's an example of where Ontario falls short of its fair share: In 2004, 29.5% of unemployed Ontarians qualified for EI benefits and the average benefit per unemployed person was \$5,030. In the rest of Canada, 52% of unemployed persons qualified for EI and the average benefit per unemployed person was \$8,338. If unemployed Ontarians were given the same benefit levels as the rest of Canadians, an additional \$1.5 billion would flow into Ontario pockets. Unemployed Ontarians deserve the same support from the federal government provided to unemployed people in the rest of the country.

I urge the federal government to continue to work with the McGuinty government to close the economic gap and provide Ontarians with the support they need and deserve.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I beg leave to present the first report, 2005, of the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Does the member wish to make a brief statement? No.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (LICENCE SUSPENSIONS), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SUSPENSIONS DE PERMIS)

Mr. Zimmer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 209, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to the suspension of drivers' licences / Projet de loi 209, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les suspensions de permis de conduire.

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

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): This is a bill designed to provide for the following consequence: If someone is convicted of a boating offence involving the use of alcohol, that conviction will trigger a suspension of an Ontario driver's licence if they hold an Ontario driver's licence.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Mrs. Bountrogianni moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 210, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

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

The minister has the floor.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I reserve my comments for ministerial statements.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. till 12 midnight on Monday, June 6, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The government House leader has moved government notice of motion 388. Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

The Speaker: The government House leader has moved government notice of motion 388. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Jackson, Cameron	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Runciman, Robert W.
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Craitor, Kim	Meilleur, Madeleine	Tory, John
Crozier, Bruce	Miller, Norm	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	O'Toole, John	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	Yakabuski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	
Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim	

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

Nays

Hampton, Howard	Kormos, Peter
Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 4.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ADOPTION

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to inform members of the historic step we are taking on behalf of the thousands of children and youth in Ontario who are in the permanent care of a children's aid society.

We often hear stories in the news about children who are taken into the care of the children's aid society. These

are children who have been abused or neglected or whose parents could not take care of them. But we don't hear many news stories about what happens to those children after the crisis has subsided. Some of those children thrive, but often these children get trapped in a system that doesn't work for them.

In Ontario, there are roughly 9,000 children in the permanent care of a children's aid society. They live in foster homes and they live in group homes. On average, children in foster or group care are moved every two years. Consider that situation. It's not just moving your stuff; it's leaving your friends and your school, it's a new house, a new foster family, a new group home, new rules, new expectations. That kind of instability affects every part of a child's life: their education, their self-esteem and their ability to form meaningful long-term relationships.

The current system is too rigid. We need to help more children find a permanent, caring home by making adoption more flexible for individual children and friendlier for parents. Today, I introduced legislation that, if passed, would modernize the rules around adoption so they work for children and families. These proposed changes would remove the rigid restriction that a child must completely sever all ties to his or her birth family before being eligible for adoption.

Right now, 70% of children in permanent care can't be adopted because their birth family has a court-ordered right to contact them. When judges make an order that a child become a ward of the state, they may be hesitant to seal off all contact with the family, except in those cases where it's necessary for the child's safety. So the birth family would have the opportunity to visit the child, for example, twice a year. That often makes sense, but it should not automatically make the child ineligible to become a permanent member of a new family. Proposed changes would mean that a child could keep those important ties to their family, community and culture and still be adopted or placed in a permanent home.

We know that adoption will help a number of these children find a secure, stable family, but we also know that it's not the answer for every child. Right now, if a child can't be adopted, they often have no choice but foster or group care. Instead of trying to make the child fit the rules, we're changing the rules to fit the child.

Proposed changes would give children's aid societies more flexibility to meet the needs of each child. For some children, it would mean being placed with a member of their extended family, someone they already know and trust. It may be a grandparent; for others, it would be being placed with another adult, possibly a member of their community, even a long-time foster parent. A young person could have the legal and emotional certainty of a permanent home and family, at least until they turn 18. The proposed changes are part of our government's plan to help more children and youth in care of children's aid societies thrive in a safe, stable, supportive home.

We're making the system friendlier for prospective parents, removing some of the barriers that often discour-

age people from adopting in Ontario. Parents who have tried to adopt a child from a children's aid society will tell you that it's a cumbersome, inconsistent process. So we are standardizing the application process so that it is the same in Toronto as it is in Timmins. It will even be the same for private adoptions, so prospective parents will not have to go through a different screening process every time they speak with a different agency.

We're already working with the Adoption Council of Ontario and children's aid societies to develop a province-wide Web site that will help societies match children who are available for adoption with would-be parents. And for those families that need it, there will be some post-adoption support so that families who adopt a child from a children's aid society aren't suddenly left on their own.

We're also making three changes to the way children's aid societies do business, changes that will make the societies more stable and sustainable so that they are there for children who need them for years to come.

First, this year we will begin to provide a new funding framework. That framework puts a greater emphasis on the specific results that we want to see for children, like adoption. As well, last year we provided added resources to put the societies on a stable footing going forward.

Second, the societies will also have more options available to them when they respond to new cases. It always starts with a rigorous safety assessment, but after that, the societies will be able to match their level of response to the need of the child.

Third, the legislation proposes more extensive use of mediation instead of courts in child protection matters. Mediation is less adversarial and often better for the child and family.

Together, these changes will help children's aid societies achieve even more adoptions so that more children can live in the security of a permanent, loving home. Across Ontario, there are thousands of children who need a permanent family and a great many families who want to bring a child into their lives. We are helping bring them together. By making adoption more flexible for children and friendlier for parents, I believe the result will be more happy childhoods and more loving, stable, permanent families.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): It's my opportunity to rise in the House today to respond to the minister's announcement. For the purposes of the people watching on television, this is the size of the legislation that was tabled today.

What I find most interesting is that this minister and this ministry continue to be embroiled in a high degree of turmoil. We're still not seeing an overall plan to help us get through this period when the minister seems to be battling on several fronts: not only in our courts, as we witnessed last week, but also with the privacy commissioner and the federal government, in terms of charter protections for children. Now she's wandering into the

Child and Family Services Act with substantive reforms in the dying days of this legislative session.

My first question to the minister is: Where is the Bruce Rivers report that you promised to make public, so we can put all of these kinds of reforms into an overall program plan and a business plan, so we can understand exactly where the changes are going to occur, not just for children's aid societies but for families who are dependent on the government to manage child welfare issues? We have not seen the Bruce Rivers report, yet you've cherry-picked part of that report and dropped this on the floor of the Legislature today. No real plan; no real program. You seem to be all over the map on this issue.

Even your statement in the House today bears further scrutiny. I'll give you an example. Minister, you talk on page 4 about the resources you put in place. The resources you put in place last year were to pay for the deficits of a year ago, with no promise to assist children's aid societies today. Currently, children's aid societies are carrying about a \$70-million deficit. Their boards are cash-flowing to keep their employees salaried and in place for child protection in our province. Nowhere in your announcement have you discussed that.

You go on to say that the societies will also have more options available. I haven't read through the document, but if you're talking about the suggestion for differentiated responses, which has been talked about, that means that when there is a child protection issue, the children's aid societies won't have to do as thorough an investigation. The reason children's aid societies' budgets went from half a billion to \$1.1 billion in under five years in this province is that clearly we needed to give children's aid societies the resources to be as thorough and comprehensive with each and every one of their cases. Now you're going to take us back—of course, you don't mention that in your comments. It's buried inside these three and a half inches of legislative changes, but that's what differentiated responses are.

It's the same with your reference to kinship care. It's wonderful that we can call up a grandparent or uncle or aunt and say, "Would you please take your sister's son? We'll pay you. After all, we're paying foster care from as low as \$25 a day to as high as \$100 a day. But you know what? We can save some money if you'll take that child off our hands, but we'll pay you to be the surrogate parent for your own relation. We'll pay you \$40, \$50 or \$60 a day of taxpayers' money." If that's in fact what you're going to be doing, you should be saying that and you should be making that clear. But again, we don't know that, because that's not what's in your announcement today and, frankly, you have not tabled the Bruce Rivers report so we can look at that thoughtful bit of effort to determine exactly what the overall plan will be.

1410

You're currently in the courts with some of these families with adoption issues. You're literally countering the families for their requests of the government to come up with the necessary funding. The incentives that you're looking for to provide CASs are essentially a cost-

containment strategy and not a child welfare outcomes issue.

Bill 183 has been well documented in this House. You're currently embroiled in controversies here, and yet you're talking about increasing the number of adoptions at a time when you're going to be eliminating an adoption registry and when CASs are required to carry huge deficits. You've done nothing to protect those children whom your own ministry has taken away from a family because they've been sexually assaulted, and now you're going to accelerate their adoption and provide access to the families of these children under these changes.

Minister, you have no plan. I wish you would table the Rivers report as soon as possible so that we can comment properly on these reforms.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could I have less discussion in Parliament? I hear a lot of discussion. Could you limit it to a much quieter tone or do it outside, please?

Responses: member from Hamilton East.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Children and Youth Services and to acknowledge that it is extremely important to give children the opportunity for stable family life, the opportunity for stable and successful adoptions. That's definitely a goal that I think we all share.

It's a tragedy that we're seeing, in all communities across the province, the tragedy of children being forced to grow up in foster homes and group homes. That's not the environment that anybody would want a child to be growing up in in this day and age. I know the adoption community and grandparents and many people were waiting for this to come forward, were waiting for this kind of change to happen, and I'm sure that they are, at this point in time, lauding the initiative. It's no doubt important, and I think we would all agree it's important, that we need to get these children adopted into stable situations as quickly and as seamlessly as possible in this province, but not before the government has an opportunity to sort out who was given to children's aid societies inappropriately in the first place and under false pretences.

The ministry would know that it currently has a really big problem on its hands because it doesn't track very well the basic information they obtain about these children. We also know that in many cases children's aid societies have a dismal record with severely challenged children, children with severe disabilities. The ministry has hardly any information at all about what is happening with these children.

A recent Queen's University study showed that adoption disruption rates were 43.2% for children with disabling conditions compared to 4.8% for children without such conditions. Four per cent is a good record, but 43% is definitely not a good record. That's something the government seriously needs to work on. The Queen's University study actually came up with a couple of

recommendations, which include enhancing the focus on children with disabling conditions, promoting research in the permanency of outcomes for children with disabling conditions and improving data collection and ministry reporting on the crown ward population. These are some very tangible measures that need to be put in place to improve the situation for children with disabling conditions.

The ministry has historically done a terrible job of collecting and retaining this basic information about children in care. We should really be careful about children who have special needs and make sure that reuniting them with their families takes priority over the adoption by new families within the context of what we're seeing happening in the province right now.

The Queen's study shows that there are many barriers facing disabled children who need adoption, and the ministry needs to follow their recommendations very closely. The ministry is able to actually make some of those changes, and we'd like to see that happening right away. In fact, in the context of what's been happening in the province with the Ombudsman's report, you would think that the minister would have taken this opportunity today with this announcement to announce that she was implementing all four of the recommendations that came from that very condemning report.

In fact, I was in court just last week, on Friday, with lawyers representing Anne Larcade, who was concerned about the situation with her son Alexandre, and the many other families who are dealing with the fact that they were forced to give up custody of their children just so those children could get the services they need from this province.

There's no doubt that grandparents will be very happy about what they're seeing today, but there's another issue, and that is the issue of affordability. While the announcements of the minister are important, what we need to keep our eye on is how well people can take advantage of this situation and actually get those children into the stable situations they need to have to grow and prosper in life.

The other issue that leaves me with some concern about the huge document I received today is the issue of mediation and child protection. I think that's a very concerning prospect because we know that in any situation of mediation—for example, alternative dispute resolutions in family matters—there is always a power imbalance that needs to be dealt with. There are significant concerns that we need to address, and I'm not quite sure that the minister has taken that into consideration. Yes, there are backlogs in the family courts that we need to address. Yes, that's a serious problem we need to get through, but there are ways of dealing with that to make sure that everybody is appropriately represented with the appropriate framework around it to make sure that the best possible solutions are outcomes—something like family law clinics, which we have advocated for for quite some time in this province and would like to see implemented.

Those are my comments; there are many, many more that I'm sure I will have as I review the information I received today.

ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes in recognition of the anniversary of D-Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The government House leader requests unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): It's my privilege today to rise during this Year of the Veteran to mark the anniversary of D-Day, June 6, 1944, and to honour all those Ontarians who fought with other Canadians and Allies that day and through the war.

As we all know, the invasion of Normandy was the largest combined sea, air and land military operation in history. Tragically, it took the lives of hundreds of Canadians that day, and 600 were wounded and dozens were taken prisoner. Yet proudly, by day's end, Canadians had advanced further through enemy lines than any other force. It's no wonder that this conflict remains so profoundly and deeply felt generations later. Amazingly, over one million Canadians and Newfoundlanders volunteered to serve in the Second World War. That was one in 11 Canadians. Tragically, by the end of the war, one out of 10 of those who had gone off to war was either dead or wounded.

D-Day and the Battle of Normandy marked the turning point in the Second World War. The Year of the Veteran marks some of those significant milestones that we have all been recognizing: the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands, victory in Europe and victory in Japan. This year is an opportunity to celebrate, honour, remember and, importantly, thank our veterans, and importantly to teach our youth about the contributions and the sacrifices our veterans made both here and abroad in war and peace. Our veterans deserve respect and recognition for their sacrifice and accomplishments to preserve our freedom and safety and for the contributions they continue to make.

Today, Ontario is proud to have over 100,000 Second World War veterans sharing with us the peace and safety that they helped to preserve. While many are well into their 80s and 90s, many of us know many of them who have a zest for life that is ageless. That was evident in all of our ridings last month when thousands of veterans marched across the province to mark Victory in Europe Day and to dance at the CNE on May 8. Strong and vital communities are the legacy of those who fought so bravely to preserve the freedoms we enjoy today.

We're committed to ensuring that future generations recognize and remember the contributions of all our veterans, including those with us today and those who made the ultimate sacrifice. With the support of your gov-

ernment, veterans are bringing history alive for students in school face to face—many of us have been in schools where veterans have been in those classrooms—and on-line through a project called the Memory Project, which is led by our Dominion Institute. We are also supporting the Dominion Institute's Memory Project road show. The road show records veterans' stories in their own words and voices. It records their artifacts, such as medals, photographs and letters. This will be accessible to generations to come as our Memory Project Web site begins its eight-city road show.

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I'm also pleased to report, as the Premier has in the past, that with your support and the support of all three parties in the Legislature, we are making significant progress toward our project of constructing a veterans' memorial right here on the grounds of Queen's Park. This memorial will be a fitting and lasting tribute to the heroism, the dedication and the loyalty of all of our armed forces members past and present, in times of war and in times of peace. As you know, the memorial will be built on the front lawn of Queen's Park, visible and accessible to everyone who comes to visit. In fact, this is the first time in almost 70 years that approval has been given by the Legislature to erect a structure on its lawns. I'm very pleased with the co-operation we have received from you, Mr. Speaker, and from all parties in the Legislature.

June, as you know, is recognized as Seniors' Month in the province, an annual tradition that we have recognized for over 20 years. This month allows us to recognize older Ontarians who continue to make enormous contributions to their families, their communities and country. Each of our proud veterans has made, and continues to make, an important contribution to Ontario. On behalf of all Ontarians, I salute them and I thank them for their enormous contribution to our province.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): This morning while I was reading my newspaper at home at the breakfast table, I noticed the date on the paper as being June 6. I remarked to our boys, who were eating breakfast with me, that today is a very special day, because 61 years ago today, the guns of freedom were discharged on the beaches of Normandy, launching the final phase of the liberation of Europe from its Nazi enslavement.

We commemorate many of the anniversaries associated with World War I and World War II. On or around November 11, Royal Canadian Legions across this country hold solemn observances to remind us of the horrors of war, the sacrifices of the generation who gave their all to achieve our victories, and the need for us, the generations who follow, to never, ever forget.

Just a month ago, many scores of Canadian Expeditionary Force veterans of the campaign in Holland returned to that grateful country for a hero's welcome. Still proud and charismatic but now carrying the burden of age, many of these veterans were probably visiting the Netherlands for the final time. To say that the Dutch people are thankful for what Canadians did there in the

1940s would be to understate the degree of heartfelt appreciation that they continue to demonstrate every time they see the Canadian flag.

The events of June 6, 1944, hold special symbolic importance for all of us today. Many of us have a view of that day which has been provided for us by Hollywood through the films *Saving Private Ryan* and *The Longest Day*, or perhaps the recent television film *Eisenhower*. Without a doubt, these historical depictions give us a somewhat greater appreciation of what it must have been like for the men who disembarked from those landing craft into that wall of fire.

What we don't often contemplate is the fact that without a successful amphibious landing in France in 1944, there would have been no way of dislodging the Nazi regime, and there was no guarantee that the landings would succeed. In fact, I believe that General Eisenhower had prepared a speech which would have been broadcast over the radio where he would have taken full personal responsibility for the failure of the landings if the Allied forces had been turned back into the sea and been unable to establish the vital bridgehead that they needed. Such is the magnitude of that historic event on Juno Beach on that stormy day. If the landings had been unsuccessful, it is not difficult to speculate that the war would have been prolonged, more lives would have been lost, and the human misery that war represents would have been intensified for millions.

It has been my privilege to come to know well one of our Canadian veterans who participated in the Normandy campaign, having landed just hours after D-Day. Donald J. MacDougall of Harriston, who goes by the name of Tuffy, I think going back to his years in the Canadian army, is someone I admire greatly, because to me he exemplifies the courage and sacrifice of that entire generation.

I return again to this morning at our family's breakfast table. We need to know about what happened 61 years ago today. We need to make sure that our children know about it. We need to make certain that future generations, even after the passing of our veterans, continue to recognize the superlative valour of every single Canadian who wore a uniform when their country needed them and the millions whose toil here at home supported them.

I'm pleased that I've had the opportunity to speak briefly in the House in commemoration of the anniversary of D-Day on behalf of our party's critic for citizenship, the member for Burlington. I thank you.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I too am pleased to be able to participate in what I believe a very significant moment in Canadian history. I want to follow on my colleague's statement, that too often we tend to take history for granted. We tend to assume that it just happened this way. I think it's good for all of us to reflect on the fact that D-Day didn't just happen; it wasn't a guaranteed success. As my colleague said, Eisenhower actually carried around in his pocket, until very late in the day of 6 June, a press release which would have said, "Our landings have been a failure. We

are withdrawing from the continent,” and then taking responsibility. In fact, Churchill said this was such a gamble that if it didn't succeed, it would likely be years before the allied armies would have sufficient strength to enter Europe again.

It really was quite a gamble. The weather was a gamble. Whether or not the landings were still going to be a secret was a gamble. So there were all kinds of uncertainties to it.

What is really amazing is the success that was achieved, and the success that was achieved by and large, in Canada's terms, by soldiers and sailors and flyers who were all volunteers. These were not professional soldiers; these were all volunteers. Many of them had enlisted in the armed forces because they'd come through the Depression and they were sick and tired of being unemployed. They wanted a job and they wanted three square meals a day, and that's what they thought of.

Over 15,000 Canadians participated that day. What I think Canadians need to know is that Canada was not a large country then: 11 million people. Yet Canada virtually participated on an equal basis with the United States and Britain. Canadians landed as paratroopers. In fact, the history of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion is probably one of the most interesting. As everyone knows, paratroops have the most dangerous job, but the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion probably had the most dangerous job of all. They were landed far out on the flank, and their job was to blow up a number of bridges before the German army knew that the bridges had been blown up. It was really quite an amazing feat, which probably is one of the best histories of D-Day.

Another Canadian—he actually lives in Winnipeg now—did something equally outstanding. If anyone has ever seen the movie *The Longest Day*, you'll know there is a scene where a glider lands quite close to a bridge that had to be captured. It's regarded as the greatest feat ever of military flying. The pilot landed the glider 47 yards from the bridge so that the paratroops were able to get out and rush the bridge without anyone knowing it. Forty-seven yards away from the bridge on a dark night with no moon and cloud cover. Where does that pilot live? He lives in Winnipeg.

A year ago, I was able to see him interviewed. They asked him what special skill he had. He said, “Look, I was only 19 years old. I was just trying to do my job and make sure I lived through the night.” Incredible things were done by people who were very young and just trying to do their job.

Nowadays, many of these people are in their 80s and we recognize them on special days, but, again, I want to agree with my colleagues here: I think it's important that we do something more than that.

This was such a unique turning point in the history of the world.

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I just want to read something that a Canadian journalist said at the time. This is by Lionel Shapiro. He was then a columnist for *Maclean's* magazine. On the evening

of June 6, in the dining room of l'Hôtel Belle Plage, just a few hundred yards from the beach in front of Bernières-sur-Mer, which Canadians had liberated, Shapiro sat down at his typewriter and reflected on the day's events. “Then, reflecting on the Canadian citizen soldiers, whose ‘appetite for battle’ he had chronicled in Sicily, he wrote finally about their premier victory in France, ‘Between the little seaside town of Bernières-sur-Mer and the Caen battle front, Canadian troops have written an immortal history.’”

It really is an immortal history, and that's why I believe we need to do more. These, in many ways, were some of Canada's finest hours, by people who were citizen soldiers just trying to do their job.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Last week we referenced here a number of examples and concerns that echoed those raised by the privacy commissioner about your adoption disclosure bill; specifically, the privacy of those birth parents or adoptees who do not wish to have their identities revealed. Your minister did not, at that time, disclose any details about how the tribunal that is proposed, or that exists and would hear some of these applications, would actually work for people in just this circumstance. In fact, she repeatedly said it would be dealt with by way of the regulations that would be developed. I think it's part of a trend, over many years, where governments of all stripes seem to decide that issues are far too complex or far too difficult for mere parliamentarians to deal with.

My question to the Premier is, will you include as part of the legislation itself, as opposed to leaving it entirely to regulations developed later in secret, some specific criteria and procedures that would govern the role of the tribunal in hearing applications from those who are concerned about the violation of their privacy rights?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The minister would like to speak to this.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): The Leader of the Opposition and I had an opportunity to discuss over the telephone today the content of an amendment that is being tabled at committee this afternoon. That is in keeping with the conversation we had last week, where I assured the member opposite that if he had concerns about details involving information for abused children who are now adult adoptees to access information and have the opportunity for that veto—rather than his not seeing that by regulation but wishing to see that in the bill, that is the amendment that will be tabled this afternoon. I hope that

goes a long way to assure the member opposite that not only are our intentions good, but we are now coming forward with an amendment that will show him what would have been done by regulation.

Ultimately and in the end, there are two pillars here. Yes, there is a controversy for part of it, but the lion's share of individuals who are affiliated with this issue on adoption want two things: They want retroactivity and they want that openness, with protection for those extreme circumstances. I believe that, with the work we have done over several months, that is what we have today.

Mr. Tory: As I've indicated a number of times here and elsewhere, we'll have to see these amendments to see if they fulfill the purpose I was describing; namely, to give people some greater degree of comfort that we know in the legislation how these tribunals are going to be set up and how they're going to work.

Yesterday's Toronto Sun editorial said, "The Liberals have proposed a bill which, while it has several positive aspects, is fatally flawed because it ignores the fundamental and non-negotiable privacy rights of both adopted children and their birth parents." The privacy commissioner has said the same thing.

Premier, given some of these comments and concerns, we're asking that you outline the details of exactly how this bill would work before it is passed. The minister has made some allusion to perhaps doing some of that later today. As an example, under the Victims' Bill of Rights, a person who has been the victim of sexual assault is presumed to be a victim; no justification is required. Under your legislation as written, however, a victim of sexual abuse would have to appear in person before a tribunal and beg for their privacy. We don't think this is right.

My question is this: At the very least, will you set out, in your legislation, means by which those who wish their information to be kept private may still have their submissions put in front of the tribunal without having to relive the entire experience, especially in person?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Let me say for the leader opposite that the work that will be done through the course of the summer, if we're successful with the passage of this bill, would be exactly that. We have never had the intention to have people relive horrible experiences. We also understand that 3% to 5% of those related to adoption may be in this. For those people, what we are saying is that there will be protection for individuals who come from an abused background. If that CAS file has abuse in it, that file will be stopped. That adoptee, that adult, will have a choice to release that information. Many of them want it released anyway, but we are giving them that choice. So that will now be in the law, as I said—in the amendment.

For the birth parents, there will be circumstances that no one in this House can describe that would constitute, in their view, extreme harm. You and I are not going to be the ones who are going to be the judge of that. It will, in fact, be by the panel. We will make a process that will work for those individuals.

Mr. Tory: We're still in this mode of, "Pass the bill now and we'll sort out the details later." I think that there are members of this House and, indeed, members of the public who might like to be involved in a very public way in sorting out the details now, concurrent with the passage of any piece of legislation.

The minister has indicated in the media that the most common case—of a mother who had given up a child for adoption and did not want to relive the pain and anguish associated in her case with that decision—would not be successful in a bid to have her privacy maintained were she to apply to this tribunal to have the information kept private. Recognizing, as the minister just said, the relatively low percentage of files that will go to a hearing, are you willing to include in the legislation, as part of the provisions we've been discussing today, an explicit mandate given to the tribunal to hear and decide upon any application to be brought by anyone so that there can and will be a balanced consideration of both the protection of privacy rights and the benefits which would flow from disclosure of information, without any arbitrary assumption in advance as to which rights should prevail in a given case? Are you willing to give the tribunal that explicit mandate?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Let me just say that it has always been the intention, and the bill, as it is written, allows for individuals to come before that tribunal, however easy that process will be. I can tell you that it will be an easy process. If anyone has described it as something difficult, that's their description, not ours.

I will also say that in all of the parts that will require regulation, we have laid out a plan for open consultation on the regulation-making; stakeholder consultation on its development; e-consultation so that people can do it anonymously; and it will include the regulations that will affect the adopted children as well as the birth parents.

In answer specifically to the question that this member asks: Absolutely. We will have a process by which people can get involved in the development of those regulations, especially for the cases that he describes.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): New question.

The Speaker: New question.

HYDRO ONE LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'd love another supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I would say that what I asked for there was a specific legislative provision that would mandate the committee, but we'll go to a new question, again for the Premier.

For the first time in the history of Hydro One, engineers, scientists and safety supervisors are on strike. Indeed, this is the first strike vote taken by these energy professionals in over 50 years.

Last week, in responding to a question from our energy critic, your energy minister said that a "robust

contingency plan”—his words, not mine—was in place for this strike. What specifically is in your plan to ensure the safety and reliability of our power system and to ensure that the lights remain on in Ontario? Can you share some of those details with us?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm going to allow the Minister of Energy to speak to this in the supplementaries, but let me just say at the outset that it is indeed unfortunate that it has come to this and that there is a strike. I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition would agree with me that we should, in the strongest possible terms, be urging both sides to continue to talk to ensure that, at all times, the public interest is upheld. Notwithstanding the fact that we find ourselves in this situation, I remain optimistic, I remain hopeful, and again I urge both sides to come together, work out their differences and do so in a way that always upholds the public interest and public safety.

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Mr. Tory: I think we would all share those sentiments, though it had little to do with my question. I'll try again.

It was the Ontario Minister of Energy who boasted of a robust plan in the event of a strike when we asked him about this last Wednesday. All I'm seeking is an assurance on behalf of the people and the businesses of Ontario that we will continue to have a reliable, safe electricity system while these people have withdrawn their services.

The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers sent a letter to the members of your cabinet two months ago raising concerns over a potential strike. The letter says, "Professional engineers of Hydro One are responsible for the protection and control of transmission operation and supervision of the safety of work rules. Their role is critical to recovery from outage situations such as the August 2003 blackout."

My questions is this: You've known about this strike for over two months. I think it is fair now for you to share with us details and specific elements of your robust contingency plans so that people and businesses know they can rely on a stable supply of electricity and maintain their confidence in that important element of our economy.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The plan was devised and developed by Hydro One. It has been subject to review by the Independent Electricity System Operator, which is an organization that is separate from Hydro One. They have responsibility for overseeing the flow of electricity from generation through to transmission and distribution. They reported publicly this weekend that they are satisfied that this is a robust contingency plan, one that will serve the interests of the province while this dispute is ongoing.

As the Premier said, it is our hope that both sides will get back to the bargaining table and be able to resolve the

dispute before them. In the interim, the plan has been overseen by the Independent Electricity System Operator, which is the expert in these matters. They are satisfied that the plan will serve to protect consumer interests in Ontario during this period of time.

Mr. Tory: While I certainly welcome the minister's volume today, which I would say might be appropriate to be used at a Rosedale tea party, he didn't answer my question, which was to talk about the plan. He told us there was a plan and he said the plan is a plan we can all rely on, and so forth. We need to have some assurances from this government, and the people of Ontario need those assurances. It's not unreasonable for us to ask about some of the details of those plans. We have seen the detrimental effects that small power interruptions can have on daily life in Ontario. Two weeks ago, NOVA Chemicals lost \$25 million as a result of a four-second power outage which occurred at a transmission station in Milton. In that case, it was the Hydro One engineers who had to fix it.

I'm going to ask one more time: Can you tell us what the elements are of this robust plan that you referred to so confidently a few days ago? Can you give the people and the businesses the assurance they need that they will have a confident, reliable supply of energy during the course of this work stoppage?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The member opposite will be aware that the operations of the system and its security are overseen by the Independent Electricity System Operator. The elements include management employees from within Hydro One who will fulfill obligations, so you have that contingency. The contingency deals with making sure of the safety of the system itself, quite apart from the potential public impact. Those are defined in regulation and enforced by the IESO, and I'll be happy to send those regulations to the Leader of the Opposition.

It deals with a range of contingencies. For instance, last night, power was lost in Puslinch township. That was a routine outage caused by weather. Power was lost briefly in my riding last night as a result of a storm. There are routinely outages every day throughout the province. There's a set of rules that are publicly available that govern how we operate our system. They're overseen by the Independent Electricity System Operator. I have confidence in their ability to ensure that this contingency plan will serve the system well throughout the duration of this labour situation.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): A question for the Premier: Premier, it is a very hot day indeed. People are turning on their air conditioners across southern Ontario, and the usage of hydroelectricity is surging. But while that's happening, 1,000 of the skilled engineering professionals whose job it is to ensure a stable provision of hydroelectricity are off the job. For the first time in 60 years, they are not on the job.

Last week, we made a modest request that you take responsibility and get both sides together to try to find an agreement. Premier, why do you sit on the sidelines

while Ontario's hydroelectricity supply comes under greater risk every day?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Earlier, before I came into the House, I checked: Peak demand is expected to reach 23,000 megawatts of power today, or a little bit higher. There will be the routine imports of electricity on a day like today. The IESO reports that on Monday and Tuesday of this week, we expect domestic production to be augmented. I should also point out that three out of 15 nuclear units are out of service at this moment. Our reserve remains at approximately 20%. Two of those three are on planned maintenance. So in terms of the available supply, it's very robust.

We have in fact availed both sides of all the services offered by the Ministry of Labour: conciliation, mediation. There is a board of directors in place to oversee the negotiations. Our belief, I stress again, is that union and management should negotiate free and open collective agreements. We continue to believe in that. We believe that the services of the government have been put to good use to date. Unfortunately, the situation remains unresolved, but we do—

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: This is really encouraging. I ask the minister a question about transmission of electricity, and he talks about generation. This is not fooling anyone. People understand that it's the transmission system that is increasingly under stress, and the people who should be there operating the transmission system aren't there. Your government wants to try to pretend that you have no responsibility here.

Minister, you say there's no risk. Then can you tell me why Hydro One lawyers are in court saying that they need to clamp down on picket lines at the Barrie control centre because "the system is at risk"? Let me put it to the Premier, because ultimately the buck stops with him: How many risks are you prepared to take, Premier, with the hydroelectricity supply of the province?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I don't want to speak about the matter before the court right now, but I want to stress, first of all, as I said to the question from the leader of the official opposition, that we believe there is a robust contingency plan in place that involves continuing access to Hydro One facilities. The member did indirectly reference generation in his first question. Generation is satisfactory, and I'm satisfied that the contingency plan will see to it that transmission remains in place throughout the duration.

These matters are difficult. We have had a number of opportunities, as I indicated earlier, through the Ministry of Labour to have appropriate mediation and conciliation with the two sides. I have faith in the free collective bargaining system, and I am optimistic that both sides will be able to resolve their differences.

Finally, I'm satisfied that the contingency plan is satisfactory under the circumstances.

Mr. Hampton: What a contrast between Liberals today and Liberals just a couple of years ago. I want to

quote one of their spokespersons: "The Minister of Energy is really the representative of the shareholder, the people of Ontario. We, the people, own Hydro One. We're the sole shareholder and our representative is [the minister]. He is responsible not only for that which happens to his direct knowledge, but he is responsible for everything that happens in Hydro One, ultimately."

Who said that? The now Attorney General of the McGuinty government. But suddenly, now that they're the government, they want to pretend that somebody else out there, somewhere off in never-never land, is responsible.

Look, you're fooling no one. You are taking huge risks with the electricity transmission system in Ontario. You're already seeing situations where electricity supply has been interrupted. When are you going to take your head out of the sand, call the parties together, take some responsibility and help them find an agreement that works for the people of Ontario?

1450

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I don't know where that member has had his head, but I can tell you the ministry conciliators and mediators have done that on a number of occasions.

Again, the Attorney General at the time was correct, and we are relying on the board. That is who is in place, the board that this Legislature agreed to. One of the members is Bob Rae.

I am optimistic, and I believe in free and open collective bargaining. I believe the two sides can resolve this issue. I'm optimistic that at the appropriate time, they will. In the interim, I'm satisfied that the contingency plan in place will maintain the service that Ontarians have come to expect from one of the most reliable systems in the world.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: Again to the Premier: What really has the energy professionals baffled here is your position in terms of who should get what. You handed your chief executive officer at Hydro One, Tom Parkinson, a 35% pay increase, plus you're going to subsidize his mortgage, but you want the people who actually work in the system, who make the transmission system work, to take an over 11% pay cut. Can you explain this logic on behalf of the McGuinty government: The CEO gets a 35% pay increase, but the engineers who actually do the work take an 11% pay cut?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I'm not going to even attempt to respond to the inaccuracies contained in the question, but what I do know is what is on the record from the member. This is what the member had to say about those workers who are members of the bargaining unit who are in the \$100,000-plus club. He said, "These people aren't concerned with providing a service to the people of Ontario. They are concerned about their own salaries." We don't believe that. A number of the members of this bargaining unit have made it into that club—a number of

them because their salaries get them there and a number of them because they work considerable overtime.

I believe that the free collective bargaining system can resolve this. I'm optimistic that it will. In the interim, I believe there is a contingency plan that will continue to ensure Ontarians have a reliable supply of electricity as we move forward.

Mr. Hampton: It is appropriate that these workers show concern about their own salaries, particularly when the McGuinty government wants to hand the CEO a 35% pay increase and tell them, "We're going to cut you by 11%."

It's not just Mr. Parkinson's pay increase that I find interesting. You also pay for his golf club dues at Glen Abbey. This is how they advertise it: "Canada's no. 8 golf course. Receptive fairways. Devilishly undulating greens. Lavish meals at the spectacular Gallery Bistro and Grill." Cost to Ontario's hydro ratepayers: almost \$5,000 a year. While you cut the wages of these workers, how do you justify paying Tom Parkinson's greens fees?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Again, unlike the member opposite, who is inconsistent in his views of these workers—as I said, on March 31 he spoke about them being concerned about their own salaries—we have been consistent. The board of directors oversees not only the hiring and salary levels of the CEO but indeed bargaining with the collective bargaining agents in place. We have confidence in that collective bargaining system. We believe in open and free collective bargaining.

I am optimistic that both sides will come to an agreement. I hope they will continue to work toward that. We have employed all the services available to us over the last few months to ensure that we try to bring the two parties together. In the interim, while this labour situation is present, I believe there is a robust contingency plan in place that will give Ontarians assurances that the reliability they've come to expect from Hydro One will continue to be in place.

Mr. Hampton: Once again, I just want to draw the contrast between what these people used to say a couple of years ago and what they're saying now. I want to quote Dalton McGuinty: "We, the people of Ontario, through you, are the sole shareholders in Hydro One. Why is it that you have been so weak, so incapable of bringing the Hydro One board to heel?" Here we have the Hydro One board handing the CEO a 35% pay increase to make him another million-dollar man, paying his greens fees at one of Canada's most illustrious golf courses, subsidizing his house mortgage, flying him around in a helicopter for pleasure, and yet you're cutting the wages of the people who actually keep the lights on.

I say to the Premier, what happened to your promise to exercise some control over what happens at Hydro One, or is that just another forgotten promise?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: In fact, we are exercising proper leadership by entrusting the board of directors of the corporation to manage the affairs of the corporation in a way that maximizes the benefit of the corporation to the people of Ontario through their government.

In addition to what the member said on March 31 with respect to these employees, we also shouldn't forget that, while he was the government, they laid off 10,000 employees at Hydro. Albeit that these are difficult decisions and difficult discussions, our hope is to preserve jobs and to create jobs, both at Hydro One and indeed at OPG in the future as we move forward.

I believe the board has put forward the policy of Hydro One with respect to this particular set of negotiations. As the Premier said, I am optimistic and remain optimistic that the two sides can resolve their differences. In the interim, I believe that the contingency plan in place should give Ontarians some comfort that the reliability of their hydroelectric system remains in place.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. Your health plan is in disarray. Yesterday the Toronto Sun reported that a senior health ministry official has said that you will be spending \$27 million to get rid of district health councils. As you know, it only costs \$18 million to operate them. Most of this money is going to pay severance to staff. This \$27 million could have been spent on 13 MRIs, 27 CT scanners, 540 nurses, or treatments for a year for 90 Fabry patients.

While you are spending \$27 million to eliminate DHCs, you've also spent \$91 million to fire nurses. At the same time, Ontarians have paid \$1.6 billion in your illegal health tax.

Minister, why are you asking Ontarians to use their hard-earned dollars to pay your illegal health tax so you can use it to close DHCs and fire nurses?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As always from that honourable member, you need five or six minutes to untangle fact from fiction, but I'll try.

On the issue of district health councils, I'm very pleased to confirm for the honourable member—not some unnamed source in a newspaper—that the costs with respect to the windup of district health councils will come in at a number in the teens, not anywhere close to the number the honourable member has predicted through an unnamed source.

With respect to the honourable member's suggestion that any dollars last year were paid to Ontario hospitals for the layoff of nurses, this is inaccurate. She's been corrected on that point before. There is not one nurse that I've been made aware of who has been given severance from any of the figures the honourable member speaks about. However, I would acknowledge that that honourable member, from the party that spent \$400 million on severance for nurses, does know a lot about severance.

Mrs. Witmer: Despite the rhetoric coming from the Minister of Health, he should talk to the OHA and they can tell him precisely how much money they asked for—*Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order.

Mrs. Witmer: With all due respect, the Minister of Health should probably ask his staff how much money was spent providing severances to fire nurses. The nurses have put out their own press release, and he knows that the information is different than what he said.

However, your health plan is in disarray. You've now shut down the DHCs, and at the same time there is no health services planning in the province because your new LHINs are not up and running as you planned. According to the senior official from the ministry, "All of the ... planning has stopped. Nobody's doing planning in hospitals because they don't know what direction the LHINs will take.... One of the abject fears that folks in the ministry have is, 'Please don't let us have another SARS right now.'" Minister, why are you putting patient safety at risk, and can you tell us when your LHINs will be approved and operational?

1500

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm happy to address any of the questions the honourable member speaks about, and I'd encourage her to raise them. But I'm not surprised that that honourable member, operating off the quote of some unnamed person who may be—who knows—a former Conservative staffer, would dare to raise the spectre of a lack of preparation for SARS. All I can say is, if the honourable member seriously thinks that's the case, or if that unnamed person honestly thinks that's the case, they should send a note with all the detail they have down to Justice Archie Campbell, because he's the one who is working hard on this issue and giving significant advice and direction to the government. Here's what he said on April 11: "The government accepted the recommendations and committed itself to implement them in an ambitious three-year program.... Improvements have so far been significant."

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): My question is for the Premier. Contributions from golf-club-swinging energy company executives accounted for roughly 35% of all money donated to Energy Minister Dwight Duncan's riding association last year. An energy watchdog is quoted in today's Windsor Star as saying, "Dwight Duncan is just picking up where the Conservatives left off.... the smell of all this is quite bad."

Premier, before the election you said, "The Harris-Eves government gave money too much influence and citizens too little." Why are things as bad as ever?

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Could you address members by riding rather than by name—

Ms. Churley: I was quoting.

The Speaker:—regardless of the quote.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): We introduced legislation, which I understand is being debated in the House today. If we

can get the New Democratic Party and the Progressive Conservative Party to agree, we can get this passed today. I think it's important for people to understand that this bill is the most ambitious, open and transparent effort to bring on real-time disclosure that has happened in the history of the Commonwealth and maybe the world. I say to the member opposite, just say yes. Let's agree to pass this now so that we can get real-time disclosure tomorrow.

Ms. Churley: Today's Windsor Star presents a long list of private power merchants and other corporate interests who bought access to your minister—Calpine, AIM PowerGen, Bruce Power—and they didn't even have space for some others, like former Enron lobbyist Aleck Dadson, Accenture lobbyist Barry Campbell, and the vice-president of the Detroit-Windsor tunnel, who sent his money in from south of the border. One of those donors is quoted as saying that buying access is simply part of politics. He says, "The reality is, you get to talk about issues that are bothering you as a company or bothering you as a person. That's democracy."

Premier, is this democracy in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, and don't you think the minister should give the money back?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Obviously, the Minister of Energy ensured that the fairness commissioner oversaw all energy RFPs, as one would expect to happen. I just say to the member opposite that the reason real-time disclosure is important is that it will mean that everybody will understand who is giving to whom in real time.

For example, Eleanor Clitheroe is well known to have given \$5,000 to the New Democratic Party—I don't know if she gave to our party or not. In 1994, when the NDP were in power, cabinet colleagues emphasized in their good-news announcements, the centrepiece of which was a Windsor visit, a provincial fundraising dinner.

Here's what Sid Ryan said. He said it was ironic that this dinner was being held for business people who were "begging" trade unionists to buy tables to support the NDP government. "That just highlights the betrayal" of the way in which the NDP talk and yet the amount of money which they raise. The point—

The Speaker: The point is that your time is up.

ADOPTION

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, as Hillary Clinton wrote, "It takes a village to raise a child." You've been talking for some time now about the need to help Ontario's 9,000 crown wards find a permanent home. We all know how important a stable and loving permanent family is for the well-being of a child, but too many children and youths do not have this type of home to grow up in. I understand that, because of the legal and structural barriers, fewer than 10% of all children currently in the care of children's aid can be adopted. That kind of instability affects every child's life.

Minister, you've been talking for some time now about the need to help these children find a permanent home. Can you explain how the changes you have introduced today will help these children?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): There are approximately 9,000 crown wards in Ontario; 75% of them have access orders. The majority of those access orders are never accessed. We've introduced legislation today which would remove some of the obstacles for children's aid societies so that it's not so black and white—either you have a family or you don't—so that these children who right now are restricted because of access orders can have permanent families, and so that there's an agreement between the birth mother and the adoptive parents for some sort of contact or access, if agreed upon, so those children can have families. This is long overdue. Seventy-five per cent of 9,000 is 6,500, approximately. Those children cannot ever be adopted at present. We hope that, with the present legislation, we can give permanent families for these children. We all know that the best prognosis for a healthy future is a good, stable family.

Ms. Smith: Members of my family, some friends, and many constituents who have tried to adopt from a children's aid society have told me that it's a cumbersome and inconsistent process. In some cases they must file an application form and a complete home study for each children's aid society that they approach. This is a time-consuming and onerous process, and these barriers often discourage people from adopting in Ontario. With 9,000 children in the care of children's aid societies, we need to find some way to encourage and promote adoption in Ontario. Can you tell us what steps you are taking today that will make it easier for these prospective parents to adopt right here in Ontario?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: We are actually standardizing the application process for adoption so it is identical no matter where you are in Ontario. It will even be the same for private adoption, so prospective parents will not have to go through the screening every time they speak to a different agency. We're already working through the Adoption Council of Ontario and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies to develop a province-wide Web site that will help societies to match children who are available for adoption and would-be parents. For those parents who need it, we're going to provide some post-adoption support so that families who adopt a child from a children's aid society aren't suddenly left on their own. I believe that by making adoption more flexible for children and friendlier for parents, the result will be more children in permanent, stable and loving homes.

GREENBELT COUNCIL

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Minister, Ron Bonnett, president of the OFA, wrote to Premier McGuinity on March 28 of this year and copied you with

respect to the greenbelt advisory council. In his letter he made the point that that council should “reflect proportional representation from the largest group of land holders in the greenbelt proper. For this reason, we are requesting a majority percentage of farmer representation on this committee.” Do you agree with Mr. Bonnett's point?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Certainly, as we move forward with the greenbelt through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, first and foremost, unlike the Tories who want to pave, we want to save land in this province. That's all they want to do.

I think that when one looks at the representation that is on this Greenbelt Council, it is very reflective of agriculture. We have a farmer who is there from the Durham region. We have a grape grower who is represented on the Greenbelt Council. We have representation from the University of Guelph, the foremost leaders in agriculture. We've listened, we wanted to make sure that there was an agricultural voice there, and I think we've very clearly demonstrated that agriculture is being heard.

1510

Mr. Hudak: With respect to the Minister of Agriculture, he has a choice: He can speak on behalf of farmers or he can speak on behalf of the Dalton McGuinty government. I guess he's made that decision, by the way he describes this greenbelt advisory committee. Certainly, the OFA put out a press release saying that they're frustrated with the committee makeup. They're not saying the same thing you're saying, Minister; in fact, quite the opposite.

I'll tell you why farmer representation is important. Since the greenbelt act was passed, we have seen a lack of progress—in fact, backward steps—for the agricultural community. There is no support plan for greenbelt farmers that has come forward. Thomas Kuegler, a grape farmer in Niagara-on-the-Lake, has said that the greenbelt act is preventing him from farming his 22-acre parcel that he wishes to farm. In Pickering and Durham, when it comes to the agricultural preserve, those communities are in full rebellion against the government. Clearly, a strong agricultural voice is necessary. Will you fight for a majority representation of farmers and support the call for subcommittees for Niagara and the Holland Marsh area, the two specialty crop areas, in my private member's bill, Bill 200?

Hon. Mr. Peters: It just amazes me, the richness of what comes out of this member's mouth. He talks about preserving agricultural land. What was one of the first things the Tories did? They cancelled the Niagara tender fruit land protection program. So how can he stand up here today and say that we need to be compensating there for farmers? There was a program in place, and the Tories cancelled it.

We have Howie Herrema, a full-time farmer from Uxbridge; Clay Switzer, former Deputy Minister of Agriculture and food in this province and dean of the Ontario Agricultural College; Mrs. Donna Lailey, a grape

grower in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I'm sure that everyone has a great deal of confidence in the expertise, the leadership, that Dr. Elgie is going to show with this initiative. Unlike the Tories, who want to pave, we want to save agricultural land.

WEST NILE VIRUS

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Minister, here's a letter to you, dated May 27, 2005, from Dr. Fiona Hunter, a medical entomologist specializing in West Nile virus at Brock University. She says, "The 2005 West Nile virus mosquito program has the potential to be a disaster because of a serious potential conflict of interest. The private companies hired to test mosquitoes for West Nile viruses are strongly linked to members of mosquito-killing pesticides. Some have been listed and linked to false positive results reported. Companies that stand to gain financially from selling pesticides shouldn't be doing the testing." I agree.

Minister, why are pesticide companies hired to do the testing for West Nile? Isn't this a conflict of interest?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the question from the honourable member. I had a chance to see the media transcript from the story. This follows a practice that was in place last year. The ministry does not involve itself in organizing for these. This is done by public health units, which we fund to conduct this testing. Accordingly, they have the opportunity to contract with a variety of different suppliers of this service. In any instance where they might choose to contract with a supplier that doesn't meet the honourable member's test, I just want the honourable member to be aware that public health units, by the directives it's necessary for them to follow, must take conflict of interest into consideration. So I think there is adequate protection there for the public. We feel very secure with the choices that public health units are making in Ontario.

Ms. Churley: Your own Web site, HealthyOntario.com, cites Dr. Hunter as being on the front lines in the battle against West Nile virus in Ontario. But her letter says that she has been ignored by your ministry and by you. She has written to you eight times over the last two months and has had absolutely no response. She says that the privatization and conflicts of interest began under your watch last year.

Mosquito season is upon us. Some mosquitoes could be carrying the deadly West Nile virus again this year. Dr. Hunter wrote to you two months ago about privatization and conflicts of interest. You do have some say and control over this. You'd better have some say and control over this. It is a conflict of interest. Why have you ignored her concerns?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I don't think that's an accurate characterization. If the honourable member wishes to make that assertion, I suppose it's appropriate for her to do so; it's her choice. The reality is, as I said in my

earlier answer, this is a policy that's been in place since last year. It's a policy that is designed to have adequate protection around the idea of conflict of interest. No one has presented information with respect to the challenges associated with the way the program operated last year.

I'm very proud of the role that our public health units are playing in the front-line defences for the public around West Nile virus. We continue to support that with a very significant contribution of operating resource. As always in battles with respect to public health, we continue to rely upon those front-line health care providers, our public health units across the province of Ontario, and we invest in them a significant degree of confidence.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia–Lambton): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Our government's recent budget presented a balanced and responsible plan to return the province to fiscal health while making key investments in health and education. Eliminating the structural deficit is a responsible part of our strategy. In the three years before we took office, spending was increasing by 21% while tax revenues declined by 0.7%. We've reduced or flatlined spending to below the rate of inflation in 15 ministries.

I know the minister has been meeting with investors that buy and with the agencies that rate our bonds. Can the minister update the House about the status of our bond ratings?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I appreciate the question. I should tell you that I feel, given the time of year, a little bit like the student at the end of the school year coming home with a pretty good report card.

In fact, the Dominion Bond Rating Service actually upgraded the trend of our—

Applause.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): What did they say?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: In their report, they referred to faster progress in restoring fiscal soundness than had been originally anticipated. They also pointed to increased confidence that the fiscal recovery plan can be successfully implemented by the province. We were very, very happy indeed.

Ms. Di Cocco: Outside agencies are affirming the prudent management of our government, but other financial institutions have also commented on our approach. The Bank of Montreal has said, "The economic and fiscal projections appear to be reasonably conservative, raising the possibility that the province will better its targets." The Royal Bank noted, "To its credit, the Ontario government is taking a careful and prudent approach to a balanced budget." The TD Bank said, "The general thrust of the budget is to be commended."

This is about good management, so I ask the minister, how does our record compare to that of the former government from 1990 to 2003?

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): Great question.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: My friend from Trinity–Spadina says, “Great question,” and it is a great question.

I would just point out that we appreciate the comments of objective entities that have no particular axe to grind, but it just points out to us that we have a whole lot more work to do.

In response to my colleague’s question on how we compare to the period 1990 to 2003, I don’t think we can comment much on the NDP period in government. They weren’t prepared to form government. It was a surprise to them. They weren’t ready, and their sins should now be forgiven.

Let’s deal with the Tories for a second, though, from 1995 to 2003. It’s clear that the economic policies that dominated that era led to a \$48-billion increase in the public debt, shrinking revenues, and a deterioration of public services that is unprecedented in our history.

1520

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, I understand that you are putting the final touches on a plan that will have the National Parole Board take over the responsibilities of the Ontario Board of Parole. Why are you jeopardizing public safety for the sake of saving dollars?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): We have a responsibility, and it’s interesting to note that when the Leader of the Opposition responded in the budget debate, he was critical that we hadn’t looked at every single item in our ministries. We are looking at every single item in our ministries to see if in fact we can provide better service for the people of Ontario without in any way minimizing safety. That decision has not been made, but we are looking at everything in our ministry, because we have a very large program delivery ministry. Just so the member will know, the three largest expenditures made by program delivery are the teachers’ pension plan and OPSEU’s pension plan, correctional service and the OPP. Those are the three major program delivery parts of the government. I have an obligation, as the minister, to take a look at two of those three, to make sure that we are getting value for money and doing what is right for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Dunlop: Minister, I’ve been informed by staff within your ministry that about 50% of the offenders who go before the National Parole Board for hearings are released, whereas about 14% to 15% of offenders are released after the hearings at the provincial parole board. Clearly, they have been much more lenient at the federal level.

Minister, we have many examples of National Parole Board mistakes. We could ask the family of Christopher Stephenson, who was brutally murdered by Joseph

Fredericks, and ask the family of parole officer Louise Pargeter, who was brutally murdered by Eli Ulayuk just last fall; or how about Douglas Moore, who is the prime suspect in the deaths of René Charlebois and Robert Grewal? Minister, we have many other examples of errors and blunders by the National Parole Board. This is a very serious community safety issue.

Minister, how are you going to assure this House and the families of Ontario that your \$3-million savings won’t end up in tragic blunders by the National Parole Board?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: Again, the member is predicting that this is going to happen. That decision has not been made. But I think it’s also important that you can’t compare one with the other. The provincial correctional service houses those offenders who have been sentenced to two years less a day. There are no murderers in there; there are none of these people who are there. These are people who, on average, serve 54 days of their sentence, which means that very, very few of them even appear before parole boards. Most of them are on probation as opposed to parole. So to compare one with the other isn’t reasonable and it isn’t responsible.

I can tell you that nothing will be done in this ministry unless it protects the public safety and it makes sense from a taxpayer’s point of view.

HIGHWAY 406

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, a horrible crash last Thursday on the two-lane portion of Highway 406 down in Niagara leaves one driver still in very serious condition in a Hamilton hospital. The stats show that the accidents and fatalities on the two-lane portion are twice what they are on the four-lane portion. Do you agree that the four-laning of the 10.8-kilometre section of 406 is essential to make it safer, among other things?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I had the chance to meet the chair of the region of Niagara and also other representatives from that region. We feel that Highway 406 is an important corridor in that region and that we need to move ahead in order to protect the economic viability of that region, and we feel some improvements are needed on that highway.

Mr. Kormos: Minister, if you met with Chairman Partington, you also know that folks down in Niagara region who agree with the goal of preserving scarce and valuable agricultural land believe that the four-laning and extension of 406 is critical to move development up on to what we call the clay belt and away from tender fruit land and prime agricultural land. Do you agree that the extension and four-laning of Highway 406 is an important and effective tool in your greenbelt policy?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I already indicated that Highway 406 is an important corridor in the region of Niagara. We feel it’s important for us to protect the economic viability of that region, and we need to do something with the 406. We have already done the design work on that region,

and we hope to make some announcements in the very near future.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Graduations and the summer job season are approaching. Young workers will be starting their summer jobs, and recent graduates will be entering the workforce.

Statistics show that workers are six times more likely to be injured during their first month on the job than at any other time in their work lives. More than 49,000 young workers were injured, and some even killed, on the job last year.

There can be no doubt that this government has taken significant steps to improve the health and safety of Ontario's workers. We've hired 100 new health and safety inspectors, and we're going to be hiring 100 more.

Given the special situation of young workers and this government's clear emphasis on workers' health and safety, can you please tell me if there are initiatives that focus specifically on the health and safety of young workers?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga East for the question about young workers' health and safety. He has been a tireless advocate for safety and a tireless advocate for prevention activities in general in his many roles before the House.

He correctly outlines the challenge: Although a lot of good work has been done, 49,000 young people are still injured in workplace incidents every year. That is a horrible statistic.

This morning, I had the good fortune to be in the riding of Kitchener Centre with my colleague from Kitchener Centre, Mr. Milloy.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean—Carleton): Name him.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I just did.

We were announcing a new initiative to enforce health and safety rules. In particular, we were announcing an initiative that I'll talk about further in the supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Let's get some order on the other side.

Mr. Fonseca: Maybe the opposition doesn't care about young workers, but I do, and I know the hard-working minister does too.

Minister, I'm glad to see the focus on enforcing the health and safety of young workers. As you have indicated, on-the-job training and supervision, with a focus on health and safety, are crucial. I'm wondering if there's also an opportunity to learn about health and safety even before young people leave the classroom and start their careers, volunteer work, co-op placements or summer jobs. Can you tell us about the initiatives to educate students about the importance of health and safety before they leave school?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: When I was in Kitchener Centre with Mr. Milloy this morning talking about young workers' health and safety, we talked about two things: first of all, the extra information available to young workers—for example, through the Live Safe! Work Smart! program. It was started a few years ago. It's a program in all high school curricula in the province. Recently, we announced an improvement to that program—namely, the Live Safe! Work Smart! Special Needs Resource—which provides additional health and safety information to workers with special challenges or workers who actually learn in a different way.

At the same time, at the member's insistence, we also addressed an additional means of getting businesses to understand their responsibilities. We have enhanced enforcement. We've got five tips:

—Is your workplace ready for the workers?

—Are the workers ready?

—Is there an orientation program?

—Is there a training program?

—Are there tips for supervisors?

It was a great morning.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. As you probably know, we're entering the critical period of summer demand for energy. You should be aware that today's projected peak is in the order of 23,000-plus megawatts. At 11 o'clock we were already at 21,500 megawatts.

The issue is that this is at over 10 cents per kilowatt hour. Your reckless plan to close the five coal plants and eliminate as much as 25% of generating capacity will have a terrifying impact on the bottom line. The president of the Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Garry McDonald, has stated that the business community is concerned that electricity will drastically rise in price if coal is abandoned by 2007. Minister, can you be honest about Sarnia-Lambton, Nanticoke and the coal plants in Ontario? Is it your plan to go ahead with the closure of those plants without sufficient replacement power on-line?

1530

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Only the Tories would advocate keeping coal-fired plants open on a smog day in Ontario. My goodness.

But to address his question specifically, he referenced the high peak point price today. He probably doesn't understand how it works. The fact is that prices are down almost 19% since we took office.

The other point is that, unlike his government, this government is moving to bring on an abundance of new, clean, run-of-the-river hydroelectric opportunities not only in northern Ontario, but indeed importing electricity from northern Manitoba. In fact, we're bidding on the Lower Churchill opportunity in Newfoundland.

I urge restraint. I urge that people understand the true cost associated with coal-powered generation: more than \$4.4 billion to our health care system, to children's health. Let me be unequivocal and say without hesitation that, unlike the member opposite, this government has laid out a plan for closing down all of the coal-fired generation stations in this province. We believe it's prudent, we believe it's in the public interest, and we believe it's a cost-saving measure that will save this province tens and hundreds of millions of dollars over time.

PETITIONS

LEGAL DRINKING AGE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Wilfrid Laurier University students' union.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas most Ontario students now begin post-secondary education at 18;

“Whereas the age of majority in Ontario is 18;

“Whereas an increased drinking age leads to more underground drinking;

“Whereas an increased drinking age leads to an increase in illegal drug consumption;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to lower the legal drinking age to 18.”

HIGHWAY 406

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition 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 development-ready land in Niagara's southern tier lacks adequate transportation infrastructure to facilitate economic development; 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 the accident and fatality rate double on the two-lane stretch of the 406 highway in comparison to the four-lane segment of the 406 highway; and

“Whereas the expansion of the 406 highway will attract much-needed new investment and job opportunities for Niagara; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario will receive compensation in 2005 from the federal government in the form of a percentage of the gas tax to be applied towards transportation and infrastructure projects;

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

“That the Premier of Ontario together with the Minister of Transportation fulfill their existing commit-

ment and place the expansion of the 406 highway in the capital plan for infrastructure projects in Ontario in 2005.”

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly today regarding the Credit Valley Hospital capital improvements program. I'm doing this on behalf of a friend, Elva Waldron, who lives at Idlewilde Crescent in Mississauga. I always like to try to help those people out.

“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.”

I will affix my signature to this petition and give it to Devon to deliver to the table.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of Dani Robins, Alan Robins and Logan Robins from my constituency, along with other people.

“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” in Bowmanville; “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 provincial 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, 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.

“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 petition and give this to Alecia to bring to the table on my behalf.

FALLSVIEW CASINO

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I’m pleased to submit this petition. It’s signed by a large number of people from my riding, including Sheila Hosking, Carol Maiden and Pat Mangoff. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Falls Management Group made numerous commitments to the city of Niagara Falls when it was awarded the Fallsview Casino contract by the government of the day in 1998,

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

“Niagara Falls residents are still waiting for the on-site amenities and the off-site attractors. We believe that the government of Ontario should ensure that all promises made at the time of the awarding of the contract be fulfilled.”

I’m pleased to present this, and I have affixed my signature in support of this petition.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I’m pleased to present a petition signed by many folks in Niagara, including Nelson Gaidola from Grimsby and Sammy Halls on Fly Road. It reads as follows;

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

“Re: Support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

“Whereas,

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

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

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

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

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

In support, I affix my signature.

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SENIORS’ TRANSIT PASS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This petition regards free TTC passes for senior citizens and it reads as follows:

“To the Parliament of Ontario and” especially “minister responsible for seniors:

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

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

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

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

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

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I will therefore sign it.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): “In-Depth Investigation of the Judicial System

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Honourable Michael Bryant is minister responsible for democratic renewal;

"Whereas the Honourable Michael Bryant, Attorney General of Ontario, is elected to safeguard our justice system on behalf of the people of Ontario;

"Whereas the ministry of our Attorney General may not be aware of the serious and important issues facing individuals involved in areas of the justice system, even though the Attorney General's ministry is continually monitoring,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Honourable Michael Bryant, Attorney General, for his in-depth investigation of the Ontario judicial system and make the public aware of his findings immediately."

Signed by Albert Werry from Inniskillin.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition here signed by a number of people in Mississauga, including Ines Wiehr of Battleford Road in Meadowvale and Rena Turpin of Buttonbush Crescent in Erin Mills. It reads as follows:

"To the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"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."

I'm pleased to sign this petition, to support it and to ask Benjamin to carry it for me.

TUITION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance:

"Whereas tuition fees in Ontario are already the second-highest in the country;

"Whereas all willing and qualified students in Ontario must be guaranteed equitable access to university;

"Whereas the provincial government has a clear responsibility to provide appropriate public funding to universities as an investment in the social and economic viability of Ontario;

"Whereas the provincial government, not any individual post-secondary institution, has a social responsibility to ensure affordability by controlling costs;

"Whereas the costs of post-secondary education must be predictable to ensure that students are able to save for and afford to go to university; and

"Whereas the deregulation of tuition fees hurts Ontario students;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the accessibility and affordability of higher education for all students by regulating all tuition fees in Ontario."

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This petition is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation, and I know you're interested in finding this petition of use:

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

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

"Whereas this bridge ... will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane of traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

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

Again, I'm delighted to sign this petition.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a petition to put a tunnel under Simcoe county.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

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

I’m pleased to sign my name to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLACES TO GROW ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR

LES ZONES DE CROISSANCE

Mr. Caplan moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Caplan.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I’m indeed very pleased to speak in support of Bill 136, the proposed Places to Grow Act, having now been called for third reading debate. This legislation would allow us, for the first time in Ontario’s history, to make rational, balanced decisions about the way we grow in the future, decisions that would strengthen our economy, decisions that would support strong communities, decisions that promote a healthy and sustainable environment.

Speaker, as you and of course all members, are aware, the proposed Places to Grow Act is enabling legislation. If it does receive the approval of this Legislature, it would allow the government to designate specific geographic areas of Ontario as growth plan areas. Within those areas, we would work with local communities, with all of our stakeholders, to develop appropriate growth

plans. Those plans would then be used to focus and guide the region’s future development.

I must tell you that Ontario municipalities and our associated stakeholders right across the region and the province have been calling for provincial leadership and growth planning for a long time. In fact, many communities have already undertaken their own growth planning and growth management initiatives. While other governments were not prepared or able to respond to the call, the McGuinty government is determined to make Ontario a leader in this area.

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Ontario is expected to dramatically grow over the course of the next 25 years. Between now and 2031, our population is projected to increase by more than four million people. Whether that’s through natural migratory patterns or birth rates, most of those new people will reside in this area that we call the greater Golden Horseshoe. This part of the province is already experiencing some incredibly significant growth pressures, and we see the results of some of that. Certainly we see large urban communities and jobs created, but we also see gridlock, urban sprawl and declining air quality. To help reduce some of those pressures and to maximize the potential benefits of growth, we need to begin planning more effectively for the growth that will be taking place over the course of the next several decades.

I know that all members would be interested, because we need to stimulate even more growth in northern, eastern and southwestern Ontario. Clearly we need a more flexible and sustainable approach to managing growth that can indeed help us better meet our challenges in every part of the province in order that we have vibrant, revitalized cities and towns.

Back to the greater Golden Horseshoe: We’re taking a number of measures to manage growth. We’ve put in place—carried forward through this Legislature by my colleague Mr. John Gerretsen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs—an historic greenbelt plan that protects some 1.8 million acres of valuable farmland and green space right around the greater Golden Horseshoe from urban encroachment. With this plan, we are making it clear where we do not want urban growth to take place. The corollary is Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act, where we would be able to make it equally clear where and how we do want future growth to occur in this area of the province.

The proposed Places to Grow Act is a key piece of our strategy for managing future growth. The growth planning process proposed under this act would encourage broader, more comprehensive planning that links land use planning decisions to future infrastructure needs, and that, of course, is the key to the whole thing. It would give us a new mechanism to deal effectively with those broader planning issues that often transcend both the boundaries and the interests of municipalities. Above all, the proposed Places to Grow Act would ensure that our choices about the future are guided by a long-term vision of the kind of strong, healthy communities that Ontarians have told us they want to see.

I've said before, and I'll say again, that this is groundbreaking legislation. Nothing like this has been attempted in Ontario before. It is a radical departure from past practice. We have received widespread praise from key municipal and environmental stakeholders as well as from leading members of Ontario's business community. I want to take the opportunity to share some of those remarks and some of that praise with members of the assembly today.

Toronto Mayor David Miller wrote to us, on behalf of the council of the city of Toronto, "to reiterate Toronto's support for the development of a growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe ... and in particular, to express our support for the introduction of its enabling legislation, Bill 136."

We heard from Conservation Ontario, the organization that represents Ontario's 36 conservation authorities, who told us, "We are pleased to see such a progressive piece of legislation enabling the province to plan in a balanced manner." The proposed act was also praised by the Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society, or PALS, who wrote, "Bill 136 will represent a major milestone toward strong land use planning in Ontario."

Members of this assembly are aware that I released a draft growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe earlier this year. This would be the first area for which a growth plan would be developed under the proposed new act. The draft plan is ambitious and outlines three broad strategies. But before I get to those, I want to acknowledge here and now, as I have previously, that this growth plan was not a creation simply of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal or even a creation of the McGuinty government. Many hands have gone into it, including the former government with the leadership of former minister Chris Hodgson and the government previous to that, through some of the work done by Anne Golden; work done by foundations such as Neptis; work done by academics; and work done way back by the Toronto centre region and previous governments in helping to shape some of the ideas and concepts that are a part of this plan. This draft plan, of which I am so proud, has been the creation of so many different individuals, both within this Legislature and without. It encourages better use of our urban areas by encouraging growth to go where it can best be accommodated, keeping it away from lands that provide our food, our water and our recreation.

Second, the draft plan promotes a broader range of housing choices and employment opportunities. In fact, we also talk about the third element: It supports the maximization of infrastructure investments that support the growth plan, to provide better public transit, faster movement of goods, and clean, safe drinking water. In the greater Golden Horseshoe, this new approach will create more compact and complete communities, a different urban form, the kind of places that offer people more opportunities for work, shopping and recreation, and better access to the services that they demand close to where they live.

Perhaps just as importantly, this approach offers tremendous new economic advantages and business opportunities for Ontario. There are numerous studies that demonstrate that the kind of low-density urban development that leads to urban sprawl increases the costs of our infrastructure and thus reduces the effectiveness of our capital spending. Sprawling development forces workers to commute longer distances on our already clogged highways, which creates tremendous stress and leads to lower productivity. As well, the extra time that delivery trucks spend stuck in gridlock represents an added cost to business and thus an added cost to us all, because we are all consumers. This acts as a drag on our economy.

According to the Toronto Board of Trade, gridlock in the greater Toronto area represents a \$2-billion annual loss to the local economy. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce says that delays at our borders are costing the provincial economy some \$5 billion per year. According to the Urban Land Institute in the United States, low-density housing costs far more to service—of course, that makes intuitive sense—which means that residents in more densely populated communities end up subsidizing the additional miles of pipes and highways that would be required to support these new communities.

Poorly managed growth and urban sprawl also come at a high cost to our public health system. This year alone we have received studies from the Heart and Stroke Foundation and from the Ontario College of Family Physicians that clearly demonstrate the health advantages of compact communities. These studies tell us that people living in car-dependent communities miss out on natural opportunities for physical activity. Moreover, they are prone to health problems, such as obesity and heart disease. Our children, in particular, are at much greater risk.

We need to promote the benefits of creating more exciting, more diverse and more compact communities. For those reasons alone it's well worth doing, but taxpayers can also save money through better growth planning by redirecting money from infrastructure that supports and indeed encourages urban sprawl, toward spending on priority areas that Ontarians have told us about, that Finance Minister Sorbara outlined in the recent budget, such as hospitals, schools and colleges and universities.

To remain competitive, Ontario always has to keep an eye on the major trends south of the border and abroad. Our major competitors, the large urban zones in the United States, are way ahead of us in recognizing that growth planning creates attractive and dynamic communities that people want and will flock to.

The proposed Places to Grow Act is designed to help us achieve these goals. Based on the support that we've received from stakeholders, the design of the legislation is sound. This bill, Bill 136, was praised by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which commended the government on its plan to develop a comprehensive strategy to accommodate growth in the greater Golden Horseshoe area.

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We've also received strong support from the Greater Toronto Homebuilders' Association, who wrote to us to tell us, "We applaud the fact that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal has taken this initiative, and are committed to its success."

Last week, I had the honour to release Ontario's new five-year infrastructure investment plan, a plan that calls for more than \$30 billion in infrastructure investments by the province and its partners. This includes at least \$7.5 billion that's earmarked for the greater Golden Horseshoe, and that does not include elementary and secondary education.

But we will not succeed simply by throwing money at our major challenges; we need to plan our future. We need to plan our future growth better, and we need to spend the public's money more intelligently, to make sure that we are building the right facilities in the right places and, most importantly, at the right time.

When we invest in infrastructure, we are investing in our communities. We need to ensure that those investments are helping us to build the kind of society that Ontarians have said they want. The government's community infrastructure investments are important instruments of social change, because by building stronger communities we're able to achieve the social goals that the people of Ontario support.

Over the next few years, communities right across the province will continue to make thousands of individual decisions about land use and development and about economic development activity. Those decisions are permanent. Once the land is paved over, once the houses are built, there's no going back, and our children and our grandchildren will have to live with the consequences.

To that end, if the proposed Places to Grow Act becomes law, it will enable us to develop growth plans that represent our last—indeed, maybe even our best—chance to transform Ontario into an even better place to grow, a place that offers better choices, a place that offers a brighter future for us all. These are worthy goals. They're worthy of this Legislature and of our collective work. I'm confident that Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act, will enable us to achieve them.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to be able to rise this afternoon and to make a few comments on the leadoff hour speech by the government. I guess it was 15 minutes today. Again, it's a bill that they're bragging about, but they can only speak for 15 minutes on a bill that is apparently so important to the citizens of the province of Ontario. I find that a little disappointing that, day after day in this House, we're here to debate second and third reading, and the government refuses to debate the legislation. They just want you to rubber-stamp everything and put it through, and hopefully it will work out well. That's what they're asking the opposition members to do.

The bottom line is that we in this House are meant to debate this legislation. I thought when standing orders called for a one-hour leadoff, the least we could do is for

the government that's putting forth such an important piece of legislation to debate it for more than 15 minutes; maybe 30 minutes, 35 minutes at least.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): Oh, come on.

Mr. Dunlop: I heard somebody over there saying, "Oh, come on." You come on. The bottom line is that you've got a one-hour leadoff and—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe North, I feel left out a little bit. Direct your comments through the Chair, please.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm sorry, but, Mr. Speaker, if you don't mind, I think it is quite important. It's a one-hour leadoff on Bill 136, and the government spends 15 minutes on it. The other night on the smoking legislation, they spoke for seven minutes. I find that kind of pathetic.

I'm going to have an opportunity later on to speak on this particular piece of legislation, and a lot of our members want to speak to this bill. I know the government wants out of here badly. There's a hot spell coming up, and the minister is feeling a lot of pressure with the strike going on and all that sort of thing—not this minister; the Minister of Energy. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we're prepared to do a lot of debating in this House on all of these particular pieces of legislation that are before the House, and particularly on Bill 136.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I listened intently to what the minister had to say—or perhaps did not have to say—in that 15 minutes. But I will tell you that he did have a couple of things right, and that is the whole talk about urban sprawl and the problems associated with urban sprawl. The problem I have is with the solution. But actually, for talking about the problem, he has it right. There is a huge problem in terms of urban sprawl and what is happening to our lands. You can see it in many municipalities: Toronto—Brantford, perhaps, is one of the better examples that I've seen, where lands that were once quite productive in terms of housing, factory use or commercial or industrial are now referred to as greyfields or brownfields and in fact can't be used any more or are not being used. The whole problem that has developed in southern Ontario is that we are intent upon taking farmlands, greenfields, nice, clean spaces, and turning them into the new sprawl, rather than taking the initiative of cleaning up some of the mistakes of the past, and that needs to be addressed. I only wish this bill had done it more.

He's talking about the use of existing infrastructure. In fact, the existing infrastructure in many places will accommodate great infill, and it's not being used. I'm going to give some examples in my speech of towns around Toronto, towns that are outside of this magic new area, that are now getting into big pipes. They're now getting into sewer systems and water systems to accommodate towns of 100,000 people. They're building well in advance. I wish the minister had talked about that. He talked about the need for transit and transportation, and of course that is central if you're going to stop sprawl.

I only wish there were a little more contained in the bill. I will be talking more about that in the leadoff to come later today.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I'd like to begin by congratulating the minister on Bill 136. I have a bit of a personal connection with this bill because last July the minister came in the middle of the holiday season to my community to hold a public town hall on the discussion paper which eventually became this bill. You'd be surprised that on a beautiful July evening, when most people's thoughts should be on barbecues or their cottage by the lake, hundreds of people showed up for a public meeting. They showed up with excitement and enthusiasm because, as so many of the other speakers have pointed out, urban sprawl has become a real concern for ordinary Ontarians who wonder: Where are the limits to the growth of our cities, and where is the planning?

We no longer live in the sort of political world where we know that there's a paved road up near our cottage because 50 years ago the Premier of the day happened to live nearby, or that a certain bridge isn't in repair because an area always brought in an opposition leader. Those days are past. Ontarians realize that planning is no longer a political issue; it's an issue of survival for our province. They came out that night to say, "We need a plan which recognizes where the greenbelt should be, we need a plan which recognizes the limits of urban development, and we need a plan which interconnects them."

I want to congratulate the minister not only on 136 but on the work that he's been doing in terms of giving municipalities other tools for planning, the work that he's been doing in consultation and co-operation with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Transportation.

At the same time, a link to all of this is the infrastructure plan, which has already started to roll out \$30 billion over the next five years to start to give the type of infrastructure that's needed to have development that makes sense and development that the people certainly of my riding and, I think, the people of Ontario, are looking for.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Minister, you have two minutes to reply.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I want to thank the members from Simcoe North, Beaches–East York and Kitchener Centre.

I'll start with the member from Kitchener Centre. Indeed, 300 people on a very nice July evening—including the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, by the way—attended that meeting and had a very full dialogue about the need to get on with it after a 30-year absence, and we quite agree. There is some urgency to this. We are losing our valuable green spaces. Our air quality is declining at a terrible rate. We have not seen the level of investment. It's important that we get on with the job.

I want to thank the member and I also want to indicate that the Waterloo region, in fact, is way ahead of the province of Ontario, as are other municipalities. One of our colleagues in eastern Ontario might want to indicate that Ottawa has one of the strongest growth management plans anywhere to be found in this province. My colleague beside me here from Brantford reminds me that

the city of Brantford is well ahead of most municipalities in Canada as far as brownfields redevelopment. It's time that the province got into the game.

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To the member from Beaches–East York, I can't wait to hear your comments. I say, thank you very much.

A \$1-billion TTC investment, a \$1-billion GO investment, supporting light rail transit expansion in Waterloo region and much, much more: I couldn't do justice to all those investments in a very short time. That's why I spend a lot of time outside this chamber in the communities around Ontario, and not only talking about these issues.

To the member from Simcoe North, I can't wait to hear his comments and the comments of his colleagues. We've invited comments in committee hearings, which we had extensively in our town halls and public hearings. In fact, I was in Barrie, very close to the member's community, to talk about Places to Grow, and I can't wait to hear his contribution.

I want to thank all members for their support in advance.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): First of all, because our critic is unavailable because of other legislative commitments, I seek unanimous consent to defer the leadoff until the next time the bill is debated.

The Deputy Speaker: The member has asked for unanimous consent to step down the leadoff of the official opposition. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you're going to speak now?

Mr. Yakabuski: Yes. I'm pleased to join the debate today on Bill 136, Places to Grow. I appreciate the minister's short address. As my colleague from Simcoe North has said, they've been getting shorter on the part of this government as they reach the summer recess time. They're hoping to get out and avoid some of the controversy that might cloud the Legislature should some of these potential pitfalls entrap them with regard to the Hydro One situation and the engineers, whether there are significant problems caused because of the government's failure to deal with that situation properly. And, of course, they don't want to be around here if there are some problems with OPSEU and we have a province-wide strike. They certainly don't want to be here dealing with it. They would like to be hiding behind some oak tree somewhere, maybe up in my riding. Please come on up and visit; it's a great place. But certainly they don't want to be here in the Legislature dealing with the controversy that might surround them should those kinds of things happen.

Anyway, Bill 136, Places to Grow, is part and parcel of the government's Bill 135, the greenbelt legislation; and Bill 26. While I think everybody agrees that the previous government had done the lion's share of the work in bringing forth—

Mr. Rinaldi: But never finished.

Mr. Yakabuski: Well, elections happen, Lou, and sometimes you don't get to finish the job because the people choose otherwise.

Smart Growth was the initiative of the previous government, and it was progressing well. This builds on some of the best things from it but it leaves an awful lot of things out. Some of the problems that I have with it are the concerns that we have in rural Ontario. We know that the government is going to proceed here in the cities with intensification. You might as well put all of their plans in one word; you just say "intensification." They're just going to build up, because they don't believe they have any options if they're going to protect all of this land.

In the greenbelt legislation alone, the land protection is kind of strange in a way. As one gentleman from my riding—a farmer, Mike Donohue—remarked to me, what the greenbelt ostensibly does is protect the habitat by guaranteeing the extinction of the species. That's what he's saying with regard to agriculture in the province of Ontario, particularly the land, the protected area, under the greenbelt legislation. What this government has done is, in perpetuity, determined that that piece of land, productive or not, economically viable or not, will remain a farm or nothing else. We have farmers who are saying that under the present framework in Ontario, with the lack of support for farmers in the province by this government and this Minister of Agriculture, they can't afford to continue to operate as farmers because this government doesn't support them properly. But they're not allowed to sell their land for development or anything other than agriculture.

If you can't make a living on the farm, you sure as hell ain't going to be able to sell it to another farmer.

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton—Lawrence): That's not good language.

Mr. Yakabuski: I don't think there's anything wrong with that, member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Colle: You meant "down under."

Mr. Yakabuski: I've been there and back and I like it here better—for now.

If they can't make a living on the farm, there's no buyer there. You're saying to these farmers, "We're going to make sure that you remain poor, because we're not going to support you"—this government is not going to support farmers—"but we're not going to allow you to sell that land so that maybe you and your family can have a comfortable retirement." That's one of the problems I have and that's one of the issues that we have in rural Ontario.

Another thing we've got in rural Ontario is, the government just continues to want to dictate more and more what you're going to do with your land. I could understand that in a riding like Davenport or Trinity—Spadina or Beaches—East York or a lot of these ridings here in Toronto. Davenport, as far as I know, is the smallest riding in the province, which is about 12 square kilometres or so. My riding isn't a northern riding. Some of those northern ridings, like that of the leader of the NDP, Kenora—Rainy River—it's over 330,000 square kilometres.

Mr. Prue: It's bigger than France.

Mr. Yakabuski: It's bigger than most countries, but at the same time, much of that is desolate and nobody lives there. But in my riding, which is over 12,000 square kilometres, every area is eminently inhabitable and worthwhile for development, so the municipalities and the people in that rural riding can prosper similarly to people who live in Toronto, where the average income is over \$40,000. The average income in my riding is around \$20,000, so they make about half the income that people in Toronto make. One thing that would help them would be if they could get some more development in the area so that those incomes would go up, because more people mean more demand for goods and services and more infrastructure would be needed to be built. All of these things build the economy and, as a result, the standard of living of the people would go up as well.

In the region of Whitewater right now, which is one of the municipalities in my riding, what I hear from members of the council is that basically there is not a lot on the lakes there that they can sell or build a home on because of things that this government has done—Bill 26. How is that community, that municipality, supposed to grow, develop and become more independent?

You hear people complain, "We need these rural communities to be able to be more self-sufficient and self-supporting." How are they supposed to get there if we don't give them any of the tools? This government is not doing anything to allow people in rural Ontario to be masters of their own destiny at all, in any way, shape or form. There are more and more restrictions and impediments to development than there are encouragements or assistance.

1620

My wife is a real estate agent in Barry's Bay with Royal LePage Gale Real Estate. I'll throw that in there; she'll give me heck for that. She was just talking to me the other day about selling a little lot today. The hoops that you've got to go through to sell a lot, achieve a building permit or anything like that are absolutely unbelievable. We're not talking lots like in metro Toronto here; we're talking about an acre-and-a-half lot that might sell for \$10,000. Yet they've got to go through all of the same kinds of hoops as if they were living here downtown off the Danforth or somewhere. How are we supposed to be able to develop if you can't even sell a lot or achieve a building permit without going, as I said before, to hell and back in order to get there?

Having said that, we know that urban sprawl is an issue, and we can't continue to do it just the way we always have. But alas, I think that regardless of the best intentions of this government or any other, when push comes to shove, the needs of society will always dictate the direction of the government. Right now, they're very solid that this is going to be protected land in perpetuity and that it'll outlive me and my children and my grandchildren, if we ever have any. We don't have any yet, but if we ever do, it's all set in stone and nobody should ever concern themselves that that's going to change.

We don't like a lot of the provisions within that bill, especially with what it does to hurt farmers in the province of Ontario, but I do believe that, sometime down the road when the demands are strong enough, the government of the day will adjust any legislation for the same political reasons that this government feels this bill has to be the way they go today. That's just the reality; that's how things change.

It used to be that a farmer here in Ontario could sever off a lot on his farm for personal use—to build a home for retirement purposes or whatever—and then sell the rest of the farm. You can't do that now under this bill. It is all restricted because of this government's actions. You can't even sever off a couple of acres on the farm now for yourself; you can't do it. That is another disappointing effect of this government's legislation on people in rural Ontario. It's the whole pervasive attitude of this government that they are going to control everything.

Mr. Speaker, I can see you feel it's very warm in the chair here today, and it is warm. However, in keeping with Ms. Smith's bill of last year, I'm keeping my tie on, because I feel sometimes that a little bit of suffering is good for the soul. But I wouldn't mind another glass of water, whenever one of the pages has an opportunity.

Mr. Prue: I'll have one too.

Mr. Yakubski: And bring a couple for my friend from Beaches–East York as well.

Where was I? Yes, that agriculture severance is not available any more, and that is very disappointing.

Maybe I'll look at some of these notes here. One thing I did want to talk about—the writing's too small on those anyway. I received a copy of a report called *The Rural Ontario Challenge*. I'll be forwarding this to every member of the assembly, and I hope they take a good look at it. It's a group of organizations in Renfrew county. I'll run them down for you, because I think it would be very important for you to know that: Renfrew County Private Landowners Association; Small Sawmill Owners' Association; Water Watch Association; Renfrew County National Farmers Union; Renfrew County Federation of Agriculture; Rural Research Institution; Wood Producers Association of Ontario; and, acting as their adviser and counsel, Delbert O'Brien.

That's a fairly eclectic group. You wouldn't necessarily see all of these people working together on a particular report. But when it comes to the challenge of rural Ontario—and that is in fact not quite the title; it's *The Rural Ontario Challenge*. But when it comes to the challenge facing rural Ontario, and one that has been exacerbated so greatly by this government and its indifference to rural Ontario—thank you very much, Luke. Just put that one there and give two to my colleague there from Beaches–East York.

As I said, you wouldn't necessarily expect to see all of these groups breaking bread at the same table, but they have united with regard to the challenge facing rural Ontario, in particular in my county of Renfrew, as part of my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I'll read you a couple of excerpts from it. I think it's very important. I'm going to read the introduction, if I may, because all of this information is pertinent to the kind of bills that this government continues to bring forward and the impact that it continues to have on rural Ontario. It's *The Rural Ontario Challenge*, prepared by the Renfrew County Coordinating Committee for Rural Action. The introduction reads:

“This is the tragic record of the misguided assault being conducted by the government of Ontario against the wealth, livelihood and values of rural Ontario residents.

“The government's policy ensures the continuous depopulation of rural Ontario.”

How are we going to become self-sufficient if governments continue to work to depopulate us? You do need people in order to develop and you do need people in order to generate that wealth and prosperity. This government doesn't seem to recognize it, but this group certainly does. They recognize what the government is not doing, so they're taking action, and I commend them for it.

“The recent report released by the Premier's office entitled ‘Small, Rural and Remote Communities: The Anatomy of Risk’ perhaps discloses the government's agenda when it states,

“Virtually all rural areas of the province are in relative, if not absolute, population decline.”

“It further recites, ‘At the same time, hard choices have to be made. The provincial government cannot provide subsidies to everyone everywhere in the province. Nor can all small communities survive and provide a reasonable minimum level of services and jobs within a climate of population and economic decline.’”

That's part of the introduction.

I want to talk a little bit about the differences. Last Thursday—and I hope that members of the government will support me in this—I introduced a private member's bill that would compel the government to negotiate agreements on a per capita basis to share the gas tax with all municipalities in Ontario, not simply those that have a rapid or public transit system. I think that is so important to our growth. It's about fairness, too, because in rural Ontario, we pay a far greater per capita share of that said gasoline tax than they do in urban Ontario.

I can't go out for so much as a quart of milk in Barry's Bay without getting into a vehicle, unless I've got an excessive amount of time to spend walking to get a quart of milk. If I want to go to the doctor or if I want to go to Pembroke, which would be the biggest centre in my riding, it is 80 kilometres. To go to Renfrew, which is the second-largest, it is 100 kilometres to drive there for some goods and services that may not be readily available in little Barry's Bay.

1630

The rural people pay that tax on a far greater percentage basis than people living in metro Toronto, yet this government has decided that they will not share in it, even though my understanding of the federal gasoline tax

rebate is that they will share that with all communities. This government, in a part of what I consider its assault on rural Ontario, will not share that gas tax with people living in rural Ontario. Those communities are told, "You're on your own. We can't help you." That's not right, it's not fair and we can't simply sit back here and take it. So I'm hoping that a lot of the members on the government side will assert their independence and stand for rural Ontario.

Now, I know that the member for Huron-Bruce has a private motion this week, that we recognize the value of rural Ontario. Well, that's not good enough. You're going to have to pony up with a little cabbage here, boys. They need help in rural Ontario. This government doesn't recognize it; in fact, it ignores it.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr. Prue: It is always a pleasure to comment on my good friend here from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): He brought you water.

Mr. Prue: He brought me water, yes, and he is a very kind man to understand that I, too, could be thirsty.

I listened with great interest to what he has to talk about, because his reality in his riding and my reality are very much removed. If his riding is some 12,000 square kilometres, I believe that mine is—I've never measured it, but it most certainly is under 20. In fact I can ride, if I'm in a car and if it's not too busy with traffic, from my end of the riding, where I live in the northwest quadrant, down to the southeast quadrant at the Beach in probably eight or 10 minutes, unless the traffic's bad. I will tell you that there is a very different reality from what he sees, or what he is trying to protect in his neighbourhoods, to what I am.

To my view, sprawl is a contagion. Sprawl is a problem that is happening and that should not be happening to the areas around the mature, built-up commercial, industrial and residential areas of a large city like Toronto. I only have to travel a few miles or a few kilometres outside the city, in land that was once pristine farmland. I challenge anyone who knows the city of Toronto to go up Dufferin Street north of 401. If you went up that street, I would think even five or six or seven years ago, there was nothing but beautiful farms, the odd golf course, for as far as you could drive, way past Highway 7, way up even well beyond that. Today, there is subdivision after subdivision after subdivision. It is really quite remarkable to see how fast it is growing. It isn't the only area of the province. We need, as a government, to try to rein some of that in if we are to protect our farmland and all of that greenbelt and all of the area around it.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I wished the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke had spoken to Bill 136 and some of the provisions contained within it. He did not, but that's OK. Members, of course, are free to talk about what they wish in this chamber. I know that the member from Beaches-East York will spend some time talking about the bill.

The bill is a legal framework. It allows the government to designate growth plan areas. There are some

people here in the Legislature today who had an awful lot to do with helping to put this together, certainly at the ministry level. I did want to take the opportunity to both recognize and to thank them, and the many others represented—my deputy minister, Geoff Hare, is here with us today, as is assistant deputy minister Brad Graham. Without their invaluable assistance it would not have been possible to put this legislation together, to put in the thought, the incredibly complex work as far as developing a greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan. I very much wanted to put on the record the kind of work that these individuals have done. My former assistant, Leslie Woo—there are so many people, I could spend more than the minute and a half allotted.

I hope the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will want to talk about the preservation of agricultural land and rural communities, keeping those communities and the types of investments we have made through things like the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund. I don't have the exact figures in front of me here today, but I know there was a significant amount of money invested in his riding. I know that, as a fair-minded member, the member opposite would want to indicate how well received that has been by the municipalities and the rural communities that he spoke quite passionately about.

This government is committed to all Ontarians, be they north, south, east, west. This is a government for all of Ontario.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the comments made by my colleague the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I think it's always nice to put on the record that although there was basically a sweep in the power of government in the last election, this member was our only new member elected, and that's not because of—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Laurie Scott.

Mr. Dunlop: Our only new member-held riding, OK?

Don't worry. We'll have Haliburton-Victoria-Brock forever after you guys are done with it. You don't have to worry about ever being up there and running a candidate. The same as in Simcoe county, I think you're pretty well history up there.

This new member has done a phenomenal job. I've been in his riding with him a couple of times and have witnessed his concern for all the different communities, and particularly Barry's Bay, his home community. The respect this man has within the community is unbelievable. I think a lot of it comes from recognition of his father, who was a member here for a number of years, but John has quickly established himself as a great representative for those folks. I think you heard in his comments today how well he spoke about his passion for rural Ontario.

I think sometimes the government of the day forgets to look at a map. When you look at that map, you see that most of the province is rural. Something I'm seeing more in my riding is that there's a lack of concern. With the leapfrogging effect we're seeing with the potential green-

belt legislation and how we're going to develop in Simcoe county—we haven't seen any funds come with that in all the different ministries and we're quite disappointed in that, and so are all the mayors, deputy mayors and councils. So we've got a long way to go.

I know the minister is wanting to hear my speech a little later on. I'll be addressing all the concerns that I have not been able to in comments and questions.

Mr. Colle: I just want to make sure the people of Ontario realize that we're losing hundreds of thousands of acres of some of the best farmland in North America as a result of developers—and you can't blame the developers; they want to make a fast dollar. But this bill and our greenbelt plan are about our children's children. We can't always expect that all of our farm products are going to come from Mexico or other countries. We want to be able to have locally grown tomatoes, like you have in Leamington, for our children's children.

If we don't put in any rules and if we don't direct development on to brownfield sites, etc., we're not going to have any farmland left in this province. That's why the majority of Ontarians support the greenbelt legislation, which protects 1.8 million acres of land. They support this bill, which designates where the growth should go, because we don't want growth to go on flat, fertile farmland. That's what developers are doing because they went unchecked by the last government. If we were to continue with that kind of unbridled development, we wouldn't have any farmland left for our children's children.

This is a brave and very sensible way of not only protecting farmland but also ensuring that sprawl is curtailed. Sprawl costs this economy billions of dollars, because you always have to replicate more hospitals, more schools, more roads. The developers develop the farmland and they're gone. Goodbye, Charlie. They don't care about the fact that governments have to put in all these schools, hospitals and roads.

What we're saying is, let the people decide where the growth is going to be and let's not let the developers dictate where they want—as you know, developers always want farmland. They don't want to go into brownfields. We're saying, "Go to the brownfield sites." We've got thousands of acres of brownfield sites ready for development all over this province—in Brantford, down on the lakeshore in Toronto. Let's get them off the farmland and get them on the brownfield sites.

1640

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. Yakabuski: I thank the member from Beaches–East York, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, and the members for Simcoe North and Eglinton–Lawrence for their comments, some of which had little to do with what I said but, then again, sometimes I make speeches that have little to do with what somebody else says.

The member for Beaches–East York did recognize—and I think that is an important step—that there is a

significant difference in a riding such as his here in Toronto and a riding such as mine in central eastern Ontario. That is, part and parcel, one of the important distinctions, and it's important that that recognition is taken into consideration when decisions are made in this Legislature, because the member realizes that the one-size-fits-all approach simply doesn't work.

Unfortunately, we see policy developed in Toronto by Torontocentric thinkers who believe that they have the master plan for the world, so Ontario is pretty easy, then. Rural Ontario gets kind of swept up in that maelstrom there, and all of a sudden it's not working in rural Ontario. "My goodness, it was so well-designed," they think. But they never really have been to rural Ontario, they never really have been around to understand how rural Ontario works, how rural Ontario thinks, the needs of rural Ontario—only how they see rural Ontario. That's something that we all could learn more of.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: I have the leadoff today. I did not have it before. That went to my colleague Marilyn Churley, the member from Toronto–Danforth. But I'm very interested in this bill, and I asked if I could do the leadoff here today. So you're going to get a bit of a different perspective than you will from Ms. Churley, who is the NDP's critic on environmental issues. I come at it more as a person who is interested in municipal government, a person who has lived his entire life in this very large city, save and except for one kind of interesting year that I spent in Ottawa as a graduate student. But this is the place that I call home, and I see much of the perspective in very urban terms.

I just want to talk about the whole problem of urban sprawl. I've dealt with that a little bit in some of the two-minute hits. The problem of urban sprawl—I saw it as a boy growing up in Ontario—is that the sprawl appears to be never-ending. I remember a long time ago when my uncle, who was then a police officer, came in to see my mother and announced that he had bought a home and that he was moving out of the downtown core, where he and my mother had grown up. She was all excited for him and wanted to know where the home was, and he announced that it was near Midland and Lawrence. My mother started to cry—I still remember this as a boy—because he was going so far away that she might never see him again because of the commuting distance, the difficulty in getting there. Because there was no public transit, he would have to come down by car or we would have to go up by car. In those days, of course, not everybody had a car. It was very difficult to believe that he was moving so far away.

I remember as a boy going out to that place around Midland and Lawrence—it was all farm fields—and wandering in some awe, growing up as a boy in Regent Park downtown, to see all of the things that were growing in the fields, the raspberry canes and fruit and all of that stuff that was growing, and a little stream where my cousin and I went fishing and caught some chub. It was all there. That was only 40 years ago—45 or 50 years

ago. I shouldn't be lying about my age. That was the reality of what existed there at that time.

If you go there today, you will see that's very much the heart of Scarborough. It has been eclipsed over the years as development went further and further north and east. In fact, now you can say with some justification that the greater Toronto area quite rightly spans the entire distance from Oshawa right through to Hamilton, and then around the Golden Horseshoe as well. If you drive the streets, you will see that if you go along the 401 or any of the major highways, it is very difficult to tell where one community ends and another begins. That was not always the way.

The problem of urban sprawl should not need to be explained to the members of this House. We know that there are problems with many of the brownfield sites and with some of the other greyfield sites. We know that developers seek out land that was once farmland, that was once pristine, that had forests on it, in order to raze it all and to build housing that sprawls and seems to be never-ending.

We know that there is a problem in many of the municipalities: that they are quite literally hooked on this development because of the fees that it brings in. If you wonder why Mississauga has been so spectacularly successful over all of these years and why Brampton is now, it's because of the development fees associated with the building of new houses. But we know that at some point this has to end. Even Hazel McCallion, that venerable and wonderful mayor of Mississauga, is admitting, now that the greenfield sites have been exhausted, that some of the decisions that were made in her municipality were in error, that she ought not to have done what she did, because it has been developed in a way that is not cost-effective, that in fact she should have built up a lot more than she built out, and that Mississauga, no longer having those sources of revenue, for the first time in its history has had to raise taxes for the last two years, and probably will have to raise taxes each and every year well into the future.

We also know that when these places were developed, people relied upon the automobile. I remember some people I knew, when I worked in the immigration department all those many years ago, who bought homes in Barrie and commuted from Barrie to Toronto International Airport, as it was then called. I couldn't imagine someone commuting all that distance to come to work each and every day, but they did so because the houses in those locations were cheap, the gas was cheap and you could buy an inexpensive car and make do. People were choosing to live in far, far distant communities, with transportation that literally took hours.

We also know that this province has an obligation to protect farmlands. There was a luncheon this afternoon which, unfortunately, I could not attend, because I was having luncheon with two of the pages. It was an absolutely spectacular lunch, I hope. They were really quite entertaining. Speaking to young people about their goals and aspirations is something that I think all of us in this

House should do more often, because I think they see these problems.

We need to protect the farmlands, but we have not done a good enough job, in my view. There was a luncheon put on this afternoon which, as I said, I could not attend, by people who are in the greenhouse business in Ontario: Ontario farmers. We need to respect what they do, because a good deal of the food that we have available in this province comes from them.

We also need, I think, spectacularly to look at the whole problem of what sprawl has engendered in our society. There was an excellent little article—I don't want to read it all—put out by the Ontario College of Family Physicians, dealing with sprawl and their take on what happens when you allow never-ending buildings to go on and on in areas that were once pristine farmland, and what happens to the people who live in this new sprawl. They have six points. I think people would be surprised at what happens.

1650

Number one, "Urban sprawl leads to increased motor vehicle use not only because of greater distances, but also because it makes adequate public transit services less financially feasible." We can see what has happened in the greater Toronto area, where all of the transit, or virtually all of the transit—90% of it that exists in this greater Toronto area—exists within the new megacity of Toronto. Only 10% is found in Durham or in Halton or in Peel or in York. That's what's there. It's 10%, because people who live that far out cannot rely on the transit service. It's not cost-effective and it has never been developed. Even if it's late in coming, I welcome it now, but the sprawl that has taken place is not intense enough to make it cost-viable.

The second point they're trying to make is that "Greater dependence on personal vehicle use leads to an increase in air pollution." I think that goes without saying. The average is 1.2 persons per car that you will see on the roads in the greater Toronto area. That's what's happening. People out there are driving cars all over because there is not an alternative available to them. That is why we have days like this, smog days. That's why people are having problems breathing, which takes me to the next one.

"Air pollution has also been linked to reproductive health problems and rare cancers," such as childhood leukemia. We know that the incidence of those is increasing exponentially. As years and years go on, more and more people are developing these forms of cancer.

The Ontario College of Family Physicians goes on to say that "Compared with people in more efficient and higher-density communities, people in car-dependent communities walk less, weigh more and are more likely to suffer from obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes and cardiovascular problems." I think that may be a surprise. You often think of people in suburban areas as being more healthy than their city counterparts. You often think of people in rural areas as having cleaner air and a better lifestyle. But the reality is exactly the opposite, because

urban people live in close proximity and can walk to the corner store rather than driving to the neighbourhood mall that may be miles and miles away. Because they can walk to their doctor or to their entertainment or to the local pub or to wherever else they're going, they tend to do so far more. They tend to be healthier, they tend to live an urban lifestyle which eschews tobacco, and, quite frankly, people get a lot more exercise. If you were to do statistics, and people have done them, you will find that children who live in places like Toronto or Hamilton or Ottawa are far healthier than their counterparts in many rural communities, and particularly are far healthier than many of their counterparts in suburban areas, where the children, if they are to participate in sports at all, have to be driven 10 to 15 miles to the local hockey arena or to a tap dance class or anything else in which they might participate. They even, in the majority of cases, have to be bused or driven to the schools. Very few of them have the opportunity to walk to them.

You also see here that they are saying, "Longer commuting distances lead to increases in traffic fatalities," and I think that needs no explanation. Directly proportional to the number of miles that are driven is the possibility that one might be involved in traffic accidents. In fact, most of the horrific traffic accidents that take place tend to take place in rural communities. Certainly as a percentage of the drivers, you will find that that happens, because the distances are long, people are tired, the roads are not in the same repair and, quite frankly, it just seems to happen as you spread people out. As you make them drive more and more, you have to know that the risk of such people dying in traffic accidents goes up.

Last but not least, they say that "People in sprawling communities are more likely to suffer from mental health problems due to long commutes, isolation and loss of social capital than people in better-planned communities." I had never really thought of this one, but I guess sitting in a traffic jam on the 400 highway going home at the end of a busy day could cause some people a great deal of tension, knowing that you cannot walk to work, knowing that it takes hours, knowing that you are isolated and alone in your car with nothing more than a radio or perhaps a cellphone, although I think my colleague from Durham would certainly want to dissuade that.

That's the reality for many, many people: Their workday is not an eight-hour workday, to which many of us aspire. Certainly I have not seen, in my political lifetime, an eight-hour workday. I don't know what that is. Their workday is not eight hours, because their workday is sometimes an hour, an hour and a half or even two hours, getting in a car and coming to their place of work, and then an hour, an hour and a half or two hours to drive home at the end of the night. If it's raining, if it's snowing, if the traffic is bad, it can be even much more. They become isolated from themselves, from their family, from their fellows. That's just what sprawl does.

Now I've talked enough about sprawl. I want to make sure that people understand that in no way can anyone

possibly think that it's a good thing. Those old ideas about having a four-bedroom, split-level bungalow in the suburbs as being the ideal are quite frankly not the ideal. The ideal is for people to be plugged into their communities. The ideal is for them to be able to walk to work. The ideal is for them to be able to have all of the amenities in close proximity so that they don't require a car, they don't require the commute and they have, in effect, a better term and lifestyle.

What are the problems? I have spoken enough about sprawl, but I needed to put it on the record because I keep hearing people say that they don't think it's a problem, and in fact it is.

We look forward to this bill. We thought it was a much-heralded bill. We were hoping that it would stop sprawl as we know it, particularly in the Golden Horseshoe area. I have to tell you that although I look forward to the bill, I do find the bill to be rather timid. I find it to be timid.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Oh, Michael.

Mr. Prue: The Minister of Finance is quite shocked that I find this to be a timid bill. I find it to be timid for several reasons that, I think, could have been fixed, but it was chosen not to fix it.

First is the public notification. The public notification of the growth plans should have been mandatory, but they are discretionary under the bill and under the act as has been put forward. I know my colleague from Toronto-Danforth tried to change that and tried to make it mandatory so that if there are growth plans, the developers and municipal councils can't hide behind what is being negotiated in the backrooms; they have to come right out and put their plan in front of the government and for all the world to see for at least 60 days prior to their actually proceeding so that people have a good idea of what's happening and they can't be blindsided. That, of course, was voted down in committee.

If the plan is such a good plan and what you are trying to do is such a good thing—and I was hoping that it was—then you should be prepared to shout it from the rooftops; you should be prepared to say, "This is a plan we have. These are the improvements we're going to make. Here it is. Come look. Let's do it." But, in fact, it is going to be discretionary, it is going to be hidden away somewhat. I think that is not really a very good thing.

Within the body of the legislation, I tried to look for strong words, but I found timid words. There are really no provisions for making this stronger. What I saw are words like "provincial works" or "undertakings"—i.e. highways. There are no provisions in there to bring these to the fore. Highways, provincial plans can have a huge impact on where we are going with this sprawl. That is really quite exempt from this bill, and I have some difficulties with that.

I went on to read about the draft growth plans. The first thing that caused me to use the word "timid" in my own head was the fact that this growth plan sets a 40% target. This is really quite uninspiring. I know that our

good friends the civil servants would have wanted to be much stronger than that, but here we have a 40% target.

You only have to look at what other leading jurisdictions are doing to know that Ontario's plan is not up to snuff. The minister had the courage, earlier in his own statement, to say that we are falling and have fallen far behind other jurisdictions, but this bill leaves us far behind those same jurisdictions.

1700

Look at Great Britain. Great Britain has a targeted growth set at 60% for the year 2006. They have to meet 60% by next year. We have 40% for an unspecified period way down the road. Look at Vancouver. Vancouver set theirs at 70% by the year 2021. We have 40% in an unspecified period. Look at a place like the city of Toronto. The city of Toronto mandates a 100% target, and has been able to accomplish much of the growth within that city and within that region at a 100% target, yet we can do no more than 40% in this bill.

I have to ask, why are we there? Why are we so timid? Why can't we be strong? Why can't we be like Great Britain? Why can't we be like Vancouver? If we can't get all the way to 100% in Toronto, which is a major portion of the horseshoe area, then I'm wondering, quite frankly, why this target has been set so low. I know my colleague the member from Toronto–Danforth tried to raise this to 60% so that we could be, in the future, somewhere where Great Britain is today. Again, that unfortunately was voted down in committee.

There was a man who came before the committee and I'd like to quote him. His name is Paul Bedford. Paul Bedford is one of the smartest planners that I have ever in my life had the privilege of working with, and I've had the privilege of working with many of them. I'm just trying to find his quote, because Mr. Bedford speaks with great authority on this. He was the lead architect, if I can use that word, of the city of Toronto's official plan. He steered that city through its new official plan following amalgamation, and he is a man of some considerable insight. He said the following to the committee and I quote him in its context:

"I believe it is important to increase the minimum intensification target to at least 50% if a positive impact is to be realized. By way of example, the city of Toronto has a 100% target. This has not affected growth, with council approving 25,000 units of new housing in 2004 and approximately 140,000 units of new housing in the development approval pipeline."

Mr. Bedford knows how to do it, in my respectful statement here today. I think Mr. Bedford has it right, that we need to set a doable target but we need to set the target with the idea that intensification will be the norm, not that intensification will take place from here or there and that it may be weak and that it may only approach, at some point if you're lucky, 40%. We know that intensification in the greater Horseshoe area is at present somewhere around 15% or 20%, but think how much better it would be if it was at 60%. Think of how many farms would be saved. Think of how many lives would

be saved. Think about how much better our health would be and how much better our transit and transportation systems would be able to operate.

This bill also failed because it does not include highway corridors or extensions. We know from some of the discussions that went on around this bill that there are a couple of highway corridors and extensions that will cause a great deal of difficulty in terms of urban sprawl if allowed to go ahead, and we believe that they are. The first is the Highway 404 extension which goes up to Lake Simcoe through the Queenston area. All the way to Lake Simcoe there is going to be this large highway extension. This was talked about in committee but seems to be pooh-poohed. If that is built—it's like the old baseball adage, "If you build it, they will come." If you build this highway extension, then you are going to open up the entire Queenston area to development and housing, and that is not really what I think this government has in mind when you put in all of the good words about green-fields.

There's also an extension of Highway 427 to the southern border being planned, and that will impact on some of the tender fruit lands and the farming country south and west of Toronto. I wonder why it's in there. I absolutely wonder why there is nothing in there that would connect these areas, if they were to be built, with either rail or transit.

There's also nothing in there about the economic corridors. There are three of them that the government is planning, and these too are going to impact what is built or what happens. The first one is the mid-peninsula corridor, the second one is the 407 east and the last one is the GTA west, linking Brampton to Guelph. All of these corridors are going to have a major impact on what happens, and yet there's nothing in the bill that is going to forbid this or even to allow it to be included in the planning process. As I said, this is a timid and a weak approach.

The issue of settlement: There's nothing in here about the area boundary extensions. There are no clear tests for those extensions in the short term other than that the bill, in its very weakness, defines that in the short term they're going to have "sub-area plans"—I don't know what a sub-area plan is—and they're also going to have factors to be considered, which to date are unspecified.

I know what is happening around the province, because one only has to get outside of the major media to read what is happening in little towns and how they are trying to get ahead of this legislation. They are trying desperately to do what they think is best in their own development, something which I know that this bill won't stop. One only has to read the Bradford West Gwillimbury Times to see what this is all about. I'm going to quote in part from a story contained in there entitled "Geranium/Metrus Offer to Pay for Oversizing of Sewage Plant," dated April 9, 2005. By way of explanation, in the third and fourth paragraphs, it says:

"Expanding the design of the treatment plant but not the rated capacity would create the potential to provide

sewer servicing at some point in the future for the 500-acre special policy area at Highways 400 and 88 and the entire Bond Head settlement area, both of which are already recognized in the town's official plan.

"The town has expressed interest in developing employment lands in the Highway 400 corridor."

But you skip over to near the end of the article, when the politicians start talking about what this really means, and you think, why would private developers want to build a bigger sewage treatment plant for no cost to the municipality? Why? Just stop and think why a private developer would want to spend all his money so that you could have in your municipality a bigger sewage treatment plant.

It came right down to it: "It's not a pipe dream out there," said Mayor Frank Jonkman, noting that there has already been interest expressed in constructing over 500,000 square feet of C/I development at Highway 400, if the town can guarantee water and sewer services.

"Councillor Duncan Page," it goes on in the article to state, "was skeptical. He questioned why Geranium/Metrus would consider paying the cost of a sewer force main to Bond Head, when the maximum potential population of the hamlet is only 3,000 people—and why they would extend servicing to Highway 400, when they own no lands within the area.

"Doesn't this look like a foot in the door?" he demanded. The developers have proposed a planned community of over 60,000 people between Bradford and Bond Head."

The last paragraph was the most disappointing of all in this article: "Committee of the whole recommended that council enter into an agreement to oversize the treatment plan."

That's what is happening out there. This government brought in legislation around the Oak Ridges moraine. It wasn't strong enough, but what happened is that the developers are smart. The developers are rapacious to the core. They are going beyond the area of the moraine, and they are starting to make deals with small towns like Bradford, East Gwillimbury and West Gwillimbury, towns that are in desperate need of servicing and infrastructure, and they are offering to build, gratis, large treatment plants which are well beyond the capacity of the town to use. There is nothing in this bill that forbids this.

1710

I want a bill that is far less timid. I want to make sure that this can't happen. I want to make sure that developers can't take the money and build these facilities. Again, going back to the baseball story, you build it and they will come. They're smart; they know what to do. They know if it's built and the capacity is there, it's only going to take a little while until the capacity is built out.

I looked at this bill again for all of the things that are or are not in it. There's nothing very much in this bill about affordable housing. I wish there was more. There are no mandated targets, for instance, about affordable housing. We don't know if this is going to be done, if

infill is going to take place. We don't know whether or not people are going to be able to afford to live there. You know that is why developers have gone out and out, further and further away from downtown cores to build housing, because the land is cheaper, and people who want to own a home or own some property or live in a nice place are forced to go out there. They're forced into the long commute; they're forced into all of the problems associated with it. Really, some kind of vision is going to be necessary. If we are going to develop and intensify in the downtown cores and the brownfield sites and the greyfield sites, there has to be a commitment to affordable housing. Unfortunately, I do not see it in this bill. It's not set at 1%, it's not set at 5%, it's not set at 10% and it certainly is not set at 25%, which was the provincial target for many, many years. It's just not there. But it does require that the municipalities try to produce some of this. Then again, saying that the municipalities should help to produce it or should have it in their official plan does not accomplish it if, in fact, there is no money for the municipalities to undertake it.

I looked and I watched with some interest when, it must be about a month ago now, I was in the same tent in Beaches—East York with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Some people from Ottawa were there, the mayor was there, the local councillor was there. We were all there to welcome the building of affordable housing in Ontario. We had great plans and great hopes, and I still do. I could tell that the minister wishes he could do a lot more. Unfortunately, when I had to look at reality and the budget that was passed down a couple weeks ago, the gleam that was in his eye must have dulled somewhat, because the \$300-million plan got a short shrift; but \$31 million was put toward that plan. I don't know where the municipalities are going to find the money, if the province cannot. I don't know how the affordable housing is going to be built.

In terms of transit, of course we welcome every penny that is put into transit. In our party we believe that transit is the way of the future, and where transit is not used, we believe that trains are a viable and better option than highways. Things can be moved much cheaper, things can be moved much more efficiently and things can be moved in greater safety by utilizing trains. The same can be said for moving people with transit. I don't see the commitment in this bill, although I don't expect this bill to contain everything on transit.

There is the whole problem of infrastructure. The municipalities are in desperate need of infrastructure money. It's been promised. I hope the federal budget survives. I know that today in the House a member of the government crossed the floor to become an independent. I don't know how strong or how long this Parliament is going to last, because the inherent weaknesses appear to be springing up all over the place. It is difficult.

I have to say that the problem of urban sprawl speaks for itself. We have tried, in our party, to highlight the difficulties. We appreciate that the government is trying to bring forward a bill, but we just wish it wasn't so

timid. We wish it had the force to do something. As my colleague from Toronto–Danforth said in a press release about the problem around Lake Simcoe—she said it quite succinctly, and I’d like to quote her. This is dated April 28, 2005, and it’s entitled “South Simcoe Becomes Wild West of Land Development.” She said, “Bond Head is now the target of planned leapfrog development and urban sprawl. The Bond Head situation reveals what we’ve maintained from the outset—the greenbelt will not stop urban sprawl.... Because the Liberals failed to include south Simcoe lands in the greenbelt, developers are now finding new and creative ways to bypass it, including donating infrastructure money with no strings attached to a target municipality. This scenario will become common around the greenbelt boundaries.”

This is what we’re afraid of. This is why we think this bill should have been strengthened. This is why I’m standing here making a speech now instead of giving unanimous consent to have it passed. We want a stronger bill. Unlike my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who is opposing the bill because he thinks it’s going too far, we don’t think it goes far enough.

Mr. Rinaldi: That’s why we’re right.

Mr. Prue: Well, no. See, this is the Liberal answer to everything. Because the Conservatives think it goes too far and the NDP doesn’t think it goes far enough, they think they must have it right. Well, I would say it shows that you really haven’t thought it through, if you think playing the middle of the road on every issue is having it right. Quite frankly, playing the middle of the road on every issue is generally getting it wrong, because you’re not taking the kinds of positions that you need to take.

Here is proof positive that you’re not taking the positions that need to be taken to stop urban sprawl and to do what is necessary to protect the farmlands in the greater Golden Horseshoe area, to protect the population who are forced to commute long distances, to protect the health and safety of our citizens. This is what needed to be done, and quite frankly I think this bill has failed. If your whole goal is to run a middle ground somewhere between what the Conservatives say and what the New Democrats say on every issue, then I will guarantee you that that is a testament to the failure that inevitably will happen. You have to be strong in your commitment. If your commitment is to stop the sprawl, then this bill should have been stronger.

I don’t want to repeat myself at all, so I’m going to stop in about one minute and let the debate go on. But I want the members to think long and hard about what you’re doing. If you really believe some of the statements that you have said, if you really believe that urban sprawl is to be contained, then this bill needs to be improved. It should have been improved at committee; it was not. If you are going to use your majority to put it through, as I’m sure you will, then at least have the good sense to review it almost immediately, because you cannot allow the conditions that exist in Bond Head or in Bradford and you cannot allow the conditions that seem to be manifesting themselves in Pickering or in Durham to manifest

themselves and to allow the sprawl, with municipal councils seeking ways of making extra money. If the goal is to protect and to stop the sprawl, then the legislation has to be strong enough to contain that. It isn’t now. It needs to be in the future.

If the situations that I experienced as a boy going up to Midland and Lawrence and seeing beautiful farmlands that eventually became paved over with tract after tract of housing aren’t to happen everywhere else in this verdant province, then other solutions need to be found, the money needs to be found, and, most importantly, you need to find your will.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to make some comments to my friend from Beaches–East York about Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act.

It’s somewhat confusing that we hear that the bill is not strong enough. For years, the province was out of the planning process. I can tell you that as I travelled with the minister and some staff last year to communities across Ontario, both urban and rural, we kept on hearing the same thing over and over again: The province needs to get back into the larger planning issues, and municipalities need our help. So it’s the first time in God knows how many years that the province is getting back into overall planning, to coordinate planning across the province, and also to allow for some tools for those municipalities to make things happen in a coordinated effort.

1720

Last Friday, I had the opportunity to address a joint summit on brownfields redevelopment between Canada and the US, mostly Ontario, Michigan and New York state. I talked about Places to Grow and how it impacted brownfields. Some of the delegates I had the opportunity to speak to one on one after my presentation welcomed the Ontario initiative to help them rehabilitate brownfields, to give them some of those tools.

I know the municipality in my community and other communities I spoke to welcome this legislation. Does it go far enough? Well, it’s certainly a great starting place. The beauty of this legislation is that it allows the minister to come up with different plans across different sectors of the province. We know how diversified Ontario is. What works in the greater Golden Horseshoe does not work in northern Ontario.

I look forward to getting this legislation passed so that we can get on with the process of planning for the future of Ontario.

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): It’s a pleasure to respond to the member from Beaches–East York. He will go down in history as the last mayor of East York. I know he clings to that title with tenacious effort.

But his comments are relevant. Having grown up in Toronto and having served in many capacities, his comments here are very worthwhile and notable. You can count on the NDP at least to be consistent, and their consistency is that everyone should live in urban areas and you should have the rest of Ontario to park your bike or your four-wheel drive and go for a hike.

Respectfully, his comments today were rather consistent over time. If you look back to the Sewell commission when they started to look at planning in Ontario—Mr. Sewell, the former mayor of Toronto, would be no stranger to this assembly, indeed to the member from Beaches–East York. But at least they were consistent. We understand the need to intensify the population that's expected to come to Ontario, a great place to live, work and play.

We need to protect the environment. We need to make sure that there's an overall strategy. What's disappointing to me, though, is the inconsistency of the government. If you listen to the language they use about giving local-tier municipalities more control, in fact, it's quite the opposite. In the comments I'll be making very shortly here in the little time I have been allocated to speak on this bill, I will address these inconsistencies.

To the member from Beaches–East York, as the critic for planning and municipal issues in their caucus, I commend his predictability and I commend his tenacity to hold on to the ideals which I think are important in this House. I may not agree with them all, but in protecting the quality of life we've come to expect, I would agree with him there.

Mr. Milloy: Although I didn't agree with all that the member from Beaches–East York put forward, I do want to congratulate him on, as usual, a thoughtful presentation. What I think the honourable member missed is the enthusiasm that exists for this bill in many communities across the province.

It's no surprise that I'm standing up yet again to speak on it this afternoon, coming from Waterloo region, which, as I believe the minister pointed out a few minutes ago, has been light years ahead of most communities and, indeed, the province in terms of planning. They began in the 1970s to look ahead and figure out where we, as a region, want to be in 10, 20, 30, 40 years. Most recently, in 2003, they put out a planning document which anticipates 250,000 people coming to our region. They said to themselves, "How can we build the infrastructure, how can we plan, how can we have the type of development which is going to protect our community in the way it goes forward?"

As you know, I'm a new member to the Legislature and I did something which I encourage all members to do. A few months ago I sat down with the planning department, some key planners in Waterloo region, and they outlined to me how they envision the region developing, and, of course, looking at public comment. This is a group of individuals who are forward-thinking, but the one thing they lacked were the proper tools. They needed tools in the way of a legislative framework that allowed them to make decisions for the future of our region that were going to benefit everyone and that couldn't be overturned. They welcome this bill. The regional chair, whom I've quoted in the House before, came out with a very positive quote that was included in the ministry news release, outlining how a bill like this is going to allow the region of Waterloo to build on its

success in the past and move forward with the type of growth and development that is going to make sure its nature is preserved. I fully support the bill.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm pleased to stand in support of Bill 136. I believe the optimum words are "planning for growth instead of simply letting it happen." When you anticipate the number of people who are going to come into this city and into the GTA over the next number of years, it simply would be unconscionable not to have some planning strategies put in place so that municipalities can work together, along with their natural boundaries, to determine how that growth should take place.

If you look at the growth that has taken place in some of what used to be the suburbs—for example, the constituents in my area, Etobicoke Centre, look at Places to Grow as an opportunity and a tool for them to help plan what they think that community should look like in terms of intensification or density. As you know, we just closed the Lakeview coal-fired site. If that brownfield is rejuvenated, what do you put in there?

That's the growth that you plan for. You need to be able to engage the communities, the municipalities, in the process, and you actually can make it happen so that it's constructive, so that at the end of the day you don't just have something that has simply been put up, and then you have many people who are distressed because it doesn't fit in with the local landscape, it hasn't been part of any consultation process and it doesn't recognize and share the heritage of that particular community. People are really frustrated by this process. What Places to Grow does is give them the mechanism to do growth in a planned way that actually respects not only the municipal boundaries but the natural boundaries as well.

This is something that's new for us, but it's not particularly new in Europe. In fact, if you go to Europe, they are doing this in most of western Europe. They are looking at how they too can protect their greenbelts and how they are supposed to do their planning and management. We've simply gotten in at the bottom end of it, but at the end of the day, the most important thing here is that it will be planned and not haphazard.

The Deputy Speaker: Member from Beaches–East York, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Yes, there is something more to say.

I would like to thank the members from Northumberland, Durham, Kitchener Centre and Etobicoke Centre for their very good, very insightful comments.

The member from Northumberland said that it is a first step. If I thought it was a first step, I might be more congratulatory about it. But I think this is part of the end step. What has been done is not in terms of a first step. What I have suggested is that if it is a first step, it should be reviewed almost immediately to make sure that situations like Bond Head do not recur faster than you think.

To the member from Durham: I don't know his view on New Democrats, but I think a lot of them do much

more than park their bikes and go for a walk in the areas outside Toronto. We have a consistent view, but it is for all the people of the province. In fact, we think that development of a real growth plan would do much good for many, many communities, and not just urban ones.

The member from Kitchener Centre said that many people are looking at this with enthusiasm, and I would agree with him. Whereas before there was nothing, there is now something, and one has to be enthusiastic about that. But he went on to talk about the proper tools, and that's where I think this plan falls down, because there are not proper tools.

Last but not least, the member from Etobicoke Centre talked about planning for growth. This is a plan for growth, but in some way it has left out the municipalities. She talked about the municipalities, which will still have carriage of the actual plans. This will allow places like Bradford to do exactly what Bradford is doing in Bond Head. This is what causes me some considerable angst.

1730

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be quite extraordinary here and take off my jacket because today, as you would know, the electricity system, which is under the Minister of Energy, is experiencing a very high level of demand. It's expected to rise to over 23,500 megawatts of electricity. In fact, it's just one more example of centralized planning. I can say that what's missing from this equation on this particular issue is the cost of electricity. I've asked the minister repeatedly and still don't have any idea, except that today we know that energy is going to be over 10 cents a kilowatt hour. That's about double. So it explains why I'm removing my jacket. It is a warm day. It's a beautiful day in Ontario.

Having served on local council in Clarington as well as the region of Durham, I have some appreciation for the autonomy and authority of locally elected councils. I'm going to read the explanatory note in Bill 136, which pretty well outlines my concerns. It's this usurping of duly elected local authority local. It says here under the explanatory note of Bill 136—for those viewing, Bill 136 is available at my constituency office in Clarington.

"The bill gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council the authority to designate any area of land as a growth plan area and to establish a growth plan for all or part of that area. The contents of the plan are set out in section 6," which I'll get to in a few minutes.

"The council of a municipality, a municipal planning authority or a planning board that has jurisdiction in an area to which a growth plan applies"—here's the word—"shall amend its official plan to conform with the growth plan." Centralized planning—it's sort of like the old plan—

Mr. Dunlop: Big Brother.

Mr. O'Toole: Big Brother, the Russian approach to centralized planning and all things by the centre.

I'm going on here in the explanatory note:

"A decision under the Planning Act or the Condominium Act, 1998 or under such other act or provision

of an act as may be prescribed, made by a municipal council, municipal planning authority, planning board, other local board, conservation authority, minister of the crown or ministry, board, commission or agency of the government of Ontario, including the Ontario Municipal Board, or made by such other persons or bodies as may be prescribed that relates to a growth plan area"—here's the key word—"shall conform with the growth plan that applies to that growth plan area."

It's this centralized approach: Only Dalton and his duly elected cabinet know best. It's the nanny state in a higher order of planning. It's important for those viewing tonight to understand that what they're doing is taking control away from local and regional planning boards and authorities. They're elected to make these sensitive planning decisions, and I would say this undermines their local authority and undermines their due regard. In fact, there are difficult decisions and somebody sitting in Toronto is going to be making all the decisions, not just in Durham, which it's my elected privilege to represent, but in all parts of Ontario where a planning area applies. Here's what section 6 says in amended form. This was amended as of the second reading on April 6:

"Contents of plan.

"6. A growth plan may contain"—the soft word, the ambiguous word "may"—

"(a) population projections and allocations;" in other words, they're going to tell you how many people you're getting,

"(b) an assessment and identification of priority growth areas, emerging growth areas and future growth areas, over specified time periods;

"(c) growth strategies for all or part of the growth plan area;

"(d) policies, goals and criteria in relation to,"

"(i) intensification and density...."

Key words: "intensification and density." What they're saying here in code language, for those viewing tonight, is that everyone should live on top of each other. Intensification is just more people on less land. That's what it is. Let's boil it down to what affects the quality of life. I think this really does come down to the local autonomy having a balance of intensification—I understand that—and also some control over the growth and rate of growth in their area.

I think of my riding. I think of Hampton, Orono, Burkton. I think of small towns like Inniskillin and Tyrone. These areas need to have infilling occurring, appropriate use that through the water and groundwater and private wells etc. can support growth. That should be allowed to occur. You don't need somebody sitting at Queen's Park on Bay Street to tell you what is appropriate. These duly elected people—I'm surprised they're not outraged, quite honestly.

Under section 6(d):

"(iii) expansions and amendments to the boundaries of areas of settlement,

"(iv) the location of industry and commerce,

“(v) the protection of sensitive and significant lands, including agricultural lands, and water resources,

“(vi) non-renewable resources...

“(vii) infrastructure development and the location of infrastructure and institutions.”

That’s fine, and I hope the minister will come through with the \$30 billion they promised to build or rebuild infrastructure.

I would just go on:

“(ix) municipal waste management planning,

“(x) the co-ordination of planning and development...

“(xi) growth-related capital spending and financing,”

“(xii) affordable housing,

“(xiii) community design,

“(xiv) specified actions to be taken by municipalities to implement or achieve the ... goals.”

This is where they’re actually telling them, in (xiv), what to do, where their capital investment has to be to meet the goals and criteria of the minister and cabinet.

This is the process with the orders in council where the decisions will be made that build this great province, that were normally made by elected local and regional council authorities.

When I was reading in preparation for my limited time here this afternoon—this is a critical commentary—Bill 136 was brought in to complement the Greenbelt Act, which I will speak about in a minute as well. It sets out the rules regarding growth plans to curb urban sprawl. No one would have agreement. There are provincial policy statements and objectives that have guided and navigated municipal planners and others, with more autonomy at the same time. This bill is similar to our Smart Growth plan; in fact, our government had extensive consultations on developing a Smart Growth plan. But what’s different here is the restrictive nature of Bill 136. It’s the centralization of power through the minister, through cabinet and through the secrecy of that process that’s most troubling, while exempting the authority of local and regional mayors.

I think of Mayor John Gray in Oshawa, Marilyn Pearce in Port Perry and John Mutton in Clarington. These people take seriously their responsibilities, and I am sure they know exactly where the infrastructure of the municipality is sufficient to support some growth and where other areas of the municipality are not, without investments in infrastructure such as water and sewer, which is important.

What are other stakeholders saying? It might be important to listen. I know the Minister of Agriculture is here. What did Ron Bonnett say? “The OFA has concerns that this may be the equivalent of expropriation without compensation.” They are also concerned that they have lost land value while agreeing with the principle of preserving farmland.

“The presumption in the discussion paper that farmers should be responsible for the provision of open spaces and recreational opportunities for urban residents of the GTA is totally unacceptable.” This is from the OFA’s response to the Golden Horseshoe greenbelt.

It has been said earlier that there are three or four bills: the Planning Act reforms, the planning policy statements, Bill 136, which is the infrastructure piece, and Bill 135, which was the greenbelt piece. They’re all kind of lumped together, and unless you’re basically a Bay Street lawyer, most of them are struggling to find some way of dealing with this.

I’m going to acknowledge that I did have the privilege of meeting with ministry staff today, and I brought to their attention several critical issues. This meeting was arranged through our leader, John Tory, who wants this fair and reasonable process, along with our critic Tim Hudak. I want to pay respect to the government, because what we were questioning fundamentally was the greenbelt legislation, Bill 135. We called this agronomy or soil science or political science. We were saying, where was the substance for the greenbelt plan, which is the backbone of this whole planning exercise of Bill 135 and Bill 136?

1740

I tend to work co-operatively with my councils and the regional council, so it’s important that I represent their views without any filter. Unfiltered, I’m going to share a couple of letters here that have been written by the director of planning. These aren’t my words. I will file them with the Clerk for appropriate reference for the future. This is written by David Crome, who is the director of planning services for the department in Clarington. This is dated March 2 and it’s in response to the greenbelt, municipality of Clarington.

I’m going to read pretty selectively: “A preliminary look at an enlarged copy of the greenbelt map clearly indicates that the northwest portion of Bowmanville urban area, what we informally call the north Brookhill neighbourhood, is within the limits of the greenbelt. These lands are currently designated for further urban residential on the Clarington official plan.” There we have a conflict at one of the boundaries. I was asking the ministry how they’re going to resolve these conflicts. Which takes precedence: the municipal, after the public hearing process and due notice process? They’ve had the hearings and they’ve got this conflict at the northwest boundary.

He goes on to say, “As you recall, Clarington staff suggested that the lands identified as provincially significant Maple Grove wetland complex, including these within the Bowmanville urban area, be included in the greenbelt.” So they’re asking for some changes. “At the time of the request, you stated that, ‘The greenbelt will not include any lands within a designated urban area.’” He goes on to say—this is the director of planning, a non-partisan person—“I assume that the inclusion of this portion of Bowmanville urban area is a drafting error and can be rectified. Please advise how and when this error will be corrected.” That’s a fair question. “It is important to resolve this matter immediately, as the municipality of Clarington has issued a request for proposal to prepare a secondary plan for these lands to the south.”

He goes on to say, "Clarington has had a limited chance to review the mapping"—the consultation they speak of; limited chance—"greenbelt and enabling legislation to date. Within the next week or so, it is anticipated that we will have had the opportunity needed to review these documents in detail and there may be other areas that we may need to discuss."

Basically what I was trying to do was bring voice to the municipality of Clarington, and all the municipal leaders I've spoken to, to make sure their concerns are being addressed.

This morning they were having a meeting at Clarington council. I wish I had been able to attend. I enjoy attending and listening at their meetings, and not particularly being engaged other than taking the minutes and trying to work with them co-operatively.

He goes on, "Our primary concerns with the greenbelt are as follows: Inclusion of the northwest portion of Bowmanville in the greenbelt"—we've just spoken of that. "We are in the midst of a neighbourhood study for this area that would like to see corrected as soon as possible the amendment made in committee that requires municipalities to complete their comprehensive review to implement the greenbelt within three years."

He goes on to say—this is written by David Crome—"Although I don't think this is a problem for us, five years would be preferable for this review, particularly since we are not receiving funding to assist with implementations as recommended by the Greenbelt Task Force."

There we have it: The Greenbelt Task Force recommended all these studies and technical reviews that had to be undertaken by the planning; there is no money for them. It's the downloading effect of the Liberal action of planning, downloading this function without any offsetting compensation.

They go on to say, "Lastly, there will be a greenbelt trust with funds for public acquisition in the greenbelt." I asked about this. Apparently they all looked around and there was no response. It's been speculated, but to date, no response.

"CLOCA," the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority, "and others have been talking about the possibility of using greenbelt funds to acquire portions of the Lake Iroquois shoreline beach, particularly the Black-Farewell and Maple Grove wetlands. We would really appreciate some help to see these funds come to Clarington."

I asked about that. I said that under the Oak Ridges moraine, which was our legislation, after much consultation, there was an Oak Ridges moraine trust fund set up, which helped with land acquisition and other measures to encourage private land to go into public ownership without expropriation without compensation. Apparently they have appointed a greenbelt council; I think our critic, Tim Hudak, brought it up today. There are nine members on this council. I would like to know who is representing Clarington's interests, to make sure we get a fair share of

what some would call the deficit issue, the gap; we would want no more or no less.

This becomes a little technical, because when the province controls the amount of development that occurs—you would know this, Mr. Speaker, having served on council yourself—they actually control the revenue for the municipality, because if you have a box or a line around your municipal area like Toronto does, your assessment revenue is basically frozen. In Toronto we see the response to that: Everybody is building up now. The only way they can build on the revenue side is to build up: more condos, more high-rise, more intensification. I think there is a subtlety here, almost like a conspiracy, where they are trying to force people to live on top of one another.

Coming from a rich area with a high quality of life, I suspect many members, especially those from northern Ontario, appreciate that we don't all live in the same cookie-cutter imagination of some of these intensification planning theorists. I remember, some years ago at university, taking a course in urban planning. It was called Christaller's central place theory. In that planning activity they described how Europe developed concentrically, around a centre—a central place theory. Transit and other issues to service intensively developed areas were worked out concentrically. In Ontario, and in much of North America, we are developed linearly, along the 401, along the 400, along the 404, along many of the transportation arteries. That's the reality. Until the infrastructure, like public transit, is put in place—

I can only say, as I go through Bill 136, that there are parts I want to be on the record as agreeing with. We need to make sure that urban sprawl doesn't take over all the beautiful countryside that is valuable for other uses, like agriculture—environmentally sensitive areas such as the Oak Ridges moraine, which is in my area as well as that of the member from Oshawa, the former Minister of Natural Resources, who has the greatest respect for outdoor life and is well regarded, not just in Durham but, I would say, across Ontario, and wants to share that beauty. We want to be hosts for naturalists and for persons who want to appreciate. Although we're part of the GTA, we have this wonderful countryside with creeks and valleys.

There are other areas I want to put on the record in the very few minutes I have. Oshawa Sand and Gravel is a company that has been operating on 20 acres for a number of years. They have an appeal in themselves. Orono's downtown business improvement association has expressed concerns, as have Brian Wallace/Davies Howe partners, a family-owned, 115-acre farm that is now designated as countryside within the greenbelt. The family has been paying taxes for 35 years, and now they have basically been expropriated.

Nothing in legislative format is perfect; I understand that. I understand they are trying to deal with sprawl. What is most surprising—in fact it's quite depressing—is that they've centralized this. If you listened to the explanatory notes I made in my opening remarks, they've

centralized to the minister, and there is really no appeal here either. They are overruling all planning authorities that have developed in Ontario over the last 50-plus years. Policy statements could have addressed much of this, but it's the central notion that only Dalton and his cabinet know best. That's troubling.

We live in a free and democratic state, and what I see is more centralization. I see it in health, I see it in energy, I see it in education, where the minister is now interfering with the authority of duly elected boards to negotiate with their teachers. This troubles me. This whole idea of the centralization of authority is problematic. One size fits all: That's not how Ontario becomes a great place to live and raise your family, and develops a diverse culture and a diverse economy. This bill is just symptomatic of a deep-rooted problem; namely, that they have the answers to all of the questions, whether we like it or not.

1750

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Prue: I listened to the member for Durham, as I always do, with some considerable intent, and I was quite surprised at his opening statement, where he talked about how this is just a prescription for the building of condominiums, for people living one on top of the other. I have to tell you that it is much more extensive infill than that.

In this city alone, one can see stacked townhomes. This is part of the plan for Regent Park. There are going to be far more people living in those nine square blocks than there are today. There's row housing, which has been spectacularly successful in some of the downtown core. There are factory conversions. If you go to King Street West, you'll see exactly what should be done: taking old factories and, instead of razing them to the ground, one in fact guts them and fixes them, and people move into these loft apartments that are spectacular. There are lineups of people trying to get into them.

We also have, unfortunately, in this town and I'm sure throughout Ontario, many of the glebe properties that are owned by the churches. In some cases, where the churches no longer have sustaining populations, the churches are being sold. The churches themselves are being changed, or apartments, condominiums and seniors' residences are being built on many of the lands that were once occupied by the churches.

There are many, many ways to infill, and in mature places like the larger cities in Ontario, that is in fact what needs to be done. I make no apologies for it. If people want to live in a condominium, they should be allowed to, but there are also all of the other options that are available for infill. It is not just condominium-building.

Quite frankly, I am excited by the possibility of infill, because I want to do away with a great many problems that are associated with sprawl. It's something we've got to start thinking about in different ways, and any of these will work.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm delighted to be able to speak to Bill 136, Places to Grow. If, as I do, you come from Guelph-Wellington, this is a very

important bill. We're just outside the greenbelt. People are very concerned about what will happen if growth jumps the greenbelt, and this is the bill that puts our house in order.

The member from Durham was speaking in terms of, wasn't it awful that the province was going to take some control and some leadership in this matter? I would like to disagree with him. In fact, this is exactly what is necessary. If we are going to have sensible growth, the province must take some leadership in this matter and decide where the agricultural areas are to be protected and where the areas are in which we have urban growth.

I must say I was fortunate a few weeks ago to be at a project which in some ways encapsulated just exactly what we have to do. We were at a project where affordable housing units are under construction. It was a very exciting project. It includes taking the old bus barns in Guelph, the old bus garage—this would be, by definition, a brownfield redevelopment, a wonderful old limestone garage—and turning that into affordable housing, which is desperately needed in our community. So in this one project we had brownfield redevelopment, intensification of the use of the land in the downtown core, and the provision of affordable housing, which is very, very necessary in our community.

That's the sort of growth we are encouraging under Places to Grow, and I'm very supportive of this bill.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm pleased to have a chance to briefly respond to my colleague the member for Durham and his presentation this afternoon on Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans.

I thought the member, as always, gave a very thoughtful presentation. His ideas are always well considered and thoughtfully presented in the Legislature, and we all appreciate them, certainly on our side of the House.

He noted quite rightly, I think, that this bill represents a substantial intrusion into the decision-making authority of local municipal councils. Having been privileged to represent the riding of Wellington for nine years and the riding of Waterloo-Wellington for six years after that—believe it or not, 15 years, Mr. Speaker—I've always found that the local councils in my riding in particular have done a great job of administering the responsibilities they are charged to undertake through the Municipal Act and other relevant legislation. Given that observation over the years, I find it rather strange that the government would feel it is necessary, with this act, to do what they plan to do: "The council of a municipality, a municipal planning authority or a planning board that has jurisdiction in an area to which a growth plan applies"—"growth plan" as defined by the province—"shall amend its official plan to conform with the growth plan." It is a direct intrusion, I would argue, into the decision-making authority and autonomy of our local councils. I would question very much if communities like Wellington North, Guelph-Eramosa township, Centre Wellington, Mapleton, which I have been privileged to represent over the years, would need this provincial intrusion in terms of their decision-making.

I know this is third reading of the bill, and most likely the bill will pass in its current form, but I want to offer that observation to the House once again and to compliment the member for Durham for his presentation this afternoon.

Mr. Levac: Thank you for the opportunity to make a brief comment about this particular bill, the member's comments, and other observations made as well.

It's unfortunate that this is being characterized as anything other than smart, intelligent planning. For the first time in 30 years, we are looking at a province that understands that we have some massive growth and development problems that need to be addressed because the problems will get worse if we do not act. They are getting worse as we speak. We need to take this type of action in order for us to understand the scope of the problem. The size of this problem is far, far larger than any one municipality itself. That's why this is an important plan.

Places to Grow is the companion to the almost two million acres that have been set aside, which everybody agrees needed to be done in the province. It's an advancement in provincial politics that we haven't seen. What we're talking about now is Places to Grow, which in my riding affects us immensely. We are going to be the centre of an awful lot of opportunity when we pull together and work with the province.

They've made it clear that some of our municipalities are doing wonderful jobs inside their own municipality, but it can't be talked about in isolation. We've got to be able to do that intelligent planning across the province. By doing what we're doing in this legislation, we've gone through and asked all of the experts, including the minister's staff, to take a look at where we should be doing this growth and what we should be doing inside it.

I want to compliment both of my city councils for their acceptance of this reality, and not only for that, but more importantly for the leadership they've been showing in the brownfield figures. What's happening in brownfields is extremely important, because we're going to hit that 40% target of infill by making use of those pieces of dirt that have been sitting empty for 30 and 40 years. This is fantastic planning. I want to compliment, both at the municipal level and at the ministry level, the work we're going for in Places to Grow. We need to support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. O'Toole: I want to thank the member from East York, who spoke about having more condos. In an appropriate time and place there's no question that they are the right thing. If you're out of space, you have to go up.

The member from Guelph-Wellington talked about being just outside the greenbelt. In fact, that's one of my serious concerns: this leapfrogging effect into Northumberland and into areas that are not covered by the greenbelt. She's justified to be concerned about the short-term plan we really have here about leapfrogging.

The member from Waterloo-Wellington had it right: It's about municipal autonomy. He has served here for 15 years, and I think some of the newer members should listen to his wise experience and pay careful attention.

The member from Brant talked about smart planning. We had a plan similar to this; it wasn't quite as dogmatic. Ours was more consultative; it was called Smart Growth. Yours is dictatorial. We understand that.

If I read the Toronto Star, June 1 edition—it's called "A greenbelt besieged"—it says they're already chipping away at the plan. "Now Durham region politicians have endorsed Pickering's move," which I'll outline here. Mayor Ryan "argues that Pickering isn't alone. Other municipalities throughout the greater Toronto area are angry at how the greenbelt was mapped out, he says." These are his words, not mine.

The writer of the article says, "No doubt Ontario will be fighting greenbelt battles for years to come." It's this centralized planning that only the Liberals know. It's this insatiable self-importance that I see as the crystal clear difficulty with this bill. Recognize the autonomy of local councils. If you go back into this, the planning principles, the planning policies—there's been an argument for some time whether you should "be consistent with" or "have regard to" provincial policy statements. We tried to find a balance, recognizing municipal authority while giving people respect for freedom and democracy, which the Liberals deny them.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1801.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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